



## D.H.Lawrence’s Works on Love Ethics and their Moral Significance

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### Abstract

Lawrence advocates a return to natural human instincts and the pursuit of harmony between the spirit and the flesh. This reflects a respect for human nature and the recognition of natural desires, which is in line with ethical principles that uphold the dignity of the individual. In his works, Lawrence criticized the intervention of false rationality and morality in human nature, advocating for the pursuit of authentic and sincere love. This embodies the moral and ethical values of honesty, authenticity, and candor. According to Lawrence, true love should be genuine and unfettered, not constrained by hypocritical moral norms. This aligns with ethical principles that prioritize truthfulness and sincerity.

Lawrence believed that true love should be based on mutual respect and equality, not one-sided control or oppression. This resonates with ethical principles that emphasize equality and respect. Lawrence saw healthy personalities and a pure, beautiful natural environment as essential stages for love relationships. This embodies moral and ethical concerns for nature and the environment. He was critical of the polluted environments created by industrial civilization, arguing that they were unfavorable to the occurrence of perfect love. This aligns with ethical views that promote harmony between humans and nature and the protection of the environment.

**Key words:** D.H.Lawrence; Love ethics; Moral significance

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

D.H. Lawrence, or David Herbert Lawrence, was a renowned English novelist, poet, playwright, essayist, and literary critic of the 20th century. Lawrence’s literary journey began in his youth, and he was deeply influenced by the works of writers like William Blake, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. These influences were reflected in his writing, particularly in his exploration of human psychology, and the conflict between the spiritual and the material world.

H. Lawrence’s life was a tumultuous yet brilliant journey that was shaped by his unique experiences, literary influences, and passionate pursuit of truth and understanding. His works often reflect these personal struggles and insights, providing a unique perspective on human nature and the complexities of love.

### 2. A GLIMPSE TO LAWRENCE’S WORKS ON LOVE ETHICS

One of his strength as a novelist is certainly the fairly direct attribution to his protagonists of feelings of his own which in most of us go unavowed (Fernihough, 2001). The childhood experience, especially the love between Lawrence and his mother was reflected in his first famous novel: *Sons and Lovers*, a book “ full of stir and unrest and desire for something withheld”(1966).This book can be considered as his personal biography.It begins with the author’s problems but does not end with them, and it opens out into its insight and the steady honesty of its vision. “ One sheds one’s sickness in books”(Salgado, 2005).

*The Rainbow* is Lawrence’s second longest book, and is in many ways unique among his novels. It originally began as a larger work, *The Sisters*, and included material which was later used in *Women in Love*. *The Rainbow* is an impressive fictional interpretation of a part of

English social and cultural history over three generations of Brangwen family, roughly from 1840s to the second decade of the twentieth century. It portrays the dramatic conflicts farmers had to be faced up with during the processes of the industrialization in England, and also it explored the sexual problems between male and female. Many critics consider *Women in Love* to be Lawrence's greatest novel. Ursula and Gudrun are, as we know, the central figures of *Women in Love*, along with Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich. The presence of the two sisters provides one kind of continuity between the two novels, as does the reappearance of characters such as Will Brangwen. A more important link is that between Ursula's search for a meaningful life in the modern world and the continuation of that quest in *Women in Love* in the wider and more troubled arena of the metropolitan-industrial world as well as that of the survivals of the rural past.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is his most debatable works. It was set in the ashes after the First World War. Through the stories among Sir Clifford, Constance Clifford and the game keeper Mellors, Lawrence conveys a powerful message to us that the irrevocable disasters brought about by the industrialization not only destroys the environment, but also crashes the basic human nature, and he sings a high praise of the healing function of enjoyable relationship between male and female. From Lawrence's point of view, it is the industrial world that has destroyed people's intuitive love for each other. As he describes the experience between Connie and Mellors was not a woman's fault, nor even love's fault. The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattling of engines. There is the world of greedy mechanism, sparkling with lights, ready to destroy whatever did not conform.

Lawrence is writer whose reputation, both literary and personal, has undergone extraordinary vicissitudes, fluctuating, more wildly than that of any other twentieth-century British author (Nehls, 1957). Though he had been criticized, censored and dismissed in his lifetime, he now stands as the major imaginative novelist of early twentieth century England and one who attained that eminence by the comprehensiveness of his understanding and sympathy. "It is probably of equal importance that, didactic as he was, he did not forfeit the virtue, so strongly cultivated by Dickens, George Eliot and Hardy, of wide comprehensibility and a steadily widening reading public." (Salgado, 2005).

### 3. LAWRENCE'S STATEMENTS ON LOVE AND THEIR MORAL SIGNIFICANCE

The writer's private life reveals that he was a man ultimately devoted to his marriage and it was the most worth mentioning in his life, the woman named Frieda, to whom he was married and shared a happy life. The "

here is my marriage" letter shows the writer's point of view: "Can't you feel how certainly I love you and how certainly we shall be married...Do you know, like the old knights, I seem to want a certain time to prepare myself, a sort of vigil with myself. Because it is a great thing for me to marry you, not a quick, passionate coming together. I know in my heart 'here's my marriage.'" (Fernihough, 2003, p.34).

From the statements above, we can see Lawrence was devoted to his marriage, like most other common happy married couples. Though his would-be-wife Frieda was a three-times-married woman, and wished to preserve the secret of her affair with Lawrence until she could figure out a way to retain custody of her three children. This letter can be considered as Lawrence's coercing Frieda to become his wife. Lawrence considered himself as "old Knight", for the reason that he took his marriage to Frieda very seriously and significantly, yet we can also sense Lawrence's perseverance of his egoism in love affairs. He wrote "with himself" and "for me" and conveyed his relative indifference to Frieda's thoughts and feelings. To love doesn't mean to lose oneself totally.

As regards to Lawrence's views about love ethics, *The Rainbow* is a significant example. In this novel, Lawrence discusses wild fluctuations in emotions within love relation, the awareness and torment of bisexual longings which cannot speak their names. As for him, love leads to a sense of the eternal.

"Inside the room was a great steadiness, a core of living eternity... here at the center the great wheel was motionless, centered upon itself..." As they lay close together, complete and beyond the touch of time or change, it was as if they were at the very center of all the slow wheeling of space... They found themselves there, and they lay still, in each other's arms, for their moment they were at the heat of eternity, whilst time roared far off, forever far off, towards the rim" (Fernihough, 2003, p.38). Lawrence depicts the love affair between the marriage of Will and Anna Brangwen and their honeymoon. We can see Lawrence asserts a spiritual dimension to love. The real love extends to the sense of eternity.

The balance of two sexes is the key love ethic of Lawrence. From his point of view, love is coming together. But there can be no coming together without going asunder. In love, all things unite in a oneness of joy and praise. But they could not unite unless they were previously apart. And having united in a whole circle of unity, they can go no further in love. The motion of love, like a tide, is fulfilled in this instance; there must be an ebb.

Some critics observe Lawrence's views on love through his erotic love poetry.

God, I am caught in a snare!  
I know not what fine wire is round my throat;  
I only know I let him finger there  
My pulse of life, and let him nose like a stoat

Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood.  
And down his mouth comes to my mouth! And down  
His bright dark eyes come over me, like a hood  
Upon my mind! His lips meet mine, and a flood  
Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown

*Love on the Farm*, is for some readers, a wonderfully romantic poem about love, desire and the primacy of passion over rational thought. Lawrence uses a woman's voice and consciousness to convey the love message that women should submit emotionally to men. Lawrence is prettily tactic at exploring a woman's psyche when a woman falls in love. Anais Nin extolled Lawrence's "complete realization of the love feelings of women" (Nin, 1982, p.13), arguing that he wrote as a woman would write.

In the poems such as *Mutilation* and *Both Sides of the Medal*, Lawrence dwells even more explicitly and unflinchingly on the dark side of desire and "because you love me, /think you do not hate me?" While in *Song of a Man Who is Not Loved*, he contemplates the emptiness and horror of a world without love. "I hold myself up and feel a big wind blowing, / Me like a gadfly into the dusk", and even in seemingly celebratory poems such as *Song of a Man Who Has Come Through*, in which the poet promises to "be a good fountain, a good well-head" for the wonder that "bubbles into my soul", he introduces, inevitably, a sudden anxiety at the end.

#### 4. LAWRENCE'S NOVELS ON LOVE ETHICS AND THEIR MORAL IMPLICATION

To provoke Lawrence's point of view on love deeper, Critic Kate Millett uses the term "sexual politics" to investigate Lawrence's famous novels. Kate acknowledges Lawrence as a great and original artist, and in many respects a man of distinguished moral and intellectual integrity. "Sex has a frequently neglected political aspect, taking politics to refer to power-structure relationship" (Millett, 1970, p.240). Kate closely examines Lawrence's many novels, and she cited *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as an example to make comments on Lawrence's love and sexual politics. "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a program for social as well as sexual redemption, yet the two are inextricable...while a sexual revolution, in terms of a changing attitude, and even in psychic structure, is undoubtedly essential to any radical change, this is very far from being what Lawrence has in mind. His recipe is a mixture of Morris and Freud, which would do away with machinery and return industrial England to something like the Middle Ages. Primarily the thing is to be accomplished by a reversion to older sexual roles." (Millett, 1970, p.250)

There is a development of Lawrence's sexual politics through his novels and it is the politics of sex which has always commanded Lawrence's attention most, both as

the foundation and as a stairway to other types of self-aggrandizements. For Lawrence, he believes something real in love. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is his most debatable works. It was set in the ashes after the First World War. Through the stories among Sir Clifford, Constance Clifford and the game Keeper Mellors, Lawrence conveys a powerful message to us that the irrevocable disasters brought about by the industrialization not only destroys the environment, but also crashes the basic human nature, and he sings a high praise of the healing function of love between male and female. It was from this bleak postwar perspective amid the fragmentation and collapse of the established social-cultural systems that Lawrence set out to explore the idea of cultural regeneration. His prophetic vision of the future was built upon a cyclical view of history, in which psychological forces were seen as the causes of historical change (Koh, 2002, p.189).

At that time, Britain was undergoing a transformation in the process of industrialization, and people worshiped the fame and fortune, turning very cold-hearted. Connie, the wife of a coal mine master, Clifford, was rebelling against her greedy, selfish husband, and freed her soul from the dismay of cold mining area, and renewed herself from the harmonious and enjoyable love affairs with Mellors.

Mellors always thought of his boyhood in Tevershall, and of his five or six years of married life. When he thought of his wife, he felt bitter for her being brutal, and hoped never to see her again while he lived. Then he thought of his life abroad, as a soldier, as an officer, and a lieutenant with a very fair chance of being a captain. But the death of the colonel from pneumonia disturbed everything, and he had the narrow escape from death, then he had to leave the army and came back to England to be a working man again. All the experiences told his that he was not temporizing with life, and he knew that the utter futility of expecting any solution of the wage-squabble. "The care about money is like a great cancer, eating away the individuals of all classes. He refused to care about money" (Lawrence, 2004, p.142). When he was living alone in a hut in the woods, he felt void of life. At this moment, Connie entered into his life. The elegant and strong-willed lady sparkled him and helped him recover from the great pain and come out from the deep hell of void. Therefore, Connie has played the role of self-regeneration and also the great inspiration for Mellor's rediscovery of his meaningful life. And this is what Lawrence always advocates, that it, love can bring harmony to the industrialized society, and love redemption is the only means to save our society from degenerating into abyss.

Through the analysis, we can see that Lawrence holds firmly the love ethic, that is, balance between men and women and mutual love is "the fountain head, where life bubbles up into the person from the unknown" (Salgado,

2004, p.56). He believes the only re-sourcing of art, re-vivifying it, is to make it more than joint work of man and woman. The only thing to do, is for men to have courage to draw nearer to women, expose themselves to them and be altered by them. The source of all life and knowledge is in men and women, and the source of all living is in the interchange and meeting and mingling of these two.

In many novels, Lawrence depicts utopias for men and women to love each other, for him, the ultimate meaning of life is based on mutual love, what's more, the bonds of embracing people together, the cure of social evils. Though his ideals seem very far off from the reality, it inspires the sparkles of kindness and sympathy within people, kindles the fire of love of the human race. It rebels against the modernist devils of the society: greed, aggression, lust for money and fortune, indifference towards people in the surroundings, and perverted psychology, etc. The industrialized world is so horrible, as Lawrence describes in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: "He went down again into the darkness and seclusion of the wood. But he knew that the seclusion of the wood as illusory. The industrial noises broke the solitude, the sharp lights, though unseen, mocked it. A man could no longer be private and withdrawn. The world allows no hermits."

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## CONCLUSION

Lawrence emphasizes the natural and instinctual aspect of love. He believes that love is an inherent part of human nature and should not be constrained by societal norms or rules. Lawrence's view of love is deeply ethical. He sees love as a means to elevate the human spirit and achieve a higher level of consciousness. He believes that true love, based on mutual respect and understanding, can lead to spiritual growth and enrichment.

He was critical of the modern industrial society, which he saw as dehumanizing and alienating. He argued that the emphasis on materialism and efficiency in modern society had led to a loss of human connection and intimacy. Against this backdrop, Lawrence saw love as a rare commodity that could help people escape the harsh realities of modern life.

Lawrence's statements on love emphasize its instinctual nature, as well as its ethical value in promoting spiritual growth and enrichment. He was critical of modern society's dehumanizing effects and saw love as a means to escape these harsh realities.

Lawrence's views on love are deeply rooted in moral and ethical theory. He pursued authenticity and sincerity in love, opposed repression and constraints, and paid attention to nature and the environment. These views reflect the ethical principles of respecting human nature, pursuing truthfulness, upholding individual freedom and rights, and caring for the environment, providing new perspectives for us to think about moral and ethical issues.

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