

**CENTRE UNIVERSITAIRE DE VALENCIENNES
ET DU HAINAUT CAMBRESIS**

CAHIERS DE L'U.E.R. FROISSART

RECHERCHES EN LETTRES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES

NUMÉRO DEUX

AVEC LA COLLABORATION DE LA

SORBONNE NOUVELLE

N° 2 AUTOMNE 1977

G. Peter WINNINGTON

D. H. LAWRENCE AND "MODERN GERMAN THOUGHT"

In *The Priest of Love*, Harry T. Moore refers to the long-standing debate over how much of Freud's work Lawrence knew when he wrote *Sons and Lovers*; he concludes that "There is no serious evidence to indicate that Lawrence was "in the mainstream of modern German thought" (1), as though Freud were the beginning and the end of modern German thought. Leaving Freud aside, what *did* Lawrence know of contemporary German thought ?.

First of all, it should be remembered that although Lawrence spoke enough everyday German to buy his bread, cheese and beer, or to ask the way, he did not know the language well enough to read German academic prose. What he knew of contemporary German thought, he learned through Frieda, her family and her friends. Thus, any knowledge he gained was mediated through others, rather than acquired directly by reading. A second point to bear in mind is Lawrence's dislike of theory -- especially other people's. He claimed that he did not write his novels with theories in mind; on the other hand, his own theoretical expositions grew out of his novels, as Lawrence makes clear in the Foreword to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* :

This pseudo-philosophy of mine -- "pollyanalytics", as one of my respected critics might say -- is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse. The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need which one has for some sort of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experiences as a writer and as a man. The novels and poems are pure passionate experience. These "pollyanalytics" are inferences made afterwards, from the experience (2).

Thus any link between Lawrence's theoretical writings and contemporaneous German thought is likely to be mediated not only

Typed by a secretary at the Sorbonne who - clearly - knew no English - and did not submit a proof before publication.

through his informants, but also through the concrete examples of his own experience and fiction writing.

On the other hand, the influence of Frieda upon Lawrence was enormous. His first two novels, promising though they may be, have nothing of the power of *Sons and Lovers*, while most critics value *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* more highly still. Had Lawrence remained in England and married a "Miriam" instead of leaving for Germany with Frieda in May 1912, it is arguable that he might never have developed beyond a good second-rate. As it was, Frieda changed everything. Four months after leaving England, Lawrence loathed *Paul Morel* (i.e. *Sons and Lovers*) as it then stood (3), so he settled down to re-write it for the third time. He finished in three months (4). By the time it was published in May 1913, he was well advanced with two new novels, one of which became *The Lost Girl*; the other, then called *The Sisters*, developed into *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. *Sons and Lovers* was already far behind him: "It is the end of my youthful period", he wrote to Garnett (5). Little more than a year after that, he was starting on his *Study of Thomas Hardy* (6), and within two years (March 1915) *The Rainbow* was ready to go to the printers.

Throughout this period, Frieda's ideas are clearly present in his writing. Having completed three short stories, Lawrence commented that "under the influence of Frieda, I'm afraid their moral tone would not agree with my countrymen" (7). Frieda herself assured Garnett that *The Sisters* "will be all right in the end, you trust me for my own sake" (8). Lawrence was changing rapidly (9) and he started the novel again under a new title, *The Wedding Ring* (10) later changed to *The Rainbow*, which was Frieda's choice (11). "The work is of me and her", wrote Lawrence (11).

Frieda was no "Miriam"; she had strong ideas on women and womanhood (12) and she had no hesitation about expressing them (13). John Middleton Murray called her "a completely emancipated woman" and her first husband wrote letters "imploring her to renounce for

ever all her ideas of love" (14). Lawrence and Frieda had long discussions together (15) and it would seem that Lawrence absorbed a great many of Frieda's ideas. Where did they come from, and were they representative of -- or derived from -- "modern German thought"? A recent book by Martin Green, *The Von Richthofen Sisters*, (16), provides some fresh evidence on this subject. Mr. Green has had access to unpublished letters, and these emphasize Frieda's close contacts with at least one thinker of her time.

Frieda was the second of three sisters. The eldest, Else, wrote a doctoral dissertation in economics under Max Weber -- she was his first woman student -- and during a stay in Berlin in 1898 she got to know the Weber family, including Max's younger brother, Alfred. After working for a time as an inspector of factories, Else married one of Weber's protégés, Edgar Jaffe, who was a professor of economics, but this did not prevent her from having an affair with Otto Gross -- and a child by him. Otto Gross was the leading light of German libertarianism and eroticism, a dissident disciple of Freud and a practising - but sick- psycho-analyst; he called for, and practised, a sexual revolution. Green compares him with Timothy Leary and R.D. Laing in our time. Later Else informally separated from her husband and, after refusing an invitation from Max Weber to become his mistress, plumped for his brother, Alfred, who was not married. They remained intimate for the rest of his life.

Frieda married Ernest Weekley in 1899 and returned to Germany periodically, maintaining contact with her sister's friends. Mr. Green has unearthed a postcard, dating from 1907, which was sent to Else from the *Café Stephanie*, in the heart of Munich's artist quarter, the Schwabing (17). It bears the signatures of Edgar Jaffe, Otto Gross, Frieda Gross (Otto's wife), Erich Mühsam, Regina Ullmann (who was also to have a child by Gross) and Frieda Weekley. Frieda herself had an affair with Gross about this time. He wrote her a number of letters in which he encouraged her to leave Weekley and join him in Munich, but Else was much against the idea and warned Frieda against Gross, whom she no longer trusted. When Frieda finally

threw in her lot with Lawrence, she sent some of Otto's letters - not Lawrence's - to Ernest Weekley. It was these letters that provoked Weekley's appeals to Frieda that she "abandon her ideas of love". Frieda was clearly an ardent believer in Gross's ideas and, from his letters to her, Gross was equally clearly an ardent supporter of Frieda : she was the woman of the future he had dreamed of, "the only person who *today* has stayed free of chastity as a moral code and Christianity and Democracy and all those heaps of nonsense (18).

Mr. Green makes much use of this fresh evidence in his book, which is more of a contribution to the "two cultures" debate launched by C.P. Snow and maintained by F.R. Leavis, than a specialist study of Lawrence. Mr. Green's main concern is the opposition between the patriarchal principle of Bismark's Germany and the matriarchal principle of those who revolted against it. He enlists the two von Richthofen sisters as the Muses of the two factions, represented by Weber on the one hand, and Gross on the other, with Lawrence following Gross most of the time, but not to the ultimate limit ; for Lawrence, "man is primary, but only by a hair's breadth" (19). Mr. Green is more interested in what Weber and Gross may be made to represent - male and female principles - than the actual process by which Lawrence came to reflect their thought in one way ~~or~~ another, although he is at some pains to demonstrate German origins for character and scene in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (20).

This then is the context of German ideology that Lawrence encountered through Frieda ; she was no mere *Hausfrau*, and there is probably much more to be learned of her ideas than Mr. Green has unveiled. The male/female contrast that he emphasizes is eminently Lawrencian, but Mr. Green does not seem concerned to trace it any further back. Yet it is precisely in retracing the origins of the thought of Weber and Gross that we may find more of what Frieda brought to Lawrence. One sociologist, whom Mr. Green does not mention, undoubtedly influenced Weber and probably Gross as well : Ferdinand Tönnies. There are some remarkable parallels to

be noted between the theories of Tönnies and of Lawrence - far more, at any rate, than between Gross and Lawrence - and I find these parallels more instructive than Green's Weber/Lawrence opposition.

Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) was nine years older than Max Weber and thirty years older than Lawrence, although he outlived them both. Born on a prosperous farm in Schleswig-Holstein, he studied in a number of universities (as was the custom at the time) before obtaining his doctorate in classical philology in 1877. He was already interested in sociology and, having sufficient private means, he was able to devote several years to study and to travel (he visited London) before presenting an early draft of his major work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, as his *Habilitationsschrift* at Kiel, in 1881. He made little use of the opportunity to lecture, so that his appointment to the chair of economics and statistics at Kiel came only in 1913, and he retired in 1916. In 1921, however, he resumed teaching as Professor Emeritus in sociology, and continued until 1933 when his public denunciation of Nazism and Anti-Semitism caused him to be discharged (illegally) from the university. It also cost him his presidency of the German Sociological Society, which he had founded with Georg Simmel, Werner Sombart and Max Weber, and presided over since 1909.

For all his quiet life at Kiel, where he resided outside the town until his retirement, Tönnies travelled widely ; he particularly liked England, where his writings were generally well received (21). He visited America in 1904 and was a corresponding member of the American Sociological Society.

In the present context, his most relevant book is *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, first published in 1887 (22). It received little attention from anyone but specialists like Max Weber until it was re-issued in 1912 - a pertinent date for Lawrence - when it was received with such enthusiasm that it gained popular attention. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* belongs to that school of social analysis which seeks to characterize and account for the contrast

between primitive and civilized, or rural and urban modes of life. In this field, Tönnies pioneered the use of "ideal types" (or "normal types", as he called them), following Darwin, in the *Origin of Species* (1859), and Henry Maine, in *Ancient Law* (1861). The concept has now become thoroughly familiar since it was taken over from Tönnies by Max Weber.

Basic to the theory and typology of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* is Tönnies's view of two types of human will. The word "will" has to be understood in a broad sense here, for we do not usually think of "willing" when we undertake an action for its own sake, or act out of habit or inclination. Such barely conscious uses of will Tönnies called *Wesenwille*, or "natural will", because it is an expression of the individual's temperament, character and habits. On the other hand, acts may be willed to achieve a certain aim or purpose, consciously motivated by some value or another. This type of will Tönnies called *Kürwille* (from an old German word for "choosing", because of the actor's choice of a line of action), which is usually translated by "rational will". Each type of will characterizes a type of social entity : *Gemeinschaft*, or Community, results from *Wesenwille*, and *Gesellschaft*, or Society, from *Kürwille*. "Community" here covers social entities like the family, the village or the social club, which are "communities of feeling" with emotional values derived from custom, whereas "Society" covers business associations and contractual relationships, governed by the logic of the market place where values are monetary.

Of course, no real social entity is "pure" community or "pure" society, but one or the other generally predominates. Tönnies himself compared the two concepts to chemical elements that may be found combined in different proportions : for him, contemporary civilization was shifting progressively from a predominantly *Gemeinschaft* like state to a predominantly *Gesellschaft* like state, from social relations based on family life and domestic economy through increasing commercialization, and capitalism, with concomitant growth of town and city life, towards rational manipulation of capital and

labour. Parallel to this development runs the shift from the mental community of religious faith and artistry to the society of the state and national life.

After the initial period of relative neglect, Tönnies's theories greatly influenced contemporary sociological thought, particularly through Weber. They had the advantage of pointing up fundamental contrasts in human relationships that we all sense more or less clearly, and of expressing them in terms of psycho-sociological typologies. Of particular relevance here in Tönnies's association of the two types of will with male and female roles, the *Wesenwille* being essentially female, and the *Kürwille* essentially male. Such a dichotomy may have informed the thinking of Gross ; it certainly formed the basic contrast of Lawrence's major theoretical exposition, *Study of Thomas Hardy*.

Both Lawrence and Tönnies use similar terms to describe this male/female opposition. H.M. Daleski has conveniently abstracted the respective attributes of Lawrence's male and female principles from the *Study of Thomas Hardy* ; his list included :

<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
Immutability	Change
Permanence	Activity
Will-to-Inertia	Will-to-Motion
Occupied in Self-Feeling	Registers Relationships
Submission to Sensation	Refusal of Sensation
Full Life in the Body	Service of some Idea
Being	Doing
Sensation	Mental Clarity
Darkness	Light (23)

Similar lists might be compiled from *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, in which Tönnies himself provides a number of contrastive tables, for instance :

The Temperament	
of the woman through sentiment	of the man through intention
The Character	
of the woman through mind	of the man through calculation
Intellectual Attitude	
of the woman through conscience	of the man through conscious behaviour (24)

A list similar to Dakeski's would include :

<u>Natural Will/Female</u>	<u>Rational Will/Male</u>
Includes thinking (25)	Encompassed by thought
Derives from and can be explained in terms of the past (26)	Can be understood from future developments

is characterized by

liking (27)	deliberation (28)
habit (29)	discrimination (30)
memory (31)	conception (32)
Immanent in activity (33)	Activity is its realization
Bathes in sensation of existence and instinct (33)	An instrument to comprehend and deal with reality (34)
Is fluid, soft and warm (35)	Is dry, hard and cold
Is inner, dark and passive (36)	Is outer, bright and active
Turned towards inner world (37)	Turned towards outer world (38)

In addition, the *Wesenwille* is influenced by "shame" and is "believing" ; *Kürwille* on the other hand thirsts for knowledge and is sceptical. The similarities with Lawrence are not merely superficial, but go well into the details. Although such contrasts are age-old - compare, for instance, the Chinese yin/yang dichotomy, with its female attributes of passive, cool, dark, wet, turbid, etc..., and male : active, warm, light, dry, clear, etc... - it is

striking that Lawrence should have adopted so similar a system of categories soon after *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was republished. Moreover, one of the major differences between *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow* or, more generally, between Lawrence's early novels and those published after 1914, lies in the generalized theoretical framework which informs the structure of the later works. This is especially clear in *The Rainbow*, which might be described as an illustration of the shift from Community to Society. Life at Marsh Farm is a model of *Gemeinschaft*, "for farming is labour unconscious of itself, drawing strength from the heavenly breezes" (39). The woman on the other hand show signs of male characteristics, turning to the outside world and thirsting for knowledge ; with Will and Anna, the scene moves to the small town, Ilkeston, where artistic and religious elements appear and, later, nightclasses in woodwork. These are signs of the *Gesellschaft*, against which Ursula revolts, for it turns a Skrebensky into unthinking cannon fodder, the classroom into a battlefield and miners into machines, and this, clearly enough, is the world of *Women in Love*.

The parallel or affinity between Lawrence and Tönnies extends not only to the Community/Society and male/female contrasts but also to the emphasis placed on *will*. Close study of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* reveals that the novels may equally well be read as conflicts between two types of will, following the schema of Tönnies. Lydia Lensky, for instance, meeting Tom Brangwen, "quivered, feeling herself created, will-less lapsing into him, into a common will with him" (40) embodies natural will. The relationship between Ursula and Skrebensky on the other hand is one long struggle between the rational and the natural will.

It is similarities like these that suggest that Lawrence may have got to know of Tönnies's ideas through Frieda and her contacts with people like Jaffe, Gross and, less directly, Weber. As already mentioned, Tönnies's categories are rooted in widespread "archetypal" concepts or prejudices, and if Lawrence got to know of them, they would not strike him as recondite or pure theorizing for, in all

probability, they would correspond to his own feelings, although they might not have been verbalized until then. In short, Tönnies may have provided Lawrence with a conceptual framework that suited what he had already sensed. For the moment however, the notion of any direct influence of Tönnies on Lawrence remains a mere hypothesis. On the other hand, we may conclude that whereas Lawrence may not have been "in the mainstream" of contemporary German thought, some of the categories he uses suggest an affinity with one of the tributaries of that "main stream".

N O T E S

- 1 - The Priest of Love, revised edition, Penguin (Harmondsworth), 1976, p. 213. This biography of Lawrence was first published under the title of The Intelligent Heart (1954).
- 2 - Fantasia of the Unconscious, Penguin, (Harmondsworth), 1971, p. 15.
- 3 - Cf. the Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, 2 vols., edited by Harry T. Moore, Heinemann (London), 1962, p. 135 ; letter to Edward Garnett, 3 july 1912.
- 4 - Cf. Collected Letters, p. 160.
- 5 - Collected Letters, p. 205.
- 6 - Collected Letters, p. 287, july 1914.
- 7 - Collected Letters, p. 133.
- 8 - Collected Letters, p. 208.
- 9 - Cf. Collected Letters, p. 264.
- 10 - Cf. Collected Letters, p. 259.
- 11 - Collected Letters, p. 276.
- 12 - See for instance, Not I but the Wind, Heinemann (London), 1935, pp. 52-3.
- 13 - e. g. Collected Letters, p. 158.
- 14 - Collected Letters, p. 133.

- 15 - Cf. Collected Letters, p. 153.
- 16 - Published by Basic Books (New York) and Weidenfeld & Nicolson (London), 1974.
- 17 - The von Richthofen Sisters, pp. 89-90.
- 18 - The von Richthofen Sisters, p. 47.
- 19 - The von Richthofen Sisters, p. 356.
- 20 - He goes too far on occasion, turning the Nottinghamshire/ Derbyshire border into improbable Bavarian landscape ; see for example p. 344.
- 21 - Tönnies edited Thomas Hobbes's Behemoth and The Elements of Law, Natural and Politics, for Cambridge University Press, in 1928.
- 22 - I shall quote from the English translation, entitled Community and Society, published by Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1963.
- 23 - H.M. Daleski, The Forked Flame, Faber & Faber (London), 1965, p. 30.
- 24 - Community and Society, p. 155
- 25 - idem p. 103.
- 26 - idem pp. 103-4.
- 27 - idem p. 108
- 28 - idem p. 121.
- 29 - idem p. 110.
- 30 - idem p. 122.
- 31 - idem p. 112.
- 32 - idem p. 123.
- 33 - idem p. 104.
- 34 - idem p. 123
- 35 - idem p. 143
- 36 - idem p. 156.
- 37 - idem p. 163.
- 38 - idem p. 152
- 39 - idem p. 163.
- 40 - The Rainbow, Penguin (Harmondsworth), 1949, p. 45.