

Information Concerning the Publication of the Leonhard-Frank-Gesellschaft
(Leonhard-Frank-Society)

Hans Steidle: Von ganzem Herzen links. Die politische Dimension in Leonhard Franks Werk. (Left with all his Heart. The Political Dimension in Leonhard Frank's Work.) Würzburg 2005.

The Leonhard Frank Society Würzburg with this book of about 200 pages enters new ground in three ways:

1. For the first time it does not publish a brochure with essays and treatises by one or several authors, but a book.
2. For the first time in Würzburg in this book the author tries to consider und to interpret the whole literary work of Frank in the literary and historical respects.
3. With his illustrations the sculptor and painter Jürgen Hochmuth gives artistic answers to the poet's work and the author's interpretation.

The author Dr. Hans Steidle, master of German, history and social science at a secondary school, for almost 20 years has published books and essays about the history, cultural history and literature of Würzburg, but he is also the author of textbooks. He also makes guided tours and lectures. The life and the work of the writer Leonhard Frank (1882-1961) born in Würzburg can be considered as one central point of his activities.

Leonhard Frank has interpreted his literary work, but also his life in the autobiographic novel "Links wo das Herz ist" under the aspect of the emotional socialism. Steidle critically accepts this demand and the self-image of Frank and in the experiences with his mother and the teacher of the elementary school he presents the cause for the life motives of Fran's work. "Love" and "Fight against Injustice". After a review of Frank's life and work Steidle researches the early work, the literary work during the Weimarer Republik and that of the exile and the return after 1950. He includes Frank's idea of man and world in the actions of characters of the novels and tales – in the tradition of political thinking and literary treatment of motives. In a summary the results are united in the conclusion that Frank's humanistic concern and his endeavour to take a clear position concerning up to date questions of the time prove the poet to be up to date even now in the basic attitude of engagement and the problems dealt with.

A surprising result of the search is that Frank's work cannot be unilaterally related to socialist or even tendentious criticism. Departing from the conception "Gegenwelt" (inner counter world) Steidle shows how Frank first describes the failed flight of an artist from the authoritative society before 1914. The experience of World War I made Frank as a revolutionary pacific writer very affectively get his first summit as an engaged writer in the collection of tales "Der Mensch ist gut" ("Man is good").The radical criticism of humanity is to lead to a revolution of love.

At the beginning of the Weimarer Republik Frank concretizes the conception of Gegenwelt to build up or fight for a socialist society. But in the second half Frank puts the subject of fulfilled love between two people more and more into the centre of his

work in novels such as “Das Ochsenfurter Männerquartett” and “Karl und Anna”. In the maintenance of an irrational and fateful power his concept of love goes back to Romanticism. Does love at first sight for the “dream companion” also allow to break with social conventions? Frank changed the revolution of love into a private project. At the beginning of the thirties Frank again takes up the subject of pauperisation in the important novel about workless people “Von Drei Millionen Drei” (Three Of Three Millions).

From 1933 to 1950 in exile, Frank late begins fruitful literary work, which also deals with national socialism. With “Die deutsche Novelle” (The German Story) and “Die Jünger Jesu („The Disciples of Jesus“) Frank refers to the political works of the early Weimar Republic. In the era of the cold war, due to his open socialist option and the consequent demand of the national socialist criminals, he is in opposition to west integration and against the anticommunism of the whole Adenauer era. For that reason the cultural policy of the DDR promotes the publication of Frank’s work as that of a humanist and socialist writer. For decades this situation prevented an unprejudiced reception of Frank in the old federal republic and in Würzburg, his native town, so that today he is unjustly numbered among the almost forgotten poets of the 20th century.

The book explains the motives and the development in Frank’s literary work. The term “political dimension” underwrites that the inquiry has not only to be related to political position and tendency, but also to the political importance of demands, characters and actions. In this sense the integration into the conception “emotional socialism” is acceptable.

The book addresses a politically and literally interested public. It also tries to attract those readers, who do not well know Frank’s life and work. It refers the manifold incorporation of Frank’s literary work into the German literature tradition without being complete, but for the purpose of comparing explanation. The book is also appropriate for scientific work, because it has many new possibilities of interpreting Frank, which the author developed from his reading and by means of concrete passages.

With his illustrations Jürgen Hochmuth gives an artistic answer to the ideas of the poet and the interpretations of Mr. Steidle. The artist refers to firm elements such as the cross, the lattice, Frank’s face and handwriting, which are quoted in all illustrations. Through this artistic level a proper discussion is opened, which goes beyond that of the author with Frank’s work.

The book can be bought in book-shops and at the Leonhard-Frank-Society and costs 12 € (plus the mail costs).