

# The Social Thinking of D. H. Lawrence

*Raymond Williams*

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IT is easy to be aware of Lawrence's great effect on our thinking about social values, but it is difficult, for a number of reasons, to give any exact account of his actual contribution. It is not only that the public projection of him is very different from his actual work, and that this has led to important misunderstandings (that he believed that "sex solves everything"; that he was "a precursor of the Fascist emphasis on blood"). These, in the end, are matters of ignorance, and ignorance, though always formidable, can always be faced. The major difficulties are, I think, two in number. First, there is the fact that Lawrence's position, in the question of social values, is an amalgam of original and derived ideas. Yet, because of the intensity with which he took up and worked over what he had learned from others, this is, in practice, very difficult to sort out. Secondly, Lawrence's main original contribution is as a novelist, yet his general writing, in essays and letters, which for obvious reasons expresses most clearly his social ideas, cannot really be separated or judged apart from the novels. For example, his vital study of relationships, which is the basis of his original contribution to our social thinking, is naturally conducted in the novels and stories, and has constantly to be turned to for evidence, even though it is very difficult, for technical reasons, to use it just as evidence. Again, he has certain clear positives, which appear in a central position in his general arguments, yet which again depend on what he learned, and shows, in the writing of the novels. We can quote him, for example, on vitality, or on spontaneity, or on relationship, but to realize these, as the matters of substance which for him they were, we can only go, as readers, to this or that novel.

The thinker of whom one is most often reminded, as one goes through Lawrence's social writings, is Carlyle. There is more than a casual resemblance between the two men, in a number of ways, and anyone who has read Carlyle will see the continuity of such writing as this, in Lawrence:

The Pisgah-top of spiritual oneness looks down upon a hopeless squalor of industrialism, the huge cemetery of human hopes. This is our Promised Land. . . . The aeroplane descends and lays her eggshells of empty tin-cans on the top of Everest, in the Ultima Thule, and all over the North Pole; not to speak of tractors waddling across the inviolate Sahara and over the jags of Arabia Petraea, laying the same addled eggs of our civilization, tin cans, in every camp-nest. . . . It is the joy for ever, the agony for ever, and above all, the fight for ever. For all the universe is alive, and whirling in the same fight, the same joy and anguish. The vast demon of life has made himself habits which, except in the whitest heat of desire and rage, he will never break. And these habits are the laws of our scientific universe. But all the laws of physics, dynamics, kinetics, statics, all are but the settled habits of a vast living incomprehensibility, and they can all be broken, superseded, in a moment of great extremity.

The bitter sweep of this fleeing of industrialism; this vibrant repetitive hymn to the "vast incomprehensibility": these, across eighty years, belong uniquely to Lawrence and Carlyle,

and the resemblance, which is not only imitation, is remarkable. Lawrence takes over the major criticism of industrialism from the 19th-century tradition, on point after point, but in tone he remains more like Carlyle than any other writer in the tradition, then or since. There is in each the same mixture of argument, satire, name-calling, and sudden wild bitterness. The case is reasoned and yet breaks again and again into a blind passion of rejection, of which the tenour is not merely negative but annihilating—a threshing after power, which is to be known, ultimately, only in that force of mystery at the edge of which the human articulation breaks down. The impact of each man on the generation which succeeded him is remarkably similar in quality: an impact not so much of doctrines as of an inclusive compelling, general revelation.\*

The points which Lawrence took over from the 19th-century tradition can be briefly illustrated. There is, first, the general condemnation of industrialism as an attitude of mind:

The industrial problem arises from the base forcing of all human energy into a competition of mere acquisition.

Then, when narrowed to competitive acquisitiveness, human purpose is seen as debased to "sheer mechanical materialism":

When pure mechanization or materialism sets in, the soul is automatically pivoted, and the most diverse of creatures fall into a common mechanical unison. This we see in America. It is not a homogeneous, spontaneous coherence so much as a disintegrated amorphousness which lends itself to perfect mechanical unison.

*Mechanical, disintegrated, amorphous:* these are the continuing key words to describe the effect of the industrial priorities on individuals and on the whole society. It is this condition of mind, rather than industry as such, which is seen as having led to the ugliness of an industrial society, on which Lawrence is always emphatic:

The real tragedy of England, as I see it, is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely: the man-made England is so vile. . . . It was ugliness which betrayed the spirit of man, in the 19th century. The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness: meanness and formless and ugly surroundings, ugly ideals, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationship between workers and employers. The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread.

Or again:

The blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements wet and black. It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. 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. . . . Lawrence is here carrying on a known judgment, yet with his

\* I have read, since writing this paragraph, Dr. Leavis's censure (in *D. H. Lawrence, Novelist*) on a comparison of Lawrence with Carlyle. He traces the comparison to Desmond MacCarthy, and predicts that it will "recur." Well, here it is, but not, so far as I am concerned, from that source. As my comparison stands, I see no reason for withdrawal,

own quick perception and in his own distinctive accent. This kind of observation has to be made again and again, in every generation, not only because the atmosphere of industrialism tends to breed habituation, but also because (in ironic tribute to the strength of the tradition of protest) it is common to shift the ugliness and evil of industrialism out of the present, back into the "bad old days." The reminder that the thing is still here has repeatedly to be issued. Lawrence is little concerned, historically, with the origins of industrialism. For him, in this century, it is a received fact, and at the centre of it is the "forcing of all human energy into a competition of mere acquisition"—the common element in all the diverse interpretations of which the tradition is composed.

## Lawrence's origins

Lawrence's starting point is, then, familiar ground. The inherited ideas were there to clarify his first sense of crisis. When we think of Lawrence, we concentrate, understandably, on the adult life, in all its restless dedication. That he was the son of a miner adds, commonly, a certain pathetic or sentimental interest; we relate the adult life back to it, in a personal way. But the real importance of Lawrence's origins is not and cannot be a matter of retrospect from the adult life. It is, rather, that his first social responses were those, not of a man observing the processes of industrialism, but of one caught in them, at an exposed point, and destined, in the normal course, to be enlisted in their regiments. That he escaped enlistment is now so well known to us that it is difficult to realize the thing as it happened, in its living sequence. It is only by hard fighting, and, further, by the fortune of fighting on a favourable front, that anyone born into the industrial working class escapes his function of replacement. Lawrence could not be certain, at the time when his fundamental social responses were forming, that he could so escape. That he was exceptionally gifted exacerbated the problem, although later it was to help towards solving it. Yet the problem of adjustment to the disciplines of industrialism, not merely in day-to-day matters, but in the required basic adjustments of feeling, is common and general. In remembering the occasional "victories"—the escapes from the required adjustment—we forget the innumerable and persistent defeats. Lawrence did not forget, because he was not outside the process, meeting those who had escaped, and forming his estimate of the problem from this very limited evidence. For him, rather, the *whole* process had been lived, and he was the more conscious of the general failure, and thus of the general character of the system:

In my generation, the boys I went to school with, colliers now, have all been beaten down, what with the din-din-dinning of Board Schools, books, cinemas, clergymen, the whole national and human consciousness hammering on the fact of material prosperity above all things.

Lawrence could not have written this, with such a phrase as "all been beaten down," if the pressures had not been so intensely and personally felt. In the early stages of the imposition of the industrial system, an observer could see adult men and women, grown to another way of life, being "beaten down" into the new functions and the new feelings. But once industrialism was established, an *observer* could hardly see this. Tension would be apparent to him only in those who had escaped, or half-escaped. The rest, "the masses," would normally appear to him fully formed—the "beating down" had happened, and he had not seen it. It thus became possible for men in such a position to believe, and with a show of reason to argue, that the residual majority, the "masses," had, essentially, got the way of life they wanted, or, even, the way of life they deserved—the way "best fitted" for

them. Only an occasional generous spirit could construct, from his own experience, the vision of an alternative possibility; even this, because it had to be vision, was always in danger of simplification or sentimentality. The outstanding value of Lawrence's development is that he was in a position to know the living process as a matter of common rather than of special experience. He had, further, the personal power of understanding and expressing this. While the thing was being lived, however, and whilst the pressures were not theoretic but actual, the inherited criticism of the industrial system was obviously of the greatest importance to him. It served to clarify and to generalize what had otherwise been a confused and personal issue. It is not too much to say that he built his whole intellectual life on the foundation of this tradition.

A man can live only one life, and the greater part of Lawrence's strength was taken up by an effort which in terms of ideas achieved perhaps less than had already been reached by different paths. Lawrence was so involved with the business of getting free of the industrial system that he never came seriously to the problem of changing it, although he knew that since the problem was common an individual solution was only a cry in the wind. It would be absurd to blame him on these grounds. It is not so much that he was an artist, and thus supposedly condemned, by romantic theory, to individual solutions. In fact, as we know, Lawrence spent a good deal of time trying to generalize about the necessary common change; he was deeply committed, all his life, to the idea of re-forming society. But his main energy went, and had to go, to the business of personal liberation from the system. Because he understood the issue in its actual depth, he knew that this liberation was not merely a matter of escaping a routine industrial job, or of getting an education, or of moving into the middle class. These things, on Lawrence's terms, were more of an evasion than what he actually came to do. Mitigation of the physical discomforts, of the actual injustices, or of the sense of lost opportunity, was no kind of liberation from the "base forcing of all human energy into a competition of mere acquisition." His business was the recovery of other purposes, to which the human energy might be directed. What he lived was the break-out, not theoretically, nor in any Utopian construction, but as it was possible to him, in immediate terms, in opposition alike to the "base forcing" and to his own weakness. What he achieved, in his life, was an antithesis to the powerful industrial thesis which had been proposed for him. But this, in certain of its aspects, was never more than a mere rejection, a habit of evasion: the industrial system was so strong, and he had been so fiercely exposed to it, that at times there was little that he or any man could do but run. This aspect, however, is comparatively superficial. The weakness of the exclusively biographical treatment of Lawrence, with its emphasis on the restless wanderings and the approach to any way of life but his own, lies in the fact that these things were only contingencies, whereas the dedication, and the value, were in the "endless venture into consciousness," which was his work as man and writer.

## Community frustrated

Lawrence is often dramatized as the familiar romantic figure who "rejects the claims of society." In fact, he knew too much about society, and knew it too directly, to be deceived for long by anything so foolish. He saw this version of individualism as a veneer on the consequences of industrialism.

We have frustrated that instinct of community which would make us unite in pride and dignity in the bigger gesture of the citizen, not the cottager. The "instinct of community" was vital in his thinking:

deeper and stronger, he argued, than even the sexual instinct. He attacked the industrial society of England, not because it offered community to the individual, but because it frustrated it. In this, again, he is wholly in line with the tradition. If in his own life he "rejected the claims of society," it was not because he did not understand the importance of community, but because, in industrial England, he could find none. Almost certainly, he underestimated the degree of community that might have been available to him: the compulsion to get away was so fierce, and he was personally very weak and exposed. But he was rejecting, not the claims of society, but the claims of industrial society. He was not a vagrant, to live by dodging; but an exile, committed to a different social principle. The vagrant wants the system to stay as it is, so long as he can go on dodging it while still being maintained by it. The exile, on the contrary, wants to see the system changed, so that he can come home. This latter is, in the end, Lawrence's position.

Lawrence started, then, from the criticism of industrial society which made sense of his own social experience, and which gave title to his refusal to be "basely forced." But alongside this ratifying principle of denial he had the rich experience of childhood in a working-class family, in which most of his positives lay. What such a childhood gave was certainly not tranquillity or security; it did not even, in the ordinary sense, give happiness. But it gave what to Lawrence was more important than these things: the sense of close quick relationship, which came to matter more than anything else. This was the positive result of the life of the family in a small house, where there were no such devices of separation of children and parents as the sending-away to school, or the handing-over to servants, or the relegation to nursery

or playroom. Comment on this life (usually by those who have not experienced it) tends to emphasize the noisier factors: the fact that rows are always in the open; that there is no privacy in crisis; that want breaks through the small margin of material security and leads to mutual blame and anger. It is not that Lawrence, like any child, did not suffer from these things. It is rather that, in such a life, the suffering and the giving of comfort, the common want and the common remedy, the open row and the open making-up, are all part of a continuous life which, in good and bad, makes for a whole attachment. Lawrence learned from this experience that sense of the continuous flow and recoil of sympathy which was always, in his writing, the essential process of living. His idea of close spontaneous living rests on this foundation, and he had no temptation to idealize it into the pursuit of happiness: things were too close to him for anything so abstract. Further, there is an important sense in which the working-class family is an evident and mutual economic unit, within which both rights and responsibilities are immediately contained. The material processes of satisfying human needs are not separated from personal relationships; and Lawrence knew from this, not only that the processes must be accepted (he was firm on this through all his subsequent life, to the surprise of friends for whom these things had normally been the function of servants), but also that a common life has to be made on the basis of a correspondence between work relationships and personal relationships: something, again, which was only available, if at all, as an abstraction, to those whose first model of society, in the family, had been hierarchical, separative and inclusive of the element of paid substitute labour—Carlyle's "cash-nexus." The intellectual critiques of industrialism as a

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system were therefore reinforced and prepared for by all he knew of primary relationships. It is no accident that the early chapters of *Sons and Lovers* are at once a marvellous recreation of this close, active, contained family life, and also in general terms an indictment of the pressures of industrialism. Almost all that he learned in this way was by contrasts, and this element of contrast was reinforced by the accident that he lived on a kind of frontier, within sight both of industrial and of agricultural England. In the family and out of it, in the Breach and at Haggis Farm, he learned on his own senses the crisis of industrial England. When the family was broken by the death of his mother, and when the small world of the family had to be replaced by the world of wages and hiring, it was like a personal death, and from then on he was an exile, in spirit and later in fact.

The bridge across which he escaped was, in the widest sense, intellectual. He could read his way out in spirit, and he could write his way out in fact. It has recently been most valuably emphasized, by F. R. Leavis, that the provincial culture which was available to him was very much more rich and exciting than the usual accounts infer. The chapel, the literary society attached to it, the group of adolescents with whom he could read and talk: these were not the drab, earnest institutions of the observers' clichés, but active, serious, and, above all, wholehearted in energy. What they lacked in variety and in contact with different ways of living was to a large extent balanced by just that earnestness which is so much larger and finer a thing than the fear of it which has converted the word into a gesture of derision. Lawrence's formal education, it must be remembered, was also by no means negligible.

## Creative reality

This then, in summary, is the background of Lawrence's inherited ideas and social experience. It remains to examine his consequent thinking about community, at the centre of his discussion of social values. This depends on what was his major "venture into consciousness": the attempt to realize that range of living, human energy which the existing system had narrowed and crippled. He put one of his basic beliefs in this way:

You can have life two ways. Either everything is created from the mind, downwards; or else everything proceeds from the creative quick, outwards into exfoliation and blossom. . . . The actual living quick itself is alone the creative reality.

Lawrence's exploration was into this "creative reality," not as an idea, but in its actual processes:

The quick of self is *there*. You needn't try to get behind it. As leave try to get behind the sun.

This "quick of self," in any living being, is the basis of individuality:

A man's self is a law unto itself, not unto *himself*, mind you. . . . The living self has one purpose only: to come into its own fullness of being. . . . But this coming into full, spontaneous being is the most difficult thing of all. . . . The only thing man has to trust to in coming to himself is his desire and his impulse. But both desire and impulse tend to fall into mechanical automatism: to fall from spontaneous reality into dead or material reality. . . . All education must tend against this fall; and all our efforts in all our life must be to preserve the soul free and spontaneous. . . . the life-activity must never be degraded into a fixed activity. There can be no ideal goal for human life. . . . There is no pulling open the buds to see what the blossom will be. Leaves must unroll, buds swell and open, and *then* the blossom. And even after that, when the flower dies and the leaves fall, *still* we shall not know. . . . We know the flower of today, but the flower of tomorrow is all beyond us.

Lawrence wrote nothing more important than this, although he wrote it differently, elsewhere, using different terms and methods. The danger is that we recognize this too quickly as "Laurentian" ("that gorgeous befeathered snail of an *ego*

and a personality" which Lawrence and his writing could be at their worst), and accept it or pass it by without real attention. For it is quite easy to grasp as an abstraction, but very difficult in any more substantial way. In all Lawrence's writing of this kind one is reminded of Coleridge, whose terms were essentially so different, and yet whose emphasis was so very much the same: an emphasis, felt towards in metaphor, on the preservation of the "spontaneous life-activity" against those rigidities of category and abstraction, of which the industrial system was so powerful a particular embodiment. This sense of life is not obscurantism, as it is sometimes represented to be. It is a particular wisdom, a particular kind of reverence, which at once denies, not only the "base forcing of all human energy into a competition of mere acquisition," but also the dominative redirection of this energy into new fixed categories. I believe that it sets a standard, in our attitudes to ourselves and to other human beings, which can in experience be practically known and recognized, and by which all social proposals must submit themselves to be judged. It can be seen, as a positive, in thinkers as diverse as Burke and Cobbett, as Morris and Lawrence. It is unlikely to reach an agreed end in our thinking, but it is difficult to know where else to begin. We have only the melancholy evidence of powerful and clashing movements that begin elsewhere. When this is so, every renewed affirmation counts.

For Lawrence, the affirmation led on to an interesting declaration of faith in democracy, but this was something rather different from the democracy of, say, a Utilitarian:

So, we know the first great purpose of Democracy: that each man shall be spontaneously himself—each man himself, each woman herself, without any question of equality or inequality entering in at all; and that no man shall try to determine the being of any other man, or of any other woman.

At first sight, this looks like, not democracy, but a kind of romantic anarchism. Yet it is more than this, essentially, even though it remains very much a first term. Our question to those who would reject it must rest on the phrase "no man shall try to determine the being of any other man." We must ask, and require the answer, of anyone with a social philosophy, whether this principle is accepted or denied. Some of the most generous social movements have come to fail because, at heart, they have denied this. And it is much the same, in effect, whether such determination of human beings is given title by the abstractions of production or service, of the glory of the race or good citizenship. For "to try to determine the being of any other man" is indeed, as Lawrence emphasized, an arrogant and base forcing.

## The "isms" and Man

To Lawrence, the weakness of modern social movements was that they all seemed to depend on the assumption of a "fixed activity" for man, the "life activity" forced into fixed ideals. He found this

horribly true of modern democracy—socialism, conservatism, bolshevism, liberalism, republicanism, communism: all alike. The one principle that governs all the *isms* is the same: the principle of the idealized unit, the possessor of property. Man has his highest fulfilment as a possessor of property: so they all say, really.

And from this he concludes:

All discussion and idealizing of the possession of property, whether individual or group or State possession, amounts now to no more than a fatal betrayal of the spontaneous self. . . . Property is only there to be used, not to be possessed. . . . possession is a kind of illness of the spirit. . . . When men are no longer obsessed with the desire to possess property, or with the parallel desire to prevent another man's possessing it, then, and only then, shall we be glad to turn it over to the State. Our way of State-ownership is merely a farcical exchange of words, not of ways.

In this, Lawrence is very close to the socialism of a man like Morris, and there can be little doubt that he and Morris would have felt alike about much that has subsequently passed for socialism.

## ***The Equality of Man***

Lawrence's attitude to the question of equality springs from the same sources in feeling. He writes:

Society means people living together. People *must* live together. And to live together, they must have some Standard, some *Material* Standard. This is where the Average comes in. And this is where Socialism and Modern Democracy come in. For Democracy and Socialism rest upon the Equality of Man, which is the Average. And this is sound enough, so long as the Average represents the real basic material needs of mankind: basic material needs: we insist and insist again. For Society, or Democracy, or any Political State or Community exists not for the sake of the individual, nor should ever exist for the sake of the individual, but simply to establish the Average, in order to make living together possible: that is, to make proper facilities for every man's clothing, feeding, housing himself, working, sleeping, mating, playing, according to his necessity as a common unit, an average. Everything beyond that common necessity depends on himself alone.

This idea of equality is "sound enough." Yet when it is not a question of material needs but of whole human beings, we cannot say that all men are equal. We cannot say  $A=B$ . Nor can we say that men are unequal. We may not declare that  $A = B + C$ . . . . One man is neither equal nor unequal to another man. When I stand in the presence of another man, and I am my own pure self, am I aware of the presence of an equal, or of an inferior, or of a superior? I am not. When I stand with another man, who is himself, and when I am truly myself, then I am only aware of a Presence, and of the strange reality of Otherness. There is me, and there is *another being*. . . . There is no comparing or estimating. There is only this strange recognition of *present otherness*. I may be glad, angry, or sad, because of the presence of the other. But still no comparison enters in. Comparison enters only when one of us departs from his own integral being, and enters the material mechanical world. Then equality and inequality starts at once.

This seems to me to be the best thing that has been written about equality in our period. It gives no title to any defence of material inequality, which in fact is what is usually defended. But it removes from the idea of equality that element of mechanical abstraction which has often been felt in it. The emphasis on relationship, on the recognition and acceptance of "present otherness," could perhaps only have come from a man who had made Lawrence's particular "venture into consciousness." We should remember the emphasis when Lawrence, under the tensions of his exile, falls at times into an attitude like that of the later Carlyle, with an emphasis on the recognition of "superior" beings and of the need to bow down and submit to them. This "following after power," in Carlyle's phrase, is always a failure of the kind of relationship which Lawrence has here described: the impatient frustrated relapse into the attempt to "determine another man's being." Lawrence can show us, more clearly than anyone, where in this he himself went wrong.

I have referred to the tensions of exile, and this aspect of Lawrence's work should receive the final stress. In his basic attitudes he is so much within the tradition we have been following, has indeed so much in common with a socialist like Morris, that it is at first difficult to understand why his influence should have appeared to lead in other directions. One reason, as has been mentioned, is that he has been vulgarized into a romantic rebel, a type of the "free individual." There is, of course, just enough in his life and work to make this vulgarization plausible. Yet it cannot really be sustained. There is something quite central to Lawrence in his famous declaration:

Thank God I am not free, any more than a rooted tree is free.

And again:

Men are free when they belong to a living, organic, believing community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose.

But this in practice was the cry of an exile: of a man who wanted to commit himself, yet who rejected the terms of the available commitments. Lawrence's rejection had to be so intense, if he was to get clear at all, that he was led into a weakness, which found its rationalization. He kept wanting to see a change in society, but he could conclude:

Every attempt at preordaining a new material world only adds another last straw to the load that already has broken so many backs. If we are to keep our backs unbroken, we must deposit all property on the ground, and learn to walk without it. We must stand aside. And when many men stand aside, they stand in a new world; a new world of man has come to pass.

This is the end of the rainbow: the sequel to that Ranim which had been one more in the series of attempts to evade the issues: an idealized substitute community, whether Pantisocracy, New Harmony, or the Guild of St. George. Lawrence's point is that the change must come first in feeling, but almost everything to which he had borne witness might have shown how much "in the head" this conclusion was. He knew all about the processes of "beating down." He knew, none better, how the consciousness and the environment were linked, and what it cost even an exceptional man to make his ragged breathless escape. There is something false, in the end, in the way he tries to separate the material issues and the issues in feeling, for he had had the opportunity of knowing, and indeed had learned, how closely intermeshed these issues were. It is not a question of the old debate on which conditions are primary. It is that in actuality the pressures, and the responses creating new pressures, form into a whole process, which

is *there*. You needn't try to get behind it. As leave try to get behind the sun.

## ***Freedom in exile***

Lawrence came to rationalize and to generalize his own necessary exile, and to give it the appearance of freedom. His separation of the material issues from the issues in consciousness was an analogy of his own temporary condition. There is something, in the strict sense, suburban about this. The attempt to separate material needs and the ways in which they are to be met, from human purpose and the development of being and relationship, is the suburban separation of "work" and "life" which has been the most common response of all to the difficulties of industrialism. It is not that the issues in consciousness ought to be set aside while the material ends are pursued. It is that because the process is whole, so must change be whole: whole in conception, common in effort. The "living, organic, believing community" will not be created by standing aside, although the effort towards it in consciousness is at least as important as the material effort. The tragedy of Lawrence, the working-class boy, is that he did not live to come home. It is a tragedy, moreover, common enough in its incidence to exempt him from the impertinences of personal blame.

The venture into consciousness remains, as a sufficient life's work. Towards the end, when he had revisited the mining country where the pressures of industrialism were most explicit and most evident, he shaped, as a creative response, the sense of immediate relationship which informs *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and which he had earlier explored in *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and *St. Mawr*. This is only the climax of his exploration into those elements of human energy which were denied by the "base forcing," and which might yet overthrow it. It is profoundly important to realize that Lawrence's exploration of sexual experience is made,

always, in this context. To isolate this exploration, as it was tempting for some of his readers to do, is not only to misunderstand Lawrence but to expose him to the scandal from which, in his lifetime, he scandalously suffered. "This which we are must cease to be, that we may come to pass in another being": this, throughout, is the emphasis. And, just as the recovery of the human spirit from the base forcing of industrialism must lie in recovery of "the creative reality, the actual living quick itself," so does this recovery depend on the ways in which this reality can be most immediately apprehended: "the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and meeting and mingling of these two." It is not that sexual experience is "the answer" to industrialism, or to its ways of thinking and feeling. On the contrary, Lawrence argues, the poisons of the "base forcing" have extended themselves into this. His clearest general exposition of this comes in the essay on Galsworthy, where he derides the proposition of "Pa-assion," and its related promiscuity, as alternatives to the emphasis on money or property which follows from men being "only materially and socially conscious." The idea of sex as a reserve area of feeling, or as a means of Byronic revolt from the conventions of money and property (a Forsyte turning into an anti-Forsyte), is wholly

repugnant to Lawrence. People who act in this way are "like all the rest of the modern middle-class rebels, not in rebellion at all; they are merely social beings behaving in an anti-social manner." The real meaning of sex, Lawrence argues, is that it "involves the whole of a human being." The alternative to the "base forcing" into the competition for money and property is not sexual adventure, nor the available sexual emphasis, but again a return to the "quick of self," from which whole relationships, including whole sexual relationships, may grow. The final emphasis, which all Lawrence's convincing explorations into the "quick of self" both illumine and realize, is his criticism of industrial civilization:

If only our civilization had taught us . . . how to keep the fire of sex clear and alive, flickering or glowing or blazing in all its varying degrees of strength and communication, we might, all of us, have lived all our lives in love, which means we should be kindled and full of zest in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of things.

Or again, as an adequate summary of the whole "venture into consciousness":

Our civilization . . . has almost destroyed the natural flow of common sympathy between men and men, and men and women. And it is this that I want to restore into life.