

# LAWRENCE AND THE QUESTION OF ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

We have explored Lawrence's awareness of many of the major issues in contemporary critical theories in the preceding chapters. In the first, second and third chapters our main concern was to reevaluate Lawrence's schema mainly with *the different emphases of contemporary feminist theory*. Our focus in this chapter is on the ethical dimension of Lawrentian thought adventure and its relation to his aesthetics. In Lawrence's schema, ethics and aesthetics are inseparably linked up as both of them are committed to life. As such, Lawrence's ethics and aesthetics are associated with issues that we have explored in the preceding chapters. Ethics is concerned with the investigation of the nature of right and wrong thought and action in order to judge them in personal, social and political life. Aesthetics is a term by which we at once mean the compositional aspect of a work of art, a coherent philosophy of art and the artistic dimension of culture as a whole. In this chapter we shall explore first the affinity between Lawrence's ethical and aesthetic concerns and those of our contemporary ethical critics and then move on to exploring Levinas, Bakhtin and Foucault for the purpose.

For Lawrence, the essential function of art is moral. His insistence on the impact of art on our sincere and vital emotions resonates with the 'neo-humanist' theories of contemporary criticism. In the context of the textual nihilism of postmodernism that has declared the demise of modern humanism and the absence of any serious moral content in art, the 'neo-humanism', as Daniel R. Schwarz calls it, seeks to reinstate ethical considerations in the evaluation and appreciation of literature. As Schwarz, an ethical critic, puts it, "We are in the midst of a humanistic revival or at least a neohumanist burst of energy" (Schwarz, 3). The leading names of such ethical critics are Martha C. Nussbaum, Staley Cavell, Richard Rorty and Wayne C. Booth. The premise common to all of them is that there is a strong connection between art and life—which is essentially a Lawrentian concern. In his essay "Why the Novel Matters" Lawrence focuses on this relation between life and literature: "The novel is

the bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble" (Phoenix, 535).

This idea of the great impact of literature on life is implicit in the Anglo-American humanist tradition of which Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, Henry James and Raymond Williams are the prominent representatives. Wayne C. Booth, partly drawing on this tradition and partly on Aristotelian theory of ethics and aesthetics<sup>1</sup>, emphasizes this transaction of life and literature. In his essay "Why Ethical Thinking can Never be Simple", Booth explores the undeniable power of narrative to change our lives: "The powers of narrative change our lives" (18). He insists on "the value of ethical criticism as a means for understanding narrative's capacity for registering an ethical and aesthetic impact upon the human condition" (Davies, xi). Lawrence's idea of the novel as a 'tremulation' that can 'make the whole man alive tremble' is echoed in the premise of Danies R. Schwarz: "Literature calls upon us to respond fully, viscerally, with every dimension of our psychological and moral being" (Schwarz, 6). In his insistence on the link between ethics and aesthetics, Schwarz is an Aristotelian. As he himself declares, "Following Aristotle, I believe that the aesthetic, ethical and political are inextricably linked" (9). We, however, cannot altogether link Lawrence's views of ethics and aesthetics with those of Aristotle. The reason is Lawrence's insistence on flux in life to which both ethics and aesthetics are committed.

Lawrence's dictum that the essential function of art is moral has not escaped critical attention. Gamini Salgado in his book A Preface to Lawrence (1986), has said about Lawrence, the literary critic, that "He was also passionately interested, though in an informal way, in questions of literary theory and in problems connected with the relation between art and morality" (151). Intimately connected with this view of the moral functions of art is his view of the cognitive role of the emotions in making vital contact with and among ourselves. Lawrence's emphasis on the same point is available in his essay on "Galsworthy" where he says that "we judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else" (Phoenix, 539).

The implied ethical dimension of this view of the cognitive role of imagination in art is rooted in the tradition and has always been carried further. Martha C. Nussbaum in her essay “Exactly and Responsibly” affirms that her two books, Love’s Knowledge and Poetic Justice stress “the cognitive role of the imagination and the emotions in bringing us into contact with the complexity of our own lives and the lives of others” (63).

Martha Nussbaum argues that our emotions involve “evaluative judgements” (“Exactly.”, 66) and that the works of literature “promote compassion” (68) which are implicit in Lawrence’s understanding of literature. Both she and Wayne C. Booth claim that the activities of imagination and emotion are examples of moral conduct “in the sense that they are examples of the type of emotional and imaginative activity that good ethical conduct involves” (“Exactly.”, 70). Lawrence privileged emotion over reason because the former has the power to disrupt the fixity of thought. Emotions, in Lawrence’s schema, are more conducive to morality in his sense of the term. Morality, he says “is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe which precedes and accompanies a true relatedness” (Phoenix, 528).

Morality, as the “delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance” is closely associated with emotion and the sense of flux communicated by the word “trembling”; while “changing” in Lawrence suggests an affinity with the idea of the primacy of “Saying” over “Said” in Levinas’s ethical philosophy. We shall discuss this Lawrence-Levinas correspondence later in this chapter.

Lawrence would certainly have agreed with Nussbaum’s emphasis on the ethical aspect of narrative literature. She claims that narrative literature “nourishes the ascription of humanity, and the prospect of humanity” (Poetic Justice, 39). Her insistence that there is a very general connection between our aesthetic and our moral evaluations (“Exactly”, 72) once again reaffirms Lawrence’s views. Nussbaum’s concept of the enlivening impact of the novel on the “emotional deadness” of its readers has a distinct Lawrentian import. In her essay “Exactly and Responsibly”, Nussbaum observes to the effect that: “it is precisely in virtue of the

mastery of the craft that enables the novelist to deploy 'perceptual and expressional'<sup>2</sup> terms with skill that he can make a contribution to a public victory over obtuseness and emotional deadness" (60). This public victory over emotional deadness is also a strong point of Lawrence's argument for the novel. In "Why the Novel Matters" Lawrence touches on the same point: "But in the novel you can see, plainly, when the man goes dead, the woman goes inert. You can develop an instinct for life, if you will, instead of a theory of right and wrong, good or bad" (Phoenix, 538). In "Surgery of the Novel or a Bomb", Lawrence reasserts the same idea: "It's got to present us with new, really new feelings, a whole line of new emotion, which will get us out of the emotional rut" (Phoenix, 520)

Lawrence's great emphasis on the intersubjective relations within texts points to the significant correspondence between him and Mikhail Bakhtin. This correspondence has already been pointed out by David Lodge in his essay, "Lawrence, Dostoevsky, Bakhtin. Lawrence and Dialogic Fiction". But Lodge's focus in this essay is on the fiction, on Lawrence's Women in Love to be particular. However, Lawrence's idea of fiction as revealed in his non-fiction, especially in the essays like-- "The Surgery of the Novel or a Bomb", "Art and Morality", "Why the Novel Matters" and "Morality and the Novel"—have more than superficial correspondence with that of Bakhtin. In "Morality and the Novel", Lawrence celebrates the novel's capacity to represent the polyvocality of life, insisting at the same time on the ethical significance of such an act: "The novel is a perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships. The novel helps us to live, as nothing else can" (Phoenix, 532). This is echoed in Wayne C. Booth's comment in his "Introduction" to the latest translation of Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, "The one grand literary form that is for Bakhtin capable of a kind of justice to the inherent polyphonies of life is 'the novel'" (xxiii). For Bakhtin, as for Lawrence, meaning exists in the process of intersubjective communication, because no utterance is truly isolated. An utterance can only be understood in context, a context that is partly non-verbal and involves the status of and relations between speaker, addressee and the object of reference. Lawrence thus contextualizes truth/meaning:

The novel is the highest example of subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance and untrue outside of its own place, time, circumstance. If you try to nail things down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail (Phoenix, 528).

For both of them, prose fiction provides illuminating representation of this “subtle interrelatedness” in practice. In Bakhtin’s terms prose literature is ‘dialogic’ or ‘polyphonic’, an orchestration of diverse discourses. Bakhtin emphasizes the points of Lawrence such as diversity of discourses and their interrelationship in the novel:

Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those foundational compositional unities with which help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (2000: 263).

In Bakhtin’s view “the novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of all the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it” (2000: 263). Lawrence is also aware of the diversity of ‘themes’ or discourses in the novel. In “Why the Novel Matters” Lawrence says, “And only in the novel are all things given full play, or at least, they may be given full play, when we realize that life itself, and not inert safety, is the reason” (Phoenix, 538).

The resemblance of Lawrence and Bakhtin here is very close and corroborative. Bakhtin’s concept of ‘orchestration’ of all the themes in the novel is synonymous with Lawrence’s idea of the ‘full play’ of all things in the novel as both ‘orchestration’ and ‘full play’ suggest dramatization. Moreover, both Bakhtin and Lawrence attach great importance to orchestration of diverse discourses because it ensures the ethical significance of the aesthetics of narrative literature. Bakhtin spells out the fundamental characteristic features of novel in his Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics:

The possibility of employing on the plane of a single work discourse of various types, with all their expressive capacities intact, without reducing them to a common denominator—this is one of the fundamental characteristic features of prose (1984: 200).

The warning against the possible reduction of this “orchestration of all themes” to “a common denominator” is also issued by Lawrence. In the last chapter of his long essay on Thoman Hardy, Lawrence says,

Because a novel is a microcosm, and because man viewing the universe must view it in the light of a theory, therefore every novel must have background or the structural skeleton of some theory of being, some metaphysic. But the metaphysic must always subserve the artistic purpose beyond the artist’s conscious aim (Phoenix, 479).

The specified form of Bakhtin’s “common denominator” is the “metaphysics” of the novelist in Lawrence’s version that, in Lawrence’s view, always threatens to totalize the other discourses. Elsewhere, Lawrence has also spoken about “nailing things down”, as against the unethical reduction of discourses to a single one. The well known Lawrentian dictum “Never trust the artist. Trust the tale”<sup>3</sup> also underlines the need to fight off such reductive tendency on the part of the author. The devouring presence of the novelist’s metaphysics is the source of immorality in a novel. The true morality in the novel is characterized by instability: “Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance. Which the novelist puts in his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection that is immorality” (Phoenix, 528).

It is because of the interrelatedness of the diverse discourses, the representation of polyphonic life that Lawrence prizes most in the genre of the novel. This fundamental feature of novel, according to Lawrence, can be traced in ‘Plato’s dialogues’: “Plato’s dialogues are queer little novels” (Phoenix, 520). The superiority of the novel over philosophy, religion and science rests on its capacity to present things in their ever-changing interrelatedness. In philosophy, religion and

science, things are nailed down in order to get a stable equilibrium (Phoenix, 528). That is why Lawrence triumphantly justifies his being a novelist: "For this reason I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to a saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are the great masters of different bits of men alive, but never get the whole hog" (Phoenix, 535).

Lawrence's insistence on the intersubjectivity within the novel does not only align him with Bakhtin, but also pushes his sense of morality beyond its conventional sense. In other words, Lawrence subjects conventional sense of fixed morality, the modern humanist ideal, to the morality which is forever new. In his essay on Thomas Hardy, Lawrence posits that a really good work of art "must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which it adheres" (Phoenix, 476). Lawrence points out a sense of fluidity and contingency contained in the morality that art is committed to. In "Morality of the Novel" he says, "The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and the circumambient universe, at the living moment" (Phoenix, 527). The words "circumambient" and "living" connote a sense of flux and fluidity. Lawrence's idea of morality therefore is not the limiting frame of the Enlightenment project of humanism, but a liberating one from this form that constantly renews itself according to its time, place and circumstance. It is subject to change as is everything in life: "The relation between all things changes from day to day, in a subtle stealth of change. Hence art, which reveals or attains to another perfect relationship, will be forever new" (Phoenix, 527).

This great concern for interrelatedness in Lawrence's schema points to his affinity with the ethical philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas's critique of the Western philosophy in Totality and Infinity is grounded in his argument that in its search for the truth, Western philosophy has mostly been 'ontology'—the ontology that privileges thematization and knowledge at the expense of neglecting the absolute priority of ethics. Western philosophy, according to Levinas, has tried to comprehend the nature of reality by subordinating particular beings to an all-encompassing rational structure or 'totality'<sup>4</sup>. Confined within this 'totality', the individual beings have lost their individuality and become conceptually the same.

For Levinas, the human other resists all philosophical attempts at knowing in terms of totalization and calls into question the violence and injustice of ontology.

Lawrence shares Levinas's ethical stance against totalization, against the encompassing rational structure of the post-Cartesian Western philosophy. Lawrence the critic of culture strongly denounces the idea of the average that denies human beings their individuality. In Phoenix, he says that the average "is a pure abstraction. It is the reduction of the human being to a mathematical unit" (699). For him, the ideal of equality is only a particular form of 'totality' that once again reduces a living human being to a standard unit. His repudiation of such a standard is unequivocal: "Men are not equal, and never were, and never will be, save by the arbitrary determination of some ridiculous human ideal" (Phoenix, 701). The emphasis on oneness in Western philosophy is what Lawrence the critic of culture tirelessly attacks in his non-fictional writings. The privileging of oneness of Western philosophy for Lawrence, as for Levinas, impoverishes life and deprives it of all its ethical values. Lawrence expresses his reservation against such a drastic reduction of life very clearly in The Symbolic Meaning: "if we reduce all things to terms of spirit and oneness, we impoverish life at last beyond bearing" (65). Levinas calls it "imperialism of the same" (1986: 347) what Lawrence here means by "spirit and oneness". For Levinas the "imperialism of the same" results when the other is rendered intelligible through representation and is constructed by and in the terms of the agent of observation. Both for Levinas and Lawrence, epistemology, the product of digestive ontology, thrives on the "digestion of alterity" (Critchley, 6). Levinas's ethical philosophy therefore foregrounds the presence of the other that resists and calls into question the rational ego—the 'I'. This emphasis resonates in Lawrence too. The ethics of Levinas begins with the face of the other that emphasizes responsibility for the other. In Simon Critchley's version, ethics, in the terms of Levinas, occurs as, "the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, self consciousness" (Critchley, 5). In Levinas's own words, "We name this calling into question of the spontaneity by the presence of the other, ethics" (1969: 43).

Ethics is an on-going process of putting the knowing ego into question through the process of the exposure to and recognition of alterity. It is therefore not reducible

to any fixed standard of morality. Lawrence is not so systematic in his formulation of his idea of the other and its role in the genesis of ethics. Yet his emphasis on the other is no less important than that of Levinas. For him, the other resists all attempts of the knowing ego at reducing it to the order of the same. In The Symbolic Meaning, he characterizes otherness as “untranslatable” (17). In the same book, he refers to otherness as “a term of the vivid, imminent unknown” (60). After quoting a passage from the work of an American author, Crèvecoeur, Lawrence appreciates the author’s “deep tender recognition of the life reality of the other, the other creature which exists not in union with the immediate self, but in dark juxtaposition” (The Symbolic Meaning, 64). For Levinas, ethics begins with putting into question of the rational, knowing self by the other who is incomprehensible in real terms. Lawrence’s idea of ethics also starts with the recognition of the surrounding incomprehensible others by the knowing self. Lawrence says in the “Study of Thomas Hardy”, “The vast unexplored morality of life surrounds us in its eternal incomprehensibility” (Phoenix, 419).

For Levinas, this calling into question of the knowing ego occurs in the face to face encounter with the other which “precedes ontology” (1969: 96). This encounter is totally devoid of any intention of reducing the other to the order of the same. As he maintains,

meeting the face is not of the order of the pure and simple perception, of the intentionality which goes toward adequation. Positively, we will say that since the other looks at me, I am responsible for him, without having even taken on responsibilities in his regard; his responsibility is incumbent on me (1985: 96).

Lawrence also traces the root of ethics in the recognition of the untranslatable otherness embodied in the presence of the other. In his essay on “Democracy”, Lawrence says,

Our life, our being depends upon the incalculable issue from the central Mystery into undefinable presence....And presence is nothing mystic or

ghostly. On the contrary. It is the actual man present before us. The fact that an actual man present before us is an inscrutable and incarnate Mystery, untranslatable, this is the fact upon which any great scheme of social life must be based. It is the fact of otherness (Phoenix, 714).

Lawrence shows his awareness of this relational radicalism long before Levinas has problematized it. This awareness underlines the deep affinity between Lawrence and Levinas in ethical matters. Lawrence's insistence that "any great scheme of social life must be based" on the recognition of the inscrutable 'other' is also implied in Levinas's proposition. The knowing ego, thus exposed to the defenceless nudity of the face, realizes the need for self-amendment.

For Levinas, "Subjectivity is not for itself; it is, once again, initially for another" (1985: 96). Lawrence also privileges 'being', as a unit of the unknown, to 'knowing'. Thus both of them have reversed the Cartesian order of 'knowing' and 'being' enunciated in "cogito ergo sum". Lawrence's being is also responsible for the other as its calling into question of its own identity as the knowing ego is an ongoing process. Levinas's concept of responsibility is fundamentally identical with that of Lawrence:

My responsibility is untransferable, no one could replace me. In fact, it is a matter of saying the very identity of the human I starting from the responsibility, that is, starting from his position or deposition of the sovereign I in self-responsibility for the other (1985: 101).

The deposition of the human ego from its sovereign position is reiterated by Lawrence in his criticism of culture. Like the subject of Levinas, Lawrence's subject does not have the freedom from its responsibility for the other, because the other in Lawrence's scheme of things eludes the comprehension of the conscious ego and therefore the exposure to the face remains an endless process. The intersubjective relation in Lawrence is therefore 'non-symmetrical' and non-reciprocal as in Levinas (1985: 98).

For Levinas alterity is to be understood as an experience rather than a realizable quality. This experience of alterity is, in Levinas's terms, nothing more than a subjective experience of the limits of the percipient's knowing. In his later work, Otherwise than Being, Levinas characterizes the experience of alterity in his formulation of the "Saying" which he contrasts with the "Said". "Saying", in Simon Critchley's explication of the idea, is,

The performative stating, proposing or expressive position of myself facing the other. It is a verbal or non-verbal ethical performance, whose essence cannot be caught on constative propositions. It is performative doing that cannot be reduced to constative description. By contrast, the "Said" is a statement, assertion, or proposition...concerning which the truth or falsity can be ascertained (Critchley, 7).

Lawrence's emphasis on the dynamic relation between individuals also resonates with idea of "Saying" as performative that cannot be reduced to constative description. In Fantasia of the Unconscious Lawrence anachronistically echoes Levinas as he proposes that "Life is to be lived from the deep, self-responsible spontaneous centres of every individual, in a vital, non-ideal circuit of dynamic relation between individuals" (85). Lawrence's distrust of fixity in any presentation of truth is also ingrained in Levinas's idea of the "Said". The "Said" in Levinas, "the constative proposition", conforms to Lawrence's idea of an "idea" or "theory". The dynamic life in Lawrence's schema is in perpetual conflict with the fixity of an idea or theory as something not applicable to life (Phoenix, 78).

The "alterity" in Levinas, again in the words of Critchley, is "the non-thematizable ethical residue...of language that escapes comprehension, interrupts philosophy, and is the very enactment of the ethical movement of the same to the other" (7). "Saying" is thus a relational process, rather than a fixed relationship, a movement, not stasis. Lawrence has put emphasis on this "relational process" as does Bakhtin. Lawrence attributes ethical values to "the relation between man and his circumambient universe":

“morality is that delicate, for ever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe, which precedes and accompanies a true relatedness” (Phoenix, 528). The “for ever trembling and changing balance” corresponds with Levinas’s “Saying”. Likewise, Bakhtin celebrates the novel for the orchestration of all its themes. The orchestration here is a relational process that assures truth, however contingent it may be: “Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance and untrue outside of its own place, time and circumstance” (Phoenix, 528). This once again reminds us of Levinas for whom “alterity” is an experience that is entirely subject and context specific.

The most fascinating parallelism between the ethical ideas of Lawrence and those of Levinas appears in the solution they offer to the problem of how to “say” the other without reducing it to the intelligible—the “Said”. The solution, for Levinas, lies in exploring “the ways in which the Said can be unsaid or reduced, thereby letting the Saying reside as a residue, or interruption, within the “Said”” (Critchley, 8). For Lawrence, the solution lies through an on-going periodic process of suspension and disruption of the process of knowing. Levinas’s exploration of the process of unsaying the “Said” corresponds with Lawrence’s idea of learning how not to know—an unlearning process. In *Fantasia*, Lawrence says in a paradoxical language:

We must know, if only in order to learn not to know. This supreme lesson of human consciousness is to learn how not to know. That is not to interfere. That is, how to live dynamically, from the great source, and not statically, like machines driven by ideas or principles (76).

The knowing ego of Lawrence is analogous to the “Said” of Levinas. Like Levinas who speaks for reducing the “Said”, Lawrence subjects the knowing ego to the unknown that constantly disrupts and interrupts. For Levinas also, the disruption of the “Said” is never complete (Critchley, 165).

The ethical in Levinas signifies the oscillation between the orders of the “Saying” and the “Said”. In Lawrence the ethical lies in “the changing rainbow of our living

relationships” (Phoenix, 530). In the same essay Lawrence defines morality as the “trembling instability of the balance” (538). Lawrence the critic of culture attaches great importance to “new relationship”: “A new relationship between ourselves and the universe means a new morality” (Phoenix, 523).

In Lawrence as in Levinas, ethics and aesthetics are thus one. By emphasizing the irreducibility of the other for whom the knowing ego is responsible, Levinas, like Lawrence, has celebrated the “intertwining flux” of life. For both of them, the knowing has its existence from the recognition of responsibility for the other. Therein lies the essence of ethics. For Lawrence, “Each thing, living or unliving, streams in its odd, intertwining flux” (Phoenix, 525), and the essence of the ethical lies in “living relatedness” (525).

In Levinas’s schema, the “Said” is constantly put into question by the “Saying”. Levinas’s idea of responsibility is at the very core of Lawrence’s ethical considerations: “There is nothing man can do but maintain a true relationship with the contiguous universe” (Phoenix, 525).

In matters relating to ethics and aesthetics Lawrence has significant correspondence with another leading thinker of our times, Michael Foucault. Foucault’s concept of ethics and aesthetics and their inseparable link is mainly analytical as it focuses on the shift in the interrelation of ethics and aesthetics in historical perspective—from antiquity to modern times. Foucault defines ethics as “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, rapport a’ soi, which I call ethics and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his actions” (2000: 263). Again as he adds, “the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality is our feelings” (2000: 263).

This definition further confirms the dictum that ethics and aesthetics are one. This dictum is avowed by Wittgenstein apart from Lawrence and Levinas (Davies, 33). Foucault’s insistence that “we have to create ourselves as work of art” aligns him with Nietzsche and Satre (2000: 262). Lawrence’s emphasis on the creation of an individual as a work of art is also a dominant aspect of his thought. In a letter

written to Morrel on 1 March, 1915, Lawrence says that “to create oneself, in fact, be the artist creating a man in living fact... (to) create that work of art, the living man, achieve that piece of supreme art, a man’s life.”<sup>5</sup>

Lawrence has further affinity with Foucault in matters relating to ways of creating the individual as work of art. “The novel,” says Lawrence, “is a bright book of life” (Phoenix, 535). Both Lawrence and Foucault insist that the creation of multiplicity of relationships, the developing of a new way of life, the developing of the aesthetic appreciation of sexual act and the creation of pleasure are the ways through which the individual can create his life as a work of art. Foucault, like Lawrence, is aware of the relational world we inhabit which is characterized by “multiplicity of relationships” (2000: 135-6) currently endangered by institutions: “We live in a relational world that institutions have considerably impoverished.... We should fight against the relational fabric” (2000: 158).

Lawrence the critic of culture has a great concern for the impoverishment of the “relational world” perpetuated by Judeo-Christian culture, the culture that works through the “institutions”. Again like Foucault, Lawrence suggests that the solution lies in discovering a new mode of human relationship. In Phoenix, Lawrence proposes that “We have got to discover a new mode of human relationship. Which means... we have got to get a new conception of man and of ourselves. And we have then to establish a new morality” (615).

In “Why the Novel Matters” Lawrence reposes his trust in the instinct for life based on the right man-woman relationship and not a theory of right and wrong: “in the novel you can see, plainly, when the man goes dead, the woman goes inert. You can develop an instinct for life, if you will instead of a theory of right and wrong” (Phoenix, 538). Foucault’s way of escape is very much like Lawrence’s: “Let’s escape as much as possible from the type of relations that society proposes for us and try to create in the empty space where we are new relational possibilities” (2000: 160).

Foucault also suggests the use of one's sexuality to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships and views 'homosexuality' as one form of friendship. Homosexuality, in his view, has the potential of offering us a new way of life: "It seems to me that a way of life can yield a culture and an ethics. To be 'gay'...(is) to try to define and develop a new of life" (2000: 138). Lawrence anticipates Foucault in his recommendation of "deathless friendship" outside the matrix of heterosexuality. He refers to such a friendship as "sacred", as a "great active passion and characterizes it as "adventurous" and "a leap ahead" (Phoenix, 665). The cultivation of such a friendship, for Lawrence, contributes to the creation of new way of life. Both Lawrence and Foucault view sex as a possibility of creative life. For Lawrence, "sex is a very powerful, beneficial and necessary stimulus in human life (Phoenix, 174), and for Foucault, "sex is not a fatality, it is a possibility of creative life" (2000: 163). For both of them, Christianity has eradicated pleasure by its denunciation of the body. Foucault observes, "The Christian formula puts an accent on desire and tries to eradicate it.....And pleasure is both practically and theoretically excluded" (2000: 269). In his view Christianity has eradicated pleasure by insisting on the passivity of the sexual act. He further observes that "in the fourth century B.C., the sexual act was an activity, and for Christians it is a passivity" (2000: 258-9).

Foucault's project of creating oneself as a work of art involves the reinstatement of pleasure: "We have to create pleasure" (2000: 166). Lawrence also privileges pleasure over Christianity's insistence on reproduction. The sexual act, Lawrence insists, is not for the "deposition of the seed" (Phoenix, 441). Lawrence agrees with Foucault that the Christian renunciation of the body and all its pleasures has impoverished the creative life of individuals. Therefore, Foucault emphasizes the "aesthetic appreciation of the sexual act"<sup>6</sup> and Lawrence appreciates the sexual act as a vitalistic necessity. Lawrence's description of the sexual act in Fantasia underlines both the creative and aesthetic aspect of the act:

It is the bringing together of the surcharged electric blood of the male with the polarized electric blood of the female with the result of a tremendous flashing interchange, which alters the constitution of the blood, the very quality of being in both (107).

It is, nonetheless, a description of the creative process which Christianity has denied. Immediately after the act, Lawrence observes, “the new song rises, the brain tingles to new thought, the heart craves for new activity” (Fantasia, 108).

For Foucault, Christianity has given a fixed pattern of behaviour for everybody, jeopardizing the creative life of individuals. In Christianity, Foucault observes, sexual rules for behaviour were justified through religion (2000: 266). After the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “a medical or scientific approach and a juridical framework” take over the place of religion. On the other hand, in the Greco-Roman times, the codes of sexual conduct concentrated on a kind of ethics which was an aesthetic one. Their ethics was a matter of personal choice, it was reserved for a few people in the population and their theme was aesthetics of existence (2000: 254-55). Foucault recommends this classical model of the blend of ethics and aesthetics to confront modern thought (2000: 294). Lawrence recommends his model of “true relatedness”: “Men must get back into touch, their own absoluteness...and fall into their true relatedness” (Phoenix, 382). Implicit in Foucault’s project of the ethical and aesthetic creation of one’s life is the assertion of individual freedom and choice. Lawrence the critic of culture embarks on a same project and urges that “Everyman shall be himself, shall have every opportunity to come to his own intrinsic fullness of being” (Phoenix, 603).

Central to Foucault’s project of creating individual life as art is the relationship between individuals—that constitute the “relational world”. He attaches great importance to the relation of the individual to the other. He says, “I insist on this difference as something essential: a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the other” (2000: 111). He emphasizes, like Lawrence, the difference between the lover and his beloved and refers to “lovers’ fusion of identities” as a “readymade formula” from which the lovers must escape (2000: 137). We have already pointed out Lawrence’s emphasis on difference in this chapter. Love, in Lawrence’s view, “does not lie in merging, mingling, in absolute identification of the lover with the beloved. It lies in the

communion of beings, who, in the perfection of communion, recognize and allow the mutual otherness” (The Symbolic Meaning, 130).

For Lawrence, as for Foucault, Epistemology has destroyed the ethical framework of life. The ethical can be reinstated by breaking, destabilizing and reducing the ‘One-and-Allness’, the totalization of the know-all ego promoted by the post-Cartesian Western philosophy in Judeo-Christian culture. Greek philosophy, in Foucault’s view, held that only an ethical subject can have access to truth<sup>7</sup>: “After Descartes, we have a non-aesthetic subject of knowledge” (2000: 279). Foucault strongly objects to this. All these three thinkers—Levinas, Foucault, and Lawrence—respond to the segregation of ethics from aesthetics by offering their alternative discourses to confront it.

## NOTES

1. "As Aristotelian", says Schwarz, "Booth regards ethics, rhetorics and poetics as inextricably related".(Schwarz, 8).
2. Nussbaum has taken the term "perceptual and expressional" from Henry James' Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces. 1934. New York: Scribners, 1970. p. 339.
3. On page 8 of his Studies in Classic American Literature (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971. Reprinted 1981), Lawrence has said this.
4. In Levinas's schema, "totality" denies and absorbs the other. The totalizing discourse of Western philosophy seeks to occupy all the available ground and thus deny any oppositional site to those whom it excludes.
5. This part of the letter is quoted in Apocalypse. P. 19.
6. See Foucault's Ethics. P. 149.
7. Foucault's Ethics. P. 278-79.