

# The Foundation of Pioneering Thought of Community

— In the Thought of Edward Carpenter — (II)

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先駆的共同体論の基底

— エドワード・カーペンターをめぐって — (II)

稲田敦子

本稿の目的は、イギリスの「構造転換」期にあつて、共生思想の先駆的系譜に位置づけられるエドワード・カーペンターの共同体論の基底を探ることである。カーペンターは、個と共同性をめぐる問題を中心的な課題として、現代における自然との共生およびその具体的なあり方としての新しい共同体の再編への試論を提起した。彼の問題意識は、社会総体と其中での自己を、自然を射程に組み込むことにより、解決の糸口を探ろうとするものである。言い換えれば、「人間的自然」の全体性の回復を、「本来的自然」と「社会的自然」との調和的状态において成立させる方策を求めようとしたことであろう。

近代化が推進されるにつれて、肥大化した社会関係の中では、個的な存在は社会システムの規制状況に封じこまれ、その結果として、人間の現実的存在感は希薄となっていく様相を呈していくこととなる。エドワード・カーペンターは、イギリス資本主義の「構造転換」に連動して、この希薄化をめぐる危機的状況を強く意識することとなった。彼は、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、共同体再編の試論はその実践的な試みといえるのである。

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**Key words:** Edward Carpenter, Criticism of Modern Civilization, Restructuring Community Spiritual Democracy

## Introduction

When we ask what the true significance of the relationship between man and nature is, we must try to reinterpret what nature is and we must conduct a re-questioning of self. As we take the perspectives of the natural, the physical and the chemical, and with them, study the relations between human

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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.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the pioneering thought on restructuring community expounded by Edward Carpenter (1844 ~ 1929). Carpenter examined the problems occurring in the modern civilized society of England, where modernization first began, and 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.

Edward 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.<sup>1)</sup> The age in which Edward Carpenter 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 stage. Humanistic nature lost its absolute character and had been removed from the human feelings of an existence in reality and the human as absolute and there was no longer any opportunity to put the brakes on these feelings even within the self.

## **Chapter I : The Inescapable Relationship between Man and Nature**

Historically, the concept of nature has been in correlation with the sensibilities of each passing era, and classified as an individual social category. The current negative aspects of environmental destruction provoked by the domination of nature through technology has raised present ethical and moral conscience of people with regard to this problem. A man well ahead of his time, Edward Carpenter, being aware of the inescapable relationship between man and nature and striving to awaken this innate conscience in people, advanced a critique of modern civilization in a bid to instill his views on environmental problems into contemporary society.

The main thrust of his critical essay on modern civilization was the classification of two meanings for disease as a loss of oneness or as a loss of harmony. The first malady he defined as being brought on by the wasting of one's constitution by social parasitic groups, and the second malady he described as the falling from a state in which one is fully cognizant of his oneness to a state in which this oneness has disappeared. Aiming for a restoration of harmony from within the latter state, Carpenter elucidated what the basis of life is, and experimented with the aim of actualizing a revolution in lifestyles

by undertaking production activities in harmony and intimate communion with nature while experiencing nature that labors to interweave nature and life 'ineinanderarbeiten'.

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. 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 and 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.<sup>2)</sup>

The teleological view of regards nature as a certain type of harmonic order (cosmos) and mankind's cultural and social conduct is basically subsumed within that cosmos. The true nature of things is not an attribute of some other subject and things that are not within some other subject, are considered to be individuals. An entity cannot exist apart from the individual. Therefore, the universal exists within the individual. The universal may not exist apart from the individual. Universal things and individual things are not separated and in conflict, rather the universal exists within the individual, and it is through their transformation that the self is realized.

Since the advent of the modern era, awareness of history has been based upon trends of progress and growth, i.e., the time structure is thought of as a vertically-divided one. However, change in the history of reality in which nature is included takes place in extremely long, units of 10,000 or 100 million years, and cannot adequately be depicted linearly. It takes the form of a composite body of horizontally-divided and multilayered measures of time. An historical awareness founded on these multilayered measures of time lies at the foundation of Carpenter's criticism of civilization.<sup>3)</sup>

The two major views of the relationship between man and nature are the view of nature as teleological, which was the rule from ancient times through the middle ages, and the mechanistic view which mechanically combines nature with a foundation on which stand the methods and principles of the modern natural sciences. From the criticisms of the view of nature in the modern enlightenment, arose a thinking that aims for a restoration of the organic view of nature and sees a new organic relationship between man and nature.

Carpenter was not reticent about his philosophy or about the image of human nature derived from

it. Quite explicitly Carpenter refused to separate the human race from the rest of nature. Rather the whole universe was an expression of a purposive mystical entity. Humanity's role in this scheme was both prodigal son and savior inside nature and yet at the same time capable of viewing it from the outside, human experience was to be the agency through which the connectedness of things was to be celebrated and the shattered wholeness of the cosmos to be reintegrated.

## Chapter II : Awareness of 'the Illness of the Society'

Carpenter's publishing of *Civilization—Its Causes and Cure* in 1889, was a way ahead of its times in its criticism of the rationale of Social Darwinism. He harshly criticizes the rigidity caused by the concentration of organization and authority, but rather than emphasizing this critique is much more interested in the growth of a new humanity created out of respect toward work and human beings that will open up a hole in the present situation and searches for what that should be like. He was determined to promote life's internal creative powers as the life of the community and the awakening and growth of that awareness was moving forward as a medium interacting with nature.

Carpenter's whole life presented an open revolt against the illness of the society. The two remedies he suggested were the commingling of 'classes and masses' and the adoption of the natural modes of life still prevalent, as he thought, among the latter. In pursuit of these aims he hit upon the ideas of community, democracy, and simplicity.<sup>4)</sup>

One of the Victorian orthodoxies was an optimistic belief in science and progress, and Carpenter revolted against inhumanities involved in this almost blind faith in man's mastery over nature. His revolt, however, was somewhat erratic: disillusioned with what he felt to be the shams of the Established Church, he threw religion overboard, but he soon found himself tormented by the callousness of modern science. An ex-curate and a former lecturer on scientific subjects, he at last endeavored to reconcile religion and science. Carpenter's severe criticism against the Victorian orthodoxies, writes Edward Thompson, was 'expressed in an individualistic form'.<sup>5)</sup> Perhaps it would be more accurate to call his revolt personal than individualistic. It originated from his sense of alienation, and took the form of an effort to conquer his own isolation and self-consciousness and to restore health and unity to his personality. Hence arose his strong desire for personal contacts, for friendship, fellowship, and comradeship, which was not only whole-hearted but 'whole-bodies'.<sup>6)</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 organ-

ism wears out. In contrast to this, our lives in modern society of 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*, published in 1915, Carpenter uses phrase “class disease”, to say that when one class does not act in accordance with the interests of the whole, taking over government authority and seeking only its own interests and advantages, it becomes a parasitic body and the state must of necessity become ill.<sup>7)</sup>

He points out that when the human body does not supply the needs it requires in its entirety, the part become a parasite on the entire structure, and enters an absolutist solution. He regarded that as the true state of illness. Carpenter points out that an illness of society is the same as an illness in the human body, that there is a plundering class and a state of parasitism, in other words, a loss of harmony, resulting in psychological disease.<sup>8)</sup>

“I think it may perhaps be agreed, once for all, that the human mind is incapable of really defining even the smallest fact of nature. The simplest thing, or event, baffles us at the last. It is like trying to look at the front and back of a mirror at the same time. The utmost squinting avails not. The ego and the non-ego dance eluding through creation. To catch them both in any mortal object and pin them there, surpasses our powers.”<sup>9)</sup> He also criticized the growth of bureaucracy in *Toward Industrial Freedom*.

“Most people agree nowadays in the view that the growth of bureaucracy and officialism in the modern state is a serious evil, and that the extension of the government interference and the multiplication of laws are a great danger. We all know that the institution of the law and the courts actually creates and gives rise to huge masses of evil — bribery, blackmail, perjury...”<sup>10)</sup> “We have to realize that our present social forms are as ugly and inhuman as a club foot; and then we shall begin to realize how little necessary are these institutions, like law and police, whose chief concern and office is to retain and defend these forms. The chief difficulty, then, which arises in people’s minds at the thought of a free non governmental society does not concern its desirability — they are agreed as a rule that it would be desirable — but concerns its practicability.”<sup>11)</sup> The wearing down of the structure by these social parasite groups inevitably results in many different kinds of abnormal development that include strife between individuals and violations of the other.

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 langu-

age 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.

### **Chapter III :The Foundation of the Cooperative Society**

The communality of work has now been lost, work is used by the production system in separate and isolated units, and we see that the result is the human being itself becoming an isolated entity within work. Man and work are isolated the thin that connects work of the human being is the production system, the merchandise economy, the society. A situation where community between individuals and direct relationships are lost, is a situation in which each and every human being lives in isolation. The connections between individual humans are created as separated and isolated systems.

Carpenter experienced the friction of traditional British society and discussed the danger of situation 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>12)</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. 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. When the existence of the self, or the basis for that existence, is shaken or threatened, people look into internal

and external nature, attempting to gaze steadily into the depths in a search for something concrete. When the basis or the conditions of reality are shaken, or there are signs that basis will be threatened, nature too begins to show elements of danger. The objectifying of nature has been a central task in discovering the unknown elements, and the appearance of elements of danger changes the central task into one of clarifying the structure of the composite body of known elements.

We human beings do not simply live within groups we have created, we live in complex and intricate sets of relationships — their pattern having no particularly mandatory character — with many different aspects the most important of them being language. Nature has by this point become a means of production in these relationships, and in the same way that the relation between man and nature can no longer be seen in work, the relationships between human beings have become relationships of alienation and mere means of production. People gather together solely according to the requirements for production and they are merely placed in those relationships. No sense of community exists between human beings. The productive system is the main entity, and people have been gathered together only as a means for that production. People scatter about with no sense of unity because work is a means of the production system. And they are used indiscriminately as means of the production system.

Carpenter said in *Towards Industrial Freedom*, “Thus it will be observed that whereas the present society is founded on a law-enforced system of private property, in which, almost necessarily, the covetous hard type of man becomes the large proprietor and is enabled to prey upon the small one; and whereas the result of this arrangement is a bitter and continuous struggle for possession, in which the motive to activity is mainly fear. We on the contrary, are disentangling a conception of a society in which private property is supported by no apparatus of armed authority, but as far as it exists is a perfectly spontaneous arrangement. The main motives to activity are neither fear nor greed of gain, but rather community of life and interest in life.”<sup>13)</sup>

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The pioneers from the beginning of the 19th century on who would influence Carpenter attempted to use this model to test the concreteness of coexistence of diversity among people. Since the start of the industrial revolution, the people who had made those attempts were aware of the positive and

negative aspects of the mechanism of machine and mechanized industry, the factor that most regulates modern industrial society. They were aware that according to the way in which science and technology were used either the greatest happiness or the greatest misery would be brought to mankind, and they conceived a world in which the unlimited progress of science and technology through the industrial revolution would establish both happiness and good fortune for all human beings. In *Toward Democracy*, central 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.

The building of a simple organization rooted in life is, according to Carpenter, taking the initiative in building a contemporary network. "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>14)</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.

Carpenter fixes the structure of centralized authority, and regards the system of the efficient society in which only things that are useful are propelled forward, as an external skin that will eventually peel off. He says that he is searching for the secret of society's existence, and thinks that, as far as social evolution is concerned, society will progress by taking off and thinks that, as far as social evolution is concerned, society will progress by taking off and throwing away out of necessity this external skin that it is fitted with, and as for social progress, that we must constantly condemn the obstacles



created by the freezing of the existing legal system.

## Conclusion

Carpenter's concept of complete recovery is not a simple utopian concept of crisis recovery, it is a way of critically dealing with the realities of statism and absolutism and all of its philosophical underpinnings. It takes fact as fact and is a product of nature and reason that is supported by psychology that is in line with and does not depart from the facts. Carpenter's practicality lies in the establishment of a total recovery of humanistic nature in a state harmonious with societal nature. The social reformations that guarantees the recovery is then put into practice using a cooperative thought that incorporates nature as its base.

This theory of a cooperative society removes the state, a superficiality standing in an artificial, ruling position, and makes most important the way in which the natural and life dimensions that are based on the human being exist. In reality, the state that rules all social relationships based on its superiority is, originally, nothing more than an entity that takes care of one of the functions in socially organic relationships. Therefore, this is a theory of social harmony reduces the ruling characteristics of the state itself into those of a one function entity and creates cooperative relationships above them.

## Notes

1) In May 1889 Carpenter started a crusade against air pollution or the 'smoke nuisance', as he called it, that made Sheffield 'a by-word...

throughout the civilized world'. A letter he wrote on the subject to the *Sheffield Independent* attracted wide attention.

Recurring epidemics earlier in the century had forced public attention to the question of the pollution of rivers and streams with the refuse of cities, but air pollution which was 'equally insane' remained largely neglected. It is true that Smoke Abatement Exhibitions were held in 1881 and 1882, but it was only after the publication of Carpenter's letters that the issue was revived, and several Smoke Abatement Associations in the northern towns became actively engaged in promoting the use of smoke-preventing appliances.

Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929, Prophet of Human Fellowship*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp.83 ~ 84

2) The rapid increase in urban population in the two centuries since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution has been pointed out as a world wide phenomenon, and the examples of change in population of British Industrial cities and of world population trends after the Industrial Revolution clearly shows that mankind has directed itself toward the cities and constantly gathered in them. Population concentration has greatly changed urban conditions. This has produced two major kinds of social problems: urban problems such as lack of sanitation, crime and delinquency; and environmental problems such as air, water and noise pollution, both of the working to reinforce and worsen each other and to have major effects on the lower classes of the city.

- 3) The person who had a strong influence on Carpenter in light of the internal anguish was Walt Whitman. It was during his days at Cambridge that Carpenter came across Whitman's poem, "Support of the Heart". 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 hind the "Vein for New Thought".
  - 4) Chushichi Tsuzuki, op.cit., p.2
  - 5) E.P. Thompson, William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary (1977ed.) p.290
  - 6) Chushichi Tsuzuki, op.cit., p.3
  - 7) Edward Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations, and the Hidden Sources of their Strife*, London, 1915, p.5
  - 8) Ibid., p.11
  - 9) Edward Carpenter, *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure*, London, 1889, p.181
  - 10) Edward Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, London, 1917, p.76
  - 11) Ibid, p.77
  - 12) Edward Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations, and the Hidden Sources of their Strife*, London, 1915, pp.9 ~ 10
  - 13) Edward Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, pp.87-88
  - 14) Edward Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations, and the Hidden Sources of their Strife*, London, 1915, p.15
- cf. What strengthened this feeling of crisis in Carpenter was the smoke pollution that engulfed the city of Sheffield. He was extremely concerned about what would happen to the human being living inside those huge clouds of thick, black smoke that were rising up into the heavens. His focus was steadily fixed on those people living suffocating lives, working like slaves, struggling to get a little bit of air and sunlight, and getting ill because of the dirty air and insufficiency of light. Legal measures had been taken to deal with the situation, but Carpenter's problem awareness had been stirred by questions about the effectiveness of those laws.

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