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Author(s)	Mizuta, Hiroko
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D. H. Lawrence and the Politics of the Symbol

Hiroko MIZUTA

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1. Introduction

D. H. Lawrence's last work, *Apocalypse* (1931), is a critical treatise on St. John's *Book of Revelation*. In it, Lawrence reveals the deception inherent in Christianity: how the Christian idea of eternal life at the hereafter rules over and suffocates earthly life; how the idea of the judgment of God at the end-time derives from weak people's¹ "*ressentiment*", or sentiment of vengeance; and how the selfless love of Jesus is replaced with an *earthly power* in the form of organized religion. In the time of *Revelation*, the Jews were forced to live in exile, unable to win this earthly power. They were persecuted and bullied wherever they went, forced to become the poor underdogs. The only hope of salvation for them was in the belief that their destiny was "postponed," and that their lives would blossom in the hereafter, not on the earth, after God had made his descent. They would then be given eternal life at the hereafter, and their enemies would face the wrath of God. In this way, the revelation that John receives is that of the ultimate victory of good over evil, from a perspective distorted by *ressentiment*, and the end of the present age.

Christianity inherits this Judaic idea of a "chosen people." Lawrence describes this sentiment: "they took over the Jewish idea of ultimate triumph and reign of the chosen people. From being bottom dogs they were going to be top dogs: in Heaven" (*Apocalypse*, 63). Lawrence condemns the *Book of Revelation* as "the revelation of the undying will-to-power in man, and its sanctification, its final triumph" (67).

Lawrence extends this condemnation to "the negative power of the mass"

(70) in his contemporary society. “In Russia, the triumph over worldly power was accomplished, and the reign of saints set in, with Lenin for the chief saint,” he writes (70). Lawrence was right to connect the problem of religious belief to that of politics: the problem of love and power.

He is convinced that the reason Christianity was transformed into a “religion of power” can be detected first in what is called a “religion of love.” According to Lawrence, Christianity was transformed when an ancient and universal web of symbols, which expressed the productive connection between man and the cosmos, was replaced with a system of allegory, which represented the one and only interpretation of the Word of God. Love between the cosmos and people was transformed into love for God, understood as a contract between God and a “chosen people.” Since then, a system of allegory has dominated European religious narratives and the submission of love for God has exercised coercive force, like the supreme extension of power, through this rhetorical device. In this way, Lawrence’s condemnation is not limited to the sphere of religion. In this book, he also links his accusation to the fact that a system of allegorical interpretation provides a foundation for political thought in Europe, causing the breakdown of its civilization. Here emerges the problem of politics and language.

This paper aims to investigate Lawrence’s criticism of Apocalyptic thought through a consideration of his linguistic views, rather than through a reading of his political thought. There are several reasons why I adopted this linguistic viewpoint. First, if we take a stance that views signification as a collective process, we can not only consider the contents of political messages but also understand its rhetoric as political. Rhetoric is that which gives society a shape and constitutes our political vision. From this perspective, the relation between politics and language is foregrounded. Secondly, we ask how allegorical thinking relates to politics in our present day and age, with its apocalyptic implications. Conversely, we can also ask how the symbolic thinking of ancient times, which Lawrence advocates, provides us not only with a method for revising politics and but also with an alternative way of approaching the problem of “the modern apocalypse.”

2. Political Implication of Mythmaking

Lawrence’s accusation against the *Book of Revelation* begins by observing

that the text is a composite of layerings: on the top layer lies Christian thought with orthodox explanatory remarks, which is piled on the layer of Jewish eschatological thought, and at the bottom there is a layer of ancient pagan thought with its proper cosmic view. According to T. R. Wright, the many commentaries read by Lawrence on the *Book of Revelation* corroborate Lawrence's belief in its intertextuality (228). In a book published in 1920, R.H. Charles, Archdeacon of Westminster, states that "since Ephesus, an ancient Greek city in Turkey of today, was a hot bed of every cult and superstition, it is not surprising that John [...] should have incorporated elements not only from Jewish apocalyptic texts but from obscure pagan texts as well" (230).

John encountered ancient eastern symbols in Ephesus, and added Jewish meanings to them as a way of fully exploiting them in his apocalyptic thought. In this way, the ancient symbol of life as an imaginative power was adapted for a new context: the Jewish allegory that centered on the judgment of God. Since then, the idea of the judgment of God has been reproduced so much that it has become a basic assumption of Christianity up to the present date.

According to Fredric Jameson, a system of allegorical interpretation calls for an Ur-narrative to absorb all other narratives. In this system, "the data of one narrative line are radically impoverished by their rewriting according to the paradigm of another narrative" (22). The political implications of a system of allegorical interpretation are here demonstrated. Similarly, the ancient myth of a vital consciousness was appropriated and transformed into ideology in order to serve the pursuit of an apocalyptic utopia by the Jews. Here we can clearly see the political implications of mythmaking.

Lawrence condemns this transformation, saying that it is the revelation of the power in man, but his condemnation is not directed entirely toward the doctrine found in the book, but rather towards the rhetorical device by which it is represented. The point here is the problem of allegory and symbol, rather than that of the theory itself. His criticism aims at disclosing how a system of allegorical interpretation functions through the *Book of Revelation* in order to serve Jewish *ressentiment*.

As discussed above, when the Jewish people appropriated the ancient symbols into their doctrine of the judgment of God, they eliminated the possibility of a variety of interpretations, to which the ancient symbols were open. The pos-

sibilities for the symbols in the imagination were rich. The crucial point here is the affirmation of imagination that makes possible a variety of interpretations. Lawrence describes this in the preface to *The Dragon of the Apocalypse* (1930), by Frederick Carter, as follows:

We do not care, vitally, about theories of the Apocalypse: what the Apocalypse means. What we care about is the release of the imagination. A real release of the imagination renews our strength and our vitality, makes us feel stronger and happier.... (294)

The imagination is considered an entrance to another, more vital and impersonal world. To the pagan, the cosmos outspreads beyond “our petty little love of nature” (*Apocalypse* 76). It is filled with a wild vitality, or rather it is dynamics itself, not staying in the same place even for a moment. It defies all explanation, so the pagan people represented the cosmos using images or symbols. “Symbols mean something: yet they mean something different to every man. Fix the meaning of a symbol, and you have fallen into the commonplace of allegory,” Lawrence writes (101). In other words, symbols have semantic polysemy, and are therefore open to a variety of interpretations. They are a resource of the imagination.

John of Patmos, however, transformed the essence of their cosmic view by replacing the multivocality of symbols with a Jewish univocality, that is, allegory. Symbols, which were the treasury of the unexhausted meanings that resist explanation, were replaced with allegory, which “can always be explained: and explained away” (142). The ancient symbols’ multivocality enabled us to find “another meaning, another level of meaning” (60), but orthodox Jews did not need another level of meaning. They needed a narrative that provided their side with a univocal justice. As a result, the meaning of the *Book of Revelation* is fixed by allegory. It has no life for us anymore, because life loses its power through explanation.

Rereading the *Book of Revelation* as a book that realizes the release of the imagination denotes digging down past the layer of “closed interpretation,” into another more vital world. During this attempt, the oppositions between allegory and symbol, explanation and imagination, the only world and the possibility of other worlds are in focus. The formers of each pair are based on a black-and-

white view of the world, and the only correct explanation of the world would be given by referring all other narratives to the one and only Ur-narrative. They open the door to the dictatorship. In this way, these oppositions are connected to political conflict.

3. The Two Aspects of Organism

Why is a web of symbols, a source of the imagination in ancient times, transformed into a system of allegory that seeks one correct explanation? In order to examine this problem more closely, let us consider Lawrence's criticism of Christianity by considering the two aspects of the word "organism," which usually correspond to "life." Contemporary philosopher Gilles Deleuze refers to the word "organism" in his essay as "the judgment of God":

[J]udgment implies a veritable organization of the bodies through which it acts: organs are both judges and judged, and the judgment of God is nothing other than the power to organize to infinity. Whence the relationship between judgment and the sense organs. ("To Have Done," 130)

A system of organs, or an organism, consists of various organs unified in a centralized system with a command central, which is exactly how the Christian God functions. In order to judge life in terms of transcendent values, the power of the transcendent entity, or God, who establishes the value system and forces us to obey it, must be assumed. In other words, God is a totalizing and organizing force, providing order by unifying many different fragmented elements. Each organism, or the body, is where this process of organization of organs is conducted.

Lawrence's criticism against Christianity is more specifically directed toward organized religion. Presumably, Christ himself never intended to organize his message as such. Against his will, however, in organized Christianity, God is regarded as the model of totalizing power who provides the cosmos with a univocal meaning and moral. This is demonstrated in Lawrence's descriptions of how the pagan symbol of the woman was transformed through the process of Christianization:

Gone is the grand pagan calm which can see the woman of the cosmos wrapped in her warm gleam like the sun, and having her feet upon the moon, the moon who gives us our white flesh. Gone is the great Mother of the cosmos, crowned with diadem of the twelve great stars of zodiac. She is driven to the desert, and the dragon of the watery chaos spues floods upon her. (121)

The ancient Jews hated pagan gods, especially the great pagan goddess. The pagan goddess was suggestive of the great Mother, who stood in the days when matriarchy was still the natural order of the nations in the eastern Mediterranean. She was the symbol of procreation and thus stood for sexual permissiveness. However, the Jewish establishment drove her into the desert, and after her flight, the great vision of the Scarlet Woman appeared. This image was borrowed from the pagans, but according to the Jewish interpretation she was the “Magna Mater in malefic aspect: the great whore of Babylon” (121). The Jews cursed her because, according to Lawrence, they envied what they were eager to but could not get. “The harlot sits magnificent with her golden cup of the wine of sensual pleasure in her hand. How the apocalyptists would have loved to drink out of her cup! And since they couldn’t, how they loved smashing it!” he writes (121).

Sex was venerated in ancient times, since ancient people affirmed our physical being as “unknown” (98) or, in other words, as a source of inexhaustible and impenetrable meaning. Once sex was regarded as an abomination by Judaism, the act of pursuing sensual pleasure came to be considered deviant. Through this conversion, an ancient symbol that affirmed life and sex was separated from the productive power of imagination. It is a key example, in which univocal Jewish morality drives out the ancient polysemic ethics of nature. This is also viewed as the work of weak people’s *ressentiment*, but what should be noted here is that Jewish doctrine rejects the innumerable possibilities of the body. This shows its tendency to be too heavily weighted by the allegorical way of thinking.

In this way, apocalyptic utopia, presupposing God as the judge, is constituted by denying deviation and by molding life into a fixed form. Along this line, a politics that seeks univocal justice emerges. These presuppositions, both in religion and politics, are directly derived from the first aspect of the “organism”: a

totalizing or organizing force.

4. The Semantic Polysemy of the Ancient Symbols

On the other hand, the ancient symbols are polysemic. This is because their wisdom is based on the belief that we are part of the living, incarnate cosmos, to which we have innumerable relations (149). This way of thinking is called emotional thinking, and it is derived from an additional aspect of the “organism.”

At first, we have to remember that the ancient times mentioned by Lawrence refer to the pre-Socratic societies. According to Daniel Schneider, Lawrence was affected by the book *Early Greek Philosophy* (1892), by John Burnet. In the following passage, Lawrence describes the common vision of the cosmos during this age: “the religious system of the pagan world did what Christianity has never tried to do: they gave the true correspondence between the material cosmos and the human soul. The ancient cosmic theories were exact, and apparently perfect. In them science and religion were in accord” (“The Two Principles,” 227).

This is the age in which magic was linked to wisdom and not distinguished from science. T. R. Wright refers to this as “earlier occult wisdom” (243). Lawrence’s thought was influenced by the philosophy of nature of the pre-Socratic philosophers Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Empedocles. As Lawrence describes, “[to] the ancient consciousness, Matter, Materia, or Substantial things are God” (95), they are materialist as long as they see dynamic power or spirit in matter itself. This is the materialism of the days when natural science and religion were linked together. To them, God is the cosmos that is newly created each time there is a change in the combination of its elements. Whatever it might be called, religion, magic, or occult, this knowledge of the cosmos is quite similar to modern science. They knew that matter alternately repeats its connection with, and disconnection from, any other matter. In other words, matter escapes from its current form and sets out for other new forms. They placed more importance on the productive forces of matter than on matter that had already been formed. Such forces of matter are the vitality, or organic power, of life. This implies another aspect of the “organism,” different from the first one that refers to totality and organization.

This aspect of the organism reflects the idea of hylozoism. As Donald Gutierrez notes, “the term hylozoism refers to the archaic pre-Socratic conception that all matter is alive, or that life and matter are indivisible” (576). This is a philosophical vision that ascribes immanent power to matter. Lawrence also describes this in *Apocalypse*, “A great rock is God. A pool of water is God. And why not? [...] I can touch it. It is undeniable. It is God” (95). For Lawrence, the word “God” signifies life. We can detect from this statement that, according to Lawrence, even inorganic substances have life, so long as we can touch them. The distinction between organic and inorganic makes no sense for him, although he does not actually use the word “inorganic” in this sense.²⁾ When he uses the expression “organic relationship,” he also implies a relationship with inorganic substances. The word “organism,” or life, signifies a deeper meaning.³⁾

This vision emphasizes the physical interrelation between the cosmos and man. The materiality of the body acts in concert with the materiality of the cosmos, and produces variable connections. These connections are affected by irrational and contingent impulses. As a result, they in turn produce open-ended responses. Life is constituted through these various relations and symbols express them.

Lawrence takes the symbol of the dragon as an example. The dragon is one of the oldest symbols of the human consciousness. It is the symbol of “a power or potency within him” (123). In other words, it symbolizes a great desire of any sort, ready to leap out in an instant. Lawrence describes this symbol as follows:

Primitive man, or shall we say early man was in a certain sense afraid of his own nature, it was so violent and unexpected inside him, always “doing things to him.” He early recognized the half-divine, half-demonish nature of this unexpected potency inside him. [...] this is the dragon, the grand divine dragon of his superhuman potency, or the great demonish dragon of his inward destruction. (123)

Here, we can see the coexistence of opposites, both the divine and demonic nature of human potency. Sometimes it comes upon us like a glorious sensation or destructive urge. We consist of such opposites. Lawrence does not destroy this dichotomy immediately, instead he stresses that the struggles of paradoxical de-

sires within us constitute our lives. It is this dragon that “surges in us to make us move, to make us act, to make us bring forth something” (124). A void would attack the life in us should we cease to struggle for existence.

Lawrence takes another symbol as an instance of this coexistence: the “twins.” He says:

[T]hey give the two alternate forms of elemental consciousness, our day-consciousness and our night-consciousness, that which we are in the depth of night, and that other, very different being which we are in bright day. A creature of dual and jealous consciousness is man, and the twins witness jealously to the duality. [...] Now these little ones, these rivals, they are “witnesses” to life, for it is between their opposition that the Tree of Life grows. (117)

The twins testify to dualism. “They make life possible, but they make life limited” (117), and at the same time they maintain a balance. Here too, the dichotomy will not be annihilated. Instead, it is shown that the existence of opposites depends upon both their conflict and balance.

The notion of tension or conflict between opposites should not be confused with that of war. Conflict is neither a cause for triumph nor annihilation, but instead the starting point for a new formation of life. War means a triumph of one side and an annihilation of the other. It belongs to the world of allegorical interpretation. On the contrary, ancient people believed that in the middle of two extremes, the cosmos, as are humans, is always transformed⁴) by the conflict between unexpected potencies. Therefore, only polysemic symbols can express the world as a kind of web, in which paradoxical elements fight against each other and find new dimensions of life. In each dimension, the symbols have different meanings. While allegory fixes the cosmos through a one-on-one correspondence of images with real substances, symbols “may remain travelling in between positions,” as noted by Mary Bryden (109). In other words, ancient symbols resist the totalitarian regime of images. In this sense, it can be said that symbols express life as a relation, the second aspect of the organism, denoting incessant self-transformation and shifting connections with the other. This can be linked to Lawrence’s expression “the living organic connections” (149), from the last

chapter of *Apocalypse*. In this way, Lawrence continues to examine, through the consideration of symbol and allegory, the opposition between the multivocality and the univocality of life.

5. The Politics of Symbolic Seeing

As we have argued above, the dichotomy of allegory and symbol is produced through two inclinations of what life is. They can be expressed as such: life as a form and life as a relation. The difference between these two inclinations can be also described as the comparison between emotional thinking of the ancient prophets dealing with living symbols and intellectual thinking of modern politicians dealing with abstraction. The emotional thought of the former can be detected in their dynamic decision making. It is described as follows:

The old oracles were not supposed to say something that fitted plainly in the whole chain of circumstance. They were supposed to deliver a set of images or symbols of the real dynamic value, which should set the emotional consciousness of the enquirer, as he pondered them, revolving more and more rapidly, till out of a state of intense emotional absorption the resolve at last formed; or, as we say, the decision was arrived at. (93)

This is an emotionally intensive way of thinking, not accomplished through a logical chain, but instead through physical and emotional, even irrational, awareness. The imagination revolves around a whirlpool and from its depth the decision is spontaneously made. The prophet, or the seer, knew what to do in response to the intensity of the symbols. This means of prophesizing can be called “symbolic seeing,” to borrow Mara Kalnins’s words (637). For comparison, she aligns it again with the influence of Heraclitus (638).

This is also a rotational thought, the repetition of which implies dynamism and constitutes what is called “a cycle of time,” which is quite different from our idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line. Under the supremacy of the mental consciousness, “we always want a ‘conclusion,’ an *end*, we always want to come, in our mental process, to a decision, a finality, a full-stop” (93). Lawrence emphasizes that there is no goal.

Moreover, the pagan way of thought allows for a complete change in state of mind, "The old method of the Apocalypse is to set forth the image, make a world, and then suddenly depart from this world in a cycle of time and movement and even, an epos; and then return again to a world not quite like the original one, but on another level" (97). They create a world, then dissolve it to recreate a new one. This process of 'dissolution and recreation,' and concept of rotational time, correspond directly to one of the characteristics of modernism pointed out by Frank Kermode (64). Images or symbols are connected to the logic of contingency, in more precise term, material contingency. They can be interpreted plurally according to the contingent encounter with other elements in other dimensions of life. In short, images and symbols have the power to recreate the world that they are often thought to represent.

Lawrence delineates the difference between the pagan manner of thought and that of modern politics. The latter arrives at decision by staying within the guidelines of a predetermined program. It is an allegorical way of thinking. Of course, he definitively supports the former. He dares to say, "the fact that no politician today has the courage to follow this intensive method of 'thought' is the reason of the absolute paucity of the political mind today" (94). However, it is not probable that any politician today applies this intensive method, too accustomed as we are to the rational way of thinking in the sphere of politics. We reject political ambiguities, while having a wide range of interpretation is regarded as means of political deceit. Therefore, Lawrence's tactics of indeterminacy are often misunderstood. Even in the sphere of literature, many commentators criticize Lawrence as ambiguous: he correctly diagnoses the disease of civilization, but does not provide a solution. Likewise, he always finishes his novels without any concrete conclusion.

His embracing of indeterminacy can be explained by two facts. First, the emotional consciousness that he advocates resides in the body, and he calls our physical being, the body, as unknown, as the ancient people do. (98) We never know what we will happen to be. However, we also have abundant possibilities to become something. These possibilities are actualized through the struggles, not war, between opposites. Indeterminacy can be linked to possibilities.

Secondly, Lawrence must have sensed the recurrence of allegorical violence in his time. It is true that during his time, when optimism for the linear view of

historical development had rapidly diminished since World War One, political moods reflected this critical awareness and partially shifted towards the control of life. At the same time, opposing political movements also sought the one ideal solution. This tendency, in the end, would mean annihilation of difference and result in a war for total mastery. Lawrence disclosed this process and urged us to revise the ethical and political implications of allegorical interpretation, by emphasizing the polysemy of life. In this sense, it is possible to identify his endeavor as an analysis of the politics of the symbol.

6. Conclusion

In *Apocalypse*, Lawrence delineates two contradictory inclinations towards life, multiplicity, and totality, through the analysis of two rhetorical devices, the symbol and allegory. These two inclinations are two sides of the same coin. The direction of social formation is dependent upon the stronger of the two at any given moment.

In the last chapter of the book, Lawrence returns to the problem of individuality and collectivity in modern society. He calls modern men, the mass, “fragments which have no organic whole” (147). The expression “organic whole” signifies a state that is open to contingent relationships with the rest. This expression corresponds to the second aspect of life. If we apprehend life only through the first aspect of the organism, that of totality and organization, we risk misunderstanding Lawrence’s implications.

Although the organism, as an entity organized by a totalizing power, seems to represent a well-established self, it is in fact closed to outside relationships, especially physical relationships. It never fulfills a proper life. Lawrence calls this type of individual a fragment with only a collective whole. He is the standardized “average man” (“Democracy” 63), having annihilated any uniqueness and becomes no more than a composite of society. On one hand, this type of men forms the society of mass democracy, and on the other hand, raises “the idea of Nation, or Internationalism, higher” (65) and is devoted to totalitarianism. Here, from the perspective of the two types of consciousness, Lawrence clearly demonstrates the dangers of the mentality of modern man and society. He says that if we want salvation from the modern predicament, we must return to the an-

cient wisdom of the unregulated relationship with the other.

We can see the same kind of allegorical violence continue onward into to the present day without any sign of cessation. In the preface to the French edition of *Apocalypse* in 1978, Deleuze positions the USA's desire for world domination on the same line as the sentiments of those who seek the judgment of God. He describes it in the following way:

The Apocalypse is not a concentration camp (Antichrist); it is the great military, police, and civil security of the new State (the Heavenly Jerusalem). The modernity of the Apocalypse lies not in its predicted catastrophes, but in its programmed self-glorification, the institution of glory in the New Jerusalem, the demented installation of an ultimate judiciary and moral power. ("Nietzsche," 46)

Moreover, a Japanese sociologist Mita Munesuke states in his post-9/11 book that this social structure has not changed, though it has been inverted. He quotes from Lawrence's *Apocalypse* and indicates that the *ressentiment* inherent in the *Book of Revelation* can be also be seen in the sentiments of Muslim extremists, who were compelled to launch suicide bombings against America in a world globalized by the ideal of "Pax Americana." As these instances show, the problem of allegorical violence continues to persist even today.

However, it is true that we cannot draw up a blueprint of modern society, which is constituted by those individuals who live with a symbolic way of thinking. In this sense, Lawrence's claim may sound like a utopian ideal, which does not go beyond a Romantic framework of liberating rhetoric. Nevertheless, Lawrence's rhetorical strategy is not the mere rediscovery of an ancient myth, but instead the connection of symbols' active power to creativity, through which an alternative societal assemblage can be realized. This strategy is drawn from his conviction that all of the rational and coherent discourses have ultimately served the seizure of power. Of course, this criticism is applicable to his own writings, but it is true that his criticism of the *Book of Revelation* not only opens the path to a critical analysis of power, but also urges us to re-examine the relation of consciousness, language, and politics.

[Notes]

- 1) In order to understand the term “weak people” more fully, we can make reference to the analysis of this notion in Gilles Deleuze’s commentary on Nietzsche. Deleuze notes that “what Nietzsche calls weak or slavish is not the least strong but that which, whatever its strength, is separated from what it can do” (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 61). This definition can be associated with Lawrence’s distinction between he who has strength within himself to fulfill his own life and he who does not.
- 2) Lawrence employs the phrase “inorganic connections” (149) in the last chapter, in opposition to “organic connections.” Here he denotes, with the word “inorganic,” a dead connection, which “is composed of myriad dis-united fragments, each fragment assuming to itself a false wholeness, a false individuality” (147). It implies a dead end. For Lawrence, democracy is one example.
- 3) Moreover, Deleuze uses the word “non-organic” in his essay “To Have Done With Judgment” in order to express the vitality of matter, contrary to the organism as the judgment of God. It should be interpreted as “not-organized” or not totalized by the central command. His famous notion of “the body without organs” can be associated with the second aspect of the organism we discuss here.
- 4) Of course the term “transformation” here should not be interpreted as the same as the Jewish modification in the *Book of Revelation*. The latter demonstrates the deliberate work of *ressentiment*, but the former shows the spontaneous process of nature.

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SUMMARY

D. H. Lawrence and the Politics of the Symbol

Hiroko MIZUTA

This paper aims to investigate Lawrence's criticism of Apocalyptic thought by focusing on the distinction between two rhetorical devices: allegory and symbol, and show how this is central to the problem of politics and language.

The last work of D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse* (1931), is a book which criticizes the *Book of Revelation* of St. John. Lawrence discloses that Christianity is transformed into a "religion of power" because of the Jewish people's *ressentiment*—they brought about the notion of "the judgment of God" in order to justify their final triumph in the hereafter. During this process the ancient symbols were appropriated to serve their utopian vision. Lawrence considers the notion of "the judgment of God" as the predestined result of a system of allegorical interpretation. Allegory requires an Ur-narrative which absorbs any other narratives. As a result, in the *Book of Revelation*, the possibilities for many interpretations, which the ancient symbol had, were lost.

Lawrence examines the potency of the ancient symbols in detail. The ancient times that Lawrence mentions are in fact the pre-Socratic societies. For people in those days, the cosmos is always newly created each time the combination of its elements changes, and so are humans. We never know what we will happen to be. They expressed this process in symbols, so the symbols are the open-ended responses to the unknown. Lawrence concludes that from the perspective of the symbolic way of thinking, meanings are not settled only in one level.

Lawrence applies the distinction between the allegorical and the symbolic way of thinking to the examination of the characteristics of modern men and society. Allegory opens the door to dictatorship, while symbolic seeing is rejected as irrational. Nevertheless, he dares to encourage people to follow the latter way of thinking. This is because he sensed the recurrence of allegorical violence in his contemporary times. In this sense, this strategy of Lawrence can be identified as the politics of symbol, which not only opens the path to a critical analysis of power, but also urges us to re-examine the relation of consciousness, language and politics.