

The novel hero's psychology is the field of action of the demonic. Biological and sociological life has a profound tendency to remain within its own immanence; men want only to live, structures want to remain intact; and because of the remoteness, the absence of an effective God, the indolent self-complacency of this quietly decaying life would be the only power in the world if men did not sometimes fall prey to the power of the demon and overreach themselves in ways that have no reason and cannot be explained by reason, challenging all the psychological or sociological foundations of their existence. Then, suddenly, the God-forsakenness of the world reveals itself as a lack of substance, as an irrational mixture of density and permeability. What previously seemed to be very solid crumbles like dry clay at the first contact with a man possessed by a demon, and the empty transparency behind which attractive landscapes were previously to be seen is suddenly transformed into a glass wall against which men beat in vain, like bees against a window, incapable of breaking through, incapable of understanding that the way is barred.

The writer's irony is a negative mysticism to be found in times without a god. It is an attitude of *docta ignorantia* towards meaning, a portrayal of the kindly and malicious workings of the demons, a refusal to comprehend more than the mere fact of these workings; and in it there is the deep certainty, expressible only by form-giving, that through not-desiring-to-know and not-being-able-to-know he has truly encountered, glimpsed and grasped the ultimate, true substance, the present, non-existent God. This is why irony is the objectivity of the novel.

'To what extent are a writer's characters objective?' asks Hebbel. 'To the extent that man is free in his relationship to God.' A mystic is free when he has renounced himself and is totally dissolved in God; a hero is free when, proud as Lucifer, he has achieved perfection in himself and out of

himself, when, for the sake of his soul's free activity, he has banished all half-measures from the world whose ruler he has become because of his fall. Normative man has achieved freedom in his relationship to God because the lofty norms of his actions and of his substantial ethic are rooted in the existence of the all-perfecting God, are rooted in the idea of redemption, because they remain untouched in their innermost essence by whoever dominates the present, be he God or demon. But the realisation of the normative in the soul or the work cannot be separated from its substratum which is the present (in the historico-philosophical sense), without jeopardising its most specific strength, its constitutive relatedness with its object. Even the mystic who aspires to the experience of a final and unique Godhead outside all formed concepts of a God, and who achieves such an experience, is still tied to the present God of his time; and in so far as his experience is perfected and becomes a work, it is perfected within the categories prescribed by the historico-philosophical position of the world's clock. Thus his freedom is subject to a double categorical dialectic, a theoretical and a historico-philosophical one; that part of it which is the most specific essence of freedom—the constitutive relation to redemption—remains inexpressible; everything that can be expressed and given form bears witness to this double servitude.

The detour by way of speech to silence, by way of category to essence, is unavoidable: when the historical categories are not sufficiently developed, the wish to achieve immediate silence must inevitably lead to mere stuttering. But when the form is perfectly achieved, the writer is free in relation to God because in such a form, and only in it, God himself becomes the substratum of form-giving, homogeneous with and equivalent to all the other normatively given elements of form, and is completely embraced by its system of categories. The writer's existence and its very quality are deter-

## THE THEORY OF THE NOVEL

mined by the normative relationship which he as the form-giver has with the structural forms—by the value technically assigned to him for structuring and articulating the work. But such subsuming of God under the technical concept of the 'material authenticity' of a form reveals the double face of an artistic creation and shows its true place in the order of metaphysically significant works: such perfect technical immanence has as its precondition a constitutive relationship (which is normatively, but not psychologically, a preliminary one) to ultimate transcendent existence. The reality-creating, transcendental form can only come into being when a true transcendence has become immanent within it. An empty immanence, which is anchored only in the writer's experience and not, at the same time, in his return to the home of all things, is merely the immanence of a surface that covers up the cracks but is incapable of retaining this immanence and must become a surface riddled with holes.

For the novel, irony consists in this freedom of the writer in his relationship to God, the transcendental condition of the objectivity of form-giving. Irony, with intuitive double vision, can see where God is to be found in a world abandoned by God; irony sees the lost, utopian home of the idea that has become an ideal, and yet at the same time it understands that the ideal is subjectively and psychologically conditioned, because that is its only possible form of existence; irony, itself demonic, apprehends the demon that is within the subject as a metasubjective essentiality, and therefore, when it speaks of the adventures of errant souls in an inessential, empty reality, it intuitively speaks of past gods and gods that are to come; irony has to seek the only world that is adequate to it along the *via dolorosa* of interiority, but is doomed never to find it there; irony gives form to the malicious satisfaction of God the creator at the failure of man's weak rebellions against his mighty, yet worthless creation and, at the same time, to the inexpressible suffering

## THE CONDITIONING OF THE NOVEL

of God the redeemer at his inability to re-enter that world. Irony, the self-surmounting of a subjectivity that has gone as far as it was possible to go, is the highest freedom that can be achieved in a world without God. That is why it is not only the sole possible *a priori* condition for a true, totality-creating objectivity but also why it makes that totality—the novel—the representative art-form of our age: because the structural categories of the novel constitutively coincide with the world as it is today.