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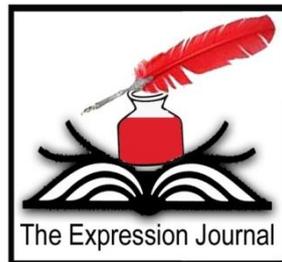
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D. H. LAWRENCE AS A CRITIC OF SOCIETY WITH REFERENCE TO HIS *WOMEN IN LOVE*

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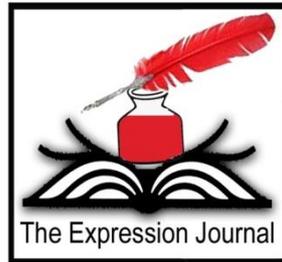
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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to present D. H. Lawrence as a critic of society with reference to his novel *Women in Love*. D. H. Lawrence was a precocious and sensitive writer who had a vision to teach and communicate something good and moralistic in all respects. Lawrence believes that the human beings are perishing for lack of fulfilment of their greater needs and they are cut off from the great sources of self-understanding. Lawrence emphasises on the self-learning of moral values. Thus, through his paper it is obvious that, Lawrence attempts to convey his belief that every individual should achieve his singleness and completion and not to look for salvation through another person.

Keywords

Society, Individuality, Moral Ideas, Education, Religion, Mental Consciousness, D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*.



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It is commonly understood that D. H. Lawrence's works deal with problems, not just of our age or one particular class, but with humanity itself. Truly speaking, Lawrence was the one who was in rebellion against the society in which he lived on moral grounds. He was almost a moralist trying to tell genuine truths about modern machine-driven civilization, however unpleasant they might have appeared to those who were more complacent and morally less honest. With vehement passion, he denounced the dehumanizing effects of our mechanical civilization and stood up in defence of spontaneity, free creative self-expression on all levels by every living human being. He strictly warned humanity against the trend towards a catastrophic civilization, leading to both moral and physical death. Kaith Salter writes:

“Every age responds most intensely to an artist who deals with the problems it is faced with our generation and the ones to come will therefore, be inevitably drawn to D. H. Lawrence whose ideas are gaining relevance and significance as we advanced into the latter half of this century, and by our passive acquiescence, become accomplices to the threat of the atomic age.” (3)

Lawrence has a revolutionary message for the society in our day. He wrote because he wanted people “to alter and have more sense”. He foresaw the need for the dissolution of society barriers and abandonment of outworn morality. He was primarily concerned with how to overcome the neurotic restlessness of the world with its sick hurry and divided aim. Earth seemed to him a sterile promontory and the air a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. Life, standardised and mechanical, had been bereft of joy. Everywhere there were dehumanization, degeneration, decay and dissipation of life. It was a mental world where head dictated the heart and the soul, where self-consciousness, self-assertion and egoistic will subordinated the essential human values. Under the influence of science, wealth accumulated but men decayed.

D. H. Lawrence was a precocious, sensitive soul whose moral sense rebelled at the wasteland culture and modern death-drift. He did not write anything simply to amuse the readers or while away the old hours. He had a vision to teach and communicate something good and moralistic in all respects. He wanted people to know that they have cut themselves off from

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the roots of their being and that they can expect only to wither like a tree in a city without soil below or light above. They have to find those roots again if they are to live full and meaningful human lives and dig them deep so as to search for the sources of the power of life. He feels that the so-called culture, education, the so-called leaders and leading classes today are only parasites. It is Lawrence's profound faith that our vision of life is all wrong:

"We must be prepared to have a new conception of what it means, to live. And everybody should try to help to build up this new conception, and everybody should be prepared to destroy bit by bit, our old conception." (*Return to Bestwood* 156)

According to Lawrence, human beings are perishing for lack of fulfilment of their greater needs and they are cut off from the great sources of their inward nourishment and renewal, sources which flow eternally in the universe. His view is that vitally the human race is dying and it is like a great uprooted tree with its roots in the air and we must plant ourselves again in the universe. Now ugliness has become the order of the day people have allowed themselves to be ruled by the machine. The blind worship of raw materialism has initiated the process of man's dehumanization and killed something in man. Man has allowed the machine to kill his emotional and spiritual life; thereby losing all spontaneity and joy in living. Mechanisation has sapped the human insight for beauty and meaning and suppressed the human intuitive faculty.

Lawrence felt the universe as a living thing and a mystic inspiration. Man's life is only a portion of the forever, mysterious vitality of the whole universe. Mechanisation led to over-cerebration and over-cerebration made man cut himself off from the living cosmos. Without the restoration of this contact, society will perish. Lawrence excoriates war because it was a complete denial of life and a letting loose of the subconscious destructive elements. Life and growth are the very essence of his creed. He asserts that all modern militarism is foul and he reiterates that what we need is not war for expansionism but love and genuine human sympathy. He dreams of a democracy in which men will cease to care for property and become their own decent selves again and walk "naked and light". He sincerely esteems individual liberty above everything. Lawrence's democracy, no doubt, aims at the establishment of the sense of wholeness in life.

Education, according to Lawrence, must be a step into a fuller life. Children must be left alone to become themselves. He stresses the element of wonder in our lives. This sense of wonder can be killed by too much knowledge. the one thing men have not learned to do is to stick up for their own instinctive feeling, against the things they are taught. The present civilization is based on knowledge. its fatal fruit is boredom. In "Hymns in a Man's Life", Lawrence writes:

"All our wonderful education and learning is producing a grand sum-total of boredom. Modern people are inwardly thoroughly bored... they are bored because they experience nothing because the wonder has gone out of them. And when the wonder has gone out of a man, he is dead."

It is no wonder that Lawrence challenges the traditional views of knowing and education. His religious ideas are radical and original. He puts forward views radically opposed to Christianity. Lawrence wants to do away with the centuries – old domination of the cerebral intelligence which ignored the cosmic mystery of life, to liberate the suppressed instincts and to return to the primitive belief that there was an organic relationship between man and the universe. In the oldest religion, everything was alive, not supernaturally but naturally alive. Christianity, according to Lawrence, is a God-religion and a formalized one. Formalized

religions interfered with the basic intelligence of the individual, imposing a barrier on true living.

Lawrence is preoccupied with the great cosmic laws underlying sex relationships to which all other aspects of life are linked. Sexual communication, to Lawrence, meant living marriage, vital being, and only in this way can the effeminacy of the twentieth century be replaced by purposeful individuality and alliance. Modern industrial civilization has perverted man and perverted sex. In a world dominated by the huge excesses of mechanisation, sex is the only remaining link with nature. Man becomes part of nature only through sex. It momentarily annihilates mental consciousness and renews both man and woman by restoring the contact with the extra-human source of life. Mechanisation is the breeding-ground of over-cerebration and the tyranny of mental consciousness. Lawrence wants a revolt in favour of life and wholeness.

Lawrence is a critic of society. his ideas have serious relevance to the modern world. He is a bitter opponent of industrialism, which, he believes, has destroyed the harmony between man and nature on which a healthy civilization depended. Lawrence looked forward to a society of human beings in which we should care about the right things, when men become their decent selves again. *Women in Love* conveys Lawrence's belief that if man becomes a mechanical unit in a mechanical society, he will break away from the natural bounds which are the springs of life and then, inevitably, disaster follows. Gerald has externalised his being in material things to such an extent that, for him, the only real and pressing issue was perfect industrialisation. He has allowed the machine to kill his emotional and spiritual life, and thus, he lost all spontaneity and joy in living. This lack of human consideration is apparent in his attitude towards the men in his firm.

Lawrence disliked too much scientific knowledge. This can be attributed to his belief that science has a mysterious hatred of beauty, because it does not fit in the cause-end-effect chain. It diminishes men's sense of wonder and blunts their sensitiveness to the great mystery. The machine "eunuch of eunuchs" emasculates us all in the end by depriving us of our vitalising contact with the dynamic universe. What Lawrence is against is the misuse of the machine whereby we ourselves become mechanised and cut off our vital relation with the living universe by trying to conquer it. What has to be kept in mind is that it is not the machine he is criticising but the way man has used it. He hails the inventor of the labour-saving machine as a public benefactor. He chides those who condemn the machine as an evil thing and canvass a return to the medieval system of handicrafts. Lawrence is in favour not of smashing machine altogether but of making constructive and healthy use of it. What happens nowadays is that modern men are directed by a blind worship of the machine which denies the creative spirit, spirit of life in him. Gerald's actions are mainly "willed ambitions". It was his will to subjugate matter to his own ends. It was not for the sake of money that Gerald was the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions.

What Lawrence wants to convey in his belief that every individual should achieve his singleness and completion and not to look for salvation through another person. Mechanisation stands in the way. The sickness of the 'self' in Gerald is identified with the evil of the industrial society seeping through him. In the end, he dies and one can assume that his death symbolises the frustrated drives of life which were violated by the tyrannical force of the machine; this force is both cold and blind. Gerald is, in many ways, typical of contemporary society with its lust for power and mechanisation.

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