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# An Attempt in Edward Carpenter's Pioneering Thought on Restructuring Community

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エドワード・カーペンターの共同体再編への試論

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本稿の目的は、エドワード・カーペンターによる共生思想をとりあげ、その実践的な共同体論を検討することである。カーペンターは、個と共同性をめぐる問題を中心に、現代における自然との共生および新しい共同体の再編という課題に先駆的に取り組んできた。

人間と自然との関係性を問うということは、自然の捉えなおしをすると同時に、自己自身への問い直しを行うことを意味する。カーペンターは、「調和の喪失」している近代文明社会にあって、自己の内と外における「負」の側面を見据える視点から共生思想を提起していったが、共同体再編の実践的な試みは、その中心となるものである。

## Introduction

Research on the many different interrelationships between human society and the natural environment in which humans find themselves has become an important task in recent years. As we take the perspectives of the natural, the physical and the chemical, and with them, study the relations between human society and its composite groups, we can see that in the progress of modern civilization, there is an awareness of danger, of threat to the foundations of social life. When we ask what the true significance is of the relationship between man and nature, we must try to reinterpret what nature is and we must conduct a re-questioning of self. The governing of physical nature by man spreads seemingly unstoppable, but what of the conquest of human nature and the human governance of self? One of those who asked these basic questions was the Englishman, Edward Carpenter (1844-1929).<sup>(1)</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine the philosophy of community expounded by Edward Carpenter who, very early on, examined the problems occurring in the modern civilized society of England, where modernization first began, and to examine the practicality of his theories of community.

**Key words;** Edward Carpenter, Criticisn of modern civilization, Restructuring Community, Spiritual Democracy

In the initial stage of doing that, we must examine the occurrence of environmental problems in England and what was being done about those problems. Carpenter took up the problem of smoke pollution in Sheffield very early and conducted new practices that were aimed at recovering the harmony of social life.

## I Environmental problems in Britain

### (1) The creation of environmental problems

It is widely recognized that the factory began with the industrial revolution and it is acknowledged that the industrial revolution's threat of mechanization and the danger of injury and death caused by mechanization destabilized the labor environment. In recognizing that the industrial revolution led to increased population growth we can point to the causes of that population growth as a favorable upturn in the food supply situation, improvements in the sanitation levels of clothing and housing, paving of roads, supply of clean water, progress in medicine, and thus a decline in the death rate. Labor environment in the factories of the industrial revolution worsened with longer hours of work and less vacation and time off. We can also point to bad plant and equipment as a destroyer of human health, especially from the poisonous dust emitted from cotton textiles and from the poisonous gases of wood stoves.

The beginning of the industrial revolution saw dramatic changes in many aspects of society. The first of these changes was the rapid increase in urban population. Industrialization means the move from an agrarian society to a factory society and industrial revolution is truly the creation of a factory society, but seen from another perspective, this creation of a factory society is also the creation of an urban society. Concentration of population in cities and urbanization are also synonyms for the industrialization of society so that if industrialization causes problems for the environment, the urbanization that accompanies it causes urban problems, which eventually lead to environmental problems. There is ample data to back up the point that rapid increase in population is a feature of the initial period of society in industrial revolution.<sup>(2)</sup> One example of the development of the industrialized city is that of Manchester. In 1700, Manchester had a population of 8,000 and in 1800, that had increased ten times to 80,000, but 50 years later, in 1850, the population of Manchester stood at 400,000. By 1900, Manchester demonstrated the phenomenon of rapid increase in population at 1.25 million and, by 1950, the population had risen rapidly to 1.9 million. We can see the same phenomenon in other urban areas as well, and during the two centuries since the industrial revolution began the rapid increase in urban population has become a worldwide phenomenon.

All of the problems that are caused by this increase in population have brought on, on the one hand, urban problems such as worsened public sanitation, increased crime and misconduct and on the other hand has created urban environmental pollution such as noise, air pollution from poisonous exhaust gases and pollution of rivers due to discharge of unclean water from homes and factories. These two types of societal problems that occur in urban areas reinforce each other and have resulted in threats to the residential situation of workers who live in the cities. Of the 11,000 homes in Nottingham, 7,000 to 8,000 were built with the walls touching each other. It is impossible for air to pass through such houses for ventilation. In addition to that, many of the homes had to share toilets with other houses, and although this was the situation in Leicester and Derby as well, smoke pollution in Sheffield made the situation there particularly bad.

The city of Sheffield is built on a slope and the smoke that rises from below passes up along the streets. There were many smithy shops with low smokestacks, and the situation was very serious indeed because smoke and dust from these stacks affected the lungs and damaged people's health. One of the first people to warn about the smoke pollution was Edward Carpenter.

## (2) Criticism of smoke pollution

In May 1889, Carpenter made a scathing indictment of industrial smoke pollution in the *Sheffield Independent* calling Sheffield the laughingstock of the civilized world and said that the giant thick cloud rising out of Sheffield was like the smoke arising from Judgment Day, and that it was the altar on which the lives of many thousands would be sacrificed. He said that 100,000 adults and children were struggling to find sunlight and air and harshly denounced a situation in which people were toiling miserably, living lives unable to breathe and dying of the resulting illnesses. He pointed out that what was damaging their physical health was the extremely filthy air and the lack of sunshine and substantiated this with an official report on sanitation. Carpenter gave a lecture, at the college in Sheffield, entitled "Smoke Pollution and Remedies for it" in which he discussed those devices that would not emit smoke like the Vickers coal feeder and argued that their use could prevent smoke pollution. He said that this would provide a concrete remedy that although of initial expenses to the manufacturer, would in the long run turn to economic savings.

Many contagious diseases were prevalent at this time and caution was being recommended for the problems of polluted rivers caused by waste discharge from the cities, but there was very little discussion of the damages occurring from smoke and air pollution. An exhibition named "Smoke Reduction" was held in 1881 and 1882, but Carpenter, in the *Sheffield Independent*, was the first to take up the problem, after it became publicly known and although "smoke reduction associations" were set up

in the cities of northern England, they did little active work to promote the use of smoke prevention equipment.

.....only a vast dense cloud, so thick that I wondered how any human being could support life in it, went up to heaven like the smoke from a great altar. An altar, indeed, it seemed to me, whereon thousands of lives were being yearly sacrificed. Beside me on the hills the sun was shining, the larks were singing; but down there a hundred thousand grown people, let alone children, were struggling for a little sun and air toiling, moiling, living a life of suffocation dying (as the sanitary reports only too clearly show) of diseases caused by foul air and want of light all for what? To make a few people rich! And this was not a lunatic asylum! I descended into the smoke. The sun went out; the chimneys towered round me, belching forth thick volumes.<sup>(2)</sup>

As modernization moved forward, social systems developed and became highly advanced but that also threatened traditional social foundations and even brought on the danger of destroying them. The individual human being was being sealed within a set of hypertrophying social relations that resulted in a diminution of the feelings of reality as a human being. Carpenter was strongly aware of the crisis surrounding this diminution, especially in its links to the structural changes occurring in British capitalism.

The 85 years that Carpenter lived, from 1844 to 1929 were convulsed by the changes in society that occurred through the industrialization of the industrial revolution. The 1850s were a time when the logical conflicts of industrialization came to the surface in concentrated form and amplified the darkness and light within English history. However, for Carpenter, it was a time of many different thoughts and emotions. The problems of civilization became the task and theme of his entire life. In an extremely literary fashion, he began to take up the more negative aspects that belong to modern civilization. Through his theories of social harmony, self-realization and perfection of character, he held that only the society will exist that, first of all, recognizes the other, that has an awareness of the other, not just a recognition of the lone individual.

## II Carpenter's thought on community

### (1) Towards Democracy

In Carpenter's main work, *Towards Democracy* (1883), he states that "rather than setting up a perspective, the poem seeks to discover individual contact," and as Lewis has clearly pointed out, the main theme of the poem is that "spiritual democracy" looks to the community as the psychological foundations for human existence. He says that this incorporates a territory that goes beyond the or-

dinary sources of individual character. Carpenter says that spiritually elevating common, vulgar democracy will strengthen the orientation toward creating a connection with general politics at its deepest level and the territory that this opens brings about the possibilities of reviving social relationships from function-role to actuality-character relations.<sup>(3)</sup>

He also points out the danger that in being a “measure of national progress” liberalism must deal with the problems of social equality. When society breaks into classes and moves toward a clearly limited hierarchy, human individuality is suppressed and rule is a class-like oppression of class damage. By moving toward separation into classes and strengthening the rule of others, we become greatly aware of the critical situation in which individual existence will be violated. Carpenter seeks the life force that is the cause of progress that is hidden within nationality and to measure that vitality. We do not see here any discussions about the course that would bring about such a revitalization of the results of that course, but it does clarify the issues of equality and freedom given to the individual.

At Cambridge University, Carpenter studied philosophy and theology and in 1867 he became a fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. In 1868 he was ordained and appointed a curate. In June 1870, he was officially made a minister by the Bishop of Ely and was the curate of St. Edward's in Cambridge. Papers that he wrote at this time were “The Effects of Religion on Art and Natural Science,” but in these papers he says that the differences in each individual are attributed to the fact that the entirety of nature goes in different directions within each individual. He argues that the viewing of the same spirit from different perspectives indicates what can be called “holy individualism. In this, it is individual awareness and attitudes on life that are thought to be most significant and any action for organizational, group or social liberation that does not take that as a basis cannot be trusted and will be an inward seeking. This inward orientation is part of the reexamination of nature. The quote given below is from a letter Carpenter wrote to a friend, but it shows the germination of Carpenter's independent thinking about nature.

I have often thought of you and our conversation, while I have been away: and ever with the increasing conviction that anything which raises our deepest feelings cannot be a mere shadow...To me all scenes of Nature being ultimately the same feeling, there is a deep unity underlying all the diversity of their beauty. And equally do I believe it true that there is a spirit of what is noble and beautiful passing through all men alike, inspiring alike all their wonderfully distinct personalities.

Therefore, even if the individual admiration be perishable in its accidents it cannot be so in essence...You see that I make a medley of Kant, Comte, and Christianity...I have been preaching and have consequently got into voluble habits.<sup>(4)</sup>

Starting in October, 1874, Carpenter became actively engaged as a lecturer in the University Extension Scheme begun in the autumn of the previous year. The promoter of these classes, James Stewart, was attempting to create an educational institution that would operate for the majority of people who are unable to have continuous leisure time. Carpenter visited various area in Northern England teaching and he had taken over classes for the Leeds Cooperative Union. In the time that he was active there, he became increasingly aware of the losses that were occurring due to the spread of mercantilism that placed priorities on capitalism and that was when he began to devise a program to help save society and he himself.

Carpenter became deeply involved in the work of the University Extension Scheme and the adult schools and through those activities began a search for methods and means of dealing with the real problems in society with his actions as a man of God. He sought something that would be the bearer of the revitalization of society, and for them to move toward reform, he came to the stark realization that it would be necessary for him to change the focus of his own life. On June 27, 1874 he formally tendered his resignation as a curate and resigned from his post at the university, and moved to the industrial city of Sheffield in the English midlands.

## (2) The spiritual interaction between Carpenter and Walt Whitman

The person who had a strong influence on Carpenter in light of this internal anguish was Walt Whitman. It was during his days at Cambridge that Carpenter came across Whitman's poem, "Support of the Heart" [Sustainer of Spirit]. The first of the poems that he read was Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," which comforted him and gave him encouragement, but the "Democratic Vistas" that Whitman had published in 1871 gave him the impact to find the "Vein for New Thought". This spurred on the doubts that he had held for some time as a minister.

In "Democratic Vistas" Whitman's intention is to take the singular but common democracy of American and make it a democracy of the spirit. This is a condemnation of a hypocritical morality, a populist appeal to the awareness of equality, and an ethic of simplicity. The paean given to the common man that we see in the "Children of Adam" in Sheffield that looked out to many smokestacks, overlaps with the image of children scavenging for coal remnants in mountains of ash, was made clearly aware by him, people trying to make a living based on a situation of damage by smoke.

In 1873, Carpenter came to a conclusion as to what he would be doing from then on, and when he had decided that he would be a teacher of the common man, he sent a long letter to Whitman telling him of his intentions. The exchange between the two continued for a long time, for the relation between the two men became one in which each could talk directly to the other openly and frankly.

When Carpenter published *Towards Democracy*, one could not expect the reaction of an undeniable effect by Whitman on Carpenter's writing, although Carpenter states that he had absolutely no intention of imitating the way that Whitman wrote. Rather it seems that by emphasizing the differences in character and perspective between each of them, they were able to make their intentions clearer. *Towards Democracy* can probably be seen as the point of departure for Carpenter's thinking on social reform. The content of this poem first of all, is about what is good and what is beautiful in life, and it asks when the practical life be transformed into something of value or more, stating that it must be turned into something of value. Secondly, he presents the thesis that industry itself must be something that gives gladness, comfort and joy. From that proposition, Carpenter says that, in order to make labor a thing of joy, it must be given freely and it must have the properties of creativity. He points out, most emphatically, that labor and industry must be art. Here, "art" does not specifically mean writing poems or painting pictures, not is it an activity for monetary return, it means that the laundress who can do her work most perfectly, most completely, is more an artist than the painter who spends money and time in his creations in order to receive money and fame. What we can see in what Carpenter is advocating is a form in which the basis is not the pursuit of bread but the pursuit of an aesthetic, not a theory for a movement going only toward an ideal but a theory for reform of a new type in which one seeks both bread and beauty. One of the pioneers for this view was William Morris, but we can also see Whitman's influence on Carpenter.

The transactions in spirit that took place between Whitman and Carpenter continued for many years only ending with Whitman's death in Camden, New Jersey bedridden, after a long battle with illness, but Carpenter visited the United States twice, in 1877 and 1884. The philosophical influences on Carpenter never went beyond the territory of thought set out in *Democratic Vistas*, the writing that arose out of the first meeting of their long relationship. Rather, on his first trip to the US, he learned many things from the way that Whitman lived on the small farm in Camden, adjacent to a small pond and surrounded by large stands of trees. Living with ordinary people in nature, and practically experiencing life that was a direct interaction with nature, was a "great lesson, an advance in thinking. Putting the brakes on the scientific rationalism that was starting to break up was a return of harmony to a modern civilization suffering in illness.

### (3) Criticism of civilization

The framework for Carpenter's critique of civilization lies in a talk he gave to the 1889 New Year lecture meeting held by the Fabian Society in England. The Fabian Society in its early years consisted of many progressive thinkers, but these people were not, generally, in sympathy with Carpenter's

ideas. At that time, 1887 and 1888, the social liberation movement that the society had begun with was in transition, and there were many diverse opinions on what form the movement should take, as to whether it should be a legalistic approach or not, and the society was searching for new directions. This was a reflection of the severity of the situation at the time, and we can consider that in the backdrop was the seriousness of problems with the unemployed and the non-organized laborers.

The traditional fixed patterns of social hierarchy were breaking down, and with many diverse patterns appearing as urbanization moved forward, employment relations were changing and the content of demand was also becoming more diverse. This was also apparent in the spread of the movement strata and in the greater activity of independent movements in regions away from the urban areas.

In the latter part of the Victorian era, liberalism and imperialism in Great Britain were still closely connected and no conflict was seen between the values of Christianity, free trade and civilization. However, in the same year that Carpenter gave his talk criticizing civilization, an opposition movement arose in the steel town of Sheffield that condemned those opposed to the damage from smoke, but the legalistic arguments began to split and it was an age in which the organization was on shaky ground. It was during this time that Carpenter abandoned his position in teaching and the church and set his sights on being a teacher of the common man, moving his residence to Milthorpe a town to the south of Sheffield. He was concerned about the rigidity of the organization and set out on his own road. He talks about his decision to do this in a letter to Whitman:

My dear friend, It is dawn, but there is light enough to write by, and the birds in their old sweet fashion are chirping in the little College gar-den outside. My first knowledge of you is all entangled with that little gar-den. But that was six years ago; so you must not mind me writing to you now because you understand, as I understand, that I am not drunk with new wine.

My chief reason for writing (so I put it to myself) is that I can't help wishing you should know that there are many here in England to whom your writings have been as the waking up to a new day.....All that you have said, the thoughts that you have given us, are vital--they will grow--that is certain. You cannot know anything better than that you have spoken the word which is on the lips of God today.....<sup>(5)</sup>

Carpenter regarded modern capitalistic civilization as socially and morally diseased. Sickness arises from the loss of the physical unity that makes up health and the result there is a conflict between the separate parts or a friction between the organs or a growing abnormality of those organs, or the organism wears out. In contrast to this, our lives in modern society or "the unification that forms true society" are lost, and in their place arises a conflict between classes or between individuals, there is abnormal development of all things that violate the other, and there is a large number of groups who are parasites on society. This is seen as a sickness that every type of group must get.

In *The Healing of Nations and the Hidden Sources of Their Strife*, which Carpenter published in 1919, he uses the term “class-disease,” which he regards as the situation in which one class does not place its own interests in accord with those of the entire community, and if that class gains control of government power it act only in its own interests, actions, all of which, are equivalent to disease. Illness in the social body is the same as illness in the individual human body, there is a plundering class in a parasitic state, a state of spiritual illness in which harmony is lost. The “wearing down of the organism by the social parasitic group” is indispensable to conflict between individuals and abnormal development of all that violates others. What Carpenter is pointing out here is that out of a state in which the self is the body unifying each individual, there arises a loss of unification because of conflict and contradiction of the self, and that this is understood as illness.

Hindman criticizes Carpenter's theory of civilization as nothing more than an expansion of the Hegelian theory of historical development, moving from unification to dissolution and then to a higher stage of unification. The group report of that days says that Mr. Hindman criticizes with strong language a theory that the barbarian had few illnesses compared with today's human being and that the modern man is stronger and tougher than the barbarian. We can see in Hindman's rebuttal a criticism of Carpenter that is, first of all, a misunderstanding of Hegelian philosophy. And, secondly, from the reaction to the use of the word barbarian that is placed in opposition to “civilization,” it is a total denial of the philosophy of progressive development. There were also reactions to Carpenter's basic intention because they did not understand it, and those criticisms came from within the movement for social enlightenment of that time, they believed in the constant progress of scientific civilization and they indicate one side of the situation in which scientific civilization and the progress of the intellect were synonymous.

Carpenter said that not just the nature of the surrounding environment, but the nature within that internalized the instincts of the human being had been lost in its entirety. He believed that what was needed was a serious awakening of a sense of crisis for the feelings of awareness of the existing reality in the internal self and that no one could wait any longer to put the brakes on the situation. situation. From that, people should examine the problem of internal nature, which shook the existence of self and the foundations for that existence.

When Carpenter speaks of a return to nature in his criticism of civilization he specifically means the productive activity of each human being as a direct interaction with nature. This is not a call for a unification with nature it is completely different from a retirement along the riverside.

Do not hurry: have faith.....

Covet not overmuch. Let the strong desires come and go;  
refuse them not, disown them not; but think not that in them  
lurks finally the thing you want.  
Presently they will fade away and into the intolerable light will dissolve  
like gossamer before the sun.<sup>(6)</sup>

Realizing the seriousness of the problems of smoke pollution in Sheffield, Carpenter sought a new mode of productive activity that would joint together factory and farm for the benefit of the producer, and to that end proposed the concept of the “industrial village. Carpenter aimed for the development of productive action that would have a new central axis, that would be a continuation of small-scale production and that would be a concept of building an organization of independent action by the producer. The Sheffield cutlery manufacturers loaned out part of their work to small bosses and the majority of the cutlery workers worked in small factories or in their own homes. Taking that situation and making use of it from a new perspective would create a small-scale community that would be active communally and directly involved in production. That would make use of a way of linking the pastoral with the factory and the worker. It would be an organization in opposition to the activity of production by the large capitalist corporations, it would be an attempt that would fit with the conditions in the locality. This is what is meant when we say that Carpenter’s criticism of civilization has its pioneering practical meaning.

### III Carpenter’s restructuring of community

#### (1) The practical implementation of social freedom

At the time that Carpenter was raising these issues, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was making a full-scale examination of the issues of social freedom in *On Liberty* (1859). Mill says that political freedom up to that time was a battle to control a class that was a minority with special rights. Advocates of respect for freedom of the individual and protection and individuality of the individual under the conditions at that time, in which the major question was freedom from the state, began to realize that state authority, as indicated in the monopoly over government, could not be restrained by regulation alone. The problem Mill points to is not just the visible power of state regulations, but the important problem of psychological restriction, the tyranny of the majority, the intervention of social pressure on the individual, harsher just because it is not easily seen. Mill is the first to codify the importance of freedom for the individual not just from political or state authority but also from the authoritarian nature of social pressure. That is what Mill contends to be the problem of social freedom.

Until that time, legal intervention of collective opinion on individual independence was considered to be an issue of state action. But Mill points out that not only is there the danger of state intervention, there is also the danger, on the level closest to the life of the individual, of violence caused by majority pressure, simply because it is a majority, on a minority of the population. When talking about freedom from the state, Mill makes clear that there is greater danger from social tyranny than from government oppression. For, as long as a government is not in sync with its people, as long as that government is seen as not representing the will of the people, its use of the right of force is undesirable. The right of force must be denied even if the government using force is a very benevolent one.

Carpenter experienced the friction of traditional British society and discussed the danger of situations in which social, as well as political, tyranny severely threatens individual freedom.

The Evil--huge and monstrous as it is--is not senseless, one may feel sure. Even now here in England one perceives an extraordinary pulling together and bracing up of the people, a development of solidarity and mutual helpfulness, a greater seriousness, and disregarding of artificialities, which are all to the good. These things are gains, even though the way of their manifestation is through much of enmity and ignorance. And one may fairly suppose that similar results are traceable in the other nations concerned. Wounds and death may seem senseless and needless, but those who suffer them do not suffer in vain. All these shattering experiences, whether in a nation's career or in the career of an individual, cause one--they force one--to look into the bases of life and to get nearer its realities.<sup>(7)</sup>

This is a warning from within against the type of behavior that governs the middle class in modern civil society and is the expression of a desire for a realistic mode for conscientious freedom of thought.

Mill emphasizes freedom of speech, of the press, of work and of association and he warns against the state determining the content of education. He also criticizes the damage that bad bureaucratic practices evoke and moreover along with that, or even more than that, he infers that there is a danger from democratic tyranny. Mill warns of tragic situations in real life brought on by social tyranny, the tyranny of the majority. He points out that freedom contains within itself the seed of new problems.

The issues stated by Mill 150 years ago continue to be relevant to this day. In addition to seeking clarification of the issues of social freedom, Carpenter also looks at what freedom is for each and every individual human being, he seeks out the basis of life that will attain that freedom, and he works to re-examine the relationship between man and nature.

## (2) Aiming for a recovery of harmony

*Towards Democracy* (1883) should be considered the basic start for Carpenter's writings. Its cen-

tral theme is that the forward progress of democracy is a just and righteous cause of the common man. The common man of which Carpenter speaks is not the group, the great mass of people, but the individual, each of which has a holy self. He borrows Ruskin's words and says that if you take interest on money will you lose interest in life? Carpenter devotes a great deal of his attention to the roots of the individual human soul" and says that equality is a tool with which the individual human being gains knowledge of self.

In *The Healing of Nations and the Hidden Sources of the Strife*, (1915) Carpenter writes that the World War has brought conditions of severity that were foretold by Mill.

The truth is that affairs of this kind--like all the great issues of human life, Love, Politics, Religion, and so forth, do not, at their best, admit of final dispatch in definite views and phrases. They are too vast and complex for that. It is indeed, quite probable that such things cannot be adequately represented or put before the human mind without logical inconsistencies and contradiction. But (perhaps for that very reason) they are the subjects of the most violent and dogmatic differences of opinion. Nothing people quarrel about more bitterly than politics--unless it be religion: both being subjects of which all that one can really say for certain is--that nobody understand them.<sup>(8)</sup>

Carpenter expresses not just an awareness of danger, he also criticizes the logic of a fraudulent society that ignores the inherent natural state of the human being. Based on a total recovery of human nature, he aims to overcome a situation in which societal nature verges on danger. This is not a simple concept of Utopian recovery from danger, but a criticism of actual statism, totalitarianism and the thinking that supports tyranny.

There are different divisions of human activity, and it is quite natural that those individuals whose temperament calls them to a certain activity--literary or religious or mercantile or military or what not--should range themselves together in a caste or class; just as the different functions of the human body range themselves in definite organs. And such grouping classes may be perfectly healthy provided the class so created subordinates itself to the general welfare. If it pursues its own ends, usurps governmental power, and dominates the nation for its own uses--if it becomes parasitical, in fact--then it and the nation inevitably become diseased; as inevitable as the human body becomes diseased when its organs, instead of supplying the body's needs, become the tyrants and parasites of the whole system.<sup>(9)</sup>

## Conclusion

The building of a simple organization rooted in life is, according to Carpenter, taking the initiative in building a contemporary network. In the autumn of his years, he said:

I can see only one ultimate way out of the morass in which we are engulfed. The present commercial system will have to go, and there will have to be a return to the much simpler systems of co-operation belonging to a bygone age...To that condition, or something very like it, I am convinced we shall have to return if society is to survive. I say this after a long and close observation of life in many phases.....This is what the miners, I think, in a dim, subconscious way, have already perceived, for they retain in their minds much of the primitive mentality of pre-civilization days.<sup>(10)</sup>

Carpenter seeks not just a political democracy but also a democracy of individual emotion and he attempts to make its practical application a reality. He takes the pattern for living as a human being as the foundation of his thought and, based on that, develops a criticism of contemporary civilization under capitalism. The loss of harmony in the modern society, as he is aware, indicates alienation from nature, the self and common man. He attempts a practical means for a rapid recovery of harmony because he is aware from his own life style and sensitivity of the depth of that alienation. An orientation toward true freedom and equality, which is the foundation, indicates a universal human task that goes beyond states and nations and beyond East and West.

The basic task Edward Carpenter proposes is to devise the social reforms that will bring about a recovery from the sicknesses of modern civilization, and, at the same time to aim for a movement that will create self-determination and independence. The two may seem to be in conflict, but, they are based on Carpenter's awareness that "In a sense they establish an equilibrium, they correct each other, but they are completely different from existing civilization, and they have clearly grown from within." This is central to Carpenter's thought on community at a time in which English society stood at a crossroads.

#### Notes

(1) Edward Carpenter was keenly aware that nature was entering a critical state, and he questioned the one-dimensional nature of this ideal of progress in the forward thrust of modernization. The age when he lived was one in which clouds had begun to form over the optimism previously felt about qualitative progress in the reality of human life compared to the acceleration of forward progress in civilization's size. It was a time when the change in the paradigm of our existence from an open to a closed thread was beginning to remove the ideal of progress from the state.

Cf. Edward Carpenter, *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure*, London, 1889 p.6

(2) *Sheffield Independent*, 25 May 1889

(3) Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) Manchester and London, 1883, pp.21-22

(4) Edward Carpenter to C.G. Oates, 12 Sept. 1869

(5) Edward Carpenter to W. Whitman, 12 July 1874, Traubel, *Whitman in Camden*, Boston, 1906, p.161

(6) R. Sharland, *Social Democrat*, August 1929

(7) Edward Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations, and the Hidden Sources of their Strife*, London, 1916, pp.9-10

(8) *ibid.* pp.13-14

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(9) *ibid.* p.14

(10) *ibid.* p.15

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