

「人間の絆」を通じてのモームの人生観

Maugham's view of life through *Of Human Bondage*

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William Somerset Maugham demonstrates that he is from Kelt as his family name, Maugham indicates. He was born in Paris on January 25, 1874. "The Summing Up", reminiscences of Maugham's half a lifetime is a very important work in order to understand his career. According to it, there is no record before his grandfather. It begins from his grandfather, Robert Maugham. Robert Maugham was a very famous court lawyer and one of the founder of the Law Society. He served in the Society as the first president. Maugham's father was also a lawyer and lived in Paris. He had his own office and at the same time held the position of consultant lawyer to the English Embassy in Paris.

Maugham's father was apparently of a rambling disposition and was fond of traveling. He loved to visit Turkey, Greece, Small Asia and Suez in Morocco where common Englishmen seldom went. According to his work, "The Summing Up", a shell type decorated with the cover of Maugham's writings was a mark of charm against ill luck which his father found in Morocco. Maugham's habit of travel can be said to be inherited from his father.

Maugham's mother was a daughter of a soldier who died in India. After the death of her father, she was raised by her mother. Some time later she lived in Paris and was married to the father of Maugham when he was forty years old. She was of rather small stature and had large

brown eyes and thick blond hair, and was a beautiful girl with a pure heart. As written in "*Of Human Bondage*" by Maugham, there is a pathetic and pitiful scene where a mother who had a premonition of death by tuberculosis visited a photographer in gala dress in order to leave her likeness for her little children. That this was reference to his mother is written in "The Summing Up". His mother died at the age of 38. Maugham was 8 years old. Following that, his father died of cancer two years later. Maugham was youngest of 6 brothers. Three brothers became lawyers. The eldest brother, Ferdrick became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and was raised to the peerage in 1935. But it is unknown about the other brothers.

After the death of his father, he was taken in by his uncle, a pastor at Whitstable. The uncle was a very worldly-minded tyrant. His life at the pastor's house gave young Maugham an unextinguishably disagreeable impression of life as evinced in "*Of Human Bondage*". This "*Of Human Bondage*" was written in an excruciating mood. He wished to vomit the many unhappy recollections during the first half of his lifetime through the writing. So he criticized the petty character of his uncle scathingly. For example, one scene is on a Sunday's afternoon. Whenever Sunday's afternoon came, his uncle would take his nap on a sofa in the parlor to prepare for preaching in the evening. On this particular day he couldn't sleep well because a disagreeable thing happened between him and parish committee and he was in ill humor.

Suddenly he heard an unexpected noise. He pulled the handkerchief off his face, got up from the sofa on which he was lying, and went into the dining-room. Philip was seated on the table with all his bricks around him. He had built a monstrous castle, and some defect in the foundation had just brought the structure down in noisy ruin.

"What are you going with those bricks, Philip? you know you're not allowed to play games on Sunday." Philip stared at him for a moment

with frightened eyes, and, as his habit was, flushed deeply.

"I always used to play at home," he answered.

"I'm sure your dear mamma never allowed you to do such a wicked thing as that."

Philip did not know it was wicked; but if it was, he did not wish it to be supposed that his mother had consented to it. He hung his head and did not answer.

"Don't you know it's very, very wicked to pldy on Sunday? What d'you suppose it's called the day of rest for? You're going to church tonight, and how can you face your Maker when you've been breaking one of His laws in the afternoon?" Mr. Carey told him to put the bricks away at once, and stood over him while Philip did so.

"You're a very naughty boy," he repeated. "Think of the grief you're causing your poor mother in heaven." Philip felt inclined to cry, but he had an instinctive disinclination to letting other people see his tears, and he clenched his teeth to prevent the sobs from escaping. Mr. Carey sat down in his arm-chair and began to turn over the pages of a book.

Philip stood at the window. The vicarage was set back from the high-road to Tercanbury, and from the dining-room one saw a semicircular strip of lawn and then as far as the horizon green fields. Sheep were grazing in them. The sky was forlorn and gray. Philip felt infinitely unhappy.¹⁾

The wife of his uncle was a woman born in Germany. No child was born to them. So she did not know how to handle a child. Though she had good intentions, he did not harmonize well with her. But even though her good intentions were channeled to him in a clumsy way, he had favorable feeling towards her, which couldn't bear comparison with that to his uncle. In "Of Human Bondage" his aunt tried to console Philip in many ways after his uncle went to church ahead of his aunt. But the locked feeling of Philip had not melted away.

"I want to be left alone," he said.

"Philip how can you say anything so unkind? Don't you know that your uncle and I only want your good? Don't you love me at all?"

"I hate you. I wish you was dead."

Mrs. Carey gasped. He said the words so savagely that it gave her quite a start. She had nothing to say. She sat down in her husband's chair; and as she thought of her desire to love the friendless, crippled boy

and her eager wish that he should love her---she was a barren woman and, even though it was clearly God's will that she should be childless, she could scarcely bear to look at little children sometimes, her heart ached so---the tears rose to her eyes and one by one, slowly, rolled down her cheeks. Philip watched her in amazement. She took out her handkerchief, and now she cried without restraint. Suddenly Philip realised that she was crying because of what he had said, and he was sorry. He went up to her silently and kissed her. It was the first kiss he had ever given her without being asked. And the poor lady, so small in her black satin, shrivelled up and sallow, with her funny cork-screw curls, took the little boy on her lap and put her arms around him and wept as though her heart would break. But her tears were partly tears of happiness, for she felt that the strongeness between them was gone. She loved him now with a new love because he had made her suffer.²⁾

In "The Summing Up" such an actual description was not seen. About the matter of his leaving King's College where he experienced many disagreeable events and his intention to go to Germany for study, his uncle was against his intention before, agreed after all, he said as follows:

He was a weak man and arguments were specious. He did not much like me, for which I cannot blame him, since I do not not think I was a likeable boy, and as it was my own money that was being spent on my education, he was willing enough to let me do as I chose.³⁾

In these simple words sharp sarcasm can be felt.

It was in 1887 that Maugham entered King's School at Canterbury. He was 13 years old then. During three years before that, Maugham had entered a preparatory school attached to King's School. He was unhappy during these school days. It was partly due to the fact that he spoke English with a French accent as he was brought up in France. He was ashamed to be laughed at by his classmates but more due to the fact he was also born as stammerer. In "*Of Human Bondage*" this stammering was described in the form of a club-foot. It became a constant source of humiliation to Philip. It describes the process of making Philip more soli-

tary and too self-consciousness.

This unhappiness during his boyhood with the early death of his parents and the consequent care by his tyrant uncle was a strong cause for the formation of Maugham's character. His habit of a cold smile and pretended rascal was for one thing a counter-measure against persecution from outside. The reason why Maugham entered King's School is that its preparatory school was only 6 miles distance from Whitstable. But his uncle and aunt wanted him to enter Cambridge University to become a clergyman in the future. However when he was advanced to an upper-class student of King's School in 1890, he was found to be infected with tuberculosis. He absented himself from school for one school term and went to South France for a change of air.

After three months' absence, he again returned to his school. But his few friends had by then made friends with other boys. A change had occurred in the school. One teacher always points out his stammering. Maugham, therefore, became disgusted with school thoroughly. He persuaded his uncle to permit him to go to Germany for study and through the good offices of his aunt's acquaintance he lodged at a certain home in Heidelberg. It is not that he was a regular student at Heidelberg, but instead he learned Latin, German and Mathematics in the form of individual teaching from several teachers. But it seemed to be more instructive for him to meet with a company of students from many places. His interest in literature and art cultivated during King's School days was more and more deepened by this association. It was one of the greatest fruits for him to have decided clearly on his future course. During this period he enjoyed, above everything, free life and good youthful days for the first time. His life at Heidelberg was only one year but the important thing was that Maugham grew up distinctly. Of this it was written in details

in "*Of Human Bondage*". Simply speaking, he cleared off the fixed viewpoint of Victorianism and he took free ways of looking at things with realistic eyes. With it he also lost faith in formal Christianity. In "*Of Human Bondage*" the thing which will be his feeling at that time is written as follows:

Philip paused for a little while, then he said: "I don't see why one should believe in God at all." The words were no sooner out of mouth than he realised that he had ceased to do so. It took his breath away like a plunge into cold water. He looked at Weeks with startled eyes. Suddenly he felt afraid. He left Weeks as quickly as he could. He wanted to be alone. It was the most startling experience that he had ever had. He tried to think it all out; it was very exciting, since his whole life seemed concerned (he thought his decision on this matter must profoundly affect its course) and a mistake might lead to eternal damnation; but the more he reflected the more convinced he was; and though during the next few weeks he read books, aids to scepticism, with eager interest it was only to confirm him in what he felt instinctively. The fact was that he had ceased to believe not for this reason or the other, but because he had not the religious temperament. Faith had been forced upon him from the outside. It was a matter of environment and example. A new environment and a new example gave him the opportunity to find himself. He put off the faith of his childhood quite simply, like a cloak that he no longer needed. At first life seemed strange and lonely without the belief which, though he never realised it, had been an unfailing support. He felt like a man who has leaned on a stick and finds himself forced suddenly to walk without assistance. It really seemed as though the days were colder and the nights more solitary. But he was upheld by the excitement; it seemed to make life a more thrilling adventure; and in a little while the stick which he had thrown aside, the cloak which had fallen from his shoulders, seemed an intolerable burden of which he had been eased. The religious exercises which for so many years had been forced upon him were part and parcel of religion to him. He thought of the collects and epistles which he had been made to learn by heart, and the long services at the Cathedral through which he had sat when every limb itched with the desire for movement; and he remembered those walks at night through muddy roads to the parish church at Blackstable, and the coldness of that bleak building; he sat with his feet like ice, his fingers numb and heavy, and all around was the sickly odour of pomatum. Oh, he had been so bored! His heart leaped when he saw he was free from all that.⁴⁾

Now I will touch on his male friend during his life at Heidelberg.

In "*Of Human Bondage*" he comes out in the name of Heyward. In the contrast to Philip he cannot see things in a realistic way. Maugham kept company with him for 40 years until this man died. When he first met him at Heidelberg, the man was 26 years old. He had graduated from Cambridge and became a lawyer. As he had some fortune and did not like the practice of law, he came to Heidelberg to learn German and determined to devote himself to literature. Maugham was stimulated by this man.

Maugham was 18 years old when he came back from Heidelberg. He had tasted freedom for the first time. So he couldn't stand against a bondage which would be put on him at Cambridge. He felt he had already grown up and was full of desire to launch into the world. But at these times it was thought to be a very absurd to choose literature as an occupation for a boy brought up in a fairly good home. He thought his uncle would not object if he wished to become a physician and he wanted to leave his uncle's house to lead a free life in London, consequently he entered medical school. However, Mr Klans W. Jonas, who belongs to the Center of Maugham Studies, says that Maugham was at London for a very short time as an apprentice of a special accountant. In fact, from chapters 36 to 38 in "*Of Human Bondage*", such a life of Philip is described. But there is the following point in the "Summing Up".

I still remember the rather absurd arguments that were held about the calling I should adopt. A suggestion was made that I should become a civil servant and my uncle wrote to an old Oxford of his who held an important position in the Home Office for his advice. It was that, owing to the system of examinations and the class of persons it had introduced into the government service, it was now no place for a gentleman. That settled that. It was finally decided that I should become a doctor.⁵⁾

So it is hard to say which is right. It was autumn of 1892 when he entered a school attached to Saint Thomas Hospital. As he didn't enter medical

school of his own accord, for the first two years he found it of little interest. So he was lazy at school and devoted himself to a study as a writer. This period as a medical student was a great contribution to Maugham who began his career as a writer. It gave him an opportunity to observe a man unreservedly and taught him interesting aspects of the observation of man.

John Brophy says as follows in his Maugham biography.

Somerset Maugham spent five years (from 1892, which is when he began, in the notebooks, his writing career) as a medical student at St. Thomas's Hospital in London. Among the qualifications which follow his name in books of reference are Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians. These biographical data afford a clue to a sustained interest, an attitude of mind persisting over many years, which almost certainly played its part in the choice of a title for a volume of short stories published as late as 1940. More than that: this attitude may be regarded as an integral and controlling part of his personality as revealed in his writings. It is not so much cynicism as clinicalism; a dispassionate and systematic habit of observation more often found among descriptive scientists than among creative artists.⁶⁾

The conclusion obtained from the outpatient with tragedy and comedy was

But on the whole the impression was neither of tragedy nor of comedy. There was no describing it. It was manifold and various; there were tears and laughter, happiness and woe; it was tedious and interesting and indifferent; it was as you saw it: it was tumultuous and passionate; it was grave; it was sad and comic; it was trivial; it was simple and complex; joy was there and despair; the love of mothers for their children, and of men for women; lust trailed itself through the rooms with leaden feet, punishing the guilty and the innocent, helpless wives and wretched children; drink seized men and women and cost its inevitable price; death sighed in these rooms; and the beginning of life, filling some poor girl with terror and shame, was diagnosed there. There was neither good nor bad there. There were just facts. It was life.⁷⁾

Another thing which played a great role in Maugham's development was that period as a medical student taught him to see human beings as crea-

tures and governed by natural law. Maugham says

The scientific world of which I thus obtained a cursory glimpse was rigidly materialistic and because its conceptions coincided with my own prepossessions I embraced them with alacrity: I was glad to learn that the mind of man (himself the product of natural causes) was a function of the brain subject like the rest of his body to the laws of cause and effect and that these laws were the same as those that governed the movements of star and atom. I exulted at the thought that the universe was no more than a vast machine in which every event was determined by a preceding event so that nothing could be other than it was. These conceptions not only appealed to my dramatic instinct; they filled me besides with a very delectable sense of liberation. With the ferocity of youth I welcomed the hypothesis of the Survival of the Fittest. It gave me much satisfaction to learn that the earth was a speck of mud whirling round a second-rate star which was gradually cooling; and that evolution, which had produced man, would by forcing him to adapt himself to his environment deprive him of all the qualities he had acquired but those that were necessary to enable him to combat the increasing cold till at last the planet, an icy cinder, would no longer support even a vestige of life. I believed that we were wretched puppets at the mercy of a ruthless fate; and that, bound by the inexorable laws of nature, we were doomed to take part in the ceaseless struggle for existence with nothing to look forward to but inevitable defeat. I learnt that men were moved by a savage egoism, that love was only the dirty trick nature played on us to achieve the continuation of the species, and I decided that, whatever aims men set themselves, they were deluded, for it was impossible for them to aim at anything but their own selfish pleasures.⁸⁾

Reading Maugham's ways of thinking, I suppose it is reflected in the scene where the hero Philip in *"Of Human Bondage"*, is deeply impressed by reading *"The Origin of Species"* or felt meaninglessness by the death of his friend, Heyward at South Africa. He must have had such a disposition inherently but unfortunately circumstance resulted in stretching his disposition and he suffered from the surrounding stupidity and found it hard to determine the ethical significance of life.

Yet, it is obvious that he felt a great feeling of release in the view of life and the world in the term of natural science. Living together in the slums and working as an intern for outpatient taught him life covered by

no long-established custom and social mask. In the "*Of Human Bondage*" there was a story in which he treated 62 babies as an assistant of an obstetrician. Through these experiences he said, "Everybody is taught reconciliation by unhappiness of others, not by his own." The result was represented by his maiden story "Liza of Lambeth" (1897), which made Maugham decide to begin a career as a writer. For that purpose he quit the medical profession for which he regretted very much, saying it meant a wonderful source of life experience was closed. As far as his scanty money permitted, Maugham went on a journey to the Continent and wrote a travel book. In 1903 he led a life in France for the third time and came to know Bohemian life. Within his Bohemian contacts he discussed daily with the painters, carvers, writers and musicians from many places of the world regarding art and life. His life in those days are written in "*Of Human Bondage*". In "*Of Human Bondage*" the relationship between the girl and the hero Philip is described. Maugham himself fell in love, but he suffered from a shortage of money. And he said calmly in "*Of Human Bondage*" that he made an imperfect writing for obtaining money. "*Money is like sixth sense without which you cannot make a complete use of the other five.*"⁹⁾

But when his money was made, his love for the girl had faded away and he confessed that he traveled with the money which he planned before to use for love. "*Of Human Bondage*" is ended in the form of marriage. Marriage is the answer which he had been seeking.

What ways of thinking Maugham had towards life is a question which has been coming and going in my mind often. In order to solve this question, I analyzed carefully *Of Human Bondage* which is said to be his spiritual autobiography.

Maugham opens his mind completely through this work. Thinking of

the year he was born, 1874, he, in his twenties when the base of building up his character was made, falls in the time when the English literature was setting itself bravely to save itself from the hypocritical trend of Victorianism when a fin de siècle movement was shaking the whole nation of England.

Oscar Wilde (1856-1900) is one of the leading actors of this movement and among those actors he is a person most well-known to Japanese. Their catch-phrase was "art for art's sake." This art for art's sake is seen everywhere in the works of Maugham, for instance, in Philip's attitude towards life in *Of Human Bondage* where he sees life as a Persian carpet, in *the Moon and Sixpence* where Strickland chases after beauty in paintings, throwing away everything.

Maugham thinks that human life is like a Persian carpet. It means that there may be a complicated pattern or a simple pattern. It will depend upon an individual. But it is only that and has no meaning in itself.

What Maugham had an eye in his life pattern after all was to have experience of the strange fact as much as possible and to enjoy a joy and to feel torture as a human being. Since these feelings are inmate to a human being, the need of feeling should be respected as well as that of the spirit. That is Maugham's idea and his contribution to world literature.

Note

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| 1 . Of Human Bondage | pp.31-32 |
| 2 . op. cit. | pp.33-34 |
| 3 . The Summing Up | p.35 |
| 4 . Of Human Bondage | pp.138-139 |
| 5 . The Summing Up | p.36 |
| 6 . John Brophy Somerset Maugham | pp.10-11 |
| 7 . Of Human Bondage | pp.500-501 |
| 8 . The Summing Up | pp.42-43 |
| 9 . Of Human Bondage | p.305 |

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