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HUMAN NATURE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S “ESSAYS ON LOVE”

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Abstract: D.H. Lawrence’s “Essays on Love” (1930) can be seen as a philosophical and cultural defense of his novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. In this work, Lawrence critiques society’s conventional view of the relationship between body and soul, while also seeking to redefine the role of love and sexuality in human existence. He upholds natural human instincts as a counterpoint to the emotional detachment of modern technological civilization, and he challenges artificial moral codes that, in his view, contribute to the decline of human nature.

Introduction. D.H. Lawrence stands out as one of the most debated yet insightful voices in twentieth-century English literature. His 1928 novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and the companion essay *A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1930) are not only significant literary works but also reflections of a deeper philosophical and ethical conflict. In these texts, Lawrence reveals how human instincts and emotional needs are suppressed in an age dominated by technocratic values. The purpose of the essay is to deliver a sharp critique of society’s hypocrisy and its distorted notions of love. Lawrence argues for a vision of life rooted in the balance between body and spirit. Through this work, he takes a stand against censorship and the weight of social conventions.

In the essay *Love*, Lawrence portrays the relationship between a man and a woman as a reciprocal “desire”. For him, love unites two opposites in a transformative experience a burning together, a dissolution of individual feelings, yet also an inevitable sense of separation. He attributes the failure of genuine union between the sexes to the incompleteness at the core of such relationships. Lawrence further insists that there exists a fundamental metaphysical difference between man and woman: their roles in life, their thoughts and emotions, their sources of pleasure, and their desires all diverge, just as their anatomy does.

Method. This article employs a qualitative, literary-analytical approach. Its aim is to examine Lawrence’s treatment of society, human nature, morality, and the concept of love in *A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover* with attention to both content and ideas. Several methods were applied:

1. Thematic and ideological analysis – Core themes such as love, body-soul harmony, sexuality, and the dual morality of society were identified and explored in depth.
2. Comparative method – Lawrence’s views were set against those of contemporary thinkers and writers, particularly Freud and Nietzsche, to highlight his distinctive position.
3. Contextual approach – The essay was situated within its historical and cultural background, reflecting the social and moral climate of early twentieth-century England.
4. Discourse analysis – The author’s aims and philosophical ideas were traced through his choice of language, lexical patterns, and artistic-philosophical expression.

Building on these methods, Lawrence’s literary-philosophical stance can be substantiated and his influence on modern ethical and social thought assessed. For Lawrence, sexual intimacy represents not

only a bodily instinct but also a profound expression of spiritual and moral unity. As he emphasizes: “*We have learned to hate our bodies. We have only forgotten to think and feel*” (Lawrence, 1930, p. 45). In addressing the effects of society and technology on the individual, Lawrence argues that industrial civilization mechanizes human life and, in doing so, distorts human nature. For this reason, he condemns the repression of emotional and sexual experience, declaring: “*When society begins to see sexuality as a disease, man becomes alienated from himself*” (Lawrence, 1930, p. 52).

Although these reflections echo Freud’s theory of libido, Lawrence’s emphasis lies elsewhere: for him, the essential task is to purify and sanctify sexuality, recognizing it not as a mere instinct but as an inseparable dimension of love and human wholeness. When considered at the crossroads of literature and morality, the enduring resonance of the essay arises from Lawrence’s challenge to the moral boundaries imposed on artistic creation. He rejects the subordination of literature to didactic purposes, asserting: “*Literature is not to teach moral lessons, but to show life itself*” (Lawrence, 1930, p. 60). This statement encapsulates one of the work’s central ideological commitments: the defense of artistic freedom and the autonomy of literature.

From a philosophical standpoint, the essay revolves around the triad of body, soul, and harmony. At its core lies the conviction that true human fulfillment depends on the unity of body and spirit. Lawrence resists Puritan traditions that demonize physical desire and instead insists that harmony between body and soul constitutes the foundation of human perfection. As he writes: “*True love is the vibration of the soul and the body together*” (Lawrence, 1930, p. 71). His approach moves beyond romanticism, which tends to elevate either sexuality or spiritual intimacy, by emphasizing their indivisible unity.

Lawrence’s reflections on the relationship between man and woman parallel the ancient Chinese concept of yin and yang. Rooted in Taoist philosophy, this duality envisions the universe as guided by the force of Tao, which divides into two opposing yet complementary principles. Yang symbolizes the masculine strength, heat, dominance, light, the sun while yin embodies the feminine softness, tenderness, receptivity, darkness, the moon. In this view, neither pole is superior; each depends upon the other for balance and survival. As Lao Tzu famously remarked, the ideal is to “be like water” to yield rather than dominate, for dominance alone leads to downfall.

In a similar spirit Lawrence maintains that while men and women are polar opposites, they are also interdependent. Masculinity does not imply superiority over femininity; the differences between the sexes express complementarity, not hierarchy. In his eyes, true equality does not mean sameness (Adelman, 1991, p. 92). Yet, modern interpretations of gender equality often reduce distinctions to mere anatomical differences, attributing all intellectual, emotional, and behavioral traits to cultural and historical conditioning. Such views, which reflect both feminist critiques of male dominance and social constructs of equality, would not have satisfied Lawrence. For him, the essence of male and female lies in their metaphysical differences, which cannot be erased without undermining the integrity of human love and life itself.

It is misleading to argue that male and female traits are entirely conditional. Within dominant American cultural thought, it is often assumed that a man cannot reach full success without the support of a woman. If male and female qualities were entirely interchangeable across all cultural settings, it would be possible to deny the existence of inherent distinctions between the sexes. In practice, however, the evidence for conditional traits is tied to cultural patterns that vary by society. In this regard, the concept of “gender equality” has been treated as dogma in some academic circles, although it has become one of the most discussed issues of the last century.

As already noted, Lawrence consistently stresses that men and women differ at a metaphysical level. In his essay *Thomas Hardy Research*, he illustrates this contrast, suggesting that men and women perceive reality in fundamentally different ways: “*Men accept that God is one and say that he belongs to the male sex. Men perceive that there is a variety of varieties in every concept. But women, perceiving things and concepts, vaguely declare that each concept is unique, the concept of uniqueness constitutes reality for them*” (Holdernes, 1982, p. 31). For Lawrence, men are drawn toward multiplicity, while women gravitate toward unity.

Philosophical traditions that shaped Lawrence’s thought often trace back to ancient Greece, especially to Pythagoras and his followers. Early theories associated singularity with masculinity and plurality with femininity. The pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles offered a framework especially relevant to Lawrence: he proposed that two forces Love and Strife govern change in the universe. Love is the principle of attraction and unity, while Strife divides and separates. Empedocles personified Love as Aphrodite and associated Strife with its opposites, often linking it to masculine identity. In this sense, his cosmology parallels Lawrence’s understanding of sexual duality.

According to Lawrence, women strive to unify and reconcile. Their role is expressed in an emotional drive to heal divisions and remove barriers, a tendency that manifests most strongly within the family, where women attempt to preserve wholeness. Men, by contrast, impose rules and structures that often obstruct this unity. Lawrence interprets war as a particularly male phenomenon, while women, throughout history, have opposed violence and chaos, advocating instead for peace and reconciliation (Patmore, 1970, p. 41).

Lawrence further observes that men of his time were haunted by feelings of isolation, yearning to be “alone,” though, paradoxically, their deeper longing was still directed toward women. He connects this psychological difference to religion: polytheism, with its acknowledgment of diversity and plurality, he links to masculine vision, whereas monotheism, with its emphasis on unity and equality before God, he identifies as feminine. Christianity in particular, while calling for peace and unity, is not accepted by Lawrence as aligned with women in essence.

Ultimately, Lawrence’s reflections point to a profound metaphysical divide: men and women inhabit different spiritual worlds and interpret the same reality through contrasting lenses. These divergent perspectives, however, are not destructive but complementary, forming the basis for balance in human existence. Lawrence’s vision resonates with the philosophy of Heraclitus, who argued that opposites necessarily converge and that harmony emerges from diversity and conflict. As Heraclitus illustrates, the strings of a lyre pull in opposite directions, yet it is precisely this tension that produces beautiful music (Nixon, 1986, p. 76).

As is evident, D.H. Lawrence considers woman to be the vital, life-sustaining force in a man’s existence. She represents the source of his energy and spirit. At times, Lawrence even portrays the relationship between man and woman as a potential cause of despair. In his view, when a man pursues creative work beyond the boundaries of family life, this endeavor deepens his attachment to life. While the bond with a woman is significant, it cannot by itself guarantee a man’s complete happiness. For Lawrence, men must also possess greater ambitions goals that inspire enthusiasm and a readiness for struggle.

For women, however, the sphere of home and family provides the highest fulfillment. Although a woman may be interested in a career, Lawrence believes her natural role lies in nurturing children and

maintaining the household. This traditional image of womanhood is central to his thought. By contrast, modern feminist voices have argued that women are capable of pursuing professions historically dominated by men, thereby expanding female influence in society (Potter, 1999, p. 23).

Lawrence depicts man as the primary discoverer and inventor of life. Men, in his eyes, stand apart solitary figures who advance by trusting in their inner world and spirit. Woman, conversely, belongs to the realm of twilight and night; evening and darkness are her domains. Yet despite these contrasts, the two sexes share a unifying core in the deepest regions of the heart. In Lawrence’s symbolic imagination, day belongs to man and night belongs to woman. This division resembles an elemental distribution of labor and is framed in mythological imagery, where the sun embodies the masculine and the moon the feminine.

Conclusion. Essay on Love is not simply a defense of a controversial novel but also a summons for humanity to return to its authentic self and to nature. In this work, Lawrence displays literary bravery, philosophical insight, and a firm ethical stance. He underscores the significance of the writer’s struggle to preserve genuine love and honesty against the prohibitions and stereotypes imposed by society. As such, the essay continues to serve as a lasting response to enduring questions of human identity, love, and freedom in the history of literature.

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