

## Industrial Civilization Vs Human Natural Instinct

### -- Lawrence's Attitude towards Industrialization in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

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**Abstract:** In this paper, from the perspective of some pairs of contrast, Lawrence's attitude towards industrialization has been presented. Under the pressure of modern industrialization, human nature has been seriously eroded. Capitalist industrial civilization has pushed human beings to a critical point. Instead of putting attention to human nature and instinct, modern people crazily seek after money and the material life. In order to struggle against modernity, through *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence shows the readers the love story of Connie and Mellors, which is a kind of rebelling against industrialization. He advocates a realistic attitude towards life and the return to human true nature. The paper comes to the conclusion that the best way to keep human natural instinct is to rebuild relationship between man and woman and fulfill their needs both on body and soul. It is also suggested that Lawrence's attitude towards modern world has realistic significance to today's literary researches.

### 1. Introduction

As a British writer, D. H. Lawrence was one of the influential figures in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. He was born in September 11 in 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. He was one of the children of a coal miner and an educated mother.

Since the second half of the 19th century, great changes had happened in Lawrence's hometown, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, where the beautiful woods and fields were in sharp contrast with the ugly coal mines, as a result of the rapid development of European industrialization and machinery civilization. In the eyes of Lawrence, the contrast symbolized antagonism between European industrial mechanism and natural agricultural economy. Man, the creature of the universe, unexpectedly became the powerless slave of machinery; human instinct and the harmonious relationship among people were eroded by the merciless money. Man was no longer the whole being with the integrity of body and mind [1]. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of his fictions concern the struggle for human fulfillment within a dehumanizing industrialized society. These works, taken together, represent an extended reflection upon the dehumanizing effects of modernity and industrialization. In them, Lawrence confronts issues relating to emotional health and vitality, spontaneity, sexuality, and instinctive behavior.

Lawrence believes that industrialized western culture is dehumanizing because it emphasizes material attributes to the exclusion of natural or physical instincts. He thinks that this culture is in decline and that humanity will soon evolve into a new awareness of itself as being a part of nature.

This short introduction of Lawrence's attitude towards industrialization has already touched on the main points to be presented in this paper. In the following parts, after a brief overview of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the analysis of the main characters, Clifford, Connie, Mellors and their relationship will be made to further explore Lawrence's idea of industrial civilization and his maintenance of human natural instinct. The conclusion will come at the end of the paper.

### 2. Overview of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is considered to be the most controversial novel of Lawrence. The story concerns a young married woman, Connie, Lady Chatterley, whose upper-class husband has been

paralyzed in the war and rendered impotent. Her sexual frustration leads her into an affair with the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. She finds love and sexual fulfillment with him. Because their lovemaking is described in intimate detail (for the 1920s), the novel caused a sensation and was banned in England and the United States until 1959.

“The theme of a novel is its controlling idea or its central insight” [2]. Just as mentioned above, in this novel, through the description of the relationship between Connie and her husband and the relationship between Connie and Mellors, the author wants to criticize the dehumanizing effect of industrialization on human beings, and human beings can realize their true nature by harmonious relationship or sexual fulfillment.

In the novel, there are a lot of contrasts and conflicts between industrial civilization and human natural instinct. In the following sections, these contrasts will be presented respectively.

### **3. Examples of Contrast between Industrial Civilization and Human Natural Instinct**

#### **3.1 Wragby Vs Woods**

From many of Lawrence’s works, it can be seen that he abhors the destruction by machinery civilization on natural environment and human nature. That is also why he chooses Wragby and its surrounding coal mines as the background of the novel. On the one hand, the coal mines as the dark side erode human instinct; on the other hand, the woods as the bright side gives people the hope of new life.

Wragby and its surrounding coal mines stand for the machinery capitalist society. There is no communication between Wragby Hall and Tevershall Village. The coal mines are black. The walls are black, the roads are black and even the water is black there. All are full of gloom and misery. The coal miners are also the victims. The iron and steel have eroded their body and soul. They have become the attachment of the industrial society. The miners stand for the lower-class people in the machinery world, and the description of them reveals that the industrial society is in decline.

In contrast, the woods, as the habitat of natural lives, is the pure land without the destruction of mechanism. It is there that the love between Connie and Mellors came into being and developed. There is sharp contrast between the woods and Wragby and its surrounding coal mines. Out of the woods, it is dominated by money and greediness and lifeless machines; while in the woods, flowers are blooming, water is running happily. The woods is the source of new life and it is Eden on earth full of vitality and hope.

Through the contrast between Wragby and its surrounding coal mines and the woods, Lawrence wants to show that only being far from the pollution of industrial civilization and retreating to nature can human beings recover their vigor.

#### **3.2 Clifford Vs Mellors**

The heroes in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* are of two opposite classes. Clifford is a nobleman and also the boss of the coal mine. He is made paralyzed by war and becomes a monster on the wheelchair day after day. It is seemed that he is a strong man, but he is rather weak inside. He has to be dependent on his wife. In front of the lower-class people, he is arrogant and indifferent and has no enthusiasm. The coal miners do not like him or hate him, and in their eyes he is just like the coal mines or Wragby Hall, just a part of the world. The disability of his body leads to the distortion and alienation of his heart. He abhors the body and worships rationalism and self-control. He has never cared about his wife as a woman, and her emotion and feelings have never been paid attention to. What he can do is just using some monotonous words to keep their nominal relationship. What he seeks after is just money and fame. Although his novels make him successful and are published on some famous magazines, actually, what he writes is nothing but some hollow words, nothing meaningful. From the perspective of the novel itself, Clifford is also a victim of modernity. His disability and the loss of sexuality are the results of war which is brought about by the expansion of rationalism and the plunder of capitalism. He cannot live a normal life and he is hurt in the heart. He dare not and is even unwilling to see other people. He encloses himself and has no real contact

with other people, even his wife feels that they have no real contact with each other. He is living in extreme loneliness and vacuity. He is the combination of extreme self-esteem and self-abasement. From the perspective of symbolism, his nature and instinct are eroded by rationalism and utilitarianism. Representative of wisdom, his upper body is highly developed; while representative of emotion, his lower body is paralyzed and disabled. He can manage the coal mines very well, but he shows no affection towards other people and society. He does everything from the perspective of utilitarianism. As the result of love, child is just the tool to pass on from one generation to another. He has no emotional life. What he advocates is just spiritual life. His disability stands for the decline of industrial civilization [3].

As opposed to Clifford who is civilized but disabled, Mellors is a natural man. He was once a coal miner, afterwards he joined in army and had contact with “civilized” people. He abhors the modern civilization and chooses to be a gamekeeper after retirement from service in army. He is healthy and likes living a serene life. Living in the woods and raising some flowers and chickens, he likes being far from the rational world which oppresses human nature, and far from the social conventions and hypocritical morality. Mellors is an independent man. In front of Clifford and his wife, he appears neither supercilious nor obsequious. He is well-educated and can speak French and German as well as the standard English that many noblemen speak, but he still speaks with his Midlands accent even to the upper-class people. Lawrence thinks that this dialect without hypocrisy comes from the real life and out of the true human nature, while the language of the upper class has been rid of the colorful content and has become far from the human instinct [4]. It is a kind of abandonment and refusal to the “spiritual” life that Mellors speaks dialect in front of upper-class people. In contrast with Clifford’s meaningless novels, fame and wealth are not what Mellors wants. He just enjoys raising chickens and looking forward to new life. It is nature that he really likes. And the best way to keep human nature is to live in the natural environment and far from the industrial and rational world. As a natural man, Mellors is not eroded by the modern civilization; he is thought the hope of civilized society and a true man in the eyes of Lawrence.

Lawrence also puts Clifford and Mellors together to show that Mellors is the real hope of industrial civilized society. The other day, the iron wheelchair on which Clifford sit was stuck and could not move. As the representative of mechanism, no matter how Clifford tried, he still could not move the wheelchair. At last, with the help of Mellors, the wheelchair could move on again. Through the description, Lawrence reveals his despair of industrial society and calls for the return of human nature.

### **3.3 Rebirth of Connie**

What Lawrence concerns is the emotion of people, rather than the social change. He believes that only by rebuilding the relationship between man and woman, and making them fulfill their sexual needs, can industrial society regain power [4]. As the heroine of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Connie seeks after the harmonious relationship with man, which shows the criticism of industrial civilization and the desire for harmonious relationship between man and woman.

Coming from an upper-class family and well-educated, Connie is healthy and full of youthful vigor, looking forward to love and a better life. She and her sister have been to Germany to study music. She is also an independent woman. After marrying Clifford and even after his injury, she becomes his caretaker. The development of industrialization not only makes Clifford bodily disabled, but also makes the deterioration of his mind. He always talks about the significance of so called “life”, and thinks that sexual love is unnecessary at all. Connie and Clifford have only some relationship on mind and there is no real bodily contact with each other. In lifeless Wragby, Connie lives a boring life like a nun. Just at that time, playwright Michaelis appears in her life. Although he is handsome in appearance, but his ugliness is in his mind. Their relationship which is just out of sexual needs without true love makes Connie feel more disappointed. In comparison with Clifford, there is no real difference between him and Michaelis. Connie becomes weaker and weaker, finding herself charmless and old at the age of just twenty-seven. Life has lost meaning for her, and all the lovely words such as love, happiness, family and husband have become meaningless. In the eyes of

Lawrence, the harmonious relationship is the basis of society. Modern industrial society has eroded human nature which predicts the decline of industrial society [4].

Afterwards, Connie leaves civilized industrial society and comes to the woods, where she encounters the gamekeeper Mellors. It is him that leads her to the real life. His instinctive passion and power give Connie the warmth that she has never felt from her husband. She gets fulfillment of her needs of love and sexuality that she has always looked forward to before. Mellors fulfills her needs both on body and on soul, and makes her become a true woman. The love between Connie and Mellors is the real combination of body and soul. Just as mentioned in the novel, in the woods which has not been polluted by industrialism and mechanism, they fulfill each other's needs and realize the harmonious relationship. In contrast to the lifeless body and hollow mind of Connie when she was limited in Wragby, she becomes a lovely flower: her skin becomes shining and she becomes more and more beautiful. Connie has recovered her vigor and she gets resurrection.

As the love between Connie and Mellors becomes deeper and deeper, Connie decides to abandon her noble title, prestigious social status and luxurious life. She chooses to live a simple life with Mellors. Her choice is a kind of rebellion against the society, and also a kind of satire on the civilized society. In order to seek her happiness, Connie bravely breaks through the barriers between different classes and gets rid of her unhappy marriage. At the end of the novel, Connie and Mellors are preparing for a new life which is freed of industrial civilization and money. They are expecting a new spring and the birth of their child. From the perspective of Lawrence, the harmonious relationship between Connie and Mellors is the hope of industrial civilized society which is in its decline.

From the process of the rebirth of Connie, it is shown that how she gradually gets her resurrection through love and sexuality, how her instinct and intuition regain power, and how she finds the meaning of life. Her instinct and true nature help her get rid of the binding of rationalism and make her a true woman, a natural woman.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From what has been discussed above – the conflicts between spirit and body, sense and sensibility, it is revealed how suffering human beings feel under the separation of body and soul, and it can be seen that Lawrence attaches great importance to human nature and power, and considers human instinct to be the basis of existence. He advocates a kind of “blood consciousness” which is based on body and blood [5]. Human beings should follow the instinct and recover the emotion. In the eyes of Lawrence, morality and rationalism has pushed human beings to a very critical point so that they should try to liberate themselves if they want to regain their power. Only by abandoning the concepts which oppress the development of human nature, by rebuilding the relationship between man and woman, by returning to the original blood consciousness, can human beings get salvation and struggle against the existing machinery industrialism. Lawrence severely criticizes the alienation by capitalist industrial civilization on human natural instinct and tries to renew interpersonal relationship by realizing human natural instinct so that human beings can get resurrection. Lawrence has spent his whole life to explore the ways of the return of human nature and has tried to recover human nature through harmonious relationship between man and woman and tried to look for the ways to the new world. He has always yearned for the brand-new, hopeful and lively world, which has realistic significance to today's literary researches.

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