CHAPTER III

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Having shown man to be a victim of the social system and having discussed Hardy's Wessex novels in the light of this idea, in the later part of the Study Lawrence discusses Hardy against a certain metaphysic. According to him all great artists are fascinated by the "antinomy between Law and Love, between the Flesh and the Spirit, between the Father and the Son." If one were a moralist he would insist on the importance of one of the antinomies which was developed by his age. But an artist is more than a moralist going beyond his times. For him art must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which every work of art adheres to. It is this antinomy, the conflict which is necessary for a tragic conception.

Lawrence refers to Aeschylean tragedy in which the Law and Love are made to co-exist in all their magnificence. The metaphysic in Aeschylus as Lawrence sees it is that Love and Law are two, eternally in conflict, and eternally being reconciled. In Euripides the metaphysic is that the Law and Love are eternally in conflict and unequally matched,
so that Love must always be borne down. There is no reconciliation and Lawrence considers the matching unfair. Only in the choral parts Euripides transcend the metaphysic so that Love and Law are put in true relations. From this it follows that adherence to metaphysic makes the work unsatisfactory but transcendence makes it artistic. Artistic form consists in showing the conflict and reconciliation. Form changes with every work. Lawrence concedes that every novel must have a metaphysic but the metaphysic must subserve the artistic purpose. There are some artists who make themselves a metaphysic of self-justification or a metaphysic of self-denial and apply the world to the metaphysic, instead of applying the metaphysic to the world. Lawrence refers to Tolstoi as one who is guilty of applying the world to his metaphysic.

From Tolstoi Lawrence passes on to Thomas Hardy and concludes that Hardy's metaphysic is similar to Tolstoi's. According to which in Hardy "there is no reconciliation between Love and the Law," "The spirit of Love must always succumb before the blind, stupid, but overwhelming power of the Law." For Lawrence, Hardy's metaphysic is "almost silly" because he makes his novels conform to this theory
of being. So the physical, the body, is made despicable and bad. The fleshy heroes are shown to be weak and "Maundering villains."

As opposed to Hardy's theory of being which is unsatisfactory, Lawrence proposes his own metaphysic. According to it "every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female with female predominant." While a man who is strongly male denies the female in him a real "man" considers himself an instrument in the service of some idea. The true female holds life in the body and considers herself superior to any ideal. The male exists in doing and female in being. The male lives in the satisfaction of some purpose achieved, the female in the satisfaction of some purpose contained.

Lawrence here suggests that man in rejecting the female in him is denying his body, is denying the Law itself. But the woman is true to her body, to the Law although she does not assert it explicitly. In Aeschylus there is the adherence to the Law, to the body, to the instinct. Lawrence says that Hardy also has belief in the Law but he denies it
to his characters who are made to conform to his metaphysic that Law is nothing, a blind custom. Consequently both men and women who represent "the old primeval Law, the great Law of the Womb, the primeval Female principle" are destroyed. Manston, Boldwood, Eustacia, Wildeve, Henchard, Tess, Jude are all shown to have a criminal tendency. When Hardy portrays his characters he does so through the medium of his metaphysic. But when he looks at the landscape he is true to the law, the instinct. The landscape or the earth is a manifestation of the Law or the Father. Igion Heath in The Return of the Native is the grand symbol of the Law.

The metaphysic that Lawrence discovers in Hardy is explained in his examination of Tess and Jude. He takes up Tess to show how she is a passive and an 'acquiescent compliment' to the male. She does not hold life in the body by the male. The female in her has become inert. Although she is a true aristocrat and believes that other persons are not extension of herself but outside her she expects fulfillment by the addition of the male compliment. She never attempts to alter anybody. She leaves others to themselves. But others do not leave her to herself. For Alec d'Urberville,
Tess is the embodied fulfilment of his desire and so she cannot live apart from him. Lawrence finds this attitude very natural and common in men and says that it is the male quality to seek fulfilment. He receives the impulses from the female and transmits it into expression. But Alec d'Urberville with his opposition to the principle of self-subordination does not transmit the impulses he receives from Tess into expression. On Tess's part she realises that Alec is rare in that he could reach some of the real sources of the female in a woman and it is this power which rules her and touch the depth of her being. Unfortunately the perverse will of Alec betrays Tess. This is the reason for Tess murdering Alec. Lawrence says that Tess acts according to Hardy's metaphysic, his obstinate theory of being which holds that there is no reconciliation between the Law and the Love.

For Lawrence Angel Clare has the opposite qualities of the Alec. Angel Clare detests the female in himself. He wants to receive the female impulse other than through the body. His instinctual hatred for the body obstructs his physical marriage with Tess. Besides the instinctual hatred for the body the ultra-christian training which
conceives of woman as the servant and attendant and administering spirit to the male, makes him blind to another great living principle, the positive woman. Angel is not an aristocrat to attend to Tess's wants, her deepest wants.

Here is a very interesting aspect to Lawrence's discussion of Tess, Alec and Angel. Instead of using the conventional labelling such as betrayer and betrayed Lawrence finds certain positive features in Alec d'urberville. Lawrence says that Alec is not given to exhaustion because any warness is only a form of death. His strength derives from the supreme laws which have been handed down to him by his predecessors. The conventional morality is transcended because he is a code unto himself. So he ignores the mass of people. And having taken it he abandons it. So there is the continual "growing of unsatisfaction, a constant seeking of another woman, still another woman." This explains, Lawrence says, why Alec abandons Tess.

If Alec is untouched by exhaustion, Tess is outworned from the beginning. It is this which allows her to be overcome by others. Aristocrat that she is she finds a kinsman in Alec. Ironically it is an aristocrat who destroys another aristocrat "though Alec d'urberville was of
no kin to her yet, in the book, he has always a quality of kinship. It was as if only a kinsman, an aristocrat, could approach her. And this to her undoing. Angel Clare would never have reached her. She would have abandoned herself to him, but he would never have lived with her husband, Clare, in a state of abandon to him, like coma. Alec d'Urberville forced her to realize him, and to realize herself. He came close to her, as Clare could never have done. So she murdered him. For she was herself."

Lawrence says that Hardy consciously made Alec a betrayer, unconsciously, with the supreme justice of the artist, made him an aristocrat. He calls Hardy a bad artist for shaping Alec to conform to his own personal creed, for showing him to be a vulgur intriguer and a ridiculous convert to evangelism. While the personal creed of Hardy condemns, Hardy the artist shows him to be other than a mere sensualist, for an ordinary sensualist is much too common, much too afraid, to turn to a woman like Tess. Lawrence says that Alec is the proper mate for Tess, although he betrays the female in her. He rouses her but never satisfied her: "He was spiritually impotent in Love."
In Jude the hero exchanges places with the heroine in Tess. If Tess contains the twin warring principles, male and female Jude contains them within himself. Alec takes the place of Arabella and Sue that of Angel Clare. Lawrence finds Hardy a bad artist here as well because the metaphysic overpowers the art. The difference between Jude and Tess is not so much the difference of quality or degree, as a difference of form. Jude is disappointed by Arabella because the latter resists consummation, resists transmission. Lawrence says that in a normal woman, "impulse received from the male drives her on to a sense of joy and wonder and glad freedom in touch with the unknown of which she is made aware, so that she exists on the edge of the unknown half in rapture." This has been done to Amelia by Fielding, to Agnes by Dickens and to the pictures of women by Reynolds. But in Jude Arabella is shown to be perverse and not normal. Having failed to receive the impulse from Arabella Jude turns to Sue who is like his kinwomen, as D'urberville is Tess's kinsman. But even with Sue, Jude is unhappy because she is scarcely a woman. She belonged like Tess to the type of women who adheres to the male principle and destroys the female. The female is dead in her. So it is unnatural for her to seek
fulfilment in Jude. Since she has killed the female in her she wishes to identify the male principle and wants to be consumed in it. Her marriage is a failure because there is no female spirit in it. Though the female is atrophied and cannot meet the physical male she seeks a man who can give her the physical sensation. It is a paradox that she wants a man who can make her live but who does not demand the female impulse from her. It is this which makes her lose her husband Phillotson. She tries to fill the vacuum with Jude. Even here she fails because Jude fails to satisfy her. Lawrence accounts for the tragedy to be the result of over development of one principle of female love at the expense of the other, "an over balancing, a laying of all the stress on the male, the love, the spirit, the mind and the consciousness, a denying, a blaspheming against the female, the law, the soul, the senses, the feelings."

Having anatomised the history of human self and having discussed the tragic characters in those terms Lawrence proceeds to divide the history of humanity into two periods: the Epoch of Law and the Epoch of Love. The Epoch of the Law belongs to the earlier period and the Epoch
of love to the latter, the latter trying to overcome the former. In Biblical terms one belongs to the Law of the Father and the other to that of the Son. Lawrence says that man began as a worshipper of nature deifying her Laws. For him natural Law came to mean the Law of the Father. Not content with the natural Law man began the journey towards the Law of Love. In the beginning man obeyed the Lord never deviating from the path shown by Him. But once the path was worn barren man decided to make the path. The Law of the Father had said that a man shall eat and drink with the Lord, that "a man shall take himself a wife and beget him seed unto the glory of God," that "a man shall save his body from harm, and preserve his flesh from hurt, for he is made in the image and likeness of the Father," all of which man defied. He believed himself to be above the common Law. He destroyed the body and lived in the life of spirit. Only when the body is destroyed he will have the peace that passeth all understanding. If anybody chooses a life other than spiritual, if he is to act in the body, if he is to live in the body then he must recognize life in the other bodies. This is the lesson that Christ meant in the doctrine of the other cheek. In fact the main principle of Christianity consists
in recognition and admission of the Law of the other person, outside and different from the Law of one's own being. Lawrence says:

It is the hardest lesson of love. And the lesson of love learnt, there must be learnt the next lesson, of reconciliation between different, may be hostile, things. That is the final lesson. Christianity ends in submission, in recognizing and submitting to the Law of the other person. Thou shalt love thy enemy.⁵

According to Lawrence man has two choices: to ignore the body and live with the spirit or to live in the body reconciling his own person with the other person, reconciling hostile things.

According to Lawrence man's effort at the utterance of the peace that passeth all understanding, the utterance of the Absoluteness of the Law, the Immutability of the Divine conception is embodied in the works of Plato, Dante, and Raphael. The utterance of the Law of Love is to be found in Rembrandt, Shakespeare, Shelley, Wordsworth, Goethe, Tolstoi. There is the third set of writers who have shown the Law of the Father and the Law of the Son in conflict
with each other and no reconciliation. They are Dostoevsky, Hardy, Flaubert. Lawrence says that the great tragic writers endure by reason of the truth of the conflict they describe but with regard to their conclusions they leave the soul unsatisfied and unrelieved. Hence he advocates the need for the Holy Spirit the Reconciler, the Originator who reconciles the Law and the Love.

From the division of history on the basis of the Law of the Father and the Law of the Son Lawrence once again returns to the human self. According to him the principle of the Law is found strongest in woman, and the principle of Love in man. If mobility is the mark of man stability is that of woman. Man seeks stability in woman and woman seeks mobility in man. "The woman grows downwards, like a root, towards the centre and the darkness and the origin. The man grows upwards, like the stalk, towards discovery and light and utterance." Lawrence further says man and woman are complementary physically, emotionally, mentally and in spite of differences and distinctions they are one, united with the Holy Spirit. This is the Law of consummated marriage which every living thing seeks. This involves a certain process; man should submit to the natural Law of
his own individual being which is contained in the great natural law, that he is but a child of God and not God himself. Then the man should recognize the Law of another man's nature which is contained in the great Law of God and reconcile his Law to the Law of his neighbour fulfilling the Christian ideal of Loving thy neighbour.

Lawrence says, "He must with reverence submit to the law of himself and he must with suffering and joy know and submit to the law of the woman, and he must know that they two together are one within the great Law, reconciled within the Great peace. Out of this final knowledge shall come his supreme art. There shall be the art which recognizes his own and also the law of the woman, his neighbour, utters the glad embraces and struggle between them, and the submission of one; there shall be the art which knows the struggle between the two conflicting laws, and knows the final reconciliation, where both are equal, two in one, complete. This is the supreme art, which yet remains to be done. Some men have attempted it, and left us the results of efforts. But it remains to be fully done."

If we move from Lawrence's observations about men and women in Hardy to men and women in Lawrence himself we
become aware of the fact that his conception of men and women have a close bearing on his characters and that he is recommending himself to the reading public. Lawrence has said, "every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female with female predominant." In Sons and Lovers, Paul Morel is unwilling to give himself fully to the woman. Again Lawrence spoke of the aristocratic qualities in men and women and of the retention of identity even in marriage. In Rainbow we have the following passage:

Fusion, fusion, this horrible fusion of two things, which every woman and most men insisted on, was it not nauseous and horrible any how, whether it was a fusion of the spirit or of the emotional body? Hermione saw herself on the perfect idea, to which all men must come: And Ursula was the perfect Womb, the bath of birth, to which all rules must come: And both were horrible. Why could they not remain individual, limited by their own limits? Why this dreadful all comprehensiveness, this hateful tyranny? Why not leave the other being free why try to absorb, or melt, or merge? One might abandon oneself utterly to the moments, but not to any other being.
Here is Lawrence once again summing up his conception of ideal relationship between men and women which has been the burden of his song in the Hardy Study.

It is ironical that Lawrence, who disapproves of Hardy’s metaphysic as one which fails to reconcile the Law and love, himself fails to reconcile the antinomies. In Sons and Lovers, The Rainbow, Women in Love the battle of the sexes leaves scars on men and women. Lawrence who with Nietzsche said “art should praise” and “art should affirm” shows only disharmony. It is indisputable that his characters are simply jets of the great dark stream of energy, carriers of energy and the cosmic will but for all their subterranean vital forces fail in their relations. Hardy’s women – Bathsheba, Eustacia, Arabella, Sue Bridehead – are also moved by vital energies. All of them are far ahead of their times. It is not, as Lawrence suggests, that Hardy fails them.