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D. H. LAWRENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND THE NOVEL: A NAGGING QUESTION

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Sometime during the post-war years, when Hemingway's ghost still haunted Europe, I encountered in a continental bar an itinerant, young American with literary aspirations.[1] As the conversation turned to Joseph Conrad he opined, "Joseph Conrad, now. He was a descriptive writer. But you don't swallow him as thinker do you?". While enjoying the absurdity of this confident separation of novelist and thinker, I was conscious, then as now, that it is hard to define positively the nature of the novel as a mode of thought. Salman Rushdie's Saleem Sinai, in *Midnight's Children* (1981), plays more ambivalently on the same image: "To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world".[2] Rushdie, that is to say, in denying the neat separation accepts the possible gullibility of readers, as indeed of all human relations. At whatever risk, we all have to absorb alien worlds. There may be various ways of combining novel and philosophy, or of assimilating a world through fiction, and Lawrence is illuminating because his more obvious weakness in this regard has so often obscured his profounder, but more implicit, strength.

The question is illuminated at a general level by the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, whose short stories often reflect on great metaphysical themes. In a piece called 'A New Refutation of Time' (1944–46), Borges, in accordance with his self-contradictory title, denies the reality of time in a cod philosophical argument whose inconsequentiality as philosophy would be immediately apparent to a first year student of the subject.[3] What Borges actually does, however, is to use philosophical ideas to give a poetic meditation on time; a metaphysical poem in prose in which the reader experiences the vertigo of temporal being. If Borges had

constructed a truly philosophical case that is all we would have: a philosophical argument. Instead, by invoking philosophy in this oblique or parodic way, he inserts into its space a different mode of reflection that does not translate back into philosophical thought. Borges's metaphysical fables are object lessons in the difference between philosophical thought and literary imagination. Borges, however, confines himself to brief fables, and speaks with some disdain, at least in his narrative persona, of extended and realist fiction as if it were a naïve imitation of the appearances of the world. But of course the creation of world in fiction can never be a simple imitation of a given world even if the author were naïve enough to think so. On the contrary, great fiction in the realist tradition will often be such because of its specific creation of world; and not least when this remains subtly implicit so that the reader inhabits it with almost the same naturalised unconsciousness as typifies our existence in what we think of as the real one.

Lawrence's own comment on philosophy and the novel is well-known:

> Plato's Dialogues, too, are queer little novels.
>
> It seems to me it was the greatest pity in the world, when philosophy and fiction got split. They used to be one, right from the days of myth. Then they went and parted, like a nagging married couple, with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and that beastly Kant. So the novel went sloppy, and philosophy went abstract-dry. The two should come together again, in the novel. And we get modern kind of gospels, and modern myths, and a new way of understanding. (*STH* 154)

Lawrence's image of the "nagging married couple" doubtless had a complex charge for him since while his own marriage was central to both his life and his writing it was far from idyllic: it was as tempestuous as it was committed. So too, when describing the marriage of Tom Brangwen's parents in *The Rainbow* (1915), the wife's nagging is described in a curiously positive way: "She railed

long and loud about her husband, but always with a balanced, easy-flying voice and a quaint manner of speech that warmed his belly with pride and male triumph whilst he scowled with mortification at the things she said" (*R* 14–5). The wife's nagging and the husband's response are an intuitive, unreflecting way of maintaining the integrity of individual difference within a deep bond: "They were two very separate beings, vitally connected, knowing nothing of each other, yet living in their separate ways from one root". Lawrence's image is not only vividly concrete but analytically precise. Marriage, in its traditional understanding as endorsed by him, is a necessary relationship founded upon difference. Difference is both the centrifugal threat and the gravitational attraction. Marriage is also a formalised relationship, but our culture has so institutionalised philosophy and literature as to lose their mutuality. They are taught as separate subjects, even though the great achievements in either domain tend constantly to encompass the other. Yet if Lawrence's own art of "true relatedness" (*STH* 174) applies to the relations of poetry and ideas, I believe, against the grain of his image, that it is precisely in their mutual nagging that fiction and philosophy find the vital dynamic of their difference.

I should say first that, despite the familiarity of the word, it is hard to say, if challenged, quite what we mean by an idea, or how it exists in the psychic economy of individuals and communities. Lawrence, like other modern writers, saw ideas as a sphere of illusion. The spirit of Cervantes, after all, is alive and well in the modern novel. Many people, especially intellectuals, tend to assume that a given set of ideas produces a certain type of person, or entails a certain kind of behaviour. For such a view, ideas are the secret agents in life and ideological analysis gives the hidden truth of the person. Others, by contrast, believe ideas are radically modified by the personalities who inhabit them, so that one may encounter saintly or hateful Christians, and saintly or hateful Marxists, all of them living by their beliefs. Lawrence seemed to agree with Ezra Pound that "An 'idea' has little value apart from

the modality of the mind which receives it".[4] This is why Lawrence is not most importantly philosophical as a "novelist of ideas" if this means two-dimensional characters acting as vehicles for the exposition of general ideas, although his novels are full of passionate arguments not just on the part of the characters but of the author himself. What distinguishes Lawrence is that his characters are not usually two-dimensional vehicles. Indeed, his great capacity as a novelist is to illuminate the specific temperament and life-experience from which a particular set of ideas or attitudes emerges. Ideas for him may range from the cutting edge of passion to the dead leaves which fall from the tree of life and he described *Women in Love* (1920), his most argumentative novel, as "*the passionate struggle into conscious being*" (*WL* 486, original emphasis).

The early exchange between Birkin and Gerald on the merits of acting spontaneously on one's impulses inaugurates the dramatic, and psychologically revelatory, nature of argument in the book.

> "And I," said Gerald grimly, "shouldn't like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously, as you call it. – We should have everybody cutting everybody's throat in five minutes."
>
> "That means *you* would like to be cutting everybody's throat," said Birkin. (*WL*, 33)

Gerald asserts a universal principle of social decorum without recognising that it reflects his self-repression. Hence, although the principle has some general truth value, it is rendered void by his unawareness of its personal relativity.

Some readers have felt, like Gerald, that they are being nagged, if not bullied, and that characters such as Gerald, Gudrun and Hermione are effectively fated. Indeed, these characters are trapped in Lawrence's vision although I have always thought this to be part of his realism about the human condition. He understands how thought is embodied and embedded in a form of life, and how

difficult it is to achieve the kind of insight necessary to change. An instance of this can be seen in the bitter exchange between Hermione Roddice and Rupert Birkin on the question of self-consciousness. Critics often say that Hermione's views are a parody of Birkin's, and Lawrence's, but Lawrence himself is often close to self-parody and I believe that such a difference is not really very evident in the actual language Hermione uses. The narrative rather stresses her bodily comportment and strange manner of speech for it is not so much that she is *wrong*, at the level of ideas, as that *she* is wrong at some more fundamental level of her being.

Lawrence's art of dramatising the peculiar life and status of ideas has been illuminated with the help of the Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, although he should be invoked with care.[5] The early twentieth century saw a great vogue for Russian literature, including the work of Dostoevsky who tended to be read as a religious thinker expounding his thought in fiction. That is to say his novels were read doctrinally, as unusually profound versions of the novel of ideas. Almost contemporaneously with Lawrence, however, Bakhtin undertook a Ph.D. thesis, which eventually became the book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963) in which he argued that, although Dostoevsky was writing with doctrinal intent, his imaginative power was such that his beliefs were submitted to impersonal, testing judgement by the dramatic truth of the novel. For Bakhtin, the essential virtue of the novel form was to relativise in this way even those beliefs that an author may intend dogmatically. *Women in Love* is highly Dostoevskyean, with its intellectually restless, self-consciously modern characters testing each other out in extreme, ultimately fatal, ways. It is also Bakhtinian as Birkin partakes of the novel's dramatic exploration and escapes being a mere authorial spokesman. At the same time, it is striking that Lawrence did not see this dramatic possibility in Dostoevsky whose novels he read in a thoroughly doctrinal spirit, objecting strongly to the religious psychology, the sickly hyper-consciousness, as he saw it, of their spiritual heroes.[6] And I am sceptical that the creation of *Women in Love* was so Bakhtinian as

we now see the outcome to be. Bakhtin's conception, after all, is intrinsically retrospective – probably you cannot set out to *write* a novel on his principle. It will be something that only occurs if you happen to have dramatic genius equal to the passionate convictions that drive the narrative. In that respect it is indicative that Lawrence's great essays on the novel, from which my introductory passage is quoted (*STH* 154), were written in the mid-1920s, some time after his peak achievements in the genre. At one level, they are thoroughly Bakhtinian in spirit, emphasising the shifting, provisional relativity of the form, but Bakhtin was taken up in the anglophone academy in the 1980s often in a spirit of postmodern open-endedness. Bakhtin's thought then became a presumptive *recipe* for such writing rather than the retrospective *rationale* of writers like Dostoevsky and Lawrence. Lawrence was far from simply relativistic if only because he sought constantly to find what he called the point of "trembling balance" (*STH* 173). With this reservation, however, Bakhtin provides a significant insight into the exploratory jostling of ideas in Lawrence's fiction, and his radical modernist scepticism about the nature of ideas as such.

But in truth the whole preoccupation with dramatising argument may be a distraction from the more important and radically philosophical dimension of Lawrence's fiction. His image of the "nagging married couple" emphasises difference (*STH* 154), and focusing on the intellectual elements, the aspects that look a bit like philosophy, may obscure the true virtue of the novel form as a radically different mode of thought.

While Lawrence's essay 'The Future of the Novel' is a defence specifically of the novel, every great novel is a poem and his conscious conception of the novel rests more implicitly on what thinkers from Plato, in classical Greece, to Friedrich Schiller, at the end of the eighteenth century, have called "poetry". Up till the early nineteenth century "poetry" was the generic term for what we now call literature. In other words, "poetry" was not restricted to verse, as in common modern usage, but referred to imaginative writing at large. It was also over the same modern period that the novel

became such a central and dominant form; perhaps the most inward, comprehensive and complex mode we have for understanding modern social humanity. Whereas the word "fiction" suggests a contrast with "reality", "poetry" is a vision of reality and my contention is that if novel and philosophy truly come together it is likely to be at the level of poetry on which both novel and philosophy, with varying degrees of consciousness, ultimately depend. Hence, while Lawrence was, of course, a poet as well as a novelist in our usual sense of writing both verse and prose fiction, I wish to define more closely the poetic dimension of his fiction.

It is indicative that while Lawrence's essays on the novel emphasise its Bakhtinian relativising of ideas when he wishes to instance the discovery of a radical new vision of the world, a wholly fresh mode of perception, he invokes poets and painters, such as Wordsworth and Cézanne. Or when he sought to identify a likely growing point for modern fiction he chose not the highly philosophical Russians but the apparently unintellectual American writers who had glimpsed in the New World a new vision of world. Their poetic power leaks through their fiction. Post-Romantic and post-Kantian modernity has found a richer force in the Greek word "poesis", and the world-making aspect of fiction constitutes its most significantly philosophical dimension. Poetry, in this sense, rather than the novel as defined by Lawrence, constitutes the more radical challenge to "ideas" and is the true locus of philosophical power in his fiction.

The creation of world, or worlds, in Lawrence's fiction is too large a theme to cover here but I will recapitulate a little of what I have set out at book length elsewhere.[7] A crucial aspect is that, along with other modern writers, Lawrence blurs the distinction between an objectively existing outer world and the subjectivity of a character. In other words, not just an idea but the whole world is created through a specific sensibility. This is not, however, done in the overtly programmatic spirit of some other modern writers and within Lawrence's broadly realist narrative many readers do not notice how, for example, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* present

subtly changing worlds as the characters gradually move from the rural past into modernity.

The opening pages of *The Rainbow* provide striking instances. As Lawrence invokes the life of earlier generations on the Marsh Farm, he celebrates its richness and intensity. Ideological critics have seen this as an idyllic, Edenic, and sentimentally falsifying image of rural life in a vaguely defined past. Where is Marx's "idiocy of rural life"?[8] But Lawrence, in the historical indeterminacy of the opening pages, enacts in the rhythms of his prose a specific way of being in the world that calls for philosophical definition: "They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men" (*R* 10). The insistent rhythm of this sentence belongs neither to the cows nor to the men but to the relationship between them. The distinction of inner and outer dissolves in a felt continuity. At the same time, unsympathetic readers have found such a sentence not just sentimentally idyllic but stifling in its rhythmic repetition. For them, it typifies an inartistic, literalistic crudeness in Lawrence's writing. Actually, these readers have a point. The claustrophobic insistence of the sentence is a little maddening. But that is part of its meaning. The early Brangwen way of life is far from simply idyllic. A substantial portion of the family, after all, want to experience life beyond the farm and some of them, indeed the ones in which we are most interested, succeed in doing so. The sentence enacts almost on the nerves, below the level of articulate ideas, the dual facets of life on the farm. It is at once richly satisfying and maddeningly claustrophobic. The explosive tension bespeaks not a lost Eden but the psychic "Big Bang" from which the world of the book unfolds; and it is historically indeterminate because, like the "Big Bang", it is known only by retrospective inference.

Lawrence expressed a similar conflict in *Twilight in Italy* when he described his experience of crossing the Alps with Frieda in 1913, the year he also began work on what was to become *The*

Rainbow. His opening description of peasant farmers in the first essay 'The Crucifix Across the Mountains' merits extensive quotation:

> The body bent forward towards the earth, closing round on itself; the arms clasped full of hay, clasped round the hay that presses soft and close to the breast and the body, that pricks heat into the arms and the skin of the breast, and fills the lungs with the sleepy scent of dried herbs: the rain that falls heavily and wets the shoulders, so that the shirt clings to the hot, firm skin and the rain comes with heavy, pleasant coldness on the active flesh, running in a trickle down towards the loins, secretly; this is the peasant, this hot welter of physical sensation. And it is all intoxicating. It is intoxicating almost like a soporific, like a sensuous drug, to gather the burden to one's body in the rain, to stumble across the living grass to the shed, to relieve one's arms of the weight, to throw down the hay on the heap, to feel light and free in the dry shed, then to return again into the chill, hard rain, to stoop again under the rain, and to rise to return again with the burden.
>
> It is this, this endless heat and rousedness of physical sensation which keeps the body full and potent, and flushes the mind with a blood heat, a blood sleep. And this sleep, this heat of physical experience becomes at last a bondage, at last a crucifixion. It is the life and the fulfilment of the peasant, this flow of sensuous experience. But at last it drives him almost mad, because he cannot escape. (*TI* 92–3)

Lawrence in his youth had helped with farm work and, despite his weak lungs, he undertook practical labour throughout his life. At the same time he had an acute, reflective consciousness. As far as the present passage is concerned, who can say what the peasant's own conscious experience was, but, in vividly imagining what it would be like for himself, Lawrence intuits something about an ancient form of life that was vanishing in his lifetime. Similarly, in

imagining the lives of the early Brangwens, he creates a dynamic tension that underlies the whole book.

To put this tension in more universal terms, we may say that the human psyche has conflicting needs: it has a need for rootedness, and the satisfactions of living within the same cycle of experience, but it has an equal and opposite need for development and discovery, for transcendence into something new. One or other of these motives will often dominate in a particular individual but they will both be present in everyone. In that respect, the early Brangwens are not so much an historical recreation, whether idyllic or otherwise, as the philosophical statement of a complex condition. Over the course of the novel this condition splits into two increasingly distinct lineages: Tom, Anna and Ursula largely maintain this complex wholeness while the seeking of a bigger world by Tom's brother Alfred, Ursula's Uncle Tom and her lover Anton Skrebensky leaves these latter characters rootless and hollow. The underlying tension of the opening pages works itself out in all these increasingly modern characters although the gradual nature of the change obscures it from the participants. Lawrence's reflection on the Alpine peasants was like a startling x-ray vision of a complex historical process and it is significant for the present theme that his intuition was triggered by wayside crucifixes on the mountain path.

In the essay 'The Crucifix Across the Mountains' Lawrence sees in locally carved crucifixes an expression of the peasant's true experience emerging unconsciously from within a more conventional piety. When Lawrence declared himself a "passionately religious man" it was in a monistic or immanent understanding of the term (*2L* 165). That is to say, religion was for him a relationship with the natural world not the desire for an alternative, supernatural realm. For Lawrence, therefore, the crucifixion was an image of the diremption suffered by human being when the urge to spirituality and transcendence becomes a dualistic conflict as it does for Will Brangwen in the cathedral episode. In this respect the story of Christ was indeed a central

myth of our culture. It was the psychological expression of what is known in philosophical language as the Cartesian split, René Descartes' famous division of mind and body. But Cartesian thought, like pious Christian dualism, is commonly unaware of itself in this respect. It pervades modern culture as if it were simply the given condition of things rather than as a complex error or a painful condition, whereas the crucifixion images a mortal suffering that is manifestly self-imposed. One can see why Lawrence saw myth as a form of truth that trumps both philosophy and the novel.

Lawrence's sense of the unconscious roots of ideas is reflected in his remarks on philosophy and the novel as he uses the word "myth" in two crucially different ways. He first refers to the "days of myth" when novel and philosophy were not yet separated (*STH* 154). This would mean an early stage of culture in which fiction, history and philosophy had not yet achieved distinct status. The functions we now ascribe to these activities were subsumed in myth. He then goes on to speak, in a speculative way, of "modern myths, and a new way of understanding".[9] What makes a myth modern, we may ask? I take it the difference would lie partly in the consciousness of it *as* myth. The word "myth", that is to say, is commonly used in two opposed senses: it may mean a false belief that is widely held or the foundational narrative of a culture, and these opposite meanings are often not in direct conflict because they are used relationally – one man's foundational narrative is another man's false belief. But it might be a definition of modernity, as Martin Heidegger thought, to inhabit both at once. To know that you inhabit not just a world but a world-view, and that, since there is no other mode of perception, your world is in that sense a human creation. The transition from the beginning of *The Rainbow* to *Women in Love* is the passing from one sense of myth to the other.

This difference between archaic myth as simply a way of being *in* the world and modern myth as a self-conscious view *of* the world was crucial for Lawrence, as it was for several of his modernist contemporaries. To the peasant who carved the wayside crucifix,

for example, we may surmise that the story of Christ was an object of literal and pious belief so that its truly mythic power as an expression of his life-experience could emerge unconsciously, as did the deeper truths Lawrence saw in the American writers. By contrast, at the beginning of *The Rainbow*, the Brangwens are in the grip of a complex conflict of myths whose mythic status Lawrence understands as such although he embeds them in the narrative in such a way that they remain unconscious to the characters themselves and largely so even for the reader. As the Brangwens enact the tension between rootedness and transcendence, figured as staying on or leaving the farm, they reflect two powerful world-views inherited by Lawrence's generation from the nineteenth century. On the one hand there was an evolutionary view of progress, a belief, or assumption, that human life is a story of ascent. By contrast there was the belief, or the anxiety, that human beings were collectively degenerating, that civilised social man is a feebler creature than his ancestors. The fall from the Garden of Eden is the mythic archetype of that conception and to some extent the prestige of science encouraged the myth of progress while religion resisted it. This period, for example, saw the nostalgic revival of the religious Middle Ages as a model of social order; a nostalgia that is powerfully felt in Will Brangwen's ecclesiastical craftsmanship. Hence, in the larger structure of *The Rainbow* a myth of progress, an optimistic turning to the future, is in constant tension with the impulse to remain within the recurrent cycle of the known. But, as my brief comment on Lawrence's narrative prose is meant to suggest, this duality is felt not as a grand scheme of ideas, as it might be in Thomas Mann, but as an unconscious tension within the characters enacted implicitly in the narrative language. *The Rainbow* is a multi-layered, intimate, dynamic example of "modern myth" as a "new way of understanding" (*STH* 154).

Of course, sympathy with myth will always attract the charge of ideological illusion. Ideological critique seeks to expose the complex of ideas by which an individual or society unconsciously lives. The fundamental, and irresolvable, conflict between

Lawrence and ideological readers of various political persuasions rests, to a significant degree, on the radical choice mentioned earlier about the status of ideas in relation to human beings and their lives. Such critique is a vital necessity in all modern reading and social thought but it also has the danger of reductiveness. It seems to me that although Lawrence's characters are caught within their myths, or temperamental world-views, the fiction is able to dramatise this and give their form of life in its fullness rather than reduce it to an ideology. This allows the form of life to be known and assessed more richly. The reader is not invited to swallow the world of the book, but to experience it self-consciously.

More importantly for present purposes Lawrence's mythopoeic consciousness constitutes a radically philosophical dimension of his fiction and helps us understand how poetry is not just a parallel possibility to philosophical thought, but its secret basis. It is no accident that the great philosophical visions from Plato through to Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger have drawn heavily upon poetic means. Fundamental world-views are philosophical myths for which poetry is not merely illustrative but essential since their comprehensive visions are ultimately arbitrary and inarguable. The business of philosophy is to present, or to question, the rational case for accepting one or other of them but no one, I imagine, despite persistent illusion to the contrary, ever became a Christian or an atheist, a Marxist or a Muslim, through sheer reason. Reason helps to clarify and justify what is in itself an existential leap based on an incalculable mixture of tradition, temperament and experience. Poetry is philosophical in so far as it expresses the intuitive vision but, to the extent that philosophy is secretly powered by poetic vision, it is even more necessary for philosophy as an academic discipline to construct a purely rational case and in that respect poetry is a threat to its integrity. The "raison d'être" of philosophic thought, in other words, is to resist the poetry, or mythopoeia, which it ultimately serves. Martin Heidegger, who was Lawrence's contemporary and who echoed much of his world-view, insisted equally on the distinction and the mutuality of poetry and thought.

He said they should "neighbour" each other: that is to say, they need each other but must not be confounded.[10] This is the relationship that Lawrence expressed in his image of the "nagging married couple" (*STH* 154) and it returns us to the paradox of difference which was to become a major philosophical preoccupation by the end of the last century and remains a nagging question for the new one.

When Heidegger defined modernity as the age of the world-view this was not a simple appreciation of its sophistication. For him it came at the cost of something more radical and precious: the loss of Being. This doubleness is precisely appropriate to Lawrence's fiction in which the conflict of temperaments and world-views is itself shot through with the sheer sense of living being. This leaves plenty of scope for what Lawrence valued specifically in the novel: its capacity to test all such visions against each other. Among other things, for example, *Women in Love* is such a testing out of the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche. But this whole drama is itself played out within, or against, a vivid sense of Being. That is the more radical reason why a post-modern Bahktinian rationale is misleading. Lawrence defined this sense of Being most formally as the "fourth dimension" and it is hardly accidental that this occurs in the essay 'Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine', his most direct and sustained meditation on the human relation to other animal life (*RDP* 313).

Lawrence's art of "true relatedness" constantly brings home the recognition that relationship and difference are two sides of the same coin (*STH* 174). There is no relationship without significant difference: one side cannot be merely an extension, reflection or possession of the other. By the same token, there is no appreciation, or even recognition, of difference without connection. Relationship and difference are mutually dependent, with each being felt only within the other. Lawrence's great theme, which seemed idiosyncratic in his time, was to become a major, nagging question for later twentieth-century philosophy, culture and politics.

This is evident in the profound changes that have occurred over the course of the twentieth century in the understanding of difference in many areas including between races and cultures, between the sexes, and between human and other animals. Lawrence as poetic and novelistic thinker anticipated these concerns; or more precisely, he anticipated their problematic nature.

Significantly, the word "other" has changed its valency over the course of the last century: instead of Sartre's mid-century "hell is other people" we hear of the beloved as the "significant other". I take it the ponderously self-parodying correctness of this phrase is an implicit acknowledgement of its banality as the ideologically-driven change of rhetoric loses the proper weight of the word. Lawrence fought not just banality of language, but of experience. Although centrally concerned with human relationships, he deepened the sense of otherness by seeking out more radical modes of difference, such as animals and trees. With human beings, because we have shared language, roughly similar bodies and so on, we readily lose the sense of otherness. The true mystery of individual others is subsumed into our habitual assumption of understanding them. But Lawrence constantly revived the mystery by seeking relationship with beings who are more radically and irreducibly other and in doing so anticipated a preoccupation with animals in philosophy and literary criticism at the end of the twentieth century.

In brief, the traditional view of man's relation to animals was that enshrined in the biblical story of Eden. Animals were here for the use of man and much philosophical and scientific thought was devoted to establishing the difference, understood as a gulf, between them. Over the course of the twentieth century, however, many of the traditional distinctions, such as animals not making tools or not having language, became less certain. Most importantly, we now prioritise what we have in common with these fellow creatures co-existing on an increasingly small planet and with a shared capacity to feel pain. The questions Lawrence explored are nagging at us even more now that culture has swung

from the pole of separation to that of continuity. It is continuity, or the assumption of relationship, that throws difference into relief. And it is in difference that we can glimpse Being.

Lawrence's invocation of animals in his fiction and poetry constantly focuses the mystery of difference as such. A naïve reading of his poems about animals might suppose that he simply commits the great late-twentieth-century sin of anthropomorphism. For indeed he puts his imagination into what it is like to be an animal or even a tree and he loves to throw his clever human phrases over them. But he knows these creatures are not to be trapped in nets of language and his anthropomorphising is usually a dramatic feint. For it is precisely in trying to understand them in human terms that the speaker of the poem is faced with their irreducible otherness; the educative process that is set out, for example, in his most famous poem, 'Snake'. And such anthropomorphising under erasure, as Jacques Derrida might call it, may be the only way to avoid sentimental anthropomorphism for a human being cannot ultimately encounter the animal in anything other than human terms, by extending the hand, so to speak, of its own species. In the earlier formula there is no encounter with difference except within relationship, one end of which is human and therefore linguistic. Hence, the mystery of difference, or the wonder of Being, is often enacted in the poetry with a playful abundance of language. Some lines from 'Fish' catch the spirit:

> They are beyond me, are fishes.
> I stand at the pale of my being
> And look beyond, and see
> Fish, in the outerwards,
> As one stands on a bank and looks in.
>
> I have waited with a long rod
> And suddenly pulled a gold-and-greenish, lucent fish from
> below,
> And had him fly like a halo round my head,

Lunging in the air on the line.
Unhooked his gorping, water-horny mouth,
And seen his horror-tilted eye,
His red-gold, water-precious, mirror-flat bright eye;
And felt him beat in my hand, with his mucous, leaping
life-throb.

And my heart accused itself
Thinking: *I am not the measure of creation.*
This is beyond me, this fish.
His God stands outside my God.

And the gold-and-green pure lacquer-mucus comes off in
my hand,
And the red-gold mirror-eye stares and dies,
And the water-suave contour dims. (*Poems I* 293)

When it is a question of overcoming banality, the revival of dead metaphor is subtly appropriate. The fish are initially, in the colloquial phrase, "beyond me" and then, more resonantly, beyond "the pale of my being". Then the pale-faced speaker, having invoked an ancient, man-made protection against difference, shifts to "As one stands on a bank", the barrier imposed by nature between man and fish. The latter phrasing, "*As* one stands" (emphasis added), is curious since the bank here is hardly a simile: it is literally how we are separated from fish. If, as Nietzsche says, all language is metaphor, Lawrence revives a metaphorical force within the literal. As he goes on, the speaker encounters the fish at first only through the "long", stiff intermediary of the rod, which might almost be an image of language itself. The passage is full of nonce compound terms as language is ostentatiously bent to capture the being of the fish, yet ambivalently so perhaps. Does "gold-and-greenish" identify the exact shade or rather acknowledge that this is just the best approximation language can achieve? The "mirror-flat" eye is initially a matter simply of shape, a shape that does not see

the human world though it may reflect horror. Later the "mirror-eye" is more of a mirror. In looking at the animal's eye do we maybe see only our own reflection? The speaker refers to the fish throughout as "him" rather than "it", and when he finally holds the fish in his literal hand rather than in language, he feels only its death rather than, like many fishermen, its weight. Lawrence's narrative and descriptive prose, as in the passages quoted about the Alpine peasant or the early Brangwens, often seeks to merge with the experience described, imitating it rhythmically or repetitively. This is true of his animal poetry too but, in an equal and opposite movement, much of it also plays with language as such, as if flaunting the human term of the difference. I do not think this is the postmodern, self-reflexive exuberance claimed by Amit Chaudhuri but an aspect of relationship.[11] As the peacock spreads its tail so the linguistic animal uses its most distinctive and glorious feature to salute the non-human one.

In conclusion, it is not surprising that animals, throughout Lawrence's writing, focus the mystery of otherness, of the literally inconceivable Being of the world. This is what he called the "fourth dimension" for which there is no language or calculation because it is the original mythopoeic marriage of poetry and philosophy. His academic occlusion through the final three decades of the last century seems to have ended with the millennium and the time may have come to see in how far he is exemplary as a poetic thinker with whom the world is still catching up.

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[1] This essay is a modified text of the annual D. H. Lawrence Birthday Lecture given in Eastwood on 11 September, 2013.

[2] Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Pan Books, 1982), 109.

[3] Jorge Luis Borges, 'A New Refutation of Time', in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, eds Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (London: Penguin, 1970), 252–69.

[4] Ezra Pound, *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 341.

[5] See for example David Lodge, 'Lawrence, Dostoevsky, Bakhtin: D. H. Lawrence and dialogic fiction', in *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, vol. 29.1 (1985), 16–32, and my comments on Lodge's reading in Michael Bell, 'Lawrence and the Present', in *D. H. Lawrence Studies* (D. H. Lawrence Society of Korea), vol. 8 (July 1999), 9–20, 11–12.

[6] See for example D. H. Lawrence, 'Review of *Solitaria* by V. V. Rozanov', *D. H. Lawrence: Essays and Reviews*, eds N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 313–9.

[7] Michael Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992).

[8] Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848). https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm [accessed 25 November 2014].

[9] This sentence was one of several omitted by the editor in the original publication of the essay (see 'Explanatory Notes', *STH* 280).

[10] Martin Heidegger, 'The Nature of Language', in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 57–108, see especially 81–6.

[11] Amit Chaudhuri, *D. H. Lawrence and Difference* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).