II

ATTEMPT AT A TYPOLOGY OF THE NOVEL FORM

I

Abstract Idealism

THE ABANDONMENT of the world by God manifests itself in the incommensurability of soul and work, of interiority and adventure—in the absence of a transcendental 'place' allotted to human endeavour. There are, roughly speaking, two types of such incommensurability: either the world is narrower or it is broader than the outside world assigned to it as the arena and substratum of its actions.

In the first case, the demonic character of the problematic individual setting out on his adventurous course is more clearly visible than in the second case, but, at the same time, his inner problematic is less sharply obvious; his failure in the face of reality looks at first glance like a merely outward failure. The demonism of the narrowing of the soul is the demonism of abstract idealism. It is the mentality which chooses the direct, straight path towards the realisation of the ideal; which, dazzled by the demon, forgets the existence of any distance between ideal and idea, between psyche and soul; which, with the most authentic and unshakeable faith, concludes that the idea, because it *should be*, necessarily *must be*, and, because reality does not satisfy this *a priori* demand, thinks that reality is bewitched by evil demons and that the spell can be broken and reality can be redeemed either by finding a magic password or by courageously fighting the evil forces.

The structure-determining problematic of this type of hero consists, therefore, in the complete absence of an inner problematic and, consequently, in the complete lack of any transcendental sense of space, i.e. of the ability to experience distances as realities.

Achilles or Odysseus, Dante or Arjuna—precisely because they are guided along their paths by gods—realise that if they lacked this guidance, if they were without divine help, they would be powerless and helpless in the face of mighty enemies. The relationship between the objective and subjective worlds is therefore maintained in adequate balance: the hero is rightly conscious of the superiority of the opposing outside world; yet despite this innermost modesty he can triumph in the end because his lesser strength is guided to victory by the highest power in the world; the forces of the imaginary and the real correspond with one another; the victories and defeats are not contradictory to either the actual or the ideal world order.

When this instinctive sense of distance, which is an essential factor in the complete life-immanence, in the 'health' of the epic, is lacking, the relationship between the subjective and the objective worlds becomes paradoxical; because the active soul, the soul that matters from the point of view of the epic, is narrowed, the world—as the substratum of its actions—likewise becomes narrower for that soul than it is in reality. But since this reduction of the world and every action which follows from it and which is aimed only at the reduced world must fall short of the real centre of the outside world, and since, too, such an attitude is of necessity a subjective one, leaving the essence of the world untouched and offering only a distorted image of it, all that opposes the soul must come from sources which are completely heterogeneous from it. Thus action and opposition have neither scope nor quality—neither reality nor orientation—in common. Their relationship to one another is not one of true struggle but only of a grotesque failure to meet, or an equally grotesque clash conditioned by reciprocal misunderstandings. The narrowing of the soul of which we speak is brought about by its demonic obsession by an existing idea which it posits as the only, the most ordinary reality. The content and in-

tensity of the actions which follows from this obsession therefore elevate the soul into the most genuinely sublime regions whilst at the same time accentuating and confirming the grotesque contradictions between the imagined and the real. And this is the action of the novel. The novel's discrete-heterogeneous nature is revealed here with maximum vividness; the sphere of the soul—of psychology—and the sphere of action no longer have anything whatosever in common.

Furthermore, in neither of the two spheres is there an element of immanent progress or development, either within itself or arising from relationships with the other. The soul is at rest in the transcendent existence it has achieved on the far side of all problems; no doubts, no search, no despair can arise within it so as to take it out of itself and set it in motion. Its grotesque, vain struggles to realise itself in the outside world will not really touch such a soul; nothing can shake it in its inner certitude, because it is imprisoned in its safe world—because it is incapable of experiencing anything. The complete absence of an inwardly experienced problematic transforms such a soul into pure activity. Because it is at rest within its essential existence, every one of its impulses becomes an action aimed at the outside. The life of a person with such a soul becomes an uninterrupted series of adventures which he himself has chosen. He throws himself into them because life means nothing more to him than the successful passing of tests. His unquestioning, concentrated interiority forces him to translate that interiority—which he considers to be the average, everyday nature of the real world—into actions; in respect of this aspect of his soul he is incapable of any contemplation; he lacks any inclination or possibility of inward-turned activity. He has to be an adventurer. Yet the world he is obliged to choose as the arena for his adventures is a curious mixture of the richly organic, which is completely alien to ideas, and of those self-same ideas (the ideas

which lead their purely transcendent life inside his soul) petrified into social convention. This is what makes it possible for his actions to be spontaneous and ideological at the same time: the world he finds is not only full of life, but also full of the semblance of the very life which exists inside him as the only essential life. However, this capacity of the world to be misunderstood is also the reason why he can so grotesquely act at cross-purposes with it: the semblance of an idea collapses in face of the absurd, petrified ideal, and the real nature of the existing world, the self-maintaining, organic life that is alien to all ideas, assumes its appropriate all-dominant position.

It is here that the ungodly, demonic character of such an obsession is most clearly revealed, but so also is its likewise demonic, confusing and fascinating resemblance to the divine. The hero's soul is at rest, rounded and complete within itself like a work of art or a divinity; but this mode of being can only express itself in the outside world by means of inadequate adventures which contain no counter-force within them precisely because the hero is so maniacally imprisoned in himself; and this isolation, which makes the soul resemble a work of art, also separates it from all outside reality and from all those other areas of the soul which have not been seized by the demon. Thus a maximum of inwardly attained meaning becomes a maximum of senselessness and the sublime turns to madness, to monomania.

Such a structure of the soul completely atomises the mass of possible actions. Because of the purely reflexive nature of the soul's interiority, outside reality remains quite untouched by it, and reveals itself 'as it really is' only as an opposition to every one of the hero's actions. Nevertheless this outside reality is no more than a sluggish, formless, meaningless mass entirely lacking any capacity for planned and consistent counter-action, and the hero in his demonic search for adventure arbitrarily and disconnectedly selects those moments

of this 'reality' which he thinks most suitable for 'proving himself'. Thus the hero's psychological rigidity and the mass of action which has been atomised into a series of isolated adventures mutually determine one another and, as a result, clearly reveal the risk inherent in this type of novel: the risk of 'bad' abstraction, 'bad' infinity.

The reason why this danger is avoided in *Don Quixote*, the immortal objectivation of this type of hero, lies not only in Cervantes' genius and the extraordinary tact with which he overcomes the danger by means of the impenetrably deep yet radiantly sensuous interweaving of divinity with madness in Don Quixote's soul, but also in the historico-philosophical moment at which the work was written. It is more than a mere accident of history that *Don Quixote* was intended as a parody of the chivalrous novels, and its relation to them is more than an essayistic one. The chivalrous novel had succumbed to the fate of every epic that wants to maintain and perpetuate a form by purely formal means after the transcendental conditions for its existence have already been condemned by the historico-philosophical dialectic. The chivalrous novel had lost its roots in transcendent being, and the forms, which no longer had any immanent function, withered away, became abstract, because their strength, which had been intended for the creation of objects, was exhausted by its own objectlessness. The great epic was replaced by entertainment literature. Yet behind the empty shell of these dead forms there had once been a pure and genuine major art form, even if a problematic one: the chivalrous epic of the Middle Ages.

We have here the curious case of a novel form existing in a period whose absolute belief in God really encouraged the epic. It is the great paradox of the Christian universe that the fragmentariness, the normatively imperfect nature of earthly life, its enslavement by error and sin, is opposed by the eternally present theodicy of the life of the beyond. Dante

succeeded in capturing this dual world-totality in the purely epic form of the *Divina Commedia*. Other epic writers, who remained on earth, had to leave the transcendent in a state of artificially untouched transcendence and so could only create sentimentally conceived life-totalities which were desired but which lacked any existing immanence of meaning. They created novels, not epics.

The unique quality of these novels, their dreamlike beauty and magic grace, consists in the fact that all the seeking which is in them is, after all, only a semblance of seeking. Every errant step of their heroes is guided and made safe by an unfathomable, metaformal grace; distance, losing its objective reality, is turned into a darkly beautiful ornament, and the leap necessary to bridge it is turned into a dance-like gesture—both distance and leap are transformed into purely decorative elements. These novels are in substance vast fairy-tales, for in them transcendence is not captured, made immanent and absorbed in the object-creating, transcendental form, but remains in its undiluted transcendence; the shadow of transcendence decoratively fills the cracks of earthly life and turns the matter of life—because of the dynamic homogeneity of every true work of art—into a substance that is likewise woven out of shadows. In the Homeric epics the omnipotence of the purely human category of life embraced both men and gods and made purely human beings out of them. Here it is the elusive divine principle that dominates, with the same omnipotence, both the life of man and its need to go outside itself, to complement itself; and this creates a flatness, robs the human characters of all relief, transforms them into pure surface.

The safe, rounded irrationality of the entire cosmos, as reflected in these novels, makes the glimpsed shadow of God appear demonic: he cannot be comprehended and fitted into some kind of order from the perspective of earthly life, and therefore he cannot reveal himself as God. Nor is it

possible, as it was in Dante—because these novels are centred on earthly life—to use God as the starting point for finding and uncovering the constitutive unity of all existence. The chivalrous novels against which *Don Quixote* was in the first place a polemic and which it parodied had lost the necessary transcendent relationship, and given this loss—unless everything, as in Ariosto, was to become pure, ironically elegant play—their mysterious and fairy-tale like surfaces were bound to degenerate into banal superficiality. Cervantes' creative criticism of the triviality of the chivalrous novel leads us once more to the historico-philosophical sources of this genre. The subjectively incomprehensible, objectively secure existence of the idea is transformed into a subjectively clear, fanatically maintained existence, lacking any objective relationship. The God who, because of the inadequacy of the material enfolding him, could only appear as a demon, actually becomes a demon, arrogating to himself the role of God, in a world forsaken by providence and lacking transcendental orientation. This world is the same one which God had previously transformed into a dangerous but wonderful magic garden; now, turned into prose by evil demons, this world yearns to be transformed back again into a magic garden by faithful heroes. That which, in the fairy-tale, had only to be guarded against so as to preserve the beneficent spell, here becomes positive action, becomes a struggle for the existing paradise of a fairy-tale reality which awaits the redeeming word.

Thus the first great novel of world literature stands at the beginning of the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world; when man became lonely and could find meaning and substance only in his own soul, whose home was nowhere; when the world, released from its paradoxical anchorage in a beyond that is truly present, was abandoned to its immanent meaninglessness; when the power of what is—reinforced by the utopian links, now degraded to mere

existence—had grown to incredible magnitude and was waging a furious, apparently aimless struggle against the new forces which were as yet weak and incapable of revealing themselves or penetrating the world. Cervantes lived in the period of the last, great and desperate mysticism, the period of a fanatical attempt to renew the dying religion from within; a period of a new view of the world rising up in mystical forms; the last period of truly lived but already disoriented, tentative, sophisticated, occult aspirations.

It was the period of the demons let loose, a period of great confusion of values in the midst of an as yet unchanged value system. And Cervantes, the faithful Christian and naïvely loyal patriot, creatively exposed the deepest essence of this demonic problematic: the purest heroism is bound to become grotesque, the strongest faith is bound to become madness, when the ways leading to the transcendental home have become impassable; reality does not have to correspond to subjective evidence, however genuine and heroic. The profound melancholy of the historical process, of the passing of time, speaks through this work, telling us that even a content and an attitude which are eternal must lose their meaning when their time is past: that time brushes aside even the eternal. *Don Quixote* is the first great battle of interiority against the prosaic vulgarity of outward life, and the only battle in which interiority succeeded, not only to emerge unblemished from the fray, but even to transmit some of the radiance of its triumphant, though admittedly self-ironising, poetry to its victorious opponent.

Don Quixote—like almost any truly great novel—had to remain the only important objectivation of its type. This particular mixture of poetry and irony, the sublime and the grotesque, divinity and monomania, was so strongly bound up with the historical moment that the same type of mental structure was bound to manifest itself differently at other times and was never again to reach the same epic significance.

The adventure novels which took over its purely artistic form became just as devoid of ideas as its immediate predecessors, the chivalrous novels. They, too, lost the only fruitful tension—a transcendental one—and either replaced it by a purely social tension or simply found the motivation for action in a spirit of adventure for adventure's sake. In either case, and despite the genuinely great talent of some of the writers involved, an ultimate triviality, an ever-increasing similarity between the great novel and the entertainment novel, and the final merging of the two could not be avoided. As the world becomes more and more prosaic, as the active demons withdraw from the world leaving the arena free to the dull opposition of an inchoate mass to any kind of interiority, the demonically narrowed soul faces a new dilemma: either it must give up all relationship to life or it must lose its immediate roots in the true world of ideas.

The great dramas of German idealism chose the first path. Abstract idealism lost even the most inadequate relationship to life; in order to come out of its subjectivity and prove itself in struggle and defeat, it needed the pure essential sphere of the drama: interiority and the world had come to be at such cross-purposes with one another that their situation could be given as a form of totality only as part of a dramatic reality specially designed and constructed to that end. Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*, artistically a major work, shows to what degree the situation of the time demanded that the hero's psychology should become a matter of purely individual pathology, so that the epic form had to become that of the novella. In this form, as in any dramatic form-giving, the profound interpenetration of the sublime and the grotesque must give place to the purely sublime: the monomania is so acute, the abstraction so extreme, the idealism inevitably becomes so thin, so contentless, so generalised, that the characters move very near the frontier of unconscious comedy

and the smallest attempt at irony would banish the sublime and transform them into embarrassingly comic figures. (Brand, Stockmann and Gregers Werle are cautionary examples of this possibility.) Marquis Posa, the true descendant of Don Quixote, lives in an entirely different form from his ancestor's and, in terms of art, the problems of the destiny of these two souls which are so alike are utterly different.

If the narrowing of the soul is a purely psychological phenomenon, if it has lost any visible relation to the existence of the world of ideas, then it has also lost the ability to be the sustaining centre of an epic totality. In this case the inadequacy of the relation between the hero and the outside world is further intensified, but in addition to the *actual* inadequacy (which in *Don Quixote* has been merely the grotesque counterpart of an adequacy that was continually demanded and insisted upon as *ideal*), there is also an inadequacy *at the level of ideas*: the contact between the hero and the outside world becomes a purely peripheral one: the hero is merely a necessary secondary figure adorning a totality and contributing to its construction, but remaining only a brick in the edifice, never its centre. The consequent danger, artistically speaking, is that the centre which is now needed has to be something that has meaning and value, but not something which transcends the immanence of life. This change in transcendental attitude means in terms of artistic method that the source of humour is no longer the same as that of poetry and the sublime. Grotesquely depicted characters either become innocuously comic, or else the narrowing of their souls, their all-devouring concentration upon a single point of existence, which no longer has anything to do with the world of ideas, produces pure demonism, and the characters, however humorously treated, become representatives of the 'bad' principle or of the pure absence of ideas.

This negativity of the central characters requires a positive

counterweight and, most unhappily for the modern humorous novel, this 'positive' counterweight can be nothing else but the objectivation of the bourgeois concept of decent behaviour. A true relation between this 'positive' element and the world of ideas would destroy the immanence of meaning in life, and, with it, the novel form. Cervantes (and, among his successors, perhaps Sterne) was able to create such immanence only by blending the sublime with the humorous, the narrowing of the soul with its relationship to transcendence. This is the artistic reason why Dickens' novels, so marvellously rich in comic characters, seem in the end so flat and moralistic. He had to make his heroes come to terms, without conflict, with the bourgeois society of his time and, for the sake of poetic effect, to surround the qualities needed for this purpose with a false, or anyway inadequate, poetic glow. Gogol's *Dead Souls* had to remain a fragment for probably the same reason: it was impossible from the start to find a 'positive' counterweight to Chichikov, a character who is, artistically speaking, wonderfully fertile and well-realised, yet undeniably 'negative'. In order to create a real totality such as Gogol's authentically epic intention demanded, a balance was absolutely essential; without it, the novel could not achieve epic objectivity or epic reality: it would remain a purely subjective work or a satirical tract.

The outside world today has become so exclusively conventional that everything, positive or negative, humorous or poetic, can take place only within the sphere of convention. The demonically humorous is nothing other than a distorted exaggeration of certain aspects of convention or its immanent (and therefore in turn conventional) denial and rejection; and the 'positive' is a coming-to-terms with it, the semblance of an organic life within limits clearly laid down by convention.

(This historico-philosophically determined conventionality of the modern humorous novel should not be confused with

the form-determined and therefore timeless conventions of dramatic comedy. In the latter, certain conventional forms of social life are merely the formal-symbolic conclusions of the rounded essential sphere of the drama. When all the major characters with the exception of the unmasked hypocrites and villains marry one another at the end of the great comedies, this is just as much a symbolic ceremony as the hero's death at the end of tragedy; both are no more than symbols indicating the drawing of a boundary, the drawing of the sharp outline required by the sculptural essentiality of the drama. It is a characteristic fact that as the conventionality of real life and of the epic increases, so the endings of comedies become less and less conventional. *The Broken Jug* and *The Inspector-General* can still use the old unmasking technique, but *The Parisienne*—not to mention Hauptmann's or Shaw's comedies—is as contourless and unfinished as today's tragedies, which do not end with the hero's death.)

Balzac chose a completely different path towards epic immanence. For him the subjective-psychological demonism which is characteristic of his work is an ultimate reality, the principle of all essential action which objectivises itself in heroic deeds; its inadequate relation to the outside world is intensified to the utmost, but this intensification has a purely immanent counterweight: the outside world is a purely human one and is essentially peopled by human beings with similar mental structures, although with completely different orientations and contents. As a result, this demonic inadequacy, this endless series of incidents in which souls are fatally at cross-purposes with one another, becomes the essence of reality, and we obtain that strange, boundless, immeasurable mass of interweaving destinies and lonely souls which is the unique feature of Balzac's novels. By this paradoxical homogeneity of the material of these novels, which in turn results from the extreme heterogeneity of its con-

stituent elements, an immanence of meaning is rescued. The danger of an abstract, 'bad' infinity is avoided by a great concentration of events (as in a novella) and a genuinely epic significance is thus attained.

However, this triumph of form occurs only in each individual novel, not in *The Human Comedy* as a whole. True, the prerequisite for it is there: the magnificent unity of the work's all-embracing material. This unity is not merely realised by means of the repeated appearances and disappearances of individual characters in the infinite chaos of the different stories; it also takes a form which is completely adequate to the innermost essence of this material, that of chaotic, demonic irrationality. And the content which fills this unity is that of the authentic great epic—the totality of a world. But ultimately this totality is not born purely out of the form: what makes the whole truly a whole is, in the end, only the effective experience of a common basis of life and the recognition that this experience corresponds to the essence of life as lived at that moment. Only the details are epically formed, the whole is merely fitted together; the 'bad' infinity, surmounted in every individual part, defeats the whole as a unified epic work: the totality rests on principles which do not belong to the epic form, on mood and insight, not on actions and heroes, and so the totality is not complete and rounded in itself. None of the parts, seen from the viewpoint of the whole, possesses an organic necessity of existence; if it were not there at all, the whole would not suffer; conversely, any number of new parts might be added and no evidence of inner completeness would prove them superfluous. The totality here is the sense of a life order, which we feel as a great lyric backdrop behind each individual story; it is not problematic, it has not been achieved by difficult struggles as in the great novels. The totality of *The Human Comedy* as a whole, with its essentially lyrical nature that belongs outside the epic, is naive and un-

problematic. And if this totality is inadequate for the novel, it is even less adequate for the epic.

A static psychology is the common feature of all these attempts at form-giving; the narrowing of the soul is a given, unchangeable, abstract *a priori* condition. It was natural, therefore, that the nineteenth-century novel with its tendencies towards psychological dynamism and psychologistic solutions should depart increasingly from this type and should seek the causes of the inadequacy between soul and reality in quite other directions. Only one great novel, Pontoppidan's *Hans im Glück*, represents an attempt to treat this type of soul structure centrally and to portray it through movement and development. Pontoppidan's manner of posing the problem leads to a completely new method of composition: the point of departure, the subject's completely secure bond with the transcendent essence, becomes the final goal, and the demonic tendency of the soul to divorce itself completely from anything that does not correspond to this *a priori* condition becomes a real tendency. Whereas in *Don Quixote* the basis of all the hero's adventures was his inner certainty and the world's inadequate attitude towards it, so that the role of the demonic became a positive, dynamic one, here the unity between basis and end-goal is concealed, the divergence between soul and reality becomes mysterious and apparently quite irrational; the demonic narrowing of the soul manifests itself only negatively, by the hero having to abandon everything he achieves because it is never what he wants, because it is broader, more empirical, more life-like than what his soul set out to seek. Whereas in *Don Quixote* the completion of the life cycle is the same adventure repeated over and over again in different ways and extended until it becomes the all-containing centre of the totality, here the movement of life shows a definite and unmistakable progression towards the purity of a soul that has attained itself, learning from its adventures that only it alone,

rigidly confined within itself, can correspond to its deepest, all-dominating instinct; that the soul is bound to be imprisoned and ultimately destroyed in a world which is alien to its essence: that every refusal to seize a conquered piece of reality is really a victory, a step towards the conquest of a self freed from illusions.

Pontoppidan's irony lies in the fact that he lets his hero succeed all the time, but shows that a demonic power forces him to regard everything he has gained as worthless and inessential and to throw it away as soon as he has gained it. The curious inner tension of the book is due to the fact that the meaning of this negative demonism is revealed only at the end, when the hero achieves complete resignation, thus giving restrospective immanence of meaning to his whole life. The revealed transcendence of this ending and its evident pre-stabilised harmony with the soul give an appearance of necessity to all the confusions that preceded it; indeed, seen from the end, the dynamic relationship between the soul and the world is reversed; it looks as though the hero had always remained unchanged, quietly watching the passing events from within himself; as though the entire action consisted merely in removing the veils in which his soul was wrapped. The dynamic nature of psychology is thus shown to be only apparently dynamic, but not until—and this is where Pontoppidan's great mastery lies—it has rendered possible a journey through a really vital and dynamic life-totality by its semblance of movement. This explains the isolated position of Pontoppidan's work among modern novels, its strict insistence upon action which is reminiscent of novels of the past, its rejection of mere psychology, and—in terms of mood—the profound difference between the resignation which is felt at the end of this novel and the disappointed romanticism of other contemporary works.

2

The Romanticism of Disillusionment

In the nineteenth century novel, the other type of the necessarily inadequate relation between soul and reality became the more important one: the inadequacy that is due to the soul's being wider and larger than the destinies which life has to offer it. The decisive structural difference is that here we are not dealing with an abstract *a priori* condition on the face of life, a condition which seeks to realise itself in action and therefore provokes conflicts with the outside world which make up the story of the novel; but rather a purely interior reality which is full of content and more or less complete in itself enters into competition with the reality of the outside world, leads a rich and animated life of its own and, with spontaneous self-confidence, regards itself as the only true reality, the essence of the world: and the failure of every attempt to realise this equality is the subject of the work.

Thus we have here a concrete, qualitative *a priori* attitude vis-à-vis the world—a matter of content, a struggle between two worlds, not a struggle between reality and a general *a priori* state. But this makes the divergence between interiority and the outside world even stronger. When the interiority is like a cosmos, it is self-sufficient, at rest within itself. Whereas abstract idealism, in order to exist at all, had to translate itself into action, had to enter into conflict with the outside world, here the possibility of escape does not seem excluded from the start. A life which is capable of producing all its content out of itself can be rounded and perfect even if it never enters into contact with the alien reality outside. Whereas, therefore, an excessive, totally uninhibited activity

towards the outside world was characteristic of the psychological structure of abstract idealism, here the tendency is rather towards passivity, a tendency to avoid outside conflicts and struggles rather than to engage in them, a tendency to deal inside the soul with everything that concerns the soul.

In this possibility lies the central problematic of this type of novel: the disappearance of epic symbolisation, the disintegration of form in a nebulous and unstructured sequence of moods and reflections about moods, the replacement of a sensuously meaningful story by psychological analysis. This problematic is further intensified by the fact that, given the relationship between the two, the outside world which comes into contact with such an interiority has to be completely atomised or amorphous, and in any case must be entirely devoid of meaning. It is a world entirely dominated by convention, the full realisation of the concept of a 'second nature'; a quintessence of meaningless laws in which no relation to the soul can be found. And this means that all formal objectivations of social life lose all significance for the soul. They do not retain even their paradoxical significance as being the necessary arena and vehicle of events whilst having no essence at the core. Thus, a character's profession loses all importance from the point of view of his inner destiny, just as marriage, family and class become immaterial to the relationships between characters. Don Quixote would be unthinkable as anything other than a knight, but the story of his love is unimaginable without the troubadours' convention of adoration of the woman; in *The Human Comedy*, the demonic obsession of all the characters is concentrated and objectified in the structures of social life; in Pontoppidan's novel, even though the social structures are unmasked as inessential for the soul, it is nevertheless the struggle concerning them—the recognition of their inessentiality and the effort to reject them—that fills the

hero's life and the novel's action. In the type of novel which we are now considering, all the relationships have ceased to exist from the start. The elevation of interiority to the status of a completely independent world is not only a psychological fact but also a decisive value judgement on reality; this self-sufficiency of the subjective self is its most desperate self-defence; it is the abandonment of any struggle to realise the soul in the outside world, a struggle which is seen *a priori* as hopeless and merely humiliating.

This attitude is so intensely lyrical that it is no longer capable of purely lyrical expression. Lyrical subjectivity has to go for its symbols to the outside world; even if that world has been made by subjectivity itself, it is nevertheless the only possible one; subjectivity, as an interiority, never confronts in a polemical or negative way the outside world that is co-ordinated to it, it never takes refuge inside itself in an effort to forget the outside world; rather, it proceeds as an arbitrary conqueror, it snatches fragments out of the atomised chaos which is the outside world and melts them down—causing all origins to be forgotten—into a newly created, lyrical cosmos of pure interiority. Epic interiority, by contrast, is always reflexive, it realises itself in a conscious, distantiated way in contrast to the naïve distancelessness of true lyricism. Therefore its means of expression are secondary ones—mood and reflexion—which, despite some apparent similarities to those of pure lyricism, have nothing whatever to do with the essence of the latter. Reflexion and mood are constitutive structural elements of the novel form, but their formal significance is determined precisely by the fact that the regulative system of ideas on which the whole reality is based can manifest itself in them and is given form through their mediation; in other words, by the fact that they have a positive, although problematical and paradoxical, relationship to the outside world. When they become an end in

themselves, their unpoetic and form-destructive character becomes clearly obvious.

This aesthetic problem, however, is at root an ethical one, and its artistic solution therefore presupposes, in accordance with the formal laws of the novel, that a solution has been found to the ethical problem. The hierarchical question of whether inner reality is superior to outer reality or vice versa is the ethical problem of utopia: the question whether the ability to imagine a better world can be ethically justified, and the question whether this ability can serve as the starting point for a life that is rounded in itself, not one which, as Hamann says, has been stopped by having a hole put in it instead of coming to an end. From the point of view of epic form the problem can be posed as follows: can this rounded correction of reality be translated into actions which, regardless of outward failure or success, prove the individual's right to self-sufficiency—actions which do not compromise the mental attitude from which they sprang? To create, by purely artistic means, a reality which corresponds to this dream world, or at least is more adequate to it than the existing one, is only an illusory solution. The utopian longing of the soul is a legitimate desire, worthy of being the centre of a world, only if it is absolutely incapable of being satisfied in the present intellectual state of man, that is to say incapable of being satisfied in any world that can be imagined and given form, whether past, present or mythical. If a world can be found that satisfies the longing, this only proves that the dissatisfaction with the present was merely an artistic quibbling over its outward forms, an aesthetic hankering after times when the artist could draw with more generous lines or paint with brighter colours than today. Such longings can indeed be satisfied, but their inner emptiness becomes apparent in the work's lack of idea, as is, for instance, the case with Walter Scott's novels, well-told though they are.

The flight from the present is of no use whatever in solving the central difficulty. The same problems—often giving rise to a profound dissonance between behaviour and soul, between outward destiny and inner fate—are evident in distantiated works, whether monumental or decorative. *Salammbô* or C. F. Meyer's novels (which are, it is true, designed as novellas) are characteristic examples of this. The aesthetic problem, the transformation of mood and reflexion, of lyricism and psychology into genuinely epic means of expression is therefore centred on the fundamental ethical problem—the question of necessary and possible action. The human type of the central character in works of this kind is in essence a contemplative rather than an active one, and so the epic representation of such a type is faced with the problem of how his rhapsodically retiring or hesitant behaviour can be translated into action; the artistic task consists of revealing the point at which such a character's *being-there* and *being-thus* coincides with his inevitable failure.

The completely pre-determined nature of this failure is the other objective difficulty of purely epic form-giving. The danger of a subjectively lyrical attitude towards events, instead of a normatively epic attitude of absorption and reproduction, is much greater when fatality is predetermined —whether this fatality is affirmed or negated, lamented or scorned—than when the outcome of the struggle has not been decided in advance. The mood which carries and nourishes such lyricism is the mood of disillusioned romanticism, an over-intensified, over-determined desire for an ideal life as opposed to the real one, a desperate recognition of the fact that this desire is doomed to remain unsatisfied, a utopia based from the start on an uneasy conscience and the certainty of defeat. And the decisive feature of this certainty is its inseparable connection with moral conscience, the evidence that failure is a necessary consequence of its own inner

structure, that it is, in its finest essence and highest value, condemned to death. That is why the attitude both towards the hero and towards the outside world is a lyrical one, compounded of love and accusation, of sorrow, pity and scorn.

The inner importance of the individual has reached its historical apogee: the individual is no longer significant as the carrier of transcendent worlds, as he was in abstract idealism, he now carries his value exclusively within himself; indeed, the values of being seem to draw the justification of their validity only from the fact of having been subjectively experienced, from their significance to the individual's soul.

Si l'arche est vide où tu pensais trouver la loi,
Rien n'est réel que ta danse :
Puisqu'elle n'a pas d'objet, elle est impérissable.
Danse pour le désert et danse pour l'espace.

Henri Franck.

The precondition and the price of this immoderate elevation of the subject is, however, the abandonment of any claim to participation in the shaping of the outside world. The romanticism of disillusionment not only followed abstract idealism in time and history, it was also conceptually its heir, the next historico-philosophical step in *a priori* utopianism. There, the individual, the vehicle of the utopian challenge to reality, was crushed by the brute force of reality; here, defeat is the precondition of subjectivity. There, subjectivity gave rise to the heroism of militant interiority; here, a man can become the hero, the central figure of a literary work, because he has the inner possibility of experiencing life as a literary creator. There, the outside world was to be created anew on the model of ideals; here, an interiority which perfects itself in the form of a literary

work demands from the outside world that is should provide it with suitable material for thus forming itself. In Romanticism, the literary nature of the *a priori* status of the soul vis-à-vis reality becomes conscious: the self, cut off from transcendence, recognises itself as the source of the ideal reality, and, as a necessary consequence, as the only material worthy of self-realisation. Life becomes a work of literature; but, as a result, man becomes the author of his own life and at the same time the observer of that life as a created work of art. Such duality can only be given form by lyrical means. As soon as it is fitted into a coherent totality, the certainty of failure becomes manifest; the romanticism becomes sceptical, disappointed and cruel towards itself and the world; the novel of the Romantic sense of life is the novel of disillusionment. An interiority denied the possibility of fulfilling itself in action turns inwards, yet cannot finally renounce what it has lost forever; even if it wanted to do so, life would deny it such a satisfaction; life forces it to continue the struggle and to suffer defeats which the artist anticipates and the hero apprehends.

This situation gives rise to a romantic lack of moderation in all directions. The inner wealth of pure soul-experience is seen immoderately as the only essential thing; the futility of the soul's existence in the totality of the world is exposed with an equally immoderate ruthlessness; the soul's loneliness, its lack of any support or tie, is intensified until it becomes immeasurable, and, at the same time, the cause of this condition of the soul in a specific world situation is mercilessly revealed. Compositionally speaking, a maximum of continuity is aimed at, since existence is possible only within a subjectivity that is uninterrupted by any outside factor or event; yet reality disintegrates into a series of mutually absolutely heterogeneous fragments which have no independent valency of existence even in isolation, as do the adventures of Don Quixote. All the fragments live only by the grace

of the mood in which they are experienced, but the totality reveals the nothingness of this mood in terms of reflexion. And so everything has to be denied, for any affirmation will destroy the precarious balance of forces: affirmation of the outside world would justify the mindless philistines who accommodate themselves to reality, and the resulting work would be no more than cheap, slick satire; straightforward affirmation of romantic interiority would give rise to formless wallowing in vain, self-worshipping lyrical psychologism. But the outside world and the interiority are too heterogeneous, too hostile to one another to be simultaneously affirmed, as can happen in novels that overlap into the epic. The only way left is to deny them both, and this merely renews and potentiates the fundamental danger of this type of novel—that of the form becoming dissolved in dreary pessimism. The purely artistic consequences of such a situation are inevitably, on the one hand, the disintegration of all secure and unconditional human values and the revelation of their ultimate nullity, and, on the other hand, the overall dominance of mood, that is to say of impotent sorrow over a world which is inessential in itself and which has only the ineffective, monotonous brilliance of a surface in process of decomposition.

Any form must contain some positive element in order to acquire substance as a form. The paradoxical nature of the novel is most strikingly revealed in the fact that the world situation and the human type which most closely correspond to its formal requirements—for which it is the only adequate form—confront the writer with almost insoluble problems. Jacobsen's novel of disillusionment, which expresses in wonderful lyrical images the author's melancholy over a world 'in which there's so much that is senselessly exquisite', breaks down and disintegrates completely; and the author's attempt to find a desperate positiveness in Niels Lyhne's heroic atheism, his courageous acceptance of his necessary

loneliness, strikes us as an aid brought in from outside the actual work. This hero's life which was meant to become a work of literature and is instead only a poor fragment, is actually transformed into a pile of débris by the form-giving process; the cruelty of disillusionment devalues the lyricism of the moods, but it cannot endow the characters and events with substance or with the gravity of existence. The novel remains a beautiful yet unreal mixture of voluptuousness and bitterness, sorrow and scorn, but not a unity; a series of images and aspects, but not a life totality.

Goncharov's attempt to fit the magnificently, truly and profoundly seen character of Oblomov into a totality by introducing a positive counter-figure was likewise doomed to failure. The memorable recurring image of Oblomov lying on his bed—an image which forcefully and sensually conveys the passivity of this type of character—cannot save the work as a whole. In face of the depth of Oblomov's tragedy—Oblomov whose innermost experience is so direct and bears so exclusively on essential things, yet who has to fail so abysmally whenever he is confronted with the smallest manifestation of outward reality—in face of this the triumphant happiness of Stolz, his 'strong' friend, becomes trivial and flat. At the same time, Stolz has just enough real strength and weight to reduce Oblomov's fate to pettiness; the terrifying comic quality of the divorce between interior and exterior, symbolised by Oblomov lying on his bed, increasingly loses its created depth and greatness as the real action of the novel proceeds—namely, Stolz's attempt to re-educate Oblomov and the failure of that attempt. Oblomov's tragi-comic destiny is increasingly reduced to the indifferent fate of a character doomed to failure from the start.

The greatest discrepancy between idea and reality is time: the process of time as duration. The most profound and most humiliating impotence of subjectivity consists not so much

in its hopeless struggle against the lack of idea in social forms and their human representatives, as in the fact that it cannot resist the sluggish, yet constant progress of time; that it must slip down, slowly yet inexorably, from the peaks it has laboriously scaled; that time—that ungraspable, invisibly moving substance—gradually robs subjectivity of all its possessions and imperceptibly forces alien contents into it. That is why only the novel, the literary form of the transcendent homelessness of the idea, includes real time—Bergson's *durée*—among its constitutive principles. In another context[1] I have pointed out that the drama does not know the concept of time: it is subject to the three unities and, provided these are properly understood, the unity of time signifies a state of being lifted out of the duration of time. The epic, it is true, appears to allow for the duration of time—we need only think of the ten years of the Iliad or of the Odyssey. Yet this time has as little reality, as little real duration, as time has in drama; men and destinies remain untouched by it; it has a dynamic of its own, and its function is solely to express the greatness of an enterprise or of a tension in a meaningful way. The years are necessary to make the listener understand the real meaning of the capture of Troy and the wanderings of Odysseus, just as the large number of warriors or the vast areas travelled are necessary for the same purpose. But the heroes do not experience time within the work itself; time does not affect their inner changes or changelessness; their age is assimilated in their characters, and Nestor is old just as Helen is beautiful or Agamemnon mighty. It is true that the characters of the epic know life's painful lesson of growing old and dying, but

[1] *A modern drama fejlödésének története* (History of the Development of Modern Drama), 2 vols., Budapest 1912. The introductory chapter is available in German under the title *Zur Soziologie des modernen Dramas* in: *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik* XXXVII (1914), p. 303 ff., p. 662 ff.

to them it is mere knowledge, mere recognition; what they experience and the way they experience it has the blissful time-removed quality of the world of gods. The normative attitude towards the epic, according to Goethe and Schiller, is an attitude assumed towards something completely in the past; therefore its time is static and can be taken in at a single glance. The author of an epic and his characters can move freely in any direction inside it; like all space, it has several dimensions but no direction. And the normative present tense of the drama, likewise laid down by Goethe and Schiller, transforms time into space (as Gurnemanz says). Only the complete disorientedness of modern literature poses the impossible task of representing development and the gradual passing of time in dramatic terms.

Time can become constitutive only when the bond with the transcendental home has been severed. Just as ecstasy elevates the mystic into a sphere where all duration and all passing of time have ceased and from which he must fall back into the world of time only because of his creaturely, organic limitations, so any close and visible connection with the essence creates a cosmos which is *a priori* exempt from this necessity. Only in the novel, whose very matter is seeking and failing to find the essence, is time posited together with the form: time is the resistance of the organic—which possesses a mere semblance of life—to the present meaning, the will of life to remain within its own completely enclosed immanence. In the epic the life-immanence of meaning is so strong that it abolishes time: life enters eternity as life, the organic retains nothing of time except the phase of blossoming; fading and dying are forgotten and left entirely behind. In the novel, meaning is separated from life, and hence the essential from the temporal; we might almost say that the entire inner action of the novel is nothing but a struggle against the power of time.

In the Romanticism of disillusionment, time is the corrupting principle: poetry, the essential, must die, and time is ultimately responsible for its passing. That is why in such novels all value is on the side of the defeated protagonist, who, because he is dying, is endowed with the beauty of wounded youth, while coarseness, harshness, the absence of an idea, belong entirely to time. Only as a post-facto correction of this one-sided lyrical opposition to the victorious power does self-irony turn against the dying essence by endowing it, negatively, with the attributes of youth; the ideal is said to be constitutive only for the soul in a state of immaturity. The overall design of the novel is bound to be deformed if positive and negative values are so distinctly divided between the two sides of the struggle. A form cannot really deny a life principle unless it is capable of excluding it *a priori* from its realm; as soon as it has to admit that principle, it must admit it as positive; and so this principle, not only as an opposing force but in its own right, becomes a precondition of the realisation of value.

Time is the fullness of life, although the fullness of time is the self-abolition of life and, with it, of time itself. The positive thing, the affirmation which the very form of the novel expresses no matter how inconsolably sad its content may be, is not only that distant meaning which dawns with a mild radiance on the far side of the search and the failure to find, but also the fullness of life which is revealed precisely through the manifold failures of the struggle and search. The novel is the form of mature virility: its song of comfort rings out of the dawning recognition that traces or lost meaning are to be found everywhere; that the enemy comes from the same lost home as the knight and defender of the essence; that life had to lose its immanence of meaning so that it might be equally present everywhere.

Thus it is that time becomes the carrier of the sublime

epic poetry of the novel: it has become inexorably existent, and no one can any longer swim against the unmistakable direction of its current nor regulate its unforeseeable course with the dams of *a priori* concepts. Yet a feeling of resignation persists: all this had to come from somewhere, must be going somewhere; even if the direction betrays no meaning, it is a direction none the less. From this feeling of resignation mixed with courage there spring experiences of time which are authentically epic because they give rise to action and stem from action: the experiences of hope and memory; experiences of time which are victories over time: a synoptic vision of time as solidified unity *ante rem* and its synoptic comprehension *post rem*. *In re*, there can be no simple, happy experience of this form or of the times which have produced it. Experiences of this kind can only be subjective and reflexive; nevertheless there is always in them the form-giving sense of *comprehending a meaning*; they are experiences in which we come as near as we can, in a world forsaken by God, to the essence of things.

Such an experience of time is the basis of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, and the absence of such an experience, a one-sidedly negative view of time, is what has ultimately been responsible for the failure of the other major novels of disillusionment. Of all great works of this type, *L'Education sentimentale* appears to be the least composed; no attempt is made here to counteract the disintegration of outside reality into heterogeneous, brittle and fragmentary parts by some process of unification or to replace absent connections or valencies of meaning by lyrical mood-imagery: the separate fragments of reality lie before us in all their hardness, brokenness and isolation. The central figure is not made significant by means of limiting the number of characters, by the rigorous convergence of the composition upon the centre, or by any emphasis upon the central character's outstanding personality: the hero's inner life

is as fragmentary as the outside world, his interiority possesses no lyrical power of scorn or pathos that might set it against the pettiness of reality. Yet this novel, of all novels of the nineteenth century, is one of the most typical of the problematic of the novel form; in the unmitigated desolation of its matter it is the only novel that attains true epic objectivity and, through it, the positiveness and affirmative energy of an accomplished form.

This victory is rendered possible by time. The unrestricted, uninterrupted flow of time is the unifying principle of the homogeneity that rubs the sharp edges off each heterogeneous fragment and establishes a relationship—albeit an irrational and inexpressible one—between them. Time brings order into the chaos of men's lives and gives it the semblance of a spontaneously flowering, organic entity; characters having no apparent meaning appear, establish relations with one another, break them off, disappear again without any meaning having been revealed. But the characters are not simply dropped into that meaningless becoming and dissolving which preceded man and will outlast him. Beyond events, beyond psychology, time gives them the essential quality of their existence: however accidental the appearance of a character may be in pragmatic and psychological terms, it emerges from an existent, experienced continuity, and the atmosphere of thus being borne upon the unique and unrepeatable stream of life cancels out the accidental nature of their experiences and the isolated nature of the events recounted.

The life totality which carries all men here becomes a living and dynamic thing: the expanse of time which the novel covers, dividing men into generations and integrating their actions in a historico-social context, is not an abstract concept, not a unit conceptually constructed after the event like that of the totality of the *Comédie humaine*, but a thing existing in itself and for itself, a concrete and organic continuum. This totality is a true image of life in the sense

that no value-system of ideas enters it except in a regulative function; the only idea immanently contained within it is that of its own existence, that of life as such. But this idea, which reveals more brutally than anything else how infinitely remote we are from the true systems of ideas that have become ideals in the minds of men, at the same time makes the failure of all endeavours seem less desolate. Everything that happens may be meaningless, fragmentary and sad, but it is always irradiated by hope or memory. And hope here is not an abstract artifact, isolated from life, spoilt and shop-worn as the result of its defeat by life: it is a part of life; it tries to conquer life by embracing and adorning it, yet is repulsed by life again and again. And memory transforms the continual struggle into a process which is full of mystery and interest and yet is tied with indestructible threads to the present, the unexplained instant. Duration advances upon that instant and passes on, but the wealth of duration which the instant momentarily dams and holds still in a flash of conscious contemplation is such that it enriches even what is over and done with: it even puts the full value of lived experience on events which, at the time, passed by unnoticed. And so, by a strange and melancholy paradox, the moment of failure is the moment of value; the comprehending and experiencing of life's refusals is the source from which the fullness of life seems to flow. What is depicted is the total absence of any fulfilment of meaning, yet the work attains the rich and rounded fullness of a true totality of life.

Herein lies the essentially epic quality of memory. In the drama (and the epic) the past either does not exist or is completely present. Because these forms know nothing of the passage of time, they allow of no qualitative difference between the experiencing of past and present; time has no power of transformation, it neither intensifies nor diminishes the meaning of anything. This is the formal meaning of the

typical scenes of revelation and recognition which Aristotle shows us; something that was pragmatically unknown to the heroes of the drama enters their field of vision and, in the world thus altered, they have to act otherwise than they might wish to act. But the force of the newly introduced factor is not diminshed by a time perspective, it is absolutely homogeneous with and equivalent to the present. Similarly, the passage of time alters nothing in the epic. In adapting the Song of the Nibelungs, Hebbel was able to take over without change Kriemhild's and Hagen's inability to forget—the precondition of their revenge—because such an inability belongs essentially to drama. In the *Divine Comedy*, the remembered earthly life of each character is as present to their souls as is Dante, to whom they are speaking, or as is the actual place of their punishment or reward. As for lyric poetry, change alone is essential for any lyrical experience of the past; lyric poetry knows no object, structured as such, that might exist either in the vacuum of timelessness or in the atmosphere of passing time: it gives form to the process of remembering or forgetting, and the object is only a pretext for lived experience.

Only in the novel and in certain epic forms resembling the novel does memory occur as a creative force affecting the object and transforming it. The genuinely epic quality of such memory is the affirmative experience of the life process. The duality of interiority and the outside world can be abolished for the subject if he (the subject) glimpses the organic unity of his whole life through the process by which his living present has grown from the stream of his past life dammed up within his memory. The surmounting of duality—that is to say the successful mastering and integration of the object—makes this experience into an element of authentically epic form.

The mood-conditioned pseudo-lyricism of the novel of disillusionment betrays itself most obviously by the fact that