

“... aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme.”

This extract is from Friedrich Engels, a German socialist and, philosopher as well as a collaborator with his friend, Karl Marx on the foundation of modern communism and the communist Manifesto in 1848 (Hammen, 2019). Engels’ political views would have affected his outlook on the industrial revolution as well as, being German, on what was the Prussian Empire at the time. His younger life and political view of liberalism could have affected him as well. As a German he would have had an outsider look at the revolution whereas a Londoner would find it very different as they lived amongst the heart of the industrial changes.

Engels’ book *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, published in London would have been for those who were literate and most possibly for the upper class or businessmen and other philosophers. The book was a study of the working class and their lives whilst the industrial revolution was underway and industries flourishing. Although the audience could affect the way Engels writes about the working class, he does not hold back when describing the people being in a bad state. However, he does praise the city of London itself as it is very large compared to many that he has seen before.

The key features of this source would be the fact Engels finds the visual scale of London “so impressive” (Friedrich, 1845.) and of a large scale, both upwards and outwards. He says he could get “lost in the marvel of England’s greatness” (Friedrich, 1845.). He continues to talk about the people of London, in particular the working class, saying the individuals are “narrow self-seeking” (Friedrich, 1845.) because of their repetitive lives where they work to be paid and most of it being spent on rent, taxations and having very little left just to feed themselves. Their society has forced them into being “suppressed” (Friedrich, 1845.) and give off the feeling of “isolation” (Friedrich, 1845.).

The main word that stands out in this piece is the word “atoms” as it is the most simplistic form known to humanity. This is to describe something that has been broken down in the smallest of possible thing and there being no knowledge of anything else and the stripping of humanity. This is a way of describing the working class. Being many but very small in terms of ambition and perhaps intelligence. The working class have no other knowledge or want than to be working as it was the only thing they had. There is no enthusiasm from the working class to do anything else, they were not living by simply getting by.

The significance of this source is the fact Engels points out that the people of London have no sense of individualism or humanization. There is nothing natural about the way the working class were living their day to day lives at the time. This source shows how the working class of London were in a cycle of suppression and depression with not much of a life to live, whilst the economy and industries thrived and expanded.

When reading this extract, at the time of publication, those of higher class and position in English society may have disregarded and disliked the idea of the working class being treated unfairly or being subjugated by the business owners, whether it was true or not. Those literate in the working class could have seen the book by Engels. They could have

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agreed with Engels' observations of mistreatment or found it offensive in the way they were being described as no longer being people but objects to other individuals in the streets, who had given up on trying to “seek happiness”.

In conclusion, Engels is not opposed to the industrial revolution and believes it will improve both the world and society. However, there needed to be a balance in the lives of the workers and an improvement in payment, conditions both at work and at home. Overall, this piece describes how life looked like from the outside in and how Engels interpreted the industrial revolution from his point of view.

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