Lukács

Goethe and his Age

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Preface

THE ESSAYS collected in this volume originated in the thirties; only the Faust studies were completed in 1940. This being the case, the question arises as to whether their present publication is justified. Today, when the problem of German literature or culture is discussed, one very often encounters the prejudices of those who will hear nothing of an examination or re-examination of such questions. The problem of German culture is generally posed abstractly and, therefore, necessarily answered abstractly and falsely. One answer is a blunt rejection of the whole of German culture. As a profession of anti-Fascism this seems very radical. In reality, this radicalism is more than dubious. For is an anti-German attitude really a guarantee of anti-Fascism or even of a position against reaction? In the ranks of anti-German politicians, writers, etc. do we not find avowed reactionaries, and even Fascists? If we reject Nietzsche or Spengler as the spiritual forefathers of modern German anti-humanism, and at the same time grow enthusiastic about Ortega y Gasset—what have we gained? At the other extreme, the question is posed with equal bias. There it is said that the political developments of recent decades must in no way influence our judgments about philosophy and literature. The fact that Hitler could prevail in Germany more than a decade should change nothing as regards what German literature from Goethe to Rilke means to us.

Both extremes are abstract. Neither the categorical condemnation, nor the separation of the phenomena from the social soil on which they have grown, can answer the question or provide a solution as regards how we are to view German culture, past and present; how a critical reckoning with it is to influence the democratic renovation of contemporary culture.

Let us attempt a concrete formulation of the question. Engels once compared the development of Germany and France from the beginning of the liquidation of feudalism to the emergence of national unity and bourgeois democracy. He came to the conclusion that in every epoch the French have found a progressive solution in historical problems, the Germans a reactionary one.

The fateful date for Germany is 1525, the year of the important German Peasants' war. Alexander von Humboldt already recognized

that this is the turning-point where the development of Germany went astray. While the defeat of the great peasant uprisings in France and England did not break the progressive line of development of these countries, in Germany the defeat of the peasants produced a national catastrophe the consequences of which remained perceptible for centuries.

In the West (and in Russia), absolute monarchy resulted from the class struggles of feudalism in the process of dissolution, and with it the first step was taken toward the achievement of national unity. In Germany, the failure of the Peasants' war produced not, as in Poland, for example, a feudal democracy of nobles, but again a variation of absolute monarchy; nevertheless a specific variation, purely reactionary and anti-national: the German petty principalities. Their victory and consolidation signified the perpetuation and solidification of the feudal disunion of the German nation. For centuries the autonomy of the petty principalities was the most serious obstacle to German national unity. Their ostensible independence, their ostensibly independent politics for a long while made Germany the passive object of European foreign policy, the battlefield of European wars. And over against the legends created by German historians it must be emphasized here that, in this respect, Prussia was a typical German petty principality; hence an obstacle to national union, an open door for foreign intervention. Viewed from within, this development means that the emergence of bourgeois culture proceeded at a very slow pace; in its place appeared a corrupt semi-feudalism. The fact that such social conditions in every way obstructed the formation of a progressive national culture requires no detailed discussion.

That explains why Germany, very belatedly, trod the path leading to modern bourgeois existence, economic and political as well as cultural. In the West, the first major battles in the class struggle of the ascendant proletariat were already being fought when, in 1848, the problems of the bourgeois revolution emerged for the first time in a concrete form for Germany. And, indeed, if we except Italy, it is only in Germany that the question was posed in such a way that the *creation* of national unity formed the central problem of the bourgeois revolution. The English revolution in the seventeenth century, and the French Revolution in the eighteenth occurred in national states which were already extensively developed, states indeed, which achieved their final form in and through these revolutions. Accordingly, the abolition of feudalism, and especially the liberation of the peasants stand in the foreground of both revolutions. This peculiarity of the German revolution made the reactionary partial solution of 1870 possible in the first place.

The consequence of all this is that in Germany social progress and national development did not mutually support and promote one another as in France, but rather stood in opposition to each other. Hence, even the development of capitalism could not produce a bourgeois class capable of assuming national leadership. Even when capitalism had already become the prevailing economy, indeed, even when it had already passed over into imperialism, political leadership still remained in the hands of the "old powers".

In Germany, as everywhere, the absolutism of the petty states created out of the formerly independent feudal nobility a court nobility, a bureaucratic nobility and a military nobility. The Sickingen revolt,[1] which directly preceded the Peasants' war, was the last independent movement made by the feudal petty nobility of the old type. From then on—if we disregard the few exceptions which became increasingly rare—we can observe the bureaucratization and growing servility of the aristocracy. Of course, this process also occurred in France. Its social character, however, is diametrically opposed to that of Germany. In France (and England), bourgeois culture, in an increasing measure, acted on the aristocracy, even on its most reactionary element, so that anyone who remained unaffected by this development rapidly became a mere eccentric. In Germany, on the other hand—especially in Prussia which determined the style of the later empire—the Junker ideology left its impress on the decisive strata of the bourgeois intelligentsia. From the most superficial daily habits to matters of *Weltanschauung*, everywhere we can perceive this assimilation of the bourgeois intelligentsia to the ideology of the Junkers.

This process completely explains the modern German "mentality" for the analysis of which we obviously have no space here. We would like only to direct the attention of the reader to some of its main features, such as the lack of civic courage that Bismarck already confirmed as being a national characteristic, and one which is unquestionably a distinguishing mark of the bureaucratic and court nobility. Very closely connected with it is the fear of making responsible independent decisions and, at the same time, the ruthless inhuman brutality aimed at inferiors (and hidden from superiors). The oft-confirmed inability of the German bourgeoisie in the area of politics must also be traced to this development. The German bourgeois wants "order"; but he creates this order in the service of anyone and anything. Servility, Byzantinism, title-seeking become increasingly characteristic of the German bourgeoisie, and they demonstrate an almost complete absence of civic pride.

[1] The revolt of 1522 led by the adventurer knight, Franz von Sickingen, 1481-1523.

After the reactionary establishment of German unity, this retardation appeared in an ideologically reverse role [*Umstilisierung*], as if just this Germany were called upon to surmount [*aufheben*] the contradictions of modern democracy in a "higher unity". It is no accident that anti-democratic thinking originally developed as a *Weltanschauung* precisely in this Germany; that in the imperialistic period Germany played the leading role in the formulation of reactionary ideology.

What is decisive, however, is that the rapid pace of belated capitalist evolution in Germany made the *Reich* into a leading imperialistic state; one, indeed, whose colonial possessions and spheres of interest were disproportionate to the strength and claims of its capitalism. Ultimately this is the reason why Germany attempted to force the redistribution of the world in two world wars. The necessary failure of both attempts was not merely the consequence of the actual balance of power; for the organization of this balance of power itself was already the consequence of the direction in which Germany's domestic and foreign policy was moving. Petty cunning and unprecedented brutality instead of forethought and energy; tactical-technical tricks instead of a comprehensive strategy—these characterize German politics both in war and peace. According to Clausewitz,[1] if war is really the continuation of politics by other means, then the German wars provide a concentrated image of the pathological, distorted aspects of Germany's development.

It is clear that a radical evaluation of German culture is necessary. It is only a question of how this is to happen. Categorical negation is no more a solution than general amnesty. It is necessary to grasp and apply in a really concrete way the simple truth that Germany's cultural evolution was the result of a struggle between progress and reaction; and insofar as reactionary tendencies came to predominate in Germany in the area of culture, the ideological evaluation must begin there. But at the same time, that means that the progressive tendencies in German life are allies of every tendency toward European renovation, just as every self-renewing democratic culture has to perceive enemies in the reactionary ideologues of the West. A well grounded radicalism in the reckoning with German reaction is attainable only by way of historical concreteness.

With that, we have arrived at the actual formulation of our question: what is our attitude toward German culture? Or, more precisely—in order to stay within the bounds of this book, and to raise no questions which cannot be answered here even cursorily—

[1] Karl von Clausewitz, 1780-1831, Prussian general and military writer, author of the classic *Vom Kriege*, Eng. trans., *Principles of War*.

what is our attitude toward the age of Goethe? For a long time this question has caused concern in literature, especially in Anglo-Saxon literature since the First World War.

The fashionable watchword is familiar: Weimar versus Potsdam. Indeed, the formulation of the problem reveals its own distortedness. German culture can no more "return" to the Weimar of Goethe than English culture can "return" to Shakespeare, or French culture to Racine. In its grandeur, as well as in its limitations, the culture of Weimar bears the marks of the German nation, economically and socially retarded, politically oppressed and dismembered. No resolution is conceivable which would create a present out of this past (out of this past which has definitely vanished) and nullify the interim evolution.

Of course, it is quite another thing to ask: in what way can the culture of Weimar become directive for the German nation of the present? To what extent can it become a cultural counter-poise, a counter-force against the Prussianization of the German spirit? That is a real question. But here too we are confronted by serious difficulties. Above all, it would be ridiculous to "discover" Goethe and Schiller for the Germans. For more than a century the whole of German culture has developed in the shadow of Goethe and Schiller. Even Fascism eliminated only Börne and Heine from German literary history; Goethe and Schiller retained their central place. That being the case, however, the whole situation appears even more problematic. For at first glance it thus seems as if Goethe and Schiller might be implicated in the false development of the German ruling classes, and even the entire German people; as if they might be accessory to the crimes which were perpetrated against humanity by the Germans. And actually, Fascists were not the only ones who made of Hölderlin, for example, a forefather of Fascism by citing clever or crass quotations. Progressive writers too charged Goethe and Schiller with complicity in the distorted and reactionary development of Germany, and made of them forerunners of German reaction—also with the aid of isolated quotations lifted out of context and overrated or twisted.

It would not be worth the effort of according even one comment to these patent misjudgments if behind them were not a century of systematic historical falsification which has completely distorted the classical period of German literature. Thus, a real knowledge of history, literature and philosophy is necessary, an independent impartial investigation, in order that behind the variously falsified layers the original might again become visible, just as it was and is, so that today it can exercise a serious and progressive effect.

In his book on Lessing, Mehring[1] presented the only correct viewpoint from which one must consider German literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This literature is the work of ideological preparation for the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany. Only if we consider the whole period from Lessing to Heine from this point of view can we perceive wherein its really progressive or reactionary tendencies are to be found.

Mehring's formulation of the question is the right one and he also recognized, partially at least, the correct course that the investigation must follow. The peculiar conditions of Germany's evolution must be examined, the economic, social and political retardation of the country; but they must be viewed in the light of the larger international context which determined positively as well as negatively the characteristic development of German literature. The great French Revolution, the Napoleonic period, the Restoration and the July revolution are events which affected German cultural evolution almost as deeply as did Germany's internal social structure. Every significant German writer stood not only on the soil of the development of his own homeland, but at the same time, was the contemporary of greater or lesser understanding, the spiritual mirror of this world of events which he assimilated and developed further.

Of course, not only the writer of the great historical events themselves, but also the writer of their preparation and aftermath; and here—proceeding now beyond Mehring's viewpoint—we are brought to realize that Germany's economic and social retardation, relating particularly to the development of literature and philosophy, signified not only a disadvantage, but also certain advantages for the great poets and thinkers. The disadvantage is obvious. Even such colossi as Goethe and Hegel could not completely free themselves from that oppressive atmosphere of narrow philistinism which surrounded all of classical German literature. As regards posing the great current problems on a purely ideological plane (something very closely related to these petty philistine conditions), it seems less clear, at first glance, how this could also be of significant advantage for bold questioning and thinking through of the answers found to these questions. Precisely because the social bases and consequences of certain problems of poetry and theory did not become immediately apparent in practical life at this point, there emerged an important area, which seemed relatively limitless, for the play of imagination, intellect and ideas, the like of which contemporaries of more developed Western societies could not know.

In sum, it is no accident that the laws of the contradictory move-

[1] The work referred to is *Die Lessing-Legende*, 1893, by Franz Mehring (1846-1919), prominent German Socialist.

ment of evolution, the main principles of the dialectical method became known in Germany precisely during the period from Lessing to Heine; that Goethe and Hegel raised this method to the highest level attainable within the limits of bourgeois thinking. (I have sketched the evolution of Russian literature and philosophy in my book, *Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur*, Berlin, Aufbau-Verlag. There I have shown that the Russian thinkers of the fifties, Chernyshévsky and Dobrolyúbov,[1] are transitional figures between revolutionary democracy and the Socialist *Weltanschauung*). It follows from this that one of the last progressive periods of bourgeois thinking, one of its last intellectual revolutions occurred in Germany in the age of Goethe. And it is no accident that this development is crowned by the discovery of the most advanced method of philosophy, the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels, likewise Germans. Not without reason does Lenin designate Hegelian dialectic as one of the three sources of Marxism.

An analysis of these relations would go beyond the bounds of this preface because our book also makes no claim to analyse comprehensively this complex of questions from all sides. Hence, I will treat in detail those problems pertaining to the specific peculiarities of Germany's development in the nineteenth century when I publish my studies on the German realists of this period.[2] Here I can only give a short summary of the crucial questions around which the reactionary falsification of classical German literary history revolves, so that the readers of this book can clearly see what the importance is of the battle between progress and reaction in this period of Germany's development.

The first crucial question is the attitude taken towards the world-movement of the Enlightenment. Here, on the one hand, reactionary literary history attempts to inimically oppose Germany's development to that of France, and to impute an anti-French chauvinism to the great progressive ideologists of German national rebirth. On the other hand, it smuggles into late eighteenth century German literature an ideology which is obscurantist and hostile to the Enlightenment (the theory of so-called pre-Romanticism).

With regard to Lessing, Mehring has already refuted the first of these false doctrines. He demonstrated how Lessing's criticism of Corneille and Voltaire was connected with the problem then central to Germany's national liberation: the struggle against the pseudo-culture of the petty Germany courts which imitated Versailles.

[1] Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshévsky, 1828-89, author of the famous novel, *What is to be Done?* Nikolay Alexándrovitch Dobrolyúbov, 1836-61, chief literary crit c for the *Sovreménnik*.

[2] *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Aufbauverlag, 1951). —Publisher's note.

Mehring proved that this battle was fought, for Lessing's part, not only under the banner of Sophocles and Shakespeare, but actually first and foremost, under that of Diderot. This falsification goes still further where it concerns the period of "Storm and Stress". With the help of quotations from the writings of young Goethe, Schiller, as well as Herder which are torn out of context, we are confronted here by true orgies of anti-French German chauvinism. But in fact, Montesquieu, Diderot and Rousseau too are intellectual patrons of this movement, and the so-called anti-French attitude is directed here more expressly against the anti-national character of the petty courts. Only in this context can the defence of Shakespeare against Voltaire be completely understood. The rôle Voltaire played in the spiritual formation of the mature Goethe is verified by countless passages in Goethe's writings, letters and conversations. There is no need to mention the attitude of the old Goethe towards contemporary French literature (Mérimée, Hugo, Stendhal, Balzac).

The theory of the alleged opposition of "Storm and Stress" to the Enlightenment is equally unsound. On the one hand, the official German falsification of history toils to oppose the historical *Weltanschauung* which is found in "Storm and Stress" to the alleged anti-historicism of the Enlightenment. On the other hand, it proceeds from the mechanical antithesis between reason and feeling and thereby arrives at the alleged irrationalism of German literature at that time. This thesis requires no detailed refutation here. We will only refer to what was stated above about the emergence of the dialectic. Namely, what it has become fashionable to designate as the irrationalism of the German Enlightenment is most often an advance toward the dialectic: an attempt to surmount the formal logic which hitherto had predominated. Unquestionably, in that attempt a crisis in the dominant philosophical trend of the Enlightenment does express itself: the transition to a higher level of thinking. But this too is an international tendency shared by the whole Enlightenment, although the German Enlightenment, as the last current to appear, plays the leading role in it. Engels shows, for example, highly developed types of this dialectical phase in Diderot and Rousseau.

Closely related to this question is that of historicism. The anti-historicism of the Enlightenment is a legend which the Romantic reaction contrived. We need only think of such writers as Voltaire or Gibbon to realize how untenable this legend is. Here too, of course, there is a further development on the part of the German Enlightenment. What took place at this point, however, did not lead in the direction of Romantic pseudo-historicism. The historical universality of Herder, for example, is a forerunner of the dialectical *Weltanschauung* of Hegel. The essay on Werther in this volume

concerns itself with the alleged opposition between reason and feeling.

From all this it is clearly evident that young Goethe was a participant in the general evolutionary process of the Enlightenment and in the German Enlightenment within it; a participant who was, for his part, an accompanying phenomenon and champion of that great process which ideologically prepared the French Revolution. The youth of Goethe (and Schiller) is therefore an organic and important component of a movement progressive on a world scale.

Indeed, the character of youth Goethe is the weakest point of the reactionary Goethe legend anyway. For the revolt of young Goethe against the existing order, against the Germany of his time, is so well-known that it could not be completely denied even by the official body of literary learning. So the legend reaps a richer harvest in Goethe's later development. Beginning with his alienation from public life, it arrives, through his hatred toward the French Revolution, at a Goethe who is one of the major figures of the modern irrationalist "philosophy of life" [*Lebensphilosophie*], the spiritual forefather of Schopenhauer and Neitzsche, and in addition, a literary founder of stylized anti-realism. This historical legend is so widespread and influential that one can see how it affects even progressive anti-Fascist writers.

For a refutation of all these legends a new biography of Goethe would be necessary. Here we must limit ourselves to the most important points, almost in the style of a telegram. Again, we must stress the merit of Mehring who recognized that Goethe did not flee to Italy out of disappointment in love, as a result of the crisis of his love for Charlotte von Stein, but because his attempt to reform the principality of Weimar socially, according to the principles of the Enlightenment, foundered in the face of the resistance of the court, the bureaucracy and Karl August.[1] (My own research, which cannot be set forth here, has convinced me that Mehring is not only completely correct in his interpretation of Goethe's disappointment at the public life then possible in Germany, but that this attempt and its failure also takes in areas with which Mehring was not acquainted). Goethe's later resignation, his withdrawal from public life has its roots here; hence, it contains a crushing criticism of the social retardation of the Germany of his time. His resignation, therefore, contains no negation at all, either of the principles of the Enlightenment, or of its social aims, but rather a rejection of the Germany of his time, with its petty principalities acting as enemies of progress. The readers of this book will find here concrete analyses concerning Goethe's attitude to the great social issues of

[1] Karl August, Duke of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach.

his age. But if such a volume of essays, by its very nature, cannot provide a complete and comprehensive picture of these problems, I hope that Goethe's actual formulations of the questions and the main line of his response will become apparent.

Goethe's connection with the French Revolution is closely related to this complex of questions. Here the legend takes as its point of departure Goethe's first reactions to the French Revolution, his—let us say it openly—shallow and mediocre comedies. It neglects all his later more mature attitudes, the essence of which can be summed up in the fact that he decidedly approved the social aims of the French Revolution while rejecting, just as decidedly, plebeian methods for their realization. This is one of the many questions where his approach runs parallel with that of his great younger contemporary, Hegel. Both comprehended that the outbreak and triumph of the French Revolution meant a new epoch for the whole of world-culture; both strived, in their spheres of endeavour, to draw as completely as possible the consequences of this ideological turning. Now as the reader of our book will observe, the realism of the mature Goethe is an organic product of his grasp of the great events of the time.

Goethe's relations with Hegel (and even earlier, with Schiller and Schelling) led to problems of *Weltanschauung*. When neo-Kantianism predominated, it was the fashion to refer to Goethe's unphilosophical, and even anti-philosophical attitude. Ever since the so-called "philosophy of life" became Germany's dominant intellectual current in the imperialistic period Goethe's philosophical renown has grown greatly. Yet little to help understand the true relations has issued from that. From Nietzsche, by way of Gundolf, to Spengler and Klages, Chamberlain and Rosenberg, each one has made of Goethe the founder of the dominant irrationalist and reactionary *Weltanschauung*. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity to discuss this problem thoroughly in the present work. Still I hope that my *Faust* studies will show the reader the correct method and approach to solve this problem: to regard Goethe, next to Hegel, and parallel to him, as a great figure of the historical dialectic which was being realized at the time.

It goes without saying that the Goethe problem would not be exhausted, even if my book were to provide detailed answers to all these questions. A special monograph on Goethe would be necessary for that. For years I planned, and even prepared such a monograph. Unfortunately, all the material for it was lost in an unfortunate turn of events during the war, so that I must temporarily forgo the completion of this task. Hence, I submit these studies to the reader with a certain resignation.

This resignation applies to the characteristics of the age of Goethe at least as strongly as to the personality of Goethe himself. Only partial outlines of the personalities of Schiller and Hegel appear in these writings, and I am perfectly aware that even a sketch of the age of Goethe must remain more than fragmentary without a serious characterization of Lessing and Herder. If Hölderlin too is not missing—with whom, as the reader will see, just as great a task of destroying legends was necessary as with Goethe himself—this only helps to show one of those tendencies in which a much more radical echo of the French Revolution was voiced than in Goethe and Hegel. At the same time, its analysis is of importance to uncover the causes of the tragic failure of all these tendencies in Goethe's Germany.

These introductory remarks are extremely sketchy. The book itself offers very fragmentary material. Nevertheless, I still hope it becomes clear that we are dealing here—in its main lines—with a progressive period of world-culture. Just as in England and France the ideological preparation of the bourgeois revolution (from Hobbes to Helvétius) founded materialistic philosophy, the latter, in turn, laid the foundations for modern dialectical thinking. And parallel to that, a bridge was built—precisely in the poetic production of Goethe—between the great realism of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth. Therewith the thought and art of mankind took an immense step forward.

After all this, I do not believe any detailed proof is required to show how important and topical all this is today. No new ideological, cultural and literary orientation is possible without a new examination, a new evaluation of the world-historical currents of the past, especially the most recent past. If we want to fight, not in phrases, but in reality, against the influence of the reactionary currents which have dominated Germany till now, then knowledge of those cultural, ideological and literary struggles which classical German literature and philosophy generated is absolutely necessary.

BUDAPEST,
February, 1947.

CHAPTER ONE

Minna von Barnhelm

IT HAS often been said—and not incorrectly—that the greatest period of German poetry and philosophy, the transitional era from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, represents a kind of battle in the clouds, analogous to the legend according to which the fallen warriors of Attila and Aetius continued the battle of the Catalaunian fields as spirits in space. This simile is valid in even greater measure for the Enlightenment. In England the "Glorious Revolution" triumphed with the ideology of Puritanism. The economically progressive capitalism was thus liberated, though interspersed with countless feudal residues; the English Enlightenment attempted to push it forward ideologically in the direction of a reign of reason. In France the more resolute and theoretically more conclusive Enlightenment advocated the same goal under an absolute monarchy, where economic development had long since dissolved the transitory progressive equilibrium of feudal and bourgeois forces, and where a revolutionary upheaval was becoming overpoweringly urgent. Thus both of these Enlightenment movements were indissolubly linked to real political and social progress. The German Enlightenment had no such clear and decisive social foundation: what the German people experienced in the eighteenth century was consciousness and conscience in the process of awakening and self-discovery. As the result of a backward condition, with its roots in history, one could at most think of a real social revolution, but never intellectually prepare for it. The German Enlightenment hence necessarily lacked the crowning achievements of the French Enlightenment, *viz.* an advanced form of materialism and atheism, the conversion of the revolutionary system of ideals into plebeian practices, and, therewith, the prophetic emergence of its peculiar inner difficulties and contradictions. Others, and I too, have repeatedly shown that these indisputable weaknesses of the German Enlightenment also involved elements that were genuinely fruitful for the future, such as the beginning of a renaissance of dialectical thought and the anticipation artistically of many problems of the nineteenth century.

For this reason despite the multitude of significant figures pro-

duced by the German Enlightenment, it is the music of Mozart which is its purest and richest, its deepest and most flawless expression in a world-historical sense. If we stay strictly within the field of literature and theory we get no picture of a ceaseless organic growth, such as occurred in France from Bayle and Fontenelle to Diderot and Rousseau. On the contrary, the only figure in whom the spirit of the German Enlightenment is purely embodied is Lessing who was misunderstood, both during his lifetime and after his death, by right and left alike, from Nicolai and Mendelssohn to Jacobi, Friedrich Schlegel and Kierkegaard. (In this connection, it is not possible to look even cursorily at the harmonious Enlightenment figure of Wieland, whose stature is not comparable to Lessing's). Before Lessing the Enlightenment was still restrained by the narrowness and irresolution of the German wretchedness [*Misere*][1] in spite of all intentions to resist. And just after Lessing, during his lifetime even, there began with Hamann and Herder, with the *Sturm und Drang*, with Jacobi etc. that transitional movement in Germany which, in an extremely contradictory way, led to the second ideological flowering of modern German culture. Hence Lessing's socially conditioned solitariness and uniqueness are manifest in all the problems of form and content in his creative writing and thinking. This is why he so sharply differs from all earlier phases of the Enlightenment taken internationally each of which, compared to him, was rife with compromise; hence his difference with Voltaire. (At a greater historical distance, Heine was the first in Germany to grasp the positive dialectic also present in Voltaire's compromises). Lessing believed he corresponded to Diderot and hence had little understanding for the specifically Rousseauesque problem; nor did he get to know the problems of Rameau's world.

All these contours of Lessing's historical personality, the individual elements of which may be called limitations only after careful dialectical reflection, point to the similarity of position between him and Mozart. Both men left the irresoluteness of the ideology of the early German Enlightenment far behind them; in neither did a feeling of inner weakness any longer inhibit boldness and confidence, nor was their bright perspective as yet clouded by inner contradictions of the realm of reason which were on the horizon. How related tendencies grew out of this—very general—historical relationship in such different media as music and literature will become clear to us later.

If Lessing's position in the history of the German Enlightenment represents a mid-point between a "No-longer" and a "Not-yet", his own life also has a highly characteristic mid-point in his Breslau

[1] A phrase coined by Heine and used frequently by Marx and Engels.

period, just when *Minna von Barnhelm* originated. It is not a question of a mid-point between his origins and the gloom of the final phase of his life. Lessing reached maturity before Breslau, and even after Breslau, he repeatedly had hopes for an agreeable and meaningful life, one offering him promising and appropriate action. But Lessing was the first important German writer who really wanted to be a free writer, and here, too, in social position he was close to Diderot. In Breslau, at the height of the Seven Years' War, Lessing became secretary to Colonel Tauentzien, and despite the paradox, it was that period of his life when he was able to feel relatively most free. Mehring has already pointed out that an élite of officers in Germany at that time was far less narrow-minded and philistine than the mass of civilians, including most scholars and writers. Not only are Lessing's Tellheim and the old Galotti officers, but Schiller's Ferdinand is also one. Although we cannot analyse this favourable situation here in detail, it must be stated that its product, *Minna von Barnhelm*, radiates a self-confident certainty that Lessing did not achieve again in his later literary production, either in the tragedy of *Emilia Galotti* or in *Nathan* with its—so prematurely—resigned and self-possessed wisdom of old age.

The musical and moral conception of *Minna von Barnhelm* emerged from this pattern of life as a reflection of its temper. About fifty years ago Paul Ernst pointed out the musical character of this work. Of course the concrete value of this suggestion is diminished by the fact that he reduces this musicality to a biased hierarchical ordering of the characters, so that "the melody of Tellheim is played about an octave lower by Werner." Apart from the fact that this principle is much too abstract to explain so differentiated a composition as our comedy, this hierarchy only appears tenable at all from the standpoint of an orthodox Prussian interpretation, namely if Tellheim, fighting as a Prussian patriot for his fatherland out of conviction for its "good cause", justly disdains Werner's military adventurousness.

We shall soon see that the play itself offers no grounds for such an interpretation. The point that Ernst regards as self-evident, i.e. Tellheim's attitude to his military career, we shall look into later more closely in more concrete contexts. But we can already clearly see, in considering some of the important situations and their reflexes in the dialogue, that the actual composition of this comedy is much more complicated and can nowhere be reduced to a social hierarchy of superior and inferior. For Ernst interprets the situation of Minna and Francisca just as he does that of Tellheim, Werner and Just. In reality, just as many situations can be found in which Francisca shows a superior humanity. For example, when the two girls learn

that Tellheim is present in the inn, Minna rejoices that she has found him, but Franciscа first of all feels sympathy for his misfortune. Minna herself says: "I am only in love, but you are good." Or when Minna, in order to guide Tellheim along the proper path of love—honour forbids him, as a poor and suspect man, from marrying a wealthy woman—gives out that she herself is poor and disinherited, so as to put their love right. Franciscа says to her: "Yes, how immensely that must flatter the most delicate egoism." That Minna, in contrast to the more primitive Franciscа, is also capable of finding good sides to evil men, is, as Ernst remarks, a sign of moral cultivation; but it is open to question whether, in the given case of Chevalier de la Marlinière, Franciscа's undifferentiated moral feeling misses the mark. The same is true of Franciscа's resistance to the Tellheim intrigue contrived by Minna.

It is much the same with the moral hierarchy of Tellheim and Werner. Apart from the decisive problem, already mentioned, in this case too there is no inflexible superior and inferior morality, but a very active alternating movement. It is true that Tellheim justly reproves Werner's jesting and frivolous remarks about the relations of the officers with the women, but Werner immediately perceives his impropriety. When Tellheim, however, rejects Werner's loan out of an exaggerated sense of honour, because he does not want to be indebted to him, Werner reminds Tellheim with legitimate indignation that he is still indebted to him since he saved Tellheim's life several times in battle. Here the moral superiority is certainly on Werner's side. We believe that this alternating movement of moral right and wrong is the determining principle of composition in this comedy. It lies precisely in repeatedly bringing to light the moral dubiousness of abstract moral principles, prescriptions and prohibitions in crucial concrete situations. The same principle is involved even when two persons falsely play off one another in this way. Thus impoverished Tellheim tells wealthy Minna: "It is a worthless man who is not ashamed to owe his whole happiness to a woman whose blind affection. . . ." When Minna's own situation is apparently reversed by her intrigue, she says to him: "It is a worthless creature who is not ashamed to owe her whole happiness to a man." It lies in the nature of the comedy that each of these "moralists" must be in the wrong on each occasion.

The number of examples could be increased at will. The whole, highly unique composition of *Minna von Barnhelm* is based precisely on this conversion of abstract morality into a humanly concrete and individualized ethic arising from a given concrete situation. Of course, the dialectic of morality and ethics is the primordial foundation of all great drama, indeed of all great literature. It is

the basis of all real conflicts. A conflict can only arise when universal moral precepts and prohibitions prove to be in opposition to each other. (One of the most serious limitations of Kant's moral philosophy is that it denies the existence, and even the conceivability of such conflicts). They form an inescapable problem which is central to any human and social existence. Every class society spontaneously produces different precepts and prohibitions for the various classes whereby it causes conflicts to become inevitable components of everyday life. The development of a society transcends them if the existing economic structure is surmounted, new relations between human beings emerge and the old morality changes into a new one. But such conflicts only materialize through struggle, through the positing of socio-historical alternatives in human life. So, fully conscious and articulated in the *Oresteia*; so as obvious, everyday fact in the *Antigone*. The conflict first becomes acute when persons are placed before the alternative of conflicting moral systems, are forced in this situation to make a choice and prepared to draw all the conclusions from it. In the conflict the moral sphere dissolves itself.

here it seems a matter of course, at the time of the historical dominance of a moral system, to comply with its precepts, the person in conflict is given the option of which side of the alternative he will recognize as his own necessity, as an imperative which applies to him personally, as a duty which is specifically binding upon his particular personality. Thus Antigone chooses to bury her brother against the law; and her own personal life is fulfilled in the consequences of this choice. Thus the ethical attitude grows out of the conflicts between moral obligations.

In the historical evolution of human society, of course, not only do the contents of the conflicts change, but also—with them and through them—their forms as well. The morality of the Renaissance went beyond the objective polis alternative of two moral systems in both of which ethical subjectivity is limited to the act of decision and its consequences. Social evolution even allowed for the eligibility of the principle of evil as an alternative (Edmund, *Richard III*). With this development naturally the form and content of the interrelationship between morality and ethics changed radically, without the basic structure of the conflict being fundamentally revolutionized, of course. Lessing's deep historical understanding of this problem shows in his discernment of the aesthetic correlation between Sophocles and Shakespeare—on the basis, moreover, of Aristotle's theory, and despite all the differences of form—and this implicitly contains the recognition of an abiding factor in the historical transformation of the form and content of conflict.

Notwithstanding his affirmation of something permanent in

change, Lessing's aesthetic and ethical position also signifies something new as regards Shakespeare. What is new is not that the conflict is transplanted into the spiritual world of comedy, although it is linked to this form, as we shall soon see. In one of his important definitions of comedy Lessing carries on a polemic with Rousseau who remonstrated against Molière's *Misanthrope* for having made virtue contemptible. First of all Lessing separates righteousness from the excess of it in the object of laughter—here the figure of Alceste, but in addition to that, he contrasts laughter and derision in comedy itself. This already manifests a movement from morality to ethics. Since derision is aimed at the excesses of virtue, as in Molière, comedy is not anti-moral, as Rousseau thought, but is a principle that preserves genuine morality. Apparently less determinate in its object than derision, laughter is aimed at the totality of human practice; and since it appears here as supreme judge of subjectivity, it becomes a new cathartic principle. Elsewhere Lessing interprets catharsis, entirely in the sense of the Enlightenment, as a "transformation of the passions into virtuous mastery." As opposed to the directness of derision, which is aimed at very definite goals, the universality of laughter makes itself a principle of enlightened catharsis. "Its true universal usefulness lies in the laughter itself; in the exercise of our ability to note the ridiculous, to perceive it lazily and promptly under the guise of every passion and vogue, in all its intermixtures with yet worse qualities and with good qualities, even in the wrinkles of solemn gravity."

It is not our task here to investigate whether, and to what extent, this ethically cathartic comedy already found poetic expression earlier. What is important here is to understand what social and moral needs compelled Lessing to emphasize so strongly on a theoretical level this cathartic function of laughter. We believe that the new fact of life which brought this new theoretical attitude, this new artistic problem to the surface was the danger, arising with the Renaissance, that not merely was one able to choose evil as a principle in the conflicts which now imposed themselves, but that the, from a moral point of view, rightly chosen virtue might conceal a principle of inhumanity. For the Renaissance, the result of Machiavelli's discovery of politics as a separate sphere of action, with its own logic and dialectic of motive and consequences, was to see the new conflict, which Shakespeare portrayed—that is, the possibility of a morally evil maxim—in life itself. The new problem that Lessing examined arose out of those great class struggles which filled the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, culminating in the French Revolution. The Enlightenment secularized the original axioms of this movement, religiously coloured as they were, for example, by

revolutionary puritanism, by a new and revolutionary interpretation of Stoic philosophy which displaced revolutionary Calvinism and its attempted Catholic equivalents. A comparison with Shakespeare allows the new formative element to stand out. In his works the dialectic of socially effective action arose out of the real structures discovered by Machiavelli. Thus, in *Julius Caesar*, it is not the Stoic Brutus, but rather the Epicurean Cassius who becomes the mouthpiece of Machiavelli's *Realpolitik* (on the question of whether, after the assassination of Caesar, Antony should also be done away with). The secularization of the religious-revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) ideologies first places the problem of political and moral Stoicism in the centre of Enlightenment moral philosophy. It is therefore no accident that Diderot sketched a theoretical discussion with Seneca; that the contradictions, which are related to these questions, often occupied Rousseau, or that a generation later there actually emerged a tragedian of political Stoicism, Alfieri.

Lessing's inner struggle with these problems began before his Breslau period. His *Philotas* represents precisely the personal union of Machiavelli's *Realpolitik* with moral Stoicism—in this instance unconditional self-sacrifice. The suicide of the prince is a moral deed of a Stoic kind the motive of which is the ruthless realization of a patriotic and political interest. Lessing presents his young hero as completely genuine and convinced, but he does not conceal his own opinion about the inhumanity of this heroism which rejects on principle any compromise. It is certain that Lessing's inner convictions are expressed in the words of King Aridaeus to Philotas: "Fate destines you for the crown, you! It wishes to entrust you with the happiness of a whole people, mighty and noble; you! What a frightful future it reveals! You will overwhelm your people with laurels and with misery. You will count more victories than happy subjects."

The line of this dramatic sketch found many an imitator in Germany. For Lessing is was only episodic. Thus Nathan says to the Knight Templar: "Great! Great and abominable!" Naturally one cannot know for certain to what extent the revolutionary social and political motives, altogether absent in *Philotas*, would have found expression if the early plan of a Rienzi tragedy and the later Spartacus project had been completed. At all events, in 1770, Lessing wrote to Ramler about Spartacus as hero, that he "sees with eyes different from those of the best Roman hero." Young Schiller wrestled all the more energetically with this problem in his permanent dilemma of whether to choose Brutus or Catalina as leader of a revolution. In his great reckoning with his own youthful development, in *Don Carlos*, Schiller worked out a whole series of possible

variations of political Stoicism, examining dialectically its moral tendency to convert the loftiest and most selfless virtue into inhumanity. The reply of the queen to the Marquis Posa may be considered as Schiller's final verdict.

> You threw yourself into this deed which you
> Call noble. Only do not deny it.
> I know you and know you have long craved it.
> Should a thousand hearts break, what does it matter
> To you, as long as your pride is satisfied.
> But now, now I learn to understand you! You have
> Striven only for admiration.
>
> [Sie stürzten sich in diese That, die Sie
> Erhaben nennen. Leugnen Sie nur nicht.
> Ich kenne Sie, Sie haben längst darnach
> Gedürstet—Mögen tausend Herzen brechen,
> Was kümmert Sie's, wenn sich Ihr Stolz nur weidet.
> O, jetzt o jetzt lern'ich Sie verstehn! Sie haben
> Nur um Bewunderung gebuhlt.]

No doubt the internal problems of Jacobinism already appear here in the mirror of a German morality which had indeed already outgrown the Enlightenment, both in the positive and negative sense. But despite all differences, this critique of stoicism grew, on the other hand, out of Lessing's and, on the other—despite its often all-too-German character—caught many of the real problems of a stoic revolutionary morality. One need only think of Gamelin in *Les Dieux ont soif* by Anatole France.

In Lessing himself, however, this moral constellation also appears in an altogether different form. Lessing observed the conditions of Germany much too sensibly to perceive in revolution anything more than a necessary abstract ideal pertaining to the future. With the same sensible power of observation, however, he saw the disgraceful suppression of every manifestation of humanity by the absolutism of the petty states in Germany. And the picture that emerged automatically raised the question: in the extreme cases which this reality daily produces how can the human dignity of people who are objectively powerless be saved? *Emilia Galotti* shows what significance stoicism assumed for Lessing in this matter. It is precisely in this drama, of course, that a very forceful differentiation emerges. The convinced stoics, Appiani and Odoardo Galotti, try to keep aloof from the violent and corrupting sphere of absolutism. The drama shows how impossible this is in practice. The end of Emilia—the much discussed dramaturgical problems of which we cannot go into

here—shows stoic suicide as the last refuge of an otherwise helpless victim of amoral caprice. Especially important for our problem, the relationship of stoic morality to a humane ethic, is the fact that Emilia's emotional world is not at all stoically oriented. In the last dialogue with her father she answers his claim that innocence is superior to all force: "But not to all temptation. Force! Force! Who cannot defy force? What is called force is nothing: temptation is true force. I have blood, father, such warm and youthful blood. My feelings too are feelings. I stand for nothing. I am good for nothing. I know the house of Grimaldi. It is a house of pleasure." When her stoic father stabs her at the end of the dialogue, the other stoic meaning of life appears clearly as a desperate way out of a situation lacking any other moral outlet.

In *Emilia Galotti* Lessing did not have the chance to develop the whole dialectic of stoicism as a last refuge for the humanly honourable but actual impotence in the Germany of his time. This constellation, however, continued to live on as a problem in the life and poetry of Germany. One need only think of Jerusalem's suicide and *Werther*. In his criticism of the Goethe novel in a letter to Eschenburg, which, in an incidental remark, theoretically justifies the suicide with the parallel of the uprising of an oppressed people, Lessing writes: "Do you really think that a Greek or Roman youth would ever have taken his life in such a way and for such a reason? Certainly not." The fact that Lessing completely disregarded the episode of the legation is easily understandable in a man who achieved greatness in continual guerrilla warfare with Germany's miniature absolutism and who always preserved his human substance intact throughout the severe humiliations that often resulted. Evidently he did not consider this conflict of Werther's as one of the really extreme situations for which stoic suicide is a valid solution. As a conclusion to this train of thought it must be said, however, that Goethe himself reached a similar moral conclusion as early as 1775 in a poem that he used as a motto, so to speak, for the second edition of *Werther*. He concludes the poem with Werther's warning to the reader: "Be a man and do not follow me."

It is the second function of stoic morality—its function in the everyday life of the time—which yields its universal character. On the one hand, it was indispensable to personal life, which was difficult to lead in that age, but on the other, its logical realization posed a whole series of internal contradictions, where the struggle against the conversion of morality into inhumanity took an inward expression. In political morality this tendency had already made itself clear—from Philotas to the Marquis Posa. But what is essential

to realize is that the dialectic of this conversion always constituted a latent danger even in the everyday moral subject who simply defended his own integrity passively against the vileness of social conditions—the danger of responding to external inhumanity with an internal inhumanity, of allowing one's own soul to harden in defence of one's own human integrity. We encountered such contradictions earlier when we considered, from another point of view, some of the moral motives in *Minna von Barnhelm*. Now we will concentrate on them because, as we will attempt to show henceforth, the composition, the treatment of the dialogue, etc. in *Minna von Barnhelm* revolve around this contradictory character of stoic morality, and because the principal merit of this work consists precisely in the way these moral conflicts are ethically surmounted.

In order to deal with this problem we must first of all look at the foundations of Tellheim's inner existence more closely and realistically than is customary. Earlier we saw how Tellheim reproached Werner on moral grounds for wanting to continue his military career. His talk about fatherland and "good causes" sounds very nice, but how could they provide any real moral basis for the Baltic Tellheim in the Prussia of that time? When Tellheim later speaks to Minna about his own life, no such high-sounding talk appears —and rightly not. Rather he describes, very straightforwardly, the origins of his soldiering and the actual prospects which he has for his future life. "I became a soldier from partiality—I myself do not know what political reasons—and from a notion that it is good for any honourable man to try his hand at this calling for a time, to familiarize himself with all that danger involves and to learn coolness and resolution. Only extreme necessity could have compelled me to make a vocation of this experiment, a trade out of this incidental occupation. But now that nothing more compels me, my sole ambition is simply to be a calm and contented man once more." There is not a syllable about fatherland and even if a "good cause" is vaguely referred to, it could have been at best a youthful illusion, long since outgrown; probably a mere pretext for that self-examination and self-education which he speaks about fully and openly. This is not to say, of course, that the resolve of young Tellheim was accidental or meaningless. As we pointed out earlier, with respect to Germany, the development of backward nations up to the present day shows that there are periods in the early phases of national awakening in which the army provides a better field of activity for honourable and decent men than any civil service. Even if one admits this, one can still ask where Tellheim gets the moral right to judge Werner's adventurousness so severely. The real "good cause" on which Tellheim's clear conscience

relies in the present is the human way in which he collected contributions at his own risk against the will of his superiors. It is true that with Werner it is a question of a simple adventure, and with Tellheim himself, a question of an internal moral self-education involving risks. But if the two of them are compared in terms of position and intellectual and moral cultivation, an abundance of factors appear to absolve Werner.

We must look into the internal origin of Tellheim's existence as a soldier somewhat more closely to understand correctly his spiritual and moral situation at the time of his discharge and the accusations against him. With him it is not a question of "my country, right or wrong", nor of a "good cause", all of which, including his honour, he could be obliged to sacrifice under certain circumstances. Directly before the passage just quoted, Tellheim expresses himself unequivocally on this question. "Serving the great is dangerous and not worth the effort, the servitude, the humiliation it costs." His stoicism, therefore, exists precisely for the purpose of giving him the humanly necessary power to resist such situations which are objectively forseeable and even to be expected. Thus his stoicism is also the ideological self-defence of a person helplessly sacrificed to stronger forces. In fact, however, this ideology is able, with the greatest exertion, to sustain Tellheim in the face of an alien and hostile world; but as soon as he faces Minna, and by her presence is forced to an ultimate act of sincerity, his stoic attitude breaks down and allows his emotions, long suppressed and in a state of impotent rebellion, to break out openly against the injustice inflicted on him. It occurs in a fit of laughter over his fate which appalls Minna. "I have never heard cursing more horrible than your laughter;" "It is the awful laughter of misanthropy!" But Minna is much too intelligent and ethical, much too stable to remain horrified. Half-jesting she brings up the example of Othello, but she continues in the most humanly sincere seriousness: "Oh the fierce, inflexible men who always fasten their vacant eyes only on the spectre of honour, hardening themselves to all other feelings! Look here, Tellheim, at me!" Tellheim is deeply —cathartically—touched by this. He replies distractedly: "Oh yes! But tell me, young lady, how did the Moor come to be in the Venetian service? Had he no fatherland? Why did he lease his sword and his blood to a foreign state?"

Here a tragedy of Tellheim could have been inserted. It appears, of course, only on the horizon, but it gives the play a completely new intonation which has a double significance. On the one hand, this new intonation shows that we are dealing with a comedy, although, in the last analysis, the basis of it could have given rise to a tragedy as well. On the other hand, it also emphasizes that, in the

last analysis, the permanent episodic element of the tragic volcanic outburst arises out of the internal logic of the situation and that it would not be appropriate to the ultimate nature of the persons who encounter their destiny here in this way. This conclusion would follow if all the consequences were inferred, such as would be possible with regard to the formal aspects. This fact is based upon levels of varying depth. It is obvious at first glance that the ruin of a man by the contradictory character of the human conditions of his development, which are selected for "pedagogical" purposes, would fulfil only the external and formal prerequisites of a tragedy. Such a man could be crushed by the conditions of his life without being able, however, to recognize his own self in the tragic debâcle and give this self the body and meaning that characterize a realized work of art. The fact that there are many such tragedies in the modern period could not possibly have been a motive for Lessing to increase them by yet another. We do know that in Lessing himself a contradictory feeling toward tragedy held sway. He was one of its most important theoreticians; he knew perfectly well that the objective social and historical foundations of life in his time were pregnant with tragedies. As soon as he devoted himself directly to these foundations he perceived and created tragedies. But on a deeper level he felt—even if he did not directly express it in a theoretical way—that human forces are effective in man which transcend these tragedies. In *Nathan*, as a farewell to life and poetry, he brought wisdom, as a spiritual force of this kind, to the stage. This one play, the plot of which consisted of a series of Romantic and improbable collisions, collisions extremely dangerous in the practical realm, however, was supposed to produce the poetic proof that human intelligence and genuine wisdom are always able to round off the dangerous edges of these collisions and resolve them, without moral compromise, by calling up a human self-examination at the level of real humanity.

In our comedy this function belongs to Minna. She too possesses wisdom, but it is not such as, clearly seeing the whole of life, hides above it; it is not a form of theoretical superiority any more than it is abstract and lifeless in *Nathan*. Rather it stems from a deep and deeply pondered experience of life. Viewed directly, Minna's wisdom is not wise at all; it is the persistent drive of a genuine human being toward a meaningful life that can only be realized in community and love. Thus her wisdom is not only the drive to make a concrete, problematical reality her own, but also to take in at a glance what is best in it and, precisely by means of this glance, to aid it in discovering and realizing its possibilities in the best sense. These positive qualities, however, nowhere coalesce into an "ideal char-

acter". Minna can err; she can entertain unreal notions about people and situations. But her bright understanding time and again breaks through these errors; her ethical authenticity triumphantly breaks through and transforms what is falsely imagined into truth just as often at Tellheim's rigidly moral stoic obsession converts his objective righteousness into wrongs directed against himself. In her heart she has an unbroken courage that nothing can break, and for that reason she simply goes through the most tragic collisions with sensitivity, grace and resolution, without display and without gestures. The best of what is human in the German Enlightenment found straightforward expression in her.

Along with the correlation and contrast of Minna and Tellheim, there emerges another fundamental intonation in the comedy: the counter-force which does not simply stem and thwart Tellheim's tragic tendency, but which does so in such a way that, in the process of the dissolution of his inflexible morality, his value is preserved and enhanced. The morality of stoicism comes to nothing in a world embodied by Minna, which no longer needs, in order to be virtuous, an internal ethical apparatus; but which is ruled by an ethic of which historical morality sought to be the guardian in a still decadent world. This reciprocal involvement of both intonations is what first gives the external treatment of the plot an internal meaning, a spiritual significance. The good ending required by a comedy is not a "happy ending" here, and still less is it a glorification of Frederick's régime. It is the Enlightenment fairy-tale of the necessary ultimate triumph of reason transformed into gracefulness; and this is the deepest level of Lessing's *Weltanschauung* which, by recognizing the truth in all the dissonant elements of reality, became unshakeably convinced of the ultimate harmony of the world, and remained convinced throughout all misfortune. The fact that this conviction elsewhere assumed the form of wisdom in *Nathan*, palingenesis in the *Education of the Human Race*, pantheism in the Spinoza discourse, etc. is, in the last analysis, a secondary problem. In the middle of Lessing's life, in that period when his style of living enabled him to be happy, a very relevant fact if regarded realistically, his conviction of the ultimate harmony of the world assumed in *Minna von Barnhelm* the form of a very earthly fairy-tale that actually came into being and illuminated the world.

This *Weltanschauung* links Lessing to Mozart. Their correlation is deep and universal. On a purely ideological level, it stands out just as plainly perhaps, and sometimes even more so in other works than in this one, e.g. in a comparison of the *Magic Flute* and *Nathan the Wise*. But the place of *Minna von Barnhelm* in Lessing's life-work is unique because it also manifests this ideological relationship artis-

tically. It is true that the contrast to music, and especially Mozart's, seems to be very marked precisely in this comedy, precisely in the formal and intellectualist treatment of the dialogue which is so typically Lessingian. For while the whole structure of the comedy, the persistent posing of moral problems in a conceptual form and the constant, continually renewed ethical effort to solve them, does indeed create a light and winged poetic atmosphere, this atmosphere forms—so it seems at first sight—the greatest conceivable contrast to a musical composition in the spirit of Mozart.

Still we believe that the relationship can be found precisely in this work. For the "intellectualist" treatment of the language and dialogue in *Minna von Barnhelm* has a unique quality; in its totality, in its main lines it is not an instrument for the fixing of ideas such as, for instance, the dramatic verses in *Nathan* are. On the contrary, since the composition of the whole comedy seeks in a ceaseless ebb and flow to negate (*aufheben*—in the threefold Hegelian sense) the false, moralizing views and inflexible tendencies of a stoic morality by means of a human ethic, no particular intellectual formulation can be arrested, fixed and perfected on a purely intellectual plane. Rather the particular intellectual formulation is either submerged in the stream of human and ethical counter-effects, which releases the human attitude at its centre, or, if it does reappear—driven by other human conflicts, not by its own immanent logic—it does so as something transformed in the concrete human *hic et nunc*. In a formal sense, therefore, it suffers the same fate of negation, but, in content, it is the concrete having-become-something-else that dominates. The directly intellectualizing form of the dialogue, which arises in this way, is further enhanced by the fact that every rejoinder is Lessingian, clearly, brightly, transparently shaped and that the individuality of the characters comes into play more in the moral content of their existence and conduct than in an individualized manner of expression. Thus the form of the dialogue negates its own intellectualist character through a sustained epigrammatic style. The epigram removes from the human expression all that is earth-bound, transforming it into something which soars freely toward a definite but unformulated goal.

This tendency is further enhanced by the fact that the dialogue is not there to unfold an ideological system embodied in men and their relations, as in *Nathan*, but to give a scenic and humorous alteration of aspirations within an internal dynamic determined by the human core of the problems raised. That is why the discussion, the sparring of theses and antitheses rises out of real life and plunges back into it, then redefined once more takes the stage in an immediate form, only to undergo yet again a similar fate. The critique

of morality, the imposing of an inflexible stoicism into a human and dynamic personal ethic thus yields—right down to the dialogue —a completely different principle of composition from the ideological one in *Nathan* or the one of concrete social dramatics in *Emilia Galotti*. Such dialogue is possible only if the ultimate foundation of the action is not the immanently necessary concatenation of happenings, as in *Emilia Galotti*, but rather an ideological basis that encompasses and underpins this concatenation, that raises all the "improbabilities" in the various situations, their connections and resolutions to the plane of a more profound—one might say philosophical-historical—necessity. In *Nathan* this occurs in a directly philosophical way; in *Minna* the composition is carried by a sensibility with ideological foundation, which never directly enters any of the dialogue, but controls the play as a whole.

Thus a musical quality like that of Mozart can emerge in these dialogues. However relevant the Mozart librettos may be for the "philosophical-historical" effect of his music, the ultimate ground for the serene confidence in the realm of reason is different and goes far deeper; it is founded in the music itself. *Minna von Barnhelm* owes its unique position in the literature of the Enlightenment to the fact that Lessing succeeded in this work in creating, purely with the word, purely indeed with his splendidly conceptual, epigrammatical pointing up of dialogue, an atmosphere which could support and authentically evoke this belief in the future, while shutting out none of the difficulties and obstacles; an atmosphere which could include the possibility of tragic failure on the part of these future tendencies and represent this possibility quite seriously, but yet remove it to the shores of an irresistible total current and simply make it part of a full experience.

Earlier we attempted to sketch the ideological foundations of these artistically authentic means whereby Lessing brought his literary work into such an ideal proximity to Mozart's music. They take concrete poetic shape in the way the moral problems, posed by the deepest needs of life, always acquire an epigrammatic style of dialogue, which gives them the firmest yet lightest contours. These problems are then resolved, almost without articulation, on the plane of personal ethics and so are immersed in the harmonizing current of the total movement. Out of these transformations of clearcut ideas into suspended moments of feeling, which fleetingly arrest the irresistible movement toward the realm of reason, there emerges that remarkable relationship of "melody" and "accompaniment" in the dialogue and its development. The bright trenchancy of the speech does not disappear, however, even if it seems to dissolve in this total atmosphere. On the contrary, both continually assimilate the ele-

ments of the other partial sphere, homogenizing one another and reconducting the elements back to their own realm in an enriched form. This reciprocal interpenetration creates an atmosphere of genuine immediacy, which is sharpened, deepened and enriched, by the sharp contours into a fitting "accompaniment", soaring upwards. The moments of feeling and sensibility ascend continually to the plane of the clearly-outlined "melodies", where, in turn strengthening, deepening, enriching these, they find their home.

I know all these statements are only similes; literature is still literature and music is still music. But it is precisely in the way that such similes force themselves upon us as something real that shows —going beyond the general "philosophical-historical" relationship of Lessing and Mozart—the Mozartian "musicality" of this work. Thus the assertion of the musical quality of *Minna von Barnhelm* has nothing to do with the connections between music and poetry that are usually examined, such as the often analysed musical character of poetic language, be it lyric poetry or be it rhetorical dramatic poetry that resembles opera. Nor does the role of the Wagnerian "leitmotiv" in the life-work of Thomas Mann, who was so deeply musical, offer anything analogous. The "leitmotiv" is an enrichment of the technique of language and composition, but it never becomes the central principle of artistic structure or of the artistic control of receptivity. (Quite apart from the fact that the literary "leitmotiv", which certainly originated independently of Wagner in similar currents of the time, is to be found also in Ibsen who undoubtedly influenced the young Thomas Mann also). In any case, if one can speak of an affinity to music in the style of writing of Thomas Mann, then it is a question of a completely different kind of music and, therefore, of a completely different kind of musical affinity in his style; it is a question of characterizing the ideal-artistic affinity of *Minna von Barnhelm* to Mozart. The agile lightness which overcomes in dance-tempo all gloomy perils and all dark forebodings without weakening their reality as living forces, the gracefulness of rational understanding as an irresistible force of progressive life: this is the foundation—which is not a simile—of the Mozartian spirit in this comedy. What is greatest, and most fascinating in the Enlightenment meets with what is greatest and most delightful in the figure of Mozart.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sorrows of Young Werther

THE YEAR in which *Werther* appeared, 1774, is an important date, not only for the history of German literature, but also for world literature. The brief but exceptionally significant philosophical and literary hegemony of Germany, which temporarily relieved France of ideological leadership in these areas, became clearly evident for the first time with the world-wide success of *Werther*. To be sure, German literature had already produced works of significance for world literature before *Werther*. One need only mention Winckelmann, Lessing and Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. But the exceptionally extensive and profound effect of *Werther* on the entire world clearly brought to light the leading rôle of the German Enlightenment.

The German Enlightenment? That startles the reader who has been "schooled" in the literary legends of bourgeois historiography and the vulgar sociology which depends upon them. Indeed, both in bourgeois literary history and vulgar sociology, it is a commonplace that the Enlightenment, on the one hand, and "Storm and Stress"—and especially *Werther*—on the other, are exclusively opposed to one another. This literary legend first began with the famous book on Germany by the Romantic writer, Madame de Staël. Then it was taken up by progressive bourgeois literary historians as well and, by way of the well-known works of Georg Brandes, it found its way into vulgar pseudo-Marxist sociology. It goes without saying that bourgeois literary historians of the imperialist period, like Gundolf, Korff, Strich, etc. enthusiastically built upon this legend. Is not constructing a Chinese wall between the Enlightenment and German Classicism the best ideological means to debase the Enlightenment to the advantage of the subsequent reactionary tendencies in Romanticism?

When a historical legend is built upon an ideological need as deep as that of the hatred of the reactionary bourgeoisie for the revolutionary Enlightenment, then it goes without saying that the makers of such historical legends will not concern themselves at all with the obvious facts of history, and that it is a matter of perfect

indifference to them if their legends fly in the face of the most elementary facts. This is quite clearly the case on the *Werther* question. For even bourgeois literary history is forced to regard Richardson and Rousseau as literary precursors of *Werther*. Of course, it is characteristic of the intellectual level of bourgeois literary historians that they can at one and the same time see a literary connection between Richardson, Rousseau and Goethe and deny all connection between *Werther* and the Enlightenment.

To be sure, intelligent reactionaries sense a contradiction here. But their way out is to take Rousseau already as an opponent of Enlightenment and to make of him an ancestor of reactionary Romanticism. With Richardson, however, even this "wisdom" fails to work. Richardson was a typical bourgeois Enlightenment figure. He achieved his great European success precisely among the progressive bourgeoisie; ideological pioneers of the European Enlightenment, like Diderot and Lessing, enthusiastically heralded his fame.

What then is the ideological content of this historical legend? What ideological need of the nineteenth century is it meant to satisfy? However pompously expressed the content is remarkably paltry and abstract. It is that the Enlightenment supposedly took into account only the "intellect" [*Verstand*]. The German movement of "Storm and Stress", on the other hand, is supposed to have been a revolt of "feeling", "soul" and "instinct" against the tyranny of intellect. This barren hollow abstraction serves to exalt the irrationalist tendencies of the bourgeois decadence and to distort all the traditions of the revolutionary period of bourgeois evolution. Among liberal literary historians of Brandes's type, this theory is eclectic and compromising, arguing for the ideological superiority of the no longer revolutionary bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century over that of the revolutionary period, due to the fact that its subsequent development was supposedly "more concrete", and that it also supposedly took into account the "soul", etc. The avowed reactionaries unconditionally turn upon the Enlightenment and shamelessly calumniate it.

What was the essence of this infamous "intellect" of the Enlightenment? Clearly a relentless criticism of religion, of the contamination of philosophy by theology, of the institutions of feudal absolutism, of feudal-religious precepts of mortality, etc. That this relentless struggle of the Enlighteners should have become ideologically insufferable to a now reactionary bourgeoisie is easy to understand. But does it follow that the Enlighteners, as the avant-garde of the revolutionary bourgeoisie in science, art and life, disdained or depreciated man's emotional life in any way because they only acknowledge what withstood the test of human reason and a confrontation with the facts of life? We believe that a clear formulation

of the question itself clearly testifies to the abstract and untenable character of such reactionary constructions. They appear plausible only from the standpoint of post-revolutionary legitimism, which gives all royalist traditions a false and sentimental emotional accent, extending this false sentimentality to the anti-popular traditions of the Enlightenment. As opposed to bourgeois literary historians and vulgar sociologists who trace Chateaubriand, for example, to Rousseau and Goethe, Marx refers to ". . . this belletrist who combines the refined scepticism and Voltarianism of the eighteenth century with the refined sentimentalism and Romanticism of the nineteenth in the most disgusting way."

In the Enlightenment itself the problem was posed quite differently. To choose only one example, since our space is much too limited for a thorough analysis: from what point of view did Lessing oppose both the theory and practice of the tragedian Corneille? His point of departure was precisely that Corneille's conception of tragedy is inhuman, that Corneille disregarded the human soul and man's emotional life, that, being engrossed in the courtly and aristocratic conventions of his time, he offers us lifeless and purely intellectualist constructions. The literary-theoretical struggle of such Enlightenment figures as Diderot and Lessing was directed against these aristocratic conventions. They combatted these conventions all along the line; their intellectualist frigidity as well as their irrationality. There is not the slightest contradiction between Lessing's struggle against the frigidity of *tragédie classique* and his proclamation of the rights of reason in the religious question, for example. For every great socio-historical revolution brings forth a *new man*. In these ideological conflicts, therefore, the question is the struggle for this concrete new man against the obsolete man of the detested and dying old social order. But never (except in the apologetic fantasy of reactionary thinkers) does a struggle really occur between two abstract and isolated human attributes (instinct versus reason).

Only by destroying such historical legends and contradictions, which have never existed in reality, can we open the way to an understanding of the actual inner contradictions of the Enlightenment. These actual contraditions in turn ideologically reflect the contradictions of the bourgeois revolution and those of the emergence, growth and development of bourgeois society itself with its social content and driving-forces. And, of course, in the life of society itself, these contradictions are not rigid and fixed once and for all. They emerge rather in an extremely uneven way, corresponding to the disparity of social evolution, are resolved in a seemingly satisfying way at a certain stage of evolution, only to reappear at a subsequent stage of social development on a higher level and in a more complex

form. The literary polemics of the Enlighteners, the criticism of Enlightenment literature by the Enlighteners themselves—from which reactionary literary history draws its "arguments" by wilful abstraction—are therefore only reflections of the contradictions of the evolution of society itself, conflicts between various currents within the Enlightenment and conflicts between its various stages.

Mehring was the first to destroy the reactionary historical legends concerning the character of Lessing's fight against Voltaire. He convincingly demonstrated that Lessing criticized the backward and compromising aspects of Voltaire from a more advanced stage of the Enlightenment. This problem is especially interesting as regards Rousseau. In Rousseau, for the first time, the ideological aspects of the plebeian realization of the bourgeois revolution come to the fore and, in conformity with the inner dialectic of this movement, they often fuse with petty bourgeois reactionary elements; often the confused plebeianism pushes the social content of the revolution into the background. Rousseau's Enlightenment critics (Voltaire, d'Alembert, etc. also Lessing) were therefore completely right, regarding Rousseau, to insist on the purity of this social content; but in this polemic they often ignored the positive new elements in Rousseau, in his plebeianism—the incipient dialectical approach to the contradictions of bourgeois society. Rousseau's literary work is very closely related to these basic tendencies in him. Thus he raised to a much higher level, both intellectually and artistically, Richardson's representation of the inner world of bourgeois daily life and its conflicts. And if Lessing often protects and—in agreement with Mendelssohn—supports Richardson against Rousseau, that is because he missed some very essential features of this new, higher and more contradictory phase of the Enlightenment.

The work of early Goethe is a *continuation* of the line of Rousseau, after a German fashion, of course, which involves in turn a series of new contradictions. The specifically German note is inseparably linked to Germany's socio-economic retardation, to the German abjectness [*Misere*]. But as important as it is to mention this German misery, one must be on guard against any vulgar simplification of it. Of course this German literature lacks the socio-political purposefulness and firmness of the French, nor does it reflect an advanced and richly expanded bourgeois society, as in England. Naturally, it is stamped by the pettiness of life in an undeveloped and dismembered Germany. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the contradictions in the evolution of the bourgeoisie have nowhere found such passionate feeling and vivid expression as in precisely this German literature of the eighteenth century. One need only consider bourgeois drama. It originated in England and France; yet in these countries

it achieved, neither in social content nor in artistic form, such heights as it did in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, and especially in the *Robbers* and *Intrigue and Love (Kabale und Liebe)* of young Schiller.

To be sure, young Goethe was no revolutionary, not even in the sense that young Schiller was. But in a broad and deep historical sense, in the sense of their internal involvement with the basic problems of the bourgeois revolution, the works of young Goethe represent a revolutionary peak of the European Enlightenment, the ideological preparation for the great French Revolution.

At the centre of *Werther* is the major problem of bourgeois revolutionary humanism, the problem of the free and full development of the human personality. Feuerbach once said: "Our ideal should not be a castrated, disembodied, abstract being; our ideal should be the complete and real man, perfectly and fully formed." Lenin, who included this sentence in his philosophical excerpts, said this ideal is that "of advanced bourgeois democracy or revolutionary bourgeois democracy."

The profundity and universality of young Goethe's formulation of the problem rests on the fact that he viewed the opposition between personality and bourgeois society as pertaining not only to the semi-feudal absolutism of petty principalities in the Germany of his time, but as pertaining to bourgeois society in general. The struggle of young Goethe was aimed obviously at those concrete forms of suppression and curtailment of the human personality which manifested themselves in contemporary Germany. But the profundity of his comprehension shows in the fact that he did not stop with a criticism merely of the symptoms, with a polemical description of the obvious manifestations. He portrayed rather the everyday life of his age with so deep an understanding of its driving-forces and its fundamental contradictions that the significance of his criticism extends far beyond that of a critique of the conditions of retarded Germany. The enthusiastic reception of *Werther* throughout Europe shows what the inhabitants of countries at a more advanced stage of capitalism must have experienced immediately in Werther's fate: *tua res agitur.* [This is your concern].

Young Goethe had a very broad and complex understanding of the opposition of personality and society. He did not limit himself to showing the immediate social obstacles to the development of personality, although a large and essential part of his work obviously is devoted to them. Goethe did see a direct and essential obstacle to the development of the human personality in the feudal stratification and separation of the social classes [*Stände*] and correspondingly criticized this social order with sharp satire.

But at the same time, he saw that bourgeois society itself, the

evolution of which so vehemently posed the problem of personality, incessantly hinders the development of personality. The same laws, institutions, etc. which serve the development of personality in the narrow class sense of the bourgeoisie and which generate the freedom of *laisser faire* are simultaneously merciless destroyers of the real development of personality. While the capitalist division of labour, the indispensable foundation of the development of the productive forces forms the material basis of the developed personality, it simultaneously subjugates the human being and fragments his personality into lifeless specialization, etc. It is clear that young Goethe lacked an economic understanding of these relations. All the more highly then must one value his poetic genius which enabled him to represent the real dialectic of this development in terms of human destinies.

Since Goethe starts from actual human beings, actual human destinies, he grasped all these problems in that concrete complexity and mediation in which they manifest themselves in the personal destinies of individual men. And because he fashioned his hero as a man remarkably differentiated subjectively, these problems emerge in a very complex manner which enters deeply the realm of ideology. But the relationship is visible everywhere and is consciously understood throughout in some way or other even by the characters involved. So, for example, Werther speaks about the relationship of nature and art: "It (nature) alone is infinitely rich, and it alone forms the great artist. One can say much in favour of the rules, almost what one can say in praise of bourgeois society."

The central problem remains always the unified and comprehensive development of the human personality. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where the old Goethe described his own youth, he thoroughly examined the principal foundations of this conflict. He analyses the thinking of Hamann who, next to Rousseau and Herder, influenced his youthful years most deeply and expresses in his own words that basic principle whose realization was the primary aspiration of the youth of others, as well as his own. "Everything that a man attempts to achieve, whether brought into being by deed or word or some other way, must arise from the totality of his unified powers; everything isolated is harmful. A marvellous maxim, but difficult to follow."

The principal poetic content of *Werther* is a struggle for the realization of this maxim, a struggle against the internal and external obstacles to its realization. Aesthetically this means the struggle against the "rules" about which we have already heard. Here too one must guard against thinking in rigid metaphysical antitheses. Werther, and with him, young Goethe are enemies of the "rules". But the "absence of rules" means for Werther a great and deeply felt

realism; it means the admiration of Homer, Klopstock, Goldsmith and Lessing.

More vehement and passionate still is the rebellion against the rules of ethics. The essential line of bourgeois evolution requires a unitary system of national law instead of corporate and local privileges. This great historical movement must be reflected also in ethics as a demand for unitary universal laws of human action. In the course of Germany's subsequent development this social tendency found its highest philosophical expression in the idealist ethics of Kant and Fichte. But this tendency—often appearing, of course, in actual life in philistine forms—existed long before Kant and Fichte.

Now however necessary this development may have been historically, it also prevented the development of personality. Ethics in Kant's and Fichte's sense seeks to discover a unitary system of rules, a consistent system of precepts for a society, the basic driving principle of which is contradiction itself. The individual who acts in this society, who is compelled to recognize in principle the system of rules in general, is bound to come into continual conflict with these principles in the concrete situation. And, of course, that does not happen, as Kant imagined, simply because man's base egoistic drives conflict with his noble ethical maxims. Rather the contradiction arises very frequently and, in the cases which are pertinent here, only out of the best and noblest human feelings. Not until much later did the Hegelian dialectic—in an idealist form, to be sure—succeed in grasping conceptually a relatively adequate image of the contradictory reciprocal action between human passion and social evolution.

But even the best conceptual comprehension cannot counteract a contradiction which really exists in reality itself. And young Goethe's generation which deeply experienced this vital contradiction, even if it did not conceptually grasp its dialectic, passionately assailed this obstacle to the free development of the personality.

Perhaps the friend of young Goethe, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, most clearly expressed this rebellion in the realm of ethics in an open letter to Fichte. He says: "Yes, I am the atheist and Godless one who . . . wishes to lie, as dying Desdemona lied, who wishes to lie and deceive like Pylades posing as Orestes, who wishes to murder like Timoleon, break laws and oaths like Epaminondas and Jan de Witt, choose suicide like Otho, pillage the Temple like David—yes, pluck ears of corn on the sabbath; but only because I am hungry, and because the law is made for the sake of man, not man for the sake of the law." And Jacobi calls this rebellion "the *majestic right* of man, the mark of his dignity."

The ethical problems of *Werther* are all enacted under the sign of of this rebellion, a rebellion in which the internal contradictions of

revolutionary bourgeois humanism manifest themselves for the first time in world literature in a great poetic creation. In this novel Goethe plotted the action in a remarkably economical way. Almost without exception he selected those characters and events in which these contradictions, the contradictions between human passions and social legality come to light. In fact, almost without exception, he selected those conflicts between emotions which contain nothing intrinsically base, nothing asocial or anti-social; and laws which are not to be rejected as senseless in themselves and inhibiting to development (like the separation of social orders in feudal society), but only those which contain the general limitations of all the laws of bourgeois society. With marvellous art Goethe presented by means of a few strokes in one or two short scenes, the tragic fate of the infatuated young servant whose murder of his beloved and his rival forms the tragic counterpart to Werther's suicide. In his later description of the Werther days, already mentioned, the old Goethe still recognized as rebellious and revolutionary the claim of the moral right to suicide. It is very interesting—and for relating *Werther* to the Enlightenment, very instructive in turn—that he appeals to Montesquieu in this matter. Werther himself has a justification for the defence of this right which sounds even more revolutionary. Long before his suicide, long before he had actually made this resolve, he had a theoretical conversation about suicide with Albert, the fiancé of his beloved. This quiet citizen naturally denied any such right. Among other things, Werther argues: "Can you call a people weak which groans under the unendurable yoke of a tyrant, if it finally rises and rends its chains?"

This tragic struggle for the realization of humanist ideals in young Goethe is intimately related to the *popular aspect* [*Volkstümlichkeit*] of his endeavours. In precisely this respect young Goethe extends Rousseauesque tendencies as opposed to the refined aristocratic approach of Voltaire whose heritage became important for Goethe later, when he was frequently disenchanted and resigned. Rousseau's cultural and literary lineage may be expressed most clearly by Marx's words concerning Jacobinism: it is *"a plebeian way of dealing with the enemies of the bourgeoisie;* absolutism, feudalism and philistinism."

We repeat: politically young Goethe was no revolutionary plebeian, not even within the limits possible in Germany, not even in the sense that young Schiller was. Thus, the plebeian element in him does not appear in a political form, but rather as an opposition of humanistic and revolutionary ideals both to the corporate society of feudal absolutism and to philistinism. The whole of *Werther* is a glowing tribute to this new man who emerged in the course of preparation for the bourgeois revolution, to that awakening of the

universal activity of man which the development of bourgeois society engendered—and also tragically condemned to destruction. This new man was formed then by being continually contrasted dramatically to corporate society and bourgeois philistinism. Time and again this newly emerging human culture is set over against the malformation and the sterility and lack of cultivation of the "upper classes" and the stagnant, torpid, petty egoistic life of the philistine bourgeoisie. And each of these oppositions is a glowing affirmation that both a real and vital understanding of life and a vital consideration of its problems are to be found exclusively in the people itself. As a vital human being, as a representative of a new world, it is not only Werther who opposes the dead petrification of the aristocracy and philistinism, but time and again popular figures do also. Werther always represents what is popular and alive as against this torpidity. And the cultural elements which are very liberally inserted (references to painting, to Homer, Ossian, Goldsmith, etc.) always move in this direction: for Werther and for young Goethe, Homer and Ossian are great popular poets, poetic reflections and expressions of the productive life that exists uniquely and alone among the working people.

Through this tendency, through this content of his work, young Goethe proclaimed the popular revolutionary ideals of the bourgeois revolution—although he personally was neither a plebeian nor a political revolutionary. Even his reactionary contemporaries immediately recognized this tendency in *Werther* and evaluated it accordingly. The orthodox pastor, Goeze, notorious for his polemic with Lessing, wrote, for example, that books like *Werther* are the mothers of Ravaillac (the murderer of Henry IV) and Damiens (the would-be assassin of Louis XV). And many decades later Lord Bristol attacked Goethe because his book made so many people miserable. It is very interesting that the old Goethe, who was otherwise so politely refined and restrained, answered these charges with gratifyingly blunt rudeness and reproached the astonished lord with all the sins of the ruling classes. Such assessments put *Werther* on a level with the openly revolutionary youthful dramas of Schiller. The old Goethe also preserved an extremely characteristic remark of the enemy about these plays. A German prince once said to him that if he had been God Almighty and had known that the creation of the world would have resulted in the birth of Schiller's *Räubern*, he would never have created the world.

These utterances from enemy quarters endorse the real significance of the great works of "Storm and Stress" far better than the subsequent apologetic interpretations of bourgeois literary history. The popular-humanistic revolt in *Werther* is one of the most important

revolutionary expressions of bourgeois ideology in the preparatory period of the French Revolution. Its world success is that of a revolutionary work. *Werther* is the culmination of young Goethe's struggles for the free and universally developed man, those tendencies which he also expressed in *Götz*, in the *Prometheus* fragment, in the first drafts of *Faust*, etc.

It would be a false depreciation of the significance of *Werther* to see it simply as the expression of a transitory, exaggerated, sentimental mood which Goethe himself quickly overcame. It is true that scarcely three years after *Werther*, Goethe wrote a playful humorous parody on "Wertherism" called *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*. Bourgeois literary history observes only that Goethe characterized in it Rousseau's *Héloïse* and his own *Werther* as the "dregs" [*Grundsuppe*] of sentimentality. But it ignores the fact that Goethe was ridiculing here precisely the aristocratic and courtly parody of the Wertherian spirit which had degenerated into the anti-natural. Werther himself flees to nature and to the people in the face of the lifeless disfigurement of aristocratic society. The hero of the parody provides himself with a theatrical, artificial nature, fearing the real one, and in his frivolous sentimentality has nothing to do with the vital forces of the people. Hence the *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* lays stress on just that popular basic theme in *Werther*; it is a parody on the unintended effect of the work on the "educated" classes, but not on the so-called "exaggerated" elements of the work itself.

The world success of *Werther* is a literary triumph of the bourgeois revolution. The artistic foundation of this success rests on the fact that *Werther* offers an artistic fusion of the great realist tendencies of the eighteenth century. Young Goethe artistically advanced the line of Richardson and Rousseau far beyond his predecessors. He took over their theme: the representation of the inner world of feeling in bourgeois daily life, in order to delineate in this inwardness the outlines of the emerging new man in opposition to feudal society. But where Rousseau still dissolves the external world (with the exception of the landscape) into a subjective mood, young Goethe also inherited an objective and clear treatment of the external world, the world of society and of nature; he not only continued Richardson and Rousseau, but also Fielding and Goldsmith.

Viewed externally, from a technical point of view, *Werther* is a culmination of the subjectivist tendencies of the second half of the eighteenth century. And this subjectivism is not something superficial in the novel, but the adequate artistic expression of the humanist revolt. Everything, however, which appears in this world of *Werther*, Goethe objectified with an unprecedented plasticity and

simplicity learned from the great realists. Only in Werther's state of mind at the end does the haziness of Ossian displace the lucid plasticity of Homer understood as a popular figure. As a creator, young Goethe remained a student of this Homer throughout the work.

But Goethe's great youthful novel does not only surpass those of his predecessors artistically. It also does so in content. As we have seen, it is not only the proclamation of the ideals of revolutionary humanism, but also the perfect formulation of the tragic contradiction of these ideals. Hence *Werther* is not only a high-point of the great bourgeois literature of the eighteenth century, but at the same time the first major forerunner of the great realistic problem literature of the nineteenth century. By regarding Chateaubriand and his consorts as the literary successors of *Werther*, bourgeois literary history tendentiously reduces the book's significance. Not reactionary Romanticism, but the great writers of the tragic decline of humanistic ideals in the nineteenth century, Balzac and Stendahl, continued the real tendencies of *Werther*.

Werther's conflict, Werther's tragedy is the tragedy of bourgeois humanism and shows the insoluble conflict between the free and full development of personality and bourgeois society itself. Naturally this tragedy appears in its German, pre-revolutionary, semi-feudal, politically fragmented, absolutistic form. But even in this conflict the outlines are very clearly visible of those conflicts which subsequently emerged more distinctly. And ultimately these are the ones that actually destroy Werther. To be sure, Goethe only formulated the dimly visible outlines of the great tragedy which manifested itself later. This enabled him to concentrate his theme into so strict a framework and limit himself thematically to the representation of a small world, almost idyllic and closed, à la Goldsmith and Fielding. But the formation of this externally narrow and closed world is already impregnated with that dramatic quality which, after Balzac's achievements, constituted the essentially new element of the nineteenth century novel.

Generally *Werther* is regarded as a love story. Is that correct? Yes, *Werther* is one of the greatest love stories in world literature. But like every really great poetic expression of erotic tragedy *Werther* provides much more than a mere tragedy of love.

Young Goethe succeeded in introducing organically into this love-conflict all the great problems of the struggle for the development of personality. Werther's tragedy of love is a tragic explosion of all those passions which usually occur in life in a divided, partial, abstract way; but in *Werther* they are fused, in the fire of passionate love into a homogenous, glowing and radiant mass.

Here we can only concentrate on a few of the essential aspects. First of all, Goethe made Werther's love for Lotte into an artistically heightened expression of the hero's popular, anti-feudal way of life. Of Werther's relationship to Lotte, Goethe himself later said that it put him into contact with daily life. But even more important is the composition of the work itself. The first part is devoted to a description of Werther's emerging love. As Werther realizes the insoluble conflict of his love, he seeks refuge in practical life, in activity, and he even accepts a position with a legation. Despite the fact that his talents are recognized there, this attempt proves unavailing against the barriers erected by aristocratic society against the bourgeoisie. Not until after Werther fails in this attempt does his tragic re-encounter with Lotte take place.

It may be of some interest to mention that one of the greatest admirers of this novel, Napoleon Bonaparte, who even took *Werther* along with him on the Egyptian campaign, reproached Goethe for having introduced a social conflict into a love-tragedy. With his courteous and refined irony, the old Goethe observed that the great Napoleon indeed had studied *Werther* very attentively, but had done so like a judge studying his briefs. Napoleon's criticism is obviously a misjudgment of the broad and comprehensive character of the Werther question. Of course, even as a tragedy of love, *Werther* would have been a great and typical expression of the problem of the time. But Goethe's intentions went deeper. In his representation of passionate love, he showed the insoluble contradiction between personality development and bourgeois society. And in order to do so, it was necessary to enable us to witness this conflict in all areas of human activity. Napoleon's criticism is a rejection—understandable from his point of view—of the universality of this tragic conflict in *Werther*.

It is through this apparent diversion that the book ends in catastrophe. As regards this catastrophe itself, we must bear in mind that Lotte also loved Werther and that she became conscious of this love through the explosion of his passion. But this is exactly what brings about the catastrophe. Lotte is a bourgeois woman who instinctively holds on to her marriage with a capable and respected man and draws back in alarm from her own feelings. Thus the tragedy of Werther is not only the tragedy of unhappy love, but the perfect expression of the inner contradiction of bourgeois marriage: based on individual love, with which it emerged historically, bourgeois marriage, by virtue of its socio-economic character, stands in insoluble contradiction to individual love.

Goethe was as plain as he was restrained in emphasizing the social aspects of this love tragedy. After a conflict with the feudal society

of the legation, Werther clears out and reads that chapter in the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus, returning home, converses with the swineherd on human and comradely terms. And on the night of his suicide, the last book that Werther reads is Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, at that time the high-point of revolutionary bourgeois literature.

The Sorrows of Young Werther is one of the greatest love stories in world literature because Goethe concentrated into this love-tragedy the whole life of his time, with all its conflicts.

For that very reason the significance of *Werther* surpasses the faithful description of a particular period and produces an effect that has survived long after its own time. In a conversation with Eckermann about the reason for this effect, the old Goethe said the following: "If one examines it closely, the much talked of age of Werther, it is true, does not belong to the course of world culture, but rather to the life-process of every individual who, with a free and innate sense of nature, seeks to find himself and adapt to the restrictive forms of a world grown old. Thwarted happiness, hampered activity, ungratified desires—these are not the infirmities of a particular period, but those of every single human being, and it must be sad if each should not once have had a phase in his life when *Werther* affected him as if it were written only for him."

Goethe exaggerated here a little the "timeless" character of *Werther*; he concealed the fact that the individual conflict in which, according to his own view, the significance of his novel lies, is just this conflict between personality and society in bourgeois society. Precisely through this onesidedness, however, he accentuated the profound universality of *Werther* for the whole duration of bourgeois society.

When the old Goethe read a review about himself in the French periodical, *Globe*, in which his *Tasso* was called an "intensified Werther", he agreed enthusiastically with this characterization. Rightly so. For the French critic quite correctly drew attention to the connecting threads which lead from *Werther* to Goethe's later production in the nineteenth century. In *Tasso* the problems of *Werther* are enhanced and driven more intensely to their extremes; but for that very reason the solution to the conflict is considerably less pure. Werther is shattered in the contradiction between human personality and bourgeois society; but he is destroyed in pure tragedy, without his soul being sullied by compromise with the evil reality of bourgeois society.

The tragedy of *Tasso* preludes the great fiction of the nineteenth century novel insofar as the tragic resolution of the conflict in this literature is already less a heroic explosion than suffocation caused by compromise. The lineage of *Tasso* then becomes a leading theme

of the great nineteenth century novel from Balzac to our own time. It may be said of a very great number of the heroes of these novels —but not in a mechanistic and schematic way—that they are "intensified Werthers." They are destroyed in the same conflicts that Werther was. But their downfall is less heroic, more abject, more sullied by compromise and capitulations. Werther commits suicide precisely because he will relinquish nothing of his humanistic-revolutionary ideals, because he knows no compromise in these questions. This straightforwardness and consistency endows his tragedy with that radiant beauty which even today constitutes the imperishable charm of this book.

This beauty is not simply the result of young Goethe's genius. It arises from the fact that, although his hero is destroyed in a conflict common to the whole of bourgeois society, *Werther* is still the product of the heroic pre-revolutionary period of bourgeois development.

Just as the heroes of the French Revolution went to their deaths radiantly heroic, filled with heroic and historically necessary illusions, so too does Werther go under in the dawn of the heroic illusions of humanism prior to the French Revolution.

According to the accounts of his biographers, unanimously agreed upon, Goethe soon overcame his Werther phase. That goes without saying. And there is no question about the fact that Goethe's subsequent development frequently went far beyond the horizon of *Werther*. Goethe experienced the disintegration of the heroic illusions of the pre-revolutionary period and yet he held fast to his humanistic ideals in a unique way, representing them in a more comprehensive and richer form in their conflict with bourgeois society.

But he always retained his feeling for the imperishable and vitally essential element in *Werther*. He did not transcend *Werther* in that vulgar sense that most of his biographers mean it, in the sense of the bourgeois who grows wiser, comes to terms with reality and overcomes his "youthful follies". When Goethe wanted to write a new preface to *Werther* fifty years after it first appeared, he wrote the stirring first part of the *Trilogie der Leidenschaft*. In this poem he expressed his relationship to the hero of his youth in this way:

> "Summoned, I to stay, you to part,
> You went ahead—and lost little."
>
> [Zum Bleiben ich, zum Scheiden du erkoren,
> Gingst du voran—und hast nicht viel verloren.]

This melancholy mood of the old and mature Goethe shows most clearly the dialectic of his overcoming of *Werther*. The evolution of society had passed beyond the possibility of the consistently pure tragedy of *Werther*. The great realist Goethe never denied this fact. Indeed, a profound grasp of the essence of reality is always the foundation of his great poetry. But at the same time, he sensed what both he and humanity had lost with the passing of these heroic illusions. He felt that the radiant beauty of *Werther* characterized a period in the development of mankind which would never return, that dawn upon which followed the sunrise of the great French Revolution.

1936.

CHAPTER THREE

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship

GOETHE'S *Wilhelm Meister* is the most important product of the literary transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. It has the characteristics, ideological as well as artistic, of both periods in the development of the modern novel. It is no accident, as we shall see, that the definitive edition was written during the years 1793-95, the period during which the revolutionary crisis of transition between the two eras reached its apex in France.

To be sure, the origins of the novel go back much further. 1777 can be confirmed as the date of its inception, and possibly even the first attempts to write it. By 1785 the six books of the novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Mission*, were already written. This first draft, which was long lost and not recovered until 1910 by a piece of good luck, offers the best means at hand to elucidate the artistic and ideological motives which manifest the new, transitional character of the *Apprenticeship*.

For the first edition is still conceived and written completely in the spirit of the young Goethe. Its focus, just as that of *Tasso*, is the problem of the relations of the poet to the bourgeois world, a problem narrowed and at the same time deepened by the rebellion of *Werther* at the beginning of the Weimar period.

Accordingly, the problem of the theatre and drama completely dominates the first draft. And, of course, the theatre here means the liberation of a poetic soul from the impoverished and prosaic confinement of the bourgeois world. Goethe says of his hero: "Was not the stage destined to become for him a sanctum where, in comfort and safety in any weather, he could contemplate the world in a nutshell, his feelings and future deeds as if in a mirror, the figures of his friends and brothers, of heroes and the splendours of Nature that can be taken in at a glance?"

In the later edition the problem extends to the relationship of the humanist cultivation of the whole personality to the world of bourgeois society. When the hero of the *Apprenticeship* definitely decides to go into the theatre, he poses the question as follows: "What good is it to manufacture good iron if my own soul is

filled with slag, and what good is it to put a country in order if I am always at odds with myself?" And what at this point motivates his decision is his insight that only the theatre will enable him fully to develop his human capacities under the given social conditions. Hence theatre and dramatic poetry are only *means* here to the free and complete development of the personality.

The fact that the plot of the *Apprenticeship* goes beyond the theatre, that the theatre is no "mission" for Wilhelm Meister, but simply a transitory phase, is completely in accordance with this conception of the theatre. The description of theatre life, which formed the whole content of the first edition, only takes up the first part of this novel, and Wilhelm who has matured explicitly considers it a mistake, a detour from his goal. The new edition thus broadens into a description of the whole of society. In *Werther* too, of course, the image of bourgeois society appears, but only in the reflection of the rebellious subjectivity of the hero. The *Theatrical Mission* is much more objective in the manner of its representation, but its conceptual breadth only admits of the expression of those social forces and social types which are directly or indirectly connected with theatre and drama. Goethe's breakthrough to the objective representation of the whole of bourgeois society, as regards both form and content, is effected, therefore, only in the *Apprenticeship*. It was directly preceded by the short, satirical epic, *Reineke Fuchs* (1793), a small masterpiece in which Goethe presents a comprehensive satirical picture of emerging bourgeois society.

Thus the theatre becomes simply one aspect of the whole. Goethe carried over a good deal from the first edition: most of the characters, the scheme of the plot, a series of specific scenes, etc. On the one hand, with true artistic disregard, Goethe eliminated everything in the first draft which was demanded purely by the central significance of the theatre (the performance of the drama that Wilhelm Meister wrote, the detailed description of his poetic development in general, the discussions on French Classicism, etc.). On the other hand, however, a great deal that had only episodic significance in the first edition is deepened and actively pushed into the foreground, especially the performance of *Hamlet*, and connected with it the treatment of the whole Shakespeare question.

Apparently this only emphasizes even more the importance of the theatre and drama. Only apparently, however, because now the Shakespeare question for Goethe goes far beyond the sphere of the theatre. For him Shakespeare is a great educator toward a fully developed sense of humanity and personality; his dramas are models showing how the development of personality was accomplished in the great periods of humanism and how it should be accomplished

in the present. The stage performances of Shakespeare at the time were necessarily a compromise. Wilhelm Meister always senses how far beyond the scope of contemporary theatre Shakespeare extended. He attempts to save, in whatever way possible, what is most essential in Shakespeare. Thus in the *Apprenticeship* the height of Wilhelm Meister's theatrical aspirations, the performance of *Hamlet*, comes clearly to express the fact that the theatre, drama and even poetry in general are only one side, one part of the great, comprehensive network of problems—culture, personality development and humanity.

So in every respect the theatre is only a transitional phase in the *Apprenticeship*. The realistic description of society, the criticism of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy and the expression of the exemplary humanistic life could not really advance until after the theatre was surmounted as the way to humanity. In the *Theatrical Mission* every description of society still related to the theatre. In this work the narrowness of bourgeois life was criticized from the point of view of Wilhelm's poetic aspirations; the nobility was viewed from the standpoint of the patron of the arts, etc. In the *Apprenticeship*, on the other hand, when Wilhelm bitterly describes the disappointments the theatre has caused him, Jarno admonishes him thus: "Do you know, my friend . . . that you have not described the theatre, but rather the world, and that I wanted you to find enough characters and actions in all social situations for your severe brush strokes?" And this way of expressing things, of course, not only applies to the second part of the novel but also to the revision of the theatrical part. Thus immediately after the appearance of the *Apprenticeship* the important critic, Friedrich Schlegel, wrote the following about the scene in the castle. "It was a veritable infatuation that allowed his colleague, the count, to greet him (an actor) with a favourable look across the enormous abyss of social distinction; the baron and baroness are second to none, he in stupidity, she in moral vulgarity; the countess herself produces at most a delightful opportunity for justifying the charm of make-up; and, making allowances for social rank, these aristocrats are to be preferred to the performers only in that they are more thoroughly vulgar."

The realization of humanist ideals in this novel proves time and again the necessity ". . . to reject birth and social position in their full nullity, as soon as it is a question of the purely human, and to do so, as is just, without wasting one word about it" (Schiller). The description and criticism of the various classes, and of the types which represent them, always proceeds from this central point of view in the *Apprenticeship*. Hence the criticism of the bourgeoisie in this work is not only a criticism of a specifically German pettiness and narrowness but also a criticism of the capitalist division

of labour, the all too intensive specialization of man and the fragmentation of man through this division of labour. The bourgeois, says Wilhelm Meister, cannot be a public person. "A bourgeois can win honour and, if need be, cultivate his mind, but act as he will, his personality perishes. . . . He cannot ask: what are you? but only: what have you? What intelligence, what knowledge, what talent, how much ability? . . . In order to be useful he must perfect isolated talents, and already it is assumed that there is not, nor can there be, any harmony in his nature, because he must neglect everything else in order to make himself useful in some way."

It is from this humanist point of view that Goethe's "glorification of the nobility", to which bourgeois literary historians so readily draw attention, is presented in the *Apprenticeship*. It is true that Wilhelm Meister, in the same remarks from which we have just quoted, speaks in detail about how well the aristocratic way of life removes from the path of the free and full development of the personality those obstacles which he condemns in bourgeois life. In Goethe's eyes, however, the nobility has a value exclusively as a springboard, as a favourable condition for this cultivation of personality. And even Wilhelm Meister—not to speak of Goethe himself—sees clearly that this springboard by no means necessarily implies a jump and that these conditions are by no means automatically translated into reality.

On the contrary, the humanist social criticism is aimed not only at the capitalistic division of labour, but also at the constriction and deformation of human nature due to all constraints resulting from the existence and consciousness of social rank. We have seen how Friedrich Schlegel judged the "glorified" aristocrats of this novel. Immediately after the scene in the castle, Wilhelm Meister himself says on the subject: "He whom inherited wealth has assured a life of complete ease . . . usually accustoms himself to considering these goods as the primary and most important thing, and he does not see so clearly the value of a humanity well endowed by Nature. The behaviour of aristocrats toward their inferiors, and even toward one another, is governed by external prerogatives; they allow each to make good his title, his rank, his attire and equipage, but not his own worth."

In the second part of the novel, of course, the aristocratic society offers an essentially different picture. In Lothario and Nathalie especially, Goethe embodies the realization of humanist ideals. Precisely for this reason these figures though are much more pallid than the more problematic ones. In the life of Lothario, however, Goethe shows with exceptional clarity what he thinks about the utilization

of the possibilities that noble birth and inherited fortune offer for the universal development of personality. Lothario travels the world, but he also fights in America at Washington's side in the war of liberation. When he comes into possession of his property he sets himself the goal of voluntarily liquidating feudal privileges. And in the second half of the novel equally the action always leads in this direction. The novel ends with a series of marriages which, from the standpoint of the hierarchical society, are all "misalliances", i.e. marriages between aristocrats and bourgeois. Thus Schiller was right when he saw in this the proof of the "nullity" of social rank in the light of humanist ideals.

But the revision of the first edition not only exhibits this completely new world in which the nobility has become humanist and the bourgeoisie has merged with it, but it also ties in the first part, the theatrical part. In the first edition Philine is a not all that significant minor character. Even in the second edition she does not receive a very extensive rôle, but her character grows remarkably in depth. She is the only figure in the novel who possesses a spontaneous, natural humanity and human harmony. By virtue of a profound realism Goethe endows her with all the characteristics of popular cunning, adroitness and adaptability. But this light-hearted cunning is always combined in Philine with a trusty native human instinct; she never surrenders nor does she ever become deformed or twisted in all her frivolity. And it is very interesting to observe that it is through Philine that Goethe expresses his deepest sense of life, the way he regards Nature and man, the "amor dei intellectualis" which he took over from Spinoza and humanized. When the wounded Wilhelm, saved by Philine, wants to send her away out of moral scruples, she derides him. "You are a fool," she says, "you'll never learn. I know better what is good for you. I will stay and not stir from here. I have never counted on men's thanks, not even on yours; and if I love you, what's that to you?"

In a very similar way, only with quite a different human and artistic colouring, of course, the character of old Barbara, the woman servant and go-between for Wilhelm's first love, Marianne, is deepened in the *Apprenticeship*. In the first scenes, her unsympathetic features stand out much more sharply and dramatically. But in the scene in which she informs Wilhelm of Marianne's death, her accusation against the society which forces a poor-born girl into sin and hypocrisy, and then drives her to destruction, rises to truly tragic grandeur.

The realization of humanistic ideals in this novel offers not only the standard by which to judge the specific classes and their representatives, but also becomes the driving force and criterion of action

in the whole novel. In Wilhelm Meister, and in several other characters of this book, the urge to realize humanist ideals in their own lives is the more or less conscious motive of their actions. Naturally this does not apply to all the characters in the novel, nor even to a majority of them. Most of them, of course, act from egoistic motives and pursue their personal interests which are on a higher or lower level. But the way in which the achievement or failure to achieve these goals is treated in the novel itself is always intimately related at every point to the realization of humanist ideals.

In this work Goethe depicts a whole tangle of individual lives which interweave with one another. He depicts those who, guilty or not, are tragically ruined; he portrays persons whose life dissolves into nothingness; he draws characters in whom the specialization, brought about by the capitalist division of labour, ossifies one feature of their personality to the point of caricature, leaving the rest of their humanity to atrophy completely. He shows in turn that the lives of others dissolve into nothingness, into worthless dissipation for want of a cohesive centre formed by the activity which originates in the core of the personality and, at the same time, constantly activates the whole man. By causing the individual lives to become entwined with one another according to this criterion, by seeing in this, and only in this the criterion of a fruitful course of life, and by treating everything else, every success, every attainment of consciously set goals in life as a matter of indifference and unimportance (think of the characters of Werner and Serlo who in other respects are very different from one another), Goethe throughout translates his *Weltanschauung* into action.

Thus he focuses on man and the realization and development of his personality with a clarity and suggestiveness in this novel that scarcely any writer has achieved in any other work of world literature. Of course this *Weltanschauung* is not Goethe's personal property. It dominates rather the whole of European literature since the Renaissance, and it forms the nucleus of all Enlightenment literature. But the special features of the Goethe novel are these: on the one hand, the consciousness of this *Weltanschauung* is continually enhanced by philosophy, tone and action, so that it becomes the conscious driving-force of the whole imaginative world. On the other hand, Goethe puts before us the fulfilment of the fully developed personality as a *real growth* of actual people in concrete circumstances, which was dreamed of by the Renaissance and Enlightenment, but which always remained utopian in bourgeois society. The literary works of the Renaissance and Enlightenment either created specific men who achieve, under especially favourable conditions, a many-sided development of their personality, harmony in their human develop-

ment, or, they are clearly aware of presenting this utopia as a utopia (the abbey of Thélème in Rabelais).

The expression of this positive outcome of the human goals of the French Revolution in the form of a concrete literary work, therefore, is what is new and special in Goethe's novel. Thus both the active side of the realization of this ideal and its social character come to the fore. In Goethe's view the human personality can only develop actively. Action, however, always implies an active interaction of men within society. Not for a moment naturally could the clear-sighted realist Goethe entertain any illusion that the bourgeois society which lay before his eyes, especially the miserable and backward Germany of his day, could ever or anywhere move towards the social realization of these ideals. The sociable character of humanist activity could not possibly grow organically out of a realistic comprehension of bourgeois society; hence in a realistic picture of this society it could never be an organic and spontaneous product of its self-movement. On the other hand, Goethe sensed, with a clarity and depth of few men before or after him, that these ideals are nevertheless necessary products of this social movement. However foreign and antagonistic may be the attitude of real bourgeois society toward these ideals in daily life they still have grown in the ground of this social movement, and they are the most valuable cultural product of all that this development has brought forth.

Now in accordance with this contradictory foundation of his conception of society Goethe created a kind of "island" within bourgeois society. Yet it would be superficial to see in it simply an escape. The realization of an ideal like that of humanism, which must necessarily remain utopian in bourgeois society, must necessarily have some escapist character about it. For no realist can unite this realization with a realistic portrayal of the *normal course* of events in bourgeois society. Goethe's "island", however, is a group of active men acting in society. Each of their lives arises out of real social foundations and assumptions with a genuine and true realism. Not even the fact that such men come together and unite can be described as unrealistic. Goethe's stylization consists only in the fact that he gives this combination certain fixed forms—only to be ironically lifted of course—and that he attempts to represent this "island" as a society within society, as a germ-cell of the gradual transformation of the whole of bourgeois society. Later, in approximately the same way, the great utopian Socialist Fourier dreamed that if a mythical millionaire made possible his founding of a phalanstery, this would necessarily lead to the extension of his Socialism throughout the world.

Goethe's "island" can only convince through the development of

the characters. Goethe's mastery manifests itself in the fact that he has all the problems of humanism—positive as well as negative—arise out of the concrete conditions of life, out of the concrete experiences of particular persons. And these ideals never appear in his work in a ready-made utopian, existent form, but always have a very definite active and psychological function as elements in the further development of particular persons at definite critical turning-points of their evolution.

But with Goethe, this way of expressing humanist ideals by no means implies the elimination of the conscious element. On the contrary, in this respect Goethe is a consistent continuator of the Enlightenment; he attributes remarkable importance to the conscious guidance of human development, to *education*. The complicated mechanism of the tower, the didactic letters, etc. serve to emphasize this consciously educative principle. With some very fine and discreet touches, in a few short scenes, Goethe intimates that the development of Wilhelm Meister was supervised from the very beginning and directed in a definite way.

It is true that this education is unique: it is intended to train men who will develop all their qualities in spontaneous freedom. Goethe sought a unity of methodical planning and chance in human life, a unity of conscious direction and free spontaneity in all human activities. Thus hatred of "fate", of any fatalistic resignation is constantly preached in the novel. Thus the educators in the novel constantly stress contempt for moral "imperatives". Human beings should not slavishly obey a moral code imposed upon them; they should become sociable by virtue of free, orgnic spontaneity and bring the manifold development of their individuality into agreement with the happiness and interests of their fellow-men. The moral of *Wilhelm Meister* is a great polemic—implicit, it is true—against Kant's moral theory.

Accordingly, the ideal of the "beautiful soul" stands at the centre of these parts of the novel. This ideal emerges explicitly for the first time in the title of the sixth book, "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul". But to see Goethe's ideal of the "beautiful soul" in the confessions of the canoness would be to misunderstand Goethe's intentions, to ignore his refined and ironical nuances. The "beautiful soul" in Goethe is a harmonious unity of awareness and spontaneity, of worldly activity and a harmoniously cultivated inner life. The canoness is as extreme in her subjectiveness and pure inwardness as most of the questing characters in the first part, like Aurelia or Wilhelm Meister himself. This subjectivist quest which takes refuge in pure inwardness, forms there the relatively, but only relatively justified counterpart of the empty and fragmented pragmatism of

Werner, Laertes and even Serlo. The turning-point in the education of Wilhelm Meister consists precisely in his turning away from this pure inwardness which Goethe, like Hegel later, in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, condemned as empty and abstract. It is true that Goethe conveys this criticism of the canoness with very fine and delicate touches. But the position of this insertion in the composition already shows the direction of Goethe's criticism by the fact that the confessions are held up to Wilhelm as a mirror, so to speak, at the time of crisis in his purely internal development, at the time of the tragic downfall of Aurelia. And at the end of the confessions Goethe becomes somewhat plainer. The abbé, the personification of the educative principle in this novel, keeps the relatives of the canoness—Lotharia, Natalie and others—at a distance from her in their childhood and takes care that they do not fall under her influence. The character of the really "beautiful soul", which surmounts the antithesis of inwardness and activity, is expressed, first of all, in figures like Lothario and Nathalie, and in what Wilhelm Meister aspires to for himself.

The polemic expressed in *Wilhelm Meister*, however, is aimed not only at both the false extremes mentioned above; it also heralds a struggle against and beyond Romantic tendencies. The new poetry of life that Goethe so passionately longed for, the poetry of the harmonious human being who daily masters life through action, was already threatened, as we have seen, by the prose of capitalism. We were able to observe Goethe's ideal of humanity in conflict with this prose. Goethe not only condemns this prose, however, but also the blind revolt against it. The revolt is blind, the poetry of Romanticism is false because, according to Goethe, it has no home in bourgeois life. This homelessness necessarily possesses a seductively poetic power, for it corresponds exactly to the direct and spontaneous rebellion against the prose of capitalism. This directness, however, is seductive, but not fruitful; it does not overcome the prose, but rather bypasses it, ignores its essential problem, thus allowing it to flourish undisturbed.

The overcoming of sterile romanticism fills the whole novel. Wilhelm's yearning for the theatre is the first phase of this struggle; the religious Romanticism of the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul" is the second. And the homeless, Romantic and poetic figures of Mignon and the harpist wander through the novel as the highest poetic personifications of Romanticism. In a letter to Goethe, Schiller noted with exceptional subtlety the ideas which form the background to these figures. "What a good idea to have traced the practically appalling and frightfully pathetic fates of Mignon and the harpist from the theoretically appalling, from the monsters of the under-

standing. . . . These monstrous fates that pursue Mignon and the harpist are concocted only in the lap of stupid superstition."

The seductive romantic beauty of these figures is the reason why the majority of Romantics overlooked Goethe's delicately accentuated polemic and why *Wilhelm Meister* became a model often copied by Romantic novels. Only Novalis, the most consequent thinker among the early Romantics, clearly recognized this tendency of Goethe's novel and bitterly combatted it. We cite only a few very significant passages from his polemic. "Basically it is a fatal and foolish book . . . unpoetic in the highest degree as regards the spirit, however poetic the presentation. . . . Economical nature is the only kind that truly survives. . . . Poetry is the harlequin of the whole farce. . . . The hero retards the penetration of the gospel of economy. . . . Essentially Wilhelm Meister is a Candide aimed at poetry." In this embittered polemic Goethe's anti-Romantic tendencies are grasped far better than in the multitude of enthusiastic imitations of Mignon and the harpist.

Novalis then attempted, very consistently, to surpass *Wilhelm Meister* poetically, i.e. to write a novel in which the poetry of life wins a real victory over prose. His *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* remained a fragment. But the drafts show quite clearly what it would have become if it had been completed: a colourful haze of magical mysticism in which every trace of realistic understanding of reality would have vanished; a road leading from a reality, already stylized, into a land of dreams without substance and without form.

The struggle of the humanist Goethe was aimed at every such dissolution of reality into dreams, into merely subjective notions or ideals. Like every great novelist, he also took for a leading theme the struggle of ideals with and their realization in reality. We have seen that the decisive turning-point in the education of Wilhelm Meister consists precisely in his abandonment of a merely internal, merely subjective attitude toward reality, and in his working toward an understanding of objective reality and active participation in reality just as it is. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is an *educative novel*: its content is the education of man for the practical understanding of reality.

A generation later, in his *Aesthetics*, Hegel put this viewpoint, that of educating man for reality, in the centre of his theory of the novel. Hegel said: "This literature of the novel is chivalry become something serious again, something with real substance. The fortuitousness of external existence is transformed into a bourgeois order of state and society which is solid and secure, so that now the police, the judiciary, the army and the government replace the chimerical goals devised by the knight. Thus the chivalry of the heroes who

act in the modern novel is also transformed. As individuals, with their subjective goals of love, honour and ambition, or with their ideals of improving the world, they stand in opposition to the existing order and the prose of reality which place obstacles in their way on all sides." Then he depicts in detail the kind of conflicts that emerge and comes to the following conclusion. "In the modern world, however, these struggles are nothing more than the apprenticeship, the education of the individual for existing reality, and thus they acquire their true significance. For the end of such an apprenticeship consists in this: the subject sows his wild oats and, whatever his wishes and opinions, adapts himself to existing conditions and the rationality thereof, enters the concatenation of the world and there acquires a suitable standpoint."

Hegel's allusion to Goethe's novel is plain. He also touches the core of Goethe's *statement of the problem*. But he speaks from another, much more advanced phase of bourgeois society; a stage in the struggle between poetry and prose when the victory of prose was already decided and the conception of the realization of human ideals had to be completely changed. This definition of Hegel concerning the outcome of the struggle between poetry and prose, between ideal and reality, is therefore perfectly applicable to the novels of the great bourgeois realism of the first half of the nineteenth century, including Goethe's later novels, *Elective Affinities (Die Wahlverwandtschaften)* and *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderings (Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre)*.

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, however, still holds another view of the nature and outcome of this struggle. The writer of the *Apprenticeship* not only believed that the ideals of humanism are anchored in the very depths of human nature, but also that their realization in the new-born bourgeois society, in the bourgeois society of the period of the French Revolution, though difficult, though possibly only gradually and in stages, was nevertheless still possible. The Goethe of the *Apprenticeship*, of course, perceived the concrete contradictions between the ideals of humanism and the reality of capitalist society, but he did not consider these contradictions as inimically antagonistic, insoluble in principle.

Here we see the deep ideological influence of the French Revolution on Goethe, as on all the great figures of German Classical philosophy and poetry. Even the old Hegel, whose words on the inevitable victory of capitalist prose we have already heard, said of the period of the French Revolution: "It was a splendid sunrise. All thinking beings celebrated this epoch. An exalted emotion prevailed in that period; a spiritual enthusiasm shook the world as if the real reconciliation of the Divine with the world had just taken

place." And in the poem, *Hermann und Dorothea*, written immediately after *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe himself has a very calm and circumspect man say:

For who indeed would deny that his heart was lifted up high,
That his bosom felt freer throbbing with pulsebeats purer,
When the first splendour of the new sun lighted up the sky,
And when were heard the rights of man that should be common to all men,
The freedom which inspires and equality worthy of praise!
At that time each man hoped to live for himself; and the bond
That ensnared so many countries appeared to be loosened,
A bond that idleness and selfishness held in their hands.
In those days of urgency, did not all peoples look
To the capital of the world, which for so long it had been
And which now, more than ever, deserved that excellent name?

[Denn wer leugnet es wohl, dass hoch sich das Herz ihm erhoben,
Ihm die freiere Brust mit reineren Pulsen geschlagen,
Als sich der erste Glanz der neuen Sonne heranhob,
Als man hörte vom Rechte der Menschen, das allen gemein sei,
Von der begeisternden Freiheit und von der löblichen Gleichheit!
Damals hoffte jeder sich selbst zu leben; es schien sich
Aufzulösen das Band, das viele Länder umstrickte,
Das der Müssiggang und der Eigennutz in der Hand hielt.
Schauten nicht alle Völker in jenen drängenden Tagen
Nach der Hauptstadt der Welt, die es schon so lange gewesen
Und jetzt mehr als je den herrlichen Namen verdiente?]

The relationship between the ideal of humanity and reality in *Wilhelm Meister* is determined by this faith. To be sure, Goethe's faith was not in the plebeian methods of the French Revolution; these he rejected bluntly and without any understanding. With him, however, this did not mean a rejection of the social and human content of the bourgeois revolution. On the contrary, his faith just then was stronger than ever in the ability of mankind to regenerate itself by its own power, to strip off the shackles which a thousand-year long social development had imposed upon it. The educational idea of *Wilhelm Meister* is the discovery of those methods with whose help the dormant forces in each individual human being might be aroused to fruitful activity, to the kind of understanding of, and grappling with reality which the development of the personality requires.

The abbé, the true representative of the educational idea in *Wilhelm Meister*, expresses most clearly this conception of Goethe's: "Only

all men together make up mankind; only all forces collectively, the world. They are often in conflict with one another, and while they seek to destroy each other, Nature restrains them and produces them anew. . . . Every natural tendency is important and must be developed. . . . One force governs the others, but none can form the others. In every natural tendency alone lies the power of self-perfection; this is understood by so few men who yet want to teach and have an effect." And in a radical and effective way the abbé draws all the practical conclusions from this conception of the nature of man and the relationship between his passions and his possibilities for development. He says: "The duty of the educator is not to avoid error but to guide the misguided, indeed, to allow him to quaff his error to the full; this is the wisdom of the teacher. He who only samples his error long husbands it and delights in it like a rare pleasure; but he who exhausts it completely is bound to recognize it if he is not mad."

This conception, that the free development of the human passions —under proper guidance, which does no violence to them—must lead to a harmonious personality and to harmonious co-operation between free men, is an old and favourite notion of the great thinkers since the Renaissance and Enlightenment. What was realizable of this freedom of human development under capitalism—the liberation of economic activity from the fetters of feudal society—appeared as a reality which was already achieved in the more advanced capitalist countries, one which found its rational, reflective expression in the economic systems of the Physiocrats and English classical economy. But precisely this practical realization and the theoretical formulation of that area of the humanist ideals, realizable in bourgeois society, clearly brought out their contradiction to the socio-economic foundations upon which they were conceived. The recognition of this insoluble contradiction pervades the subsequent literature of the great realists, the works of Balzac and Stendhal, and was formulated later in aesthetic terms by Hegel. The attempts to annul or surmount this contradiction on a purely conceptual plane, and accordingly to construct a "harmony of personality" adapted to the world of free capitalistic competition, led to the mendacious apologetics and hollow academicism of the nineteenth century.

But, for a short time at least, these developments did not exhaust the possible attitudes toward this problem. On the basis of those contradictions, which were becoming increasingly plain and prominent, attempts at a *utopian solution* to these problems were able to emerge. They were predicated on a more or less clear understanding that the harmonious development of the human passions into a rich and fully expanded personality presupposes a new social order,

socialism. Fourier is the most significant representative of this tendency. With great vigour and tenacity he reiterated time and again that there is no human passion which is intrinsically wicked or pernicious. It was only previous society that had been incapable of bringing about a balance of human passions in which each passion achieves harmony in man and in his collective life with other men. The task of socialism for Fourier above all was to realize this harmony.

There is no utopian Socialism in Goethe, of course. All attempts to interpolate it into his works, from those of the shallow chatterbox Grün to those of our own day, must lead to a distortion of his intentions. Goethe arrived only at the deep experience of this contradiction and attempted, time and again, to resolve it in a utopian way within the framework of bourgeois society, i.e. to emphasize in his literary work those elements and tendencies of human development in which the realization of humanist ideals, or at least the tendency toward their realization, seems possible. The splendour of those hopes for the renovation of mankind, which the French Revolution had awakened in the best of Goethe's contemporaries, engendered in *Wilhelm Meister* the social character of their realization, that "island" of remarkable men who transformed these ideals into practice in their lives, and whose nature and mode of life were supposed to become a germ-cell of the coming order.

The contradiction upon which this conception is based is nowhere clearly expressed in *Wilhelm Meister*. But the experience of this contradiction underlies the *presentation* of the entire second part. It is manifest in the extremely artful and profound *irony* with which this whole part was poetically conceived. Goethe brought about the realization of the ideal of humanity through the consciously educative collaboration of a group of men on this "island". And it is clear from our exposition up to now that both the content of these aspirations, as well as the hope for their realization, belong to Goethe's deepest ideological convictions. The theories of the abbé, already mentioned, are the views of Goethe himself and they are very closely related to his whole grasp of the dialectic of the movement of nature and society. Yet Goethe also lets these very convictions of the abbé be criticized by such important characters as Nathalie and Jarno. And it is by no means an accident that, on the one hand, Goethe makes the conscious guidance of the education of Wilhelm (and others) in the tower the most important factor in the plot but, on the other, treats this very guidance—the matter of the didactic letters, etc.—almost as sport, as something that society once took seriously but no longer does.

Thus Goethe stresses with his irony the character of the realiza-

tion of human ideals, which are at once both real and unreal, experienced yet utopian. He is conscious—at least his experience tells him—that he is not portraying reality itself in this work. Rather he draws from his experience the deep certainty that he is creating a synthesis of the best tendencies of mankind which have been operative time and again in outstanding examples of the human species. His stylization consists in his having concentrated all these tendencies in the small society of the second part and having juxtaposed this concentrated reality as a utopia to the rest of bourgeois society. But in this utopia each individual human element has *really* grown out of the society of its time. The irony serves only to bring down to the level of reality the stylized character of the positive concentration of these elements and tendencies. Hence the "glorification of the aristocracy" in *Wilhelm Meister* has its real foundations in the fact that Goethe inserted into his picture several elements basic to the economic life of the nobility and several cultural tendencies of the educated humanist nobility.

Thus *Wilhelm Meister* borders ideologically on two ages. It expresses the tragic crisis of bourgeois humanist ideals and the beginning of their growth—temporarily utopian—beyond the framework of bourgeois society. The fact that this critical development was expressed by Goethe in the bright colours of artistic perfection and the joy of philosophic hope was, as we have seen, a particular reflex of the French Revolution. But this colourfulness could not dispose of the tragic abyss which opened here for the best representatives of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. Both spiritually and artistically *Wilhelm Meister* is the product of the transitional crisis of a very brief age of transition. Just as it had no direct predecessors so it could have no true artistic successors. The great realism of the first half of the nineteenth century emerged after the end of the "heroic period", after the submersion of those contradictory hopes which were a part of this period. Thus Schelling's aesthetic theory (conceived in the years 1804-05) correctly assesses the unique significance of this work for the evolution of the novel. Schelling even goes so far as to recognize only *Don Quixote* and *Wilhelm Meister* as novels in the truly highest aesthetic sense. And with some justification since two great transitional crises of mankind found in both these novels their highest ideological and artistic expression.

The style of *Wilhelm Meister* manifests this transitional character very clearly. On the one hand, it is full of elements of the Enlightenment novel. It draws not only upon this novel, however, but also upon the post-Renaissance "literary epic" for the movement of the plot by means of an "artificial machine" (a tower, etc.). Very often it connects the plot with the easy-going methods of the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, i.e. misunderstandings which are explained at the necessary moment (Therese's origins), chance encounters used unconstrainedly, etc.

It is when we look more closely at Goethe's revision of the *Theatrical Mission* into the *Apprenticeship* that we see tendencies which were to be decisive for the novel of the nineteenth century. In the first place there is the concentration of action in dramatic scenes, the tighter, more dramatic unity of persons and events. This is a tendency which was theoretically expressed and realized later in practice by Balzac as an essential characteristic of the modern novel in contrast to the novel of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If we compare the introduction and development of figures like Philine and Mignon in the *Theatrical Mission* and in the *Apprenticeship* we see this dramatic tendency in Goethe quite clearly. And in the revision it is by no means something external. On the one hand, it has as premise and consequence that Goethe now creates his individual figures with more internal movement and conflict than before, broadening and intensifying their characters (compare, for instance, the earlier concluding Barbara scene). On the other hand, Goethe aspired to present the essentials in a more concentrated form, essentials which had now become in every respect more complex than earlier. Thus he reduced the episodic parts, and what he retained of them he united more rigorously and with more variety to the primary plot. The principles of this revision can be followed very exactly in the discussions on *Hamlet*, especially in the conversation with Serlo in which Wilhelm speaks about the adaptation of *Hamlet* to the stage and makes suggestions for concentrating what, in his opinion, is episodic in the plot and personae.

All this very much approaches the compositional principles of the realist novel of the first half of the nineteenth century. But it is only an approach. Goethe wanted to create more complex characters and more complex human relationships than the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had done, and than he himself intended in the first version. But this complexity had almost nothing of the analytic character of the later realist novel, much less even than Goethe's later *Elective Affinities (Wahlverwandtschaften)*. In the *Apprenticeship* Goethe fashioned his characters and situations with an extraordinarily light touch and yet gave them a plasticity and clarity of line that achieves classical effect. In all of world literature there are hardly any figures like Philine and Mignon who, with so few features and such economical means, have attained so much outer and inner life. From the lives of such figures Goethe takes only a few short scenes, but these are so concentrated and charged that the entire character, in all its richness, appears in a moment of trans-

formation. And since all these scenes are filled by internal action and hence have epic significance, they always contain more of the living features of the person and his relations to other human beings than is consciously expressed. Goethe thus achieves great possibilities for intensification which he brings about by the most subtle means and without over-accentuating. At a turning-point in the events he simply allows the latent richness to be made conscious. Thus Goethe mentions, for example, after Philine has left the troupe of actors with Friedrich, that their departure was one of the causes of the incipient disintegration of the society. Until then not a word was said about the fact that Philine was a cohesive element in the troupe; indeed she had always, on the whole, treated people in a playful and frivolous way. But in retrospect it becomes clear to the reader all at once that Philine's light-heartedness and vivacity had precisely that effect. This ability in *Wilhelm Meister* to present laconically what is most significant and emotionally complex yet with a sensibility and unforgettable life, scales a new summit in the history of narrative art. Before *Wilhelm Meister*, and especially after it, the totality of society was expressed by a realism more comprehensive in scope and more passionately probing in depth. In this respect *Wilhelm Meister* can be compared neither with Lesage or Defoe, nor with Balzac or Stendhal. But compared to the classical finish and vivid spareness of Goethe's composition and characterization, Lesage seems dry, Balzac confused and verbose.

Several times in his letters Schiller characterizes, very perceptively, the stylistic distinctiveness of this unique book. At one point he calls it, "calm and deep, clear and yet incomprehensible like Nature." Nevertheless, it is not at all a question of so-called technical "mastery". The high cultural level of Goethe's writing rests rather on a high cultural level of life itself, of the conduct of life and the relations of men to one another. If the presentation is so delicate and fine, so plastic and clear, it is only because Goethe's grasp of man and human relations in life itself is based on a genuine, deeply thought-out culture of emotions. Goethe did not need to resort either to grossly sensual or pseudo-subtle, analytical means in order to express human conflicts, changes in feeling and personal relations, etc. And this quality Schiller also brings out. Speaking of the complications in the relationship between Lothario, Therese, Wilhelm and Natalie in the last book, he writes: "I do not know how this false relationship could have been solved in a more delicate, refined and noble way. How pleased Richardson and all the others would have been to make a scene out of the display of delicate feelings, and how indelicate they would have been at it." It must be borne in mind, however, that Richardson stands head and shoulders above

the general level of literature of the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially above that of the imperialist period. Goethe's mastery resides in his profound comprehension of the most essential characteristics of human beings, his elaboration of their typically common and distinctively individual characteristics, his consistently thought-out systematization of these relationships, contrasts and nuances, and his ability to transform all these features into a vivid plot which can characterize them. The persons in this novel are grouped almost exclusively around the struggle for the ideal of humanism, around the problem of two false extremes: enrapturement and practicality. We should observe, however, how Goethe, beginning with Lothario and Nathalie, who represent a victory over the false extremes, plans his gallery of "activists" from Jarno and Therese to Werner and Melina. No person in this series resembles another, yet they are not differentiated in any pedantic, intellectual-analytic way. Similarly, no commentary from the author interferes with the hierarchy of human importance, of approach to the humanist ideal, which emerges spontaneously. This manner of writing, which the modern novel has never equalled, although some of its later representatives surpassed Goethe in several respects, constitutes an imperishable heritage for us. It is a very topical heritage, for one of the great tasks of socialist realism is to portray important spiritual and emotional developments in a way which is both calmly harmonious yet sensuously vivid form.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe

DOCUMENTS OF important artists about their own practice and about their theoretical efforts to deepen this practice are always extremely significant. They are important both for the development of our aesthetics and for the pedagogical task of presenting the great problems of art to the reading public. By the very nature of the case it follows that the most intimate problems of artistic creation can be studied best precisely in the spontaneous testimonies of great artists, in their letters, conversations, diaries, etc. The problems which are most important and theoretically the most difficult to grasp, those pertaining to the artistic recasting of material drawn directly from life, for example, appear in these documents in a concrete way which is organically linked to artistic creation. Thus we are able to study works of art in the process of being formed by comparing the first projections and the intermediary stages with the finished works, in this way tracing step by step the artistic value of the theoretical clarification and the practical improvement. In these documents concerning the creative process of important artists there exists a treasure in our critical and literary heritage which is still unexplored. A deeper and more intensive study of this heritage could prevent a great many vulgarizations in the understanding of artistic problems.

Of course, this heritage must also be treated in a critical way. Although we must approach these documents as students, seeking out experimentally, so to speak, the problems of the creative process and creative method, the conclusions of such documents cannot be applied directly to our theory and practice. The generally unfavourable conditions of the capitalist age for the development of art has generated the widespread prejudice that only artists themselves are capable of saying anything correct about art. Behind this prejudice there is a valid truth insofar as important artists articulate and express the great problems of art in their period with the greatest intimacy and in very close connection to practice. Their formulation of these problems, however, is so strictly connected to immediate practice that their views first require a thorough examination in order

to be transformed from studio truths into universal aesthetic truths.

This complementary research, this critical processing must proceed on two levels: the historical and the systematic-aesthetic. It is precisely in his immediate artistic work that it is almost impossible for the bourgeois artist, even if he has a very high level of awareness, to see really clearly the historical basis of the problems he poses. The material that he draws from contemporary life is defined and conditioned in a particular way, and he himself is born into a definite tradition of formulating aesthetic questions. Regardless of whether his attitude to this material and this aesthetic tradition is positive or negative, he attempts to find his way in this complex situation without being really clear about the truly decisive social categories that determine both, and in a great many cases without even striving for such clarity. And from an aesthetic and systematic standpoint the practical character of these documents indicates that there is seldom a concern to distinguish intellectually between technical problems of immediate practice and general problems of artistic form. On the contrary, the charm and instructive quality of these documents consists precisely in the fact that formal problems are treated as being related directly to practical and technical problems. But in order to learn something really fruitful from them the teacher must learn to analyse this relationship conceptually and to obtain both a historical and critically systematic distance with respect to the views of great artists about their own work.

The correspondence between Goethe and Schiller, one of the most important collections of documents of this kind, is obviously no exception to the rule. In a certain sense, of course, it is a unique collection of documents. For Goethe and Schiller were not only the most important writers of their time, but in their understanding of the theoretical problems of art they stood at the summit of an extremely advanced philosophical development, the development of dialectical idealism in Germany, the development of the philosophy and theory of art from Kant to Hegel. The theoretical works of Goethe and Schiller constitute one of the most important stages in the development of German philosophy and aesthetics from the subjective idealistic dialectics of Kant to the objective idealistic dialectics of Hegel.

The profound and close fusion of a highly developed aesthetic theory with a deep concern for the finest details of artistic creation constitutes the unique character of this correspondence. In their theoretical and practical collaboration Goethe and Schiller not only mutually criticized their finished works and those in the process of completion, but at the same time they strove to press forward to

the ultimate principles of artistic form and the ultimate principles according to which the literary genres are to be characterized and separated. But it is precisely the great philosophical culture, which forms the intellectual foundation of the efforts of Goethe and Schiller, that makes a historical and critical examination of their heritage necessary. For their philosophic culture is precisely the culture of the dialectical idealism of the German Classical period, with its grandeur in the formulation of new and important problems, but at the same time with its inevitable idealistic tendency to distort and turn these problems upside down.

The point of departure from the systematic and critical examination of these problems can only be a historical analysis of the period in which, and for the needs of which, Goethe's and Schiller's efforts to create a great art and give it a theoretical basis have their origin. Their correspondence covers the period from 1794 to 1805. For Schiller it was a period during which he produced his aesthetic writings, his ballads and his dramas from *Wallenstein* to the *Demetrius* fragment; for Goethe it was the period of the creation of *Hermann und Dorothea*, various projects for epic poems, the ballads, *Die natürliche Tochter* [*The Natural Daughter*], the resumption of work on *Faust*, etc. Bourgeois literary historians usually call this period of co-operation between Goethe and Schiller "classical" and sharply contrast it to the realistic development of their youth. Viewed superficially, a great many arguments seem to speak in favour of such an antithesis, especially many of the remarks of Goethe and Schiller themselves.

Nonetheless this sharp antithesis is not justified. It is true that an opposition exists between the youth of Goethe and Schiller and their later development. But this opposition cannot be reduced to formal aesthetic motifs or subjective psychological ones (maturity, lack of maturity, etc., according to bourgeois literary historians). It signifies rather the opposition and also the connection between two historical stages in the development of the bourgeois class. The youthful period of both Goethe and Schiller was the last artistic summit of the pre-revolutionary period of the Enlightenment. Their youthful writings, as well as the theories of art which accompanied them, are based on the French and English Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. They form the last significant summing-up of the kind of artistic realism peculiar to the Enlightenment, that of the period of the evolution of the bourgeoisie before the French Revolution. The so-called classical period of Goethe and Schiller, on the other hand, was the first peak of the artistic development of the bourgeoisie in the post-revolutionary period, that period of which the greatest realist writers were Balzac and Stendhal and the one

which found in Heine its last representative of European importance. In its main lines this period from 1789 to 1848 must also be considered a period of great realism, even if this realism differed from that of the Enlightenment in many of its essential features, and even if this realism was very problematical in many of its phases (especially in Schiller) and often shifted into its opposite. The theory and practice of the co-operative efforts of Goethe and Schiller forms the bridge between the literature of the pre-revolutionary Enlightenment and that of post-revolutionary realism. Goethe's life-work is especially important as an organic transition of literature from the first period to the second. In the course of our analysis of the views of Goethe and Schiller we will see how a series of important problems pertaining to literary creation in this post-revolutionary phase already appeared in their work and found solutions which are always interesting and often profound.

The specific character of this phase in the development of Goethe and Schiller can only be understood in terms of its social foundations. In calling it the post-revolutionary phase we are stressing that the great event of the outbreak of the French Revolution had a decisive influence on its problems of form and content. For the peculiar character of this phase is precisely that it began almost at the same time as the French Revolution and followed the various stages in the evolution of the whole period. Whereas in France itself the great literary representation of the revolutionary upheavals began only after the period closed with the fall of Napoleon, and whereas even highly industrialized England did not express its important literary reactions to this development until later, the writers of economically and politically retarded Germany reacted immediately to this world event on an extremely high literary level. Undoubtedly this rapid reaction is closely related to Germany's backward condition. The lag in its capitalist development at that time had not yet made the bourgeois revolution, as a political reality for Germany, the order of the day. But capitalism had advanced sufficiently to produce a relatively numerous bourgeois élite which participated ideologically in the preparatory period of the French Revolution and which now had to react in its way, poetically and philosophically, to the transition from the preparation to the Revolution itself. The economic and political backwardness of Germany in this disproportionate development determined the peculiar character of the reaction and hence the peculiar character of its highest poetic expression in Germany: the creative problems and solutions of Goethe and Schiller. The decisive feature of all German reactions to the French Revolution was their predominantly ideological character. The translation of theory into practice was a very rare exception

(Georg Forster). The consequence of this was that the contradictions within the revolutionary class itself, the bourgeoisie, were necessarily much less acute than they were in France both during and after the Revolution.

The lesser degree of intensity in the oppositions between classes gave rise, in the sphere of ideology, to problems and solutions similar in type to—but having a different content from—those which were possible in France only in the pre-revolutionary period: namely problems posed purely from a general human standpoint (i.e. from the standpoint of the bourgeois class as leader of all the levels of society oppressed by feudalism). This general and bourgeois way of formulating problems and the synthetic way of responding to them naturally did not exclude very sharp oppositions between the various currents within the bourgeois class itself. These sharp oppositions reflect the contradictory economic tendencies existing objectively within the bourgeois class which was not yet mature enough for political action. But since the moment for political action had not yet arrived objectively they were arbitrated on a purely ideological plane. The general character of this situation manifested itself not only in the fact that the posing and solving of problems acquired such a generally bourgeois and synthetic character, but also in the fact that it determined their idealistic and utopian character. This general situation of the German bourgeoisie, its economic and political weakness, in spite of the fact that it played the leading ideological rôle in society, had for its consequence that it engendered, precisely in the leading strata of bourgeois ideologists, the current of which Goethe and Schiller became the most important representatives. This current tended to fuse the leading elements of the bourgeoisie and nobility by gradually bringing into being a bourgeois form of economic and political life in Germany. That is, it strove to achieve certain social results of 1789 without revolution. It resolutely rejected revolutionary methods for the realization of the goals of the bourgeois revolution, especially what Engels has called the mobilization of the "plebeians". But at the same time it accepted the economic and political aims of 1789 and advocated the gradual, evolutionary liquidation of feudalism in Germany under the common leadership of the most culturally advanced element of the bourgeoisie and the element of the aristocracy which became bourgeois and was willing to liquidate feudalism.

This attitude toward the French Revolution, this programme arising from the rejection of revolutionary methods and the acceptance of the social content of the Revolution, constitutes the common foundation of the Weimar-Jena collaboration of Goethe and Schiller and the social and ideological foundation of German "Classicism",

the first stage in the development of European literature from 1789 to 1848. In the last analysis the key to the friendship between Goethe and Schiller is the mutuality of their fundamental economic and political views and aims. One might say, a little paradoxically, that it was a political friendship, the formation of a political bloc in the cultural and ideological sphere. The character of their co-operative effort thus explains both the exceptionally profound and intimate quality of their collaboration and also the limitations of their friendship, which bourgeois literary historians either attempt to obscure or seek to explain by "profound" psychological hypotheses.

It is true that the old Goethe himself contributed something to the formation of such literary legends. His description in his *Annalen* [*Annals*] of the obstacles in his friendship with Schiller and of the gradual emergence of their friendship suffers from the fact that he contrasts his standpoint after his Italian journey with the "Storm and Stress" outlook of Schiller, although the Schiller whom he met in Weimar and Jena had long since ceased to be the poet of *Die Räuber* [*The Robbers*] and *Kabale und Liebe* [*Intrigue and Love*]. The social tendency common to Goethe and Schiller existed years before their friendship, but the differentiations produced by the French Revolution first had to permeate the German intelligensia in order that this common tendency might triumph over existing personal differences which were also socially determined.

In his work of memoirs, *Kampagne in Frankreich* [*Campaign in France*], Goethe gives a vivid picture of these differentiations, these partings of the way. He describes his visit to Mainz with Sömmering, Huber and Forster and relates that during this sojourn they anxiously avoided making the least allusion to current events. "There was no discussion of political affairs. The feeling was mutual that we had to spare one another; for if they did not entirely renounce their republican sentiments it was plain that I was going to join an army which would put a decisive end to just these sentiments and their effects."

But naturally no tactful diplomacy in their personal relations could reconcile or even mollify for long the contradictions which existed objectively. It is well known that the old friendship between Goethe, Wieland and Herder broke up precisely during this period; the events of Mainz led to an abrupt break between Schiller and his friend from youth, Huber, etc.

The break up of personal collaborations, however, manifested itself not only in the tendency of a number of comrades-in-arms to turn to the left under the influence of the French Revolution, but also in the opposite tendency. I will mention only Goethe's conflicts with Count Stolberg, Schlosser, etc. Goethe himself expressed

his viewpoint very clearly in a letter to his friend Meyer. Written two years after the beginning of his friendship with Schiller, it concerns the reception of August Wilhelm Schlegel into Goethe's and Schiller's circle of colleagues. On this subject Goethe writes: "Unfortunately it is already noticeable that he tends to have some democratic leanings whereby various points of view are immediately distorted and the understanding of certain things hampered just as badly as by the inveterately aristocratic way of thinking." And in a letter to Fritz von Stein (son of Charlotte von Stein), which is in perfect accord with these views, he welcomes, in a very objective and cool way, the beginning of his friendship with Schiller as a collaboration "at a time when unpleasant politics and accursed disembodied party spirit threaten to destroy all friendly and scholarly relations."

It goes without saying that the mutuality of their social and political tendencies could not for a moment cancel the deep-seated differences between Goethe and Schiller; thus definite restrictions were placed upon their friendship at the outset. From the very beginning Goethe held an Enlightenment and humanistic viewpoint that was essentially evolutionary. His realism helped him to preserve this general outlook throughout the period of the French Revolution and to adapt it ideologically to the new conditions. Schiller was a petty bourgeois and idealistic revolutionary whose revolutionary humanism and ideological assault on feudal and absolutist Germany proved unavailing even before the French Revolution. As a result of the failure of his youthful ideals he tended to adopt an attitude toward the French Revolution which was similar in many ways to that of Goethe. But despite this accord as regards content, his attitude still retained a petty bourgeois idealistic nuance which manifested itself in all questions concerning the most important problems of creativity and those having to do with personal life. Thus Mehring was not incorrect to see in Schiller's narrow, petty bourgeois, moralizing attitude toward Goethe's companion, Christiane Vulpius, the cause of the increasing coolness between Goethe and himself.

This is more of a symptom of the discord, however, than its cause. The various remarks of Goethe and Schiller on their personal relations (those of Goethe, usually made later, in his conversations with Eckermann, for example; those of Schiller made in letters of the same period to Körner and Humboldt) show that these differences were constantly present and became ever deeper in the course of time. The opposition manifested itself as early as the decisive conversation with which their friendship began, the conversation about Goethe's *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* [*Metamorphosis of Plants*]. If Schiller designated Goethe's "primal phenomenon" in this con-

versation, not as an experience, but simply as an idea, thereby translating Goethe's semi-materialistic dialectic into Kantian terms, a great deal of diplomacy on both sides was necessary in order to avoid an immediate break. The same opposition pervades all their creative methods. The characterization that Goethe later gave of the principles of creative method is almost always—usually without it being admitted—directed against Schiller; and, of course, its polemical edge often comes through quite clearly, such as when Goethe groups Schiller and Romanticism together in the "epoch of forced talents". We will cite only a few very significant remarks made by Goethe when he was older. "It makes a great difference whether the poet seeks the particular in the universal or whether he sees the universal in the particular. The former method gives rise to allegory in which the particular has value only as an example of the universal. But the latter is really the nature of poetry; it expresses the particular without thinking of the universal or alluding to it. He who grasps this particular vividly also finds the universal without realizing it, or not realizing it until later" *(Maximen und Reflexionen)*.

Of course, this opposition of world-views and creative problems did not involve any obstacle to collaboration, and at times even made it extremely fruitful for both men. This is all the more the case as, on the one hand, Schiller was always very conscious about the relationship of his creative problems to idealism and was always concerned to correct this with Goethe's help. From this point of view their discussion by letter on the revision of Schiller's ballad, *The Cranes of Ibycus* [*Die Kraniche des Ibykus*], is extremely interesting. It is a discussion in which Schiller learned from Goethe's criticism the simplest facts—such as that cranes fly in flocks—but in which he also utilized this knowledge for the poetic quality of his ballad with admirable quickness and resolve. On the other hand, despite his general rejection of the idealistic features in Schiller's work, despite his criticism of details, Goethe had the highest admiration for the energy with which Schiller advanced from poor illustrative material to the essential and gave this essential vivid poetic expression. Thus he writes to Schiller that his observation of the waterfalls on a trip on the Rhine completely confirmed Schiller's description in the ballad, *The Diver* [*Der Taucher*]. Schiller's answer to this letter is very characteristic. "I have not been able to study this aspect of nature anywhere except maybe by a mill, but I studied Homer's description of the Charybdis with care and perhaps that brought me near to nature."

In the correspondence itself two periods may be clearly distinguished of which the dividing line corresponds approximately to

Schiller's settlement in Weimar. The cooling appears especially marked on the part of Goethe. It is highly characteristic that, having taken an active interest in the creation of *Wallenstein* by his theoretical and practical criticism, his criticism of Schiller's later dramas was limited to short, polite compliments, whereas Schiller, despite his critical remarks about Goethe to his more intimate friends, continued to take a passionate and critical interest in the genesis of *Faust*.

Summing up then we can say that it was the social and political connection that determined the scope of the co-operation between Goethe and Schiller. At the centre of this collaboration was the attempt to create a *bourgeois classical art*. Their attempts to clarify the great theoretical problems of art were put exclusively in the service of this practical poetic task. And as much as Goethe and Schiller, as we shall see in what follows, made use of their analysis of the theory and practice of Greek art to establish the most general laws of art, the laws governing the various genres in a manner independent of their historical conditioning, both of them were always aware that the art for which they strove was the expression of the great era which began with the French Revolution.

In his *Prologue to Wallenstein* Schiller expressed very clearly this situation of art at the time and the task of art in this era.

> And now at the century's solemn end,
> When reality itself becomes poetry . . .
> Art, on its stage of shadows, may now
> Attempt an even higher flight; indeed it must,
> If the stage of life is not to shame it.
>
> [Und jetzt an des Jahrhunderts ernstem Ende,
> Wo selbst die Wirklichkeit zur Dichtung wird . . .
> Jetzt darf die Kunst auf ihrer Schattenbühne
> Auch höhern Flug versuchen, ja sie muss,
> Soll nicht des Lebens Bühne sie beschämen.]

The mutuality of this tendency in Goethe and Schiller is all the more evident as it began in both of them under the influence of the French Revolution, even before their collaboration. Goethe had already completed his *Wilhelm Meister* in its essentials before the beginning of his intimate friendship with Schiller, and *Wilhelm Meister* is precisely the work which is the most programmatic as regards his attitude toward the social problems described above. It closes with enthusiastic propaganda for the extension of capitalism to agriculture and the voluntary liquidation of feudal remnants; enthusiastic propaganda for the fusion of the progressive representa-

tives of the aristocracy with those of the educated bourgeoisie. (In it there are three marriages between aristocrats and bourgeois). To be sure, the first conception of *Wilhelm Meister* was a product of the pre-revolutionary period (1778-85), but the first *Wilhelm Meister* deals only with an analysis of art and theatre; the great social perspective belongs exclusively to the second draft. The comic epic poem, *Reineke Fuchs* [*Reynard the Fox*], in which Hegel correctly perceives a grandiose satirical description of bourgeois society, was also completed before Goethe's collaboration with Schiller. The concomitant writing of the very weak comedies aimed at the plebeian tendencies of the French Revolution *(Die Aufgeregten* and *Der Bürgergeneral)* [*The Insurgents* and *The Citizen General*], forms the necessary complement of Goethe's political position which we have already analysed.

Schiller's important poetic production did not begin, it is true, until after his collaboration with Goethe, although a few poems, like *Die Götter Griechenlands* [*The Gods of Greece*], in which his new tendency is clearly expressed, were written earlier. But Schiller's historical writing was already in the service of the tendencies which we have described. In the preface to *Abfall der Niederlande* [*Revolt of the Netherlands*] it is clear that a bourgeois "model revolution" is being described, a revolution such as it must be. The *Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges* [*History of the Thirty Years' War*] concerns itself with another important problem of the bourgeois revolution: the feudal fragmentation of German national unity and the efforts to restore it. And Schiller's altercation with Kant, his series of aesthetic writings, as Mehring has already correctly observed, is an intellectual altercation with the problems of the French Revolution. And it is well known that Schiller's theoretical and aesthetic activity culminated—already in the period of his collaboration with Goethe, it is true—in a philosophical theory of the specific characteristics of modern bourgeois art *(Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* [*On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*].

These tendencies grew stronger in both of them in the course of their joint theoretical and practical activity. Common organs of publication appeared for the theoretical, practical and polemical propagation of their views: *Die Horen*, the *Musenalmanach*, the *Propyläen*, the efforts to establish a repertoire and ensemble of the Weimar theatre, etc. Their correspondence, especially the first part, contains their internal theoretical discussions relating to this common activity, the struggle for a bourgeois classical art.

At the fore of these discussions is the *problem of form*. For this reason, and because Goethe and Schiller constantly sought the model and the foundation for the solution to the problem of form in

Greek art, their common activity is generally termed "Classicism". In what follows, however, we will see time and again that with Goethe and Schiller it is by no means a question of the attempt simply to imitate antiquity, but the attempt to study its laws of form and to apply them to the material which the modern age offers its poets. This advance beyond the simple imitation of antiquity, beyond regarding it mechanically as a model by imitating its externals, had already been made in Germany by Lessing. But Goethe and Schiller went beyond Lessing (and Winckelmann) in an important way in their treatment of antiquity. By developing the theory of Hirt,[1] they worked out the category of the characteristic as an essential distinguishing feature of ancient art; but as opposed to Hirt, they strove to make of the characteristic only one element of beauty. Thus they aspired to a dialectical synthesis of the characteristic with Winckelmann's and Lessing's conception of beauty, the purely harmonious "noble simplicity and calm grandeur". (These attempts at a synthesis are expressed most clearly in Goethe's essay, *Der Sammler und die Seinigen* [*The Collector and His Circle*].

The relationship of these efforts to the specific problems of the period was clearly recognized and repeatedly expressed by Goethe and Schiller. In a very interesting essay, *Literarische Sansculottismus* (1795), Goethe raised the question of what a classical writer is and why in Germany there could not be any classical writer in the true sense of the word. He writes: "Whoever considers it an essential duty to combine precise concepts with the words which he uses in speaking or writing will rarely use the expressions *classical author, classical work*. When and where does a classical national author appear? When he finds in the history of his nation a harmonious and meaningful unity of great events and their effects; when he does not search in vain for greatness in the spirit of his countrymen, profundity in their sentiments, strength and value in their deeds; when he himself, filled with the spirit of the nation, feels capable of sympathizing, through an indwelling genius, both with the past and the present; when he finds his nation at a high level of culture so that his own education becomes easier; when he sees before him many collected materials, the perfect or only imperfect efforts of his predecessors, and encounters so many external and internal situations that he need not pay a heavy price for experience; that he is able to conceive, order and execute a great work in a unified state of mind in the best years of his life." And Goethe saw quite clearly

[1] Alays Hirt (1759-1836) archeologist and art historian, author of *Die Baukunst nach den Grundsätzen der Alten* (1809) and *Geschichte der Baukunst bei den Alten* (1820-27).

that the effective liquidation of feudalism and the realization of the social content of the bourgeois revolution were necessary for the production of the social conditions of the classical writer. As a result of his general political line, it is true, he expressed this insight only in a negative form, but one which is still very clear. He says: "We do not want to wish for the revolutions which could prepare for classical works in Germany."

The necessity to pose and to solve the problems of classical art from the perspective of form was conditioned by this conception of Goethe and Schiller of the social and political situation and its problems. But this necessity has even deeper causes which are also historical and social. By continuing certain currents of social criticism of the Enlightenment, Goethe and Schiller gained a clear insight into the unfavourable effect of the development of capitalism on the development of art. (Let us think of Schiller's analysis of the unfavourable effects of the capitalist division of labour in his *Letters on Aesthetic Education*). The capitalist division of labour serves the immediate interaction between society and art and thereby destroys the fruitful influence of public demands, the general conditions of receptivity, the social preparation of poetic material, the direct social determination of genres, etc. The writer who does not want to abandon himself to the immediate bourgeois tendencies which destroy and dissolve form must rely on himself and is compelled to swim against the current as regards all the important problems pertaining to form. Goethe wrote to Schiller about this situation of the modern poet. "Unfortunately even we moderns are born occasionally as poets, and we are troubled about our place in the human race without rightly knowing what we really are; for, if I am not mistaken, specific determinations should really come from without and the occasion should determine the talent. Why do we so rarely write an epigram in the Greek sense? Because we see so few things that merit one. Why are we so rarely successful with the epic? Because we have no listeners. And why is the striving after theatrical works so strong? Because with us the drama is the only form of art, the genuinely growing practice of which gives hope of some enjoyment in the present."

According to Goethe and Schiller, it was this social situation, the absence of this "determination from without" demanded by Goethe that gave rise to the general obfuscation of problems of form, the oscillation of art between a servile empirical realism and a mannered idealistic fancifulness; that gave rise to the general confusion and general mixture of genres in modern literature and art. On this subject Schiller wrote to Goethe: "I am really asking you on this occasion whether the inclination of so many talented artists in the

modern period to *poetize in art* is not to be explained by the fact that in an age like ours there is no access to the aesthetic except through poetry, and that consequently all artists who claim to have spirit—precisely because they have been awakened only by a poetic sensibility—manifest only their poetic imagination even when representing the visual. It would not be so bad if the poetic spirit in our age had not unhappily been specified in so unfavourable a way from artistic creation. But since even poetry has deviated so greatly from the concept of its species (the only thing which puts it into contact with the imitative arts), poetry is surely not a good guide for art; at best it can exercise a negative influence on the artist (by raising him above common nature), but not one that is positive and active (by determining the object). According to Schiller, this situation gave rise to the false duality of modern art: on the one hand, its attachment to immediate, empirical reality, without penetrating to the essential determinations of the object to be represented, and, on the other, its idealistic transcending of empirical reality.

The same situation also gave rise to the constant intermixing of the genres. In a letter to Schiller, Goethe writes: "I am really struck by the fact that we moderns are so inclined to mix the genres, indeed, that we are altogether incapable of distinguishing them. . . . With all his might the artist should resist these truly childish, barbaric, insipid tendencies; he should separate one work of art from another by impervious rings of magic, keep each to its qualities and peculiarities, just as the ancients did who became and remained such artists precisely because they did so. But who can separate his ship from the waves on which it sails? Against wind and current one covers only short stretches." And Goethe shows in detail how all modern art tends toward painting, all of modern literature toward drama, thus destroying and dissolving the forms of plastic and epic art.

In the light of these remarks, and because they undoubtedly do express certain elements of classicism, it is very tempting to assert that Goethe and Schiller were classical. But it would be a gross vulgarization of their views on art to see in their quest for form nothing more than classicism. We shall soon see that, in his criticism of Stendhal, Balzac perceived and approved these very same tendencies toward the pictorial and the dramatic as distinctive essential signs of the modern novel. Goethe and Schiller combatted these tendencies, of course. But that does not suffice to make them "classicists". For even Stendhal took a very critical view of these tendencies —precisely with respect to Balzac.

The transcending of classical tendencies already manifests itself

in the fact that for Goethe and Schiller the genres are not classifications mechanically and rigidly separated from one another. Goethe and Schiller conceived not only the strict separation of the genres but at the same time their dialectical relationship, their dialectical connection. (The idealistic character that this dialectic assumed, especially in Schiller, involved, as we shall see later, a series of distortions in the way that the problem was posed and solved, but did not alter methodologically their transcending of the sharp classicist separation of the genres). We will cite only one remark made by Schiller to Goethe on the relationship between the tragic and the epic. "Let me add that between poetry as *genus* and its *species* there arises a delightful conflict which is always very ingenious in nature as well as in art. The art of poetry as such makes everything sensibly present and thus obliges even the epic poet to represent events in this way, on condition only that their past character should not be effaced. The art of poetry as such gives everything present a past character, removes everything proximate (by presenting it on the plane of the ideal), and thus obliges the dramatist to hold at a distance from us the individual reality which breaks in upon us and to provide the spirit with a poetic freedom with respect to the material. In its highest concept then tragedy will always tend to *rise* to the character of epic and will become poetry only in this way. In the same way, the epic poem will tend to *descend* to drama and only in this way will it completely fulfil the concept of its poetic species. This is just what makes both of them poetic works, draws them together. . . . The true task of art is precisely to prevent this mutual tending toward each other from degenerating into a mixture and confusion of limits. In general, the highpoint of art is always to reconcile character and beauty, purity and plenitude, unity and universality, etc." Thereupon Schiller analyses Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* as an epic poem that tends toward tragedy, and his *Iphigenie* as a drama tending toward epic poetry.

This dialectical and mutual influence of the literary genres, their reciprocal enrichment of one another was a typical characteristic of literary theory and practice in the post-revolutionary period. From the standpoint of the theory of genres one can even see the embryo of Romantic aesthetics in the emphasis on this factor, and at the same time, of course, in its overestimation. And even if most Romantic writers and literary theoreticians were not aware of it, this tendency originated precisely in the growing contradictions of modern bourgeois life which the purity and simplicity of classical form was no longer able to master.

The irresistible character of the Romantic movement, which inundated the whole of European literature in the first decades of the

nineteenth century, rests precisely on the fact that it was an organic and necessary product of the rising new life. As we have already emphasized, Romanticism pushed the dialectic of the interpenetration of forms to the point of dissolution, almost to the point of a complete mixture and annihilation of genres; thus it gave extremely exaggerated expression to the new trend of the new forms of life in the process of emerging. The common tendency of the really great writers of the period from 1789 to 1848 was precisely that they incorporated into their creative methods and their theory of literature this Romantic trend as a necessary result of the new forms of life. But it was only a factor to be surmounted, and in the very process of surmounting this Romantic trend they sought to create a great new literary form. The struggle with Romanticism was at the same time the struggle for poetic mastery of the new forms of life.

This struggle with Romanticism affected the theory and practice of all the important writers of this period. In the preface to his *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac shows very clearly the significance of the Romanticism of Walter Scott for his own creative work; at the same time he shows that it was possible to overcome this Romanticism in the direction of a great social realism only by dialectically intensifying and negating [*Aufheben*] the tendencies of Romanticism. And in his exceptionally important criticism of Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme*, he states clearly that besides Classicism and Romanticism there is a third literary course which strives for a synthesis of the other two. He writes: "I do not think that a picture of modern society is possible with the rigorous literary methods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The introduction of the dramatic element, of allegory, the image, description, dialogue seems to me absolutely necessary in modern literature."

It goes without saying that these tendencies could not be so clearly and consciously apparent in Goethe and Schiller as they could later in Balzac or Heine. Indeed, the Romantic literary movement, as a great current of European art, began only after their collaboration. Goethe and Schiller together witnessed only the beginnings of German Romanticism, the attempts of the brothers Schlegel to formulate the theory of Romantic art, the first works of Tieck, etc. It is a well-known fact, moreover, that Schiller completely rejected Schlegel's literary theory. It is all the more interesting that the substance of these tendencies appears in the work of Goethe as well as in that of Schiller and that the subsequent fundamental problem of great European literature—transcending and transforming [*aufheben*] the Romantic tendencies into one element of a great realistic totality—already existed in their work before the appear-

ance of Romanticism as a distinct literary current. (cf. especially *Wilhelm Meister* and Schiller's analysis and critical letters on the subject).

Of course, the success of this transcendence was as imperfect in them as in the subsequent great writers of this period. The later dramas of Schiller in particular, where Romantic motifs clearly manifested themselves before the appearance of Romanticism as a great European literary current, only rarely succeeded in really overcoming them. *The Bride of Messina*, despite all of Schiller's efforts to endow it with necessity in the ancient sense, nonetheless remains the first "drama of destiny" [*Schicksalsdrama*]. *The Maid of Orleans* in turn shows this Romantic dissolution of the unity of the dramatic form through the atmospheric effect of local colour blended with a poetry of marvel [*Wunderlyrik*], just as does the later Romantic drama of Tieck, Victor Hugo, etc. Nonetheless, the tendency to reduce Romantic motifs to a transcended element dominated the theory and practice of Goethe and Schiller. And this tendency essentially determined their theoretical attitude toward all questions of style, related to the assimilation and surmounting of Romantic motifs and to the recognition of contemporary life as being the factor determining the form and content of literature. (The fact that the old Goethe categorically rejected Romanticism has nothing to do with this problem. He rejected German Romanticism, which had become reactionary and obscurantist, but toward the end of his life he became actively interested in Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, Manzoni, etc.).

The poetic aspirations of Goethe and Schiller, as well as their theoretical struggle for the purity of literary form, moved, therefore, on a contradictory double level. On the one hand, their point of departure was the assertion that all modern art, given the historical conditions in which it emerged, must be by nature imperfect and problematical. The great essays on aesthetics written during their collaboration (*Der Sammler und die Seinigen* by Goethe, and *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* by Schiller) provide this claim with a theoretical foundation. And in a letter to Schiller, Goethe made the following comment. "All modern artists belong in the class of *imperfects* and therefore fall more or less under separate rubrics. (In his essay Goethe attempted to systematize the typical imperfections of modern artists. The terms which follow are 'rubrics' in this system.—G. L.). . . . Now if we make Michelangelo a *phantasmist*, Correggio an *undulist*, and Raphael a *characterizer*, then these rubrics acquire an extraordinary depth, since we consider these remarkable men in their limitation and still view them as kings or great representatives of the whole species." Here Goethe stressed

the problematical character of modern art even more than Schiller did in his famous essay, because he sought to discover it also in the Renaissance, although on a much higher level, whereas Schiller treated Shakespeare as naïve, i.e. as an artist related to the Greeks with respect to style and equal to them in value. On the other hand, Goethe and Schiller did not consider antiquity to be an unattainable model in principle, nor the perfection of ancient art as something *a priori* impossible for the contemporary artist. On the contrary, the study of antiquity, the discovery and application of the aesthetic precepts of ancient art was supposed to serve to overcome the problematical character of art in the modern age by engendering an aesthetic awareness, a perfectly clear understanding of the laws governing form.

At the same time, of course, the idealistic side of this theory of art is plainly evident here. At times Goethe and Schiller did have exceptionally deep and lucid insights into the relationship between the social development of their age and the problematical character of modern art. But they were not capable of conceiving the problem of artistic form as a product—not a mechanical one, of course—of social evolution. It is true that the social determination of artistic form does play a major role in their theory of art, but as a result of the idealism of their philosophic attitude they were incapable of inferring correctly all the consequences of their deep insights. They lost themselves in idealistic utopianism, in the illusion of being able to dispose of the maladies which were rooted in social reality by healing the artistic consciousness; in the illusion of being able to overcome the problematical character of modern art by approaching it from the formal side.

It is in this, and not in a return to antiquity, that a certain classicist feature in the aesthetics of Goethe and Schiller manifests itself. Their research into the artistic precepts of antiquity was a thoroughly justified and necessary tendency without which it would have been difficult to create a truly great art and impossible to have known the laws of artistic form. Marx called the Greeks the "normal children" of humanity and saw "norms and unattainable models" in the great artistic creations of the Greeks. For Marx, of course, this norm was valid only in "certain respects". That is, Marx demanded a precise and concrete study of the specific conditions which give rise, on the basis of social reality, to the content and form of a particular period of art; he demanded a clear understanding of the forms which can be used in a particular period of artistic evolution and how they might be employed. Marx writes: "The difficulty exists only in the general formulation of these contradictions. As soon as they are specified they are also explained." The

fundamentally idealistic attitude of Goethe and Schiller hindered them from carrying out this specification in a conclusive way.

Behind this inability to pose and resolve this problem correctly there is, of course, a social necessity: the necessarily problematical character of the whole of modern art. Marx speaks about the fact that "capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of spiritual production, such as art and poetry." All important modern artists have felt this hostility, more deeply, the further capitalist production advanced. In this respect also, the period of the French Revolution and of the industrial revolution, forging ahead triumphantly in England at the same time, marks a deep cleavage in the development of modern bourgeois art and aesthetics. The naïve enthusiasm with which the great realists of the eighteenth century integrated everyday bourgeois life into literature and created the modern novel, without thinking much about the problem of form, ceased and gave way to a forced reflection on the problematical character of this reality and the artistic forms adequate to it.

This reflection moves on a double level, but only rarely can artists and theoreticians of art become aware to a certain extent, and never entirely, of its duality and contradictory character. It involves the interweaving of the following two problems. Either the system of artistic laws must be derived from the study of antiquity, with the aid of which the artist can express the *specific character* of modern life (in which case the study of antiquity serves to discover and build up the forms and laws of form of the *modern bourgeois period*), or this knowledge must lead to the discovery of a system of universal "timeless" laws, with the aid of which a classical art can be created even in the present—despite the problematical and hostile character of modern life with respect to art. Thus it is a question of overcoming the *socially problematical character of the bourgeois present* with the aid of ancient forms creatively renovated.

The first way, the one Balzac, among the modern artists, followed with the greatest effect, the one Goethe also followed in his *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*, led to the theory of the modern novel, to the relentless expression of all the problematic elements and inartistic uglinesses of modern life, to the artistic overcoming of this problematic character by the very act of following it through to the end. Balzac distinctly felt and gave clear expression to the conviction that there still remains, nonetheless, a deeply problematic aesthetic element. His artistic confessions of faith, especially his story *Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, clearly shows how following this path consistently to the end, as prescribed by the specifically modern principles of art, must lead to a self-dissolution, to a destruction of artistic form.

The other way leads necessarily to a certain aversion from the deepest problems of modern life, to a certain flight from these problems. For if the material of modern life is to give rise to a work of art having the ancient clarity of line, the ancient simplicity and economy of composition, etc., then the material must be purified of the problematical elements inherent in it and thus placed at a certain distance from the central problems of modern life. Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*, undoubtedly one of his greatest works, in which he came closest aesthetically to the simplicity and grandeur of the ancients, is the typical product of this second way. But he achieved this goal only at the price of restricting the epic poem he strove for to an idyll. He confirmed unintentionally—without either he or Schiller being aware of it—the deep insight in Schiller's *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* which described and demonstrated that elegy, satire and idyll are the typical forms of modern sentimental poetry. Despite its ancient form, *Hermann and Dorothea* is just as sentimental and problematical as *Wilhelm Meister*, only in a different way.

This antithesis of *Hermann and Dorothea* and *Wilhelm Meister* played an important role in the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller. They were both aware that *Wilhelm Meister* was the first great attempt to present, in a comprehensive unified picture, the problems of modern bourgeois life in Germany as a moving totality; that with *Wilhelm Meister* was born the new type of the modern novel. Both recognized that the greatness of this novel consists precisely in the fact that the totality of these problems is expressed in a great epic unity, that *Wilhelm Meister* accordingly is a novel of which the form constantly tends toward the grandeur of the epic. In doing so they recognized one of the essential characteristics of the modern novel. Hegel later called the novel the "modern epic". But Goethe and Schiller did not and could not recognize that the failure of this tendency of the novel to rise to the epic is an essential feature of the novel, not a "defect". One can speak of a defect only to the extent that one speaks of the artistically problematical character of all art in the bourgeois period; to the extent that one recognizes that the adequate artistic expression of a theme, which is necessarily so contradictory, can only be done in a self-contradictory form, such as the bourgeois novel. The great and consummate quality of this form lies precisely in the rigour with which the problematical theme is pursued to its conclusion.

Even in the high level of perfection of *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe and Schiller recognized this problematical character of the artistic form of the novel. And they clearly saw the formal phenomenon, namely its tendency to rise to the level of an epic poem, and the

failure of this tendency. But still biased in favour of the ideal of the ancient epic, they evaluated this correct judgment erroneously as a "defect" of Wilhelm Meister. Goethe once angrily referred to *Wilhelm Meister* as a "pseudo-epic". And in a letter in which he conclusively sums up his general impression of the book, Schiller clearly states the reason for this one-sided view. He writes: "I have also re-read *Meister* recently and I was never so struck by how important, despite everything, the external form is. The form of *Meister*, like the form of the novel in general, is simply not poetic; it lies entirely within the sphere of the understanding, submits to all its demands and shares all its limitations. But because it is a truly poetic spirit which made use of this form and expressed its most poetic states in this form, the result is a strange oscillation between a prosaic and poetic atmosphere for which I do not know the correct term. I would like to say that *Meister* (i.e. the novel) lacks a certain poetic boldness because, as a novel, it seeks always to satisfy the understanding and, again, it lacks a true explicitness (for which, however, it arouses to some extent the demand), because it is born of a poetic spirit." Then he juxtaposes this problematical character of *Wilhelm Meister* to the perfection of *Hermann und Dorothea*. "Who does not feel in *Meister* everything that makes *Hermann* so enchanting? The former lacks nothing, nothing at all of your spirit. It stirs the heart with all the forces of poetry and gives us a constantly renewed delight, and yet *Hermann* leads me into the divine world of poetry (and solely by means of its pure poetic form), whereas *Meister* never quite allows me to leave the real world."

It is very characteristic that Schiller reduced this opposition merely to one of form and did not see that behind the differences in form of the two works are concealed two different attitudes toward the content of life itself; thus he distorted in an idealistic way his conception of form which is otherwise so profound. But it is also characteristic that Goethe reacted to this criticism by expressing perfect agreement. He writes: "I am glad that *Hermann* is in your capable hands. I understand very well what you say about *Meister*; all that and more is true. Its imperfection is just what has given me the most trouble. A pure form helps and gives support, whereas an impure form everywhere hinders and impedes. Be that as it may, it will not easily happen again that I deceive myself in the subject and in the form, and we shall attend to what genius may grant us in the autumn of life." Thus Goethe viewed *Wilhelm Meister* here as a "mistake". Without hesitation both decided in favour of *Hermann and Dorothea* over *Wilhelm Meister*; in favour of the epic poem reduced to an idyll over the great modern novel.

If their decision had been theoretically and practically realized and made enduring in a consequential way then we really could speak of the classicism of their common tendencies, although even *Hermann und Dorothea* is by nature much less classical than Goethe and Schiller believed in their enthusiasm for form. And where Goethe actually attempted to create "truly classical" works on the basis of his knowledge of ancient forms, he failed. He was too much a modern realistic artist ever really to be able to forget or push aside contemporary life. *Hermann und Dorothea* owes its existence and form as much to the French Revolution as does *Die natürliche Tochter*, a drama with a consciously classical orientation. And it is no accident that those of Goethe's projects which originated almost completely in a knowledge and enthusiasm for form remained fragmentary (e.g. *Achilleis*). For Schiller this inclination toward form became much more dangerous (such as in *Die Braut von Messina*), although in his work also the great problems of the period unmistakably form the foundation of his later dramas (the question of national unity, etc.).

We would be going to the opposite, false and unhistorical extreme, however, if we were to see the "classicistic" tendency of Goethe and Schiller simply as a "defect". Behind this contradictory position of theirs is concealed the great central problem of modern art in the nineteenth century: the attempt to surmount artistically the ugliness and inartistic character of bourgeois life. If we wish to understand correctly the development of this period of modern art—and the collaboration of Goethe and Schiller introduces this last great ascendancy of bourgeois art, and in many ways constitutes its apex —then we must learn to assess correctly the tendencies in their "classicism" which are justified, despite the escapist elements and idealistic distortions in their solutions to problems.

In Goethe these problems were much more overt and clear than in Schiller. All his life Goethe was a great realist. His turning toward the classicistic purification of the content of life was a conscious evasion of the ultimate tragic contradictions and conflicts with which modern life confronted him. He states this quite openly in a letter to Schiller in which he speaks about his inability to write a tragedy. He writes: "It is true that I do not know myself well enough to know if I would be able to write a true tragedy; but I am simply frightened to undertake it and am almost convinced that the mere attempt would destroy me." Goethe says here very clearly that his evasion of the ultimate consequences of the contradictions of modern life by no means has its origin in artistic considerations, in principles of form. The latter are simply consequences of his basic attitude to modern life, and his greatest works came into being precisely

because at crucial moments he always overcame this life-instinct of his.

With Schiller the problem is more complicated. Schiller was a born tragedian whose vital element was contradiction in its tragic acuteness. Thus his classicistic tendency seems to have been born purely of consideration of form. But that too is only an appearance. On the other hand, this tendency originated in his political attitude toward the problems of the post-revolutionary period, in his rejection of the revolutionary methods for the overthrow of feudalism. Thus he excluded from his range of themes the deepest tragic problem of his age, and the formal aesthetic consequences of this political turning become clearly visible if we compare *Wilhelm Tell* with the dramas of his youth. On the other hand, the correct way in which Schiller formulated the question of the stylistic mastery of the problems of modern life was distorted by his philosophical idealism.

The continual struggle of Goethe and Schiller against the petty photographic naturalism of their contemporaries was justified and right. But Schiller's philosophical idealism sometimes distorted this struggle into a rigidly antithetical and exclusive opposition of "Truth" to "Reality". In his introduction to the *Bride of Messina* he says on the subject of the relationship of art to reality: art can be "truer than any reality and more real than any phenomenon. Hence, it automatically follows that the artist cannot use a single element of reality as he finds it, that his work must be ideal in *all* its parts just as it must, as a whole, possess reality and accord with nature." As a philosophical idealist seeking the way from subjective to objective idealism, Schiller could not formulate his attempt to go beyond the petty reproduction of immediate reality other than by separating the essential determinants of life, which art is supposed to express, from any connection with life itself and conceiving them as components of a world of ideas. This general idealistic distortion of the problems in Schiller was further strengthened by the fact that he wavered between a splendid objective comprehension of the contradictions of historical life and a moralizing constriction of these problems—philosophically between an objective idealism, which makes him one of the most important forerunners of Hegel, and a mere continuation, interpretation and application of the subjective idealism of Kant. Consequently his artistic practices are a pretty accurate reflection of his intermediary philosophical position between Kant and Hegel. Next to monumental, splendidly comprehensive historical pictures, such as dramatic literature had not known since Shakespeare, we find the great historical relationships distorted by a petty, subjective Kantian tendency to moralize. One thinks, for example, of the grand historical way in which Queen Elisabeth was

originally conceived for *Maria Stuart* and what became of it in the execution.

For Goethe and Schiller then the basic problem, justified despite all these ideological distortions, was the comprehension and representation of the really great contradictions of modern life, the realization that the trivial and all-too-close adherence to the details of everyday life constitutes an obstacle for the artistic expression of the great problems in their pure form. Equally justified was their realization that modern bourgeois life offers art dangerously contradictory material in this respect. And this is true in a double sense. It is very interesting to observe that, despite his idealistic philosophical tendencies, Schiller clearly saw this double danger—petty pseudo-realism and hollow idealistic stylization (the rhetorical, the chimerical, etc.)—and that he was perfectly aware of the danger of the second kind of tendency for his own creative work. In writing *Wallenstein*, for example, he feared falling into a sort of aridity. To Goethe he wrote that his aridity "originated in a certain fear of falling into my former rhetorical style and in a too anxious effort to preserve the proximity of the object. . . . Thus, if both perils, the *prosaic* and the *rhetorical*, are to be avoided with equal care, it is much more necessary than elsewhere to attain to a pure poetic state."

Goethe and Schiller sought a way out of these difficulties precisely through the study of the precepts of ancient art as precepts of art in general. But this quest was only apparently a mere study of form. The concept of form with which Goethe and Schiller worked was very closely connected to decisive problems of content. However faulty and idealistically distorted their formulation of the dialectical relationship between form and content often was, their basic tendency was in the direction of defining this dialectical relationship.

In a letter to Goethe, Schiller formulates their common aspirations on two points. The first is the definition of the artistic subject. "At this moment it seems to me that it would be a great advantage to proceed from the concept of the *absolute definiteness of the subject*. For it would show that all the works of art which have miscarried, owing to a poor choice of subject, suffer from such indefiniteness and thus have an arbitrary character." This analysis of the problem of the subject of art which Goethe followed henceforth, often with pedantic exactitude, led to the concretization of the specific problem of form, the problem of the genres. Concluding the observation cited above, Schiller writes: "If this proposition is joined to the other, namely that in each case the subject must be defined by the means proper to an art genre, that this must be done within the special limits of each artistic species, then I think one would have an adequate criterion to avoid being misled in the choice of subjects." We see then

that for Goethe and Schiller even the problems of form in the strict sense derive from the nature of the artistic subject.

What Goethe and Schiller learned from the Greeks was not primarily particular formal characteristics (as, for example, French Classicism of the seventeenth century often did), but rather the fundamental artistic precept that every work of art must express in a clear and necessary way the essential determinants [*Bestimmungen*] of its subject. On the one hand, the art must not lose itself in details which are only loosely related or altogether unrelated to these essential determinants, but on the other hand, it must articulate these determinants completely and in their true relationship; for any obscurity or subjective caprice in the expression of these determinants must prove fatal to the art.

The specific character of the various genres is deduced from this fundamental law. The peculiar character of the objects, the peculiar character of the relationship between their essential determinants prescribe definite forms of artistic expression. These typical forms of artistic expression are the genres. And it is very interesting to observe in their correspondence how passionately and deeply Goethe and Schiller examined each theme separately in order to discover in which form it might find the maximum, and even the only adequate expression possible. In another connection we mentioned that the separation of the genres in Goethe and Schiller is certainly very sharp, but by no means rigid and mechanical. Schiller's criticism of the tragedies of the Italian classicist, Alfieri, shows that for both of them the mere act of abstractly detaching the essential elements of a subject is not at all sufficient, even if this complies with the laws of the relevant genre. They conceived this task of detaching the essential determinants in the Greek, not in the classicistic sense; i.e. in the sense of a great realism and not in the sense of an abstract stylization. Schiller says of Alfieri: "One merit I must grant him in any case, although it also contains a reproach. He knows how to bring a subject to poetic utilization and awakens the desire to elaborate it: certain proof that he himself was not satisfied, but still a sign that he successfully wrested the subject from prose and history."

The theory of genres, which is related to a renewed and deepened study by Goethe and Schiller of Aristotle's poetics, also takes its point of departure from this central problem. Schiller expresses his sympathy for Aristotle in a highly contemporary sense, in the sense of his struggle against the double danger in modern art: "Aristotle is truly an infernal judge for all who either slavishly cling to external form or who disregard all form." And Schiller praises Aristotle especially because he saw the central problem of all poetry in the story [*Fabel*], in the connection between events. As a result

of his studies and his poetic work on *Wallenstein*, Schiller formulated this problem in the following way. "The more I reflect on my own occupation and the way the Greeks treated tragedy, the more I find that the whole *cardo rei* lies in the art of inventing a poetical story. The modern concerns himself laboriously and anxiously with incidental events and secondary conditions, and by attempting to approximate reality as closely as possible he burdens himself with idle and insignificant things and thus runs the risk of losing the deeper truth wherein everything really poetical resides. He would like very much to copy a real situation but does not reflect that a poetic description, precisely because it is absolutely true, can never coincide with reality."

In Schiller's criticism of Goethe's project for an epic poem, *Die Jagd* [*The Chase*] (from which Goethe in his old age drew the material for his "Novelle") we can see how seriously Goethe and Schiller in their correspondence considered this crucially important challenge to artistic creation, the vital role of the story, the plot in epic and dramatic literature. "I await your plan with great curiosity. What I find disquieting is that the same thing that happened to me happened to Humboldt, without our having corresponded previously about it. He thinks that the plan lacks an individual epic plot. When you first spoke to me about it I too perpetually awaited the real plot; everything you related to me seemed to be only the preamble and the field of such a plot being the principal individual figures, and just as I thought that the action was about to begin, you are finished." Here is a withering criticism, still applicable today, of the narrative manner which dominated the period of decline of the bourgeoisie, a manner which thinks that, by describing a milieu and a general event common to this milieu, it can avoid the imaginative invention and shaping required of a truly individual story, which, precisely in its individuality, expresses the typical problem of its material in its essential determinants.

Naturally Goethe and Schiller did not content themselves with this fundamental definition of the problem of literary creation. Their main effort was directed precisely at discovering within what they shared the deep-seated internal difference between epic and dramatic literature. By way of summarizing a lengthy and exceptionally interesting discussion by letter, Goethe wrote his short significant treatise, *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung* [*On Epic and Dramatic Poetry*]. In it he attempted to formulate the most general formal laws of epic and dramatic literature by stressing what they have in common as well as what distinguishes them. "The epic writer and the dramatic writer are both subject to the general laws of poetry, especially the law of unity and the law of development;

moreover they both treat similar subjects and both are able to employ a variety of motifs. The essential difference between them though rests on the fact that the epic writer relates the event as *completely past* and the dramatic writer represents it as *completely present.*"

Therewith Goethe touched upon one of the deepest decisive differences between epic and dramatic literature. And he rendered this contrast exceptionally plastic by taking as his point of departure the representative personifications of the two genres: the rhapsodist and the mime. (The fact that in Goethe also these formal differences and their personifications acquire an idealistic autonomy, that the mime and the rhapsodist are separated to some extent from their social foundation does not decisively change the essential correctness of this contrast). With respect to the treatment of plot Goethe concretized this contrast by systematizing the possible motifs of action in the poetry and separating those which are predominantly epic or dramatic from those which could be found in both genres. Now it is very simple and obvious that the opposition between past and present led Goethe to view the progressive motifs which promote the plot as specifically dramatic and those which relate the past and hold the plot at a distance from its goal as predominantly epic.

He arrived at this antithesis on the basis of his study of the Homeric poems, especially the *Odyssey*, and it is very interesting to observe just how closely this conception of the contrast between the two genres is related to his conception of the modern novel, although he regarded the form of the novel as problematical and viewed *Wilhelm Meister* simply as a pseudo-epic poem. Due to the transformation of all the social conditions which engendered the antithesis between the ancient epic and the modern novel, the motif relating to the past acquired an altogether different significance for the modern novel than it had for the ancient epic. Where it is a question of the struggle of individuals within society, the predominance of this motif in the modern novel is an accurate reflection of one of the central problems of the modern bourgeois novel, the problem of the impossibility of creating a positive and active hero. In the ancient epic poem the motif relating to the past was the objective difficulty of fulfilling a great common national and social destiny (especially in the *Iliad*). In the bourgeois novel this motif expresses the subjugation of the individual to social conditions, the emergence of social necessity in the chain of apparent contingencies in the life of the individual. Schiller analysed, in a very interesting way, the reasons why Lothario, the most positive character in *Wilhelm Meister*, could not possibly be the main hero. It is true that he noted principally the formal and psychological

reasons, but behind his argument is the correct feeling that a character conceived as so fully positive could not possibly, in bourgeois life, be the centre of the action and express himself through action; that Wilhelm Meister, precisely on account of his weaknesses and imperfections, is much better suited to be the representative of this kind of action which embraces all of reality and incorporates all essential human types and human relationships.

This comparison, which Goethe and Schiller formulated in the most varied ways in the course of their correspondence, was applied by them to a whole series of the most important specific problems of epic and dramatic literature. It is impossible here to indicate all these applications. We will mention only a few particularly characteristic examples. Goethe, for example, stressed the great difference between epic and dramatic exposition. He writes: "The epic poem also has the great advantage that its exposition, however long it may be, never inconveniences the poet; he can even place it at the centre of the work as was done very ingeniously in the *Odyssey*. For even this retrograde movement is beneficient; but it seems to me that the exposition presents a problem to the dramatic writer precisely because one expects of him continual progress, and I would call the best dramatic subject one in which the exposition is already a part of the development."

Schiller applied these insights ceaselessly to his own work and to the theoretical formulation of this work. And by thinking through thoroughly these problems of dramatic construction he progressively approached that analytical form of the drama which subsequently became extremely important for the development of the bourgeois tragedy (especially in Hebbel and Ibsen). On this theme he writes: "These days I am very busy with finding a subject for tragedy which would be of the kind exemplified by *Oedipus Rex* and would provide the poet with the same advantages. These advantages are immense even if I only mention one of them: the possibility of basing the work upon the most complex action since this action, which is entirely repugnant to the tragic form, is already past and consequently lies completely beyond the tragedy. Add to this the fact that what has happened, being irrevocable, is by nature much more terrible, and the fear that something *might have happened* affects the soul quite differently from the fear that something *might happen*. *Oedipus* is only a tragic analysis as it were. Everything is already there and is only made explicit. This can be done with the simplest plot and in an extremely short time, however complicated and dependent on circumstances the events may be." Here too it may be seen clearly to what extent the study of antiquity and its artistic precepts was conditioned by the specific needs of modern art.

The observations of Goethe and Schiller are especially interesting when, proceeding along these lines, they centre on those aspects of a particular subject which are suitable for poetic adaptation in general and for epic or dramatic adaptation in particular. Here too the criticism of Goethe and Schiller anticipates many of the false and inartistic tendencies of subsequent literature and retains a topical importance for the present as well. I will cite only one example. In seeking a theoretical foundation for his *Achilleis*, Goethe asks: "whether between Hector's death and the departure of the Greeks from the Trojan coast there is or is not still an epic poem." His most interesting result is that "the conquest of Troy itself, as an instance of the fulfilment of a great destiny, is neither epic nor tragic and can be viewed in a true epic work only at a distance forward or backward. Virgil's rhetorical and sentimental treatment is out of the question here." The attempt to create such instances of fulfilment is one of the typical weaknesses and stylistic inadequacies of later bourgeois literature. (One might think of *Salammbô*, certain writings of Zola, etc.)

In Goethe and Schiller then the basic line of inquiry into the laws of art through the study of antiquity is always aimed at a theory of specifically modern art, or at least closely related to the problems of modern art, even where there seems to be the greatest formal and thematic opposition. This fundamental fact is not invalidated by the fact that the theory of art of Goethe and Schiller sometimes sought to overcome the specific ugliness and specifically inartistic character of bourgeois life in a rather formal direction, one leading away from realism. In particular one must guard against taking too literally their formulations, which are often exaggerated and excessive, against the vulgar realism of their contemporaries and deducing from them, as do many bourgeois interpreters, an entirely anti-realistic tendency.

The interesting formal observations of Goethe and Schiller on the changes occasioned by the transposition into verse of scenes written originally in prose (in *Wallenstein* and *Faust* respectively) are in their eminently concrete character the very opposite of formalism. They show the alterations in content and structure which are related to verse form and thereby contribute to concretizing the theory of poetic expression and the understanding of the mutual influence between content and form. Here we can cite only some of these very significant observations, but they are quite sufficient to show that the search for a perfect form by Goethe and Schiller signifies precisely the opposite of the formalistic experiments which temporarily dominated literature in our age and of which several, even today, still have a phantom existence in the minds of many.

This is what Schiller writes about his experiences in transposing *Wallenstein* from the original prose into verse. "Never have I been so clearly convinced as in my present task how closely in poetry content and form are related, even externally. Since I transformed my prose into poetic and rhythmic language I find myself submitting to a completely different jurisdiction than before; I can no longer even use many of the motifs which seemed perfectly in place in the prose edition; they were only good for the common simple understanding of which prose seems to be the organ. But verse absolutely requires relations with the imagination, and so I have had to become more poetic as regards several of my motifs. One really should conceive in verse, initially at least, everything which must rise above the common, for the platitude never comes to light so much as when it is expressed in verse style. . . . In a dramatic production the rhythm still realizes this grandeur and importance so that, by treating all characters and all situations according to *one* law and by giving them, despite their internal differences, *one* form, it thereby obliges the poet and his readers to demand, even from the most characteristic and distinct elements, something universal and purely human. Everything must be united by the generic concept of poetry, and rhythm serves both as representative and instrument of this precept since it includes everything under its law. In this way it creates the atmosphere for poetic creation; that which is coarser falls away, for only what is spiritual can be borne by this light element."

The decisive point of view in judging the basic tendency of this theory of art must be that—despite all the elements of aversion from contemporary life—Goethe and Schiller nevertheless attempted to vanquish the ugliness and inartistic character of modern life by struggling with material they could not avoid, by artistically overcoming the inartistic character of this material; that they thus followed the same course—one can even say opened the way—followed by the important realists of the first half of the nineteenth century. The purgation of their themes of those elements which were too closely related to reality, too contemporary, changed nothing essential of the contemporary quality of these themes in the great historical sense. It is true that sometimes this purgation removed the theme to such an ethereal abstract remoteness that the relationship of the theme to current reality is not only difficult to perceive but is distorted even in its content (e.g. *Die natürliche Tochter*). The relationship, however, is always there and the removal of subject-matter to the level of the social contradiction which, according to Goethe and Schiller, underlies it, can lead to a broad realistic treatment of a contemporary and topical theme. Thus Goethe writes

a very interesting letter to his friend Meyer about Schiller's *Wallenstein*. He praises Schiller for having put in as prologue "Wallensteins Lager" [The Camp of Wallenstein] "where the mass of the army, like the chorus of the ancients, is represented with force and gravity, because at the end of the main drama the important thing is that the *mass* no longer remains with him as soon as he changes the *formula* of the service. In a much more *weighty* manner, and one consequently more important for art, it is the history of Dumouriez. . . ."

The dialectical contradiction in the position of Goethe and Schiller does not lie then in a superficial conflict between realism, on the one hand, and "classicism" on the other. This dialectical contradiction, the basis of all their supposedly classicistic practices, is rather the deepest contradiction of great bourgeois art, especially during the period from 1789 to 1848. It manifests itself both when Goethe and Schiller follow through their classical approach in a fruitful way as when they become unfaithful to the classical ideal of form and turn with apparent inconsistency to those themes which cannot be mastered at all by means of classical form. This apparent inconsistency lies deep in the nature of the classicism of Goethe and Schiller. We have already spoken of the pre-Romantic and Romantic tendencies of Schiller and will mention only in passing that he constantly played with a theme in this period which must have represented the Paris of his time. In Goethe, of course, this double tendency is even more clearly visible. It is no coincidence that, after a very long interval, he took up work again on *Faust*, precisely during his collaboration with Schiller. It should not surprise us that Goethe and Schiller manifested a certain contradiction to their classical tendencies in working out the style of *Faust*. The essential thing is that it was just this work that Goethe took up again, that Schiller hailed enthusiastically and where he collaborated in the theoretical and practical clarification of the problems of form related to it.

The appearance of the theoretical inconsistency from the standpoint of the classical theory of art manifests itself very clearly in Goethe when he writes, for example: "I am more at home with this barbarous composition and think rather to touch on than to fulfil the highest demands." But his subsequent works show how closely this "barbarous composition", precisely in terms of its laws, is connected to the important fundamental problems of the aesthetics of Goethe and Schiller. The fact that Goethe derived the laws of form in their application to *Faust* from his knowledge of epic literature, and not from his knowledge of drama or tragedy, shows to what extent the remarks already cited on the dialectical interpenetration of the genres was no formalistic play of ideas for Goethe and Schiller but originated in a knowledge of the specific problems of modern

art. Thus, in connection with the passage cited above, Goethe writes: "I will take care that the parts are pleasant and entertaining and provide food for thought; as for the whole, which will always remain a fragment, the new theory of the epic poem may prove useful to me." (The relative autonomy of the parts in the aesthetics of Goethe and Schiller is a characteristic of the epic as opposed to drama). These observations of Goethe conclude an epistolary criticism of those parts of *Faust* already written in which Schiller emphasized that the development of the whole could proceed only in the direction of a representation of the extensive totality of modern life. By stressing the epic character of the total conception of *Faust*, Goethe only drew the ultimate conclusions from this correct statement of Schiller concerning the theme of his most important work.

The definition of *Faust* as a "barbaric composition" distinctly shows the contradictory attitude continually stressed by us, that Goethe and Schiller had toward modern life as subject-matter for poetry. The figure of Helen in the second part of *Faust*, on whom Goethe began in this period, expresses in perhaps the most plastic way their struggle with modern bourgeois life considered as subject-matter. By taking up this struggle seriously, i.e. by situating the Greek figure of Helen in the midst of the barbaric and medieval-bourgeois milieu of Faust, Goethe went far beyond the content of the Faust legend and his original youthful conception of *Faust*. Thus we can clearly see to what extent the "barbaric composition" of the completed *Faust* is connected to the real foundation of society and to the fundamental objective orientation of the "classicism" of Goethe and Schiller; to what extent the apparent contradiction which comes to light here is only the manifestation of the real contradictory character, which is deeply grounded in society, of the whole position of Goethe and Schiller.

On the subject of the tragedy of Helen, Goethe writes: "But now the beauty in the situation of my heroine attracts me so much that it grieves me above all to have to transform it into a grimace. Actually I do not feel the least desire to base a serious tragedy on what has been begun." Schiller's reply to this letter clearly expresses the attitude of both toward the great problem of modern art. "But if beautiful figures and situations appear, do not be troubled by the thought that it would be a pity to barbarize them. The situation might recur even more often in the second part of *Faust*, and it would be good to silence your poetic conscience once and for all on this matter. The barbarous aspect of the treatment which is imposed on you by the spirit of the whole, can neither destroy its higher content nor nullify its beauty; it can only specify the whole in a different way and prepare it for another faculty of the soul.

It is precisely the more elevated and noble element in the motifs that will give the work its peculiar attractiveness, and Helen is a symbol in this drama for all the beauteous figures who will stray into it. It is a very important advantage to proceed consciously from the pure to the impure instead of seeking to ascend from the impure to the pure as is the case with us other barbarians. In your *Faust* then you must at all times assert your *right of fist*."[1]

This frank admission by Goethe and Schiller of the contradiction between their discussion of Goethe's most important work and their consciously formulated conception of art, and also the realization that it is not a question here of a simple contradiction between theory and practice, illuminates very clearly the nature and significance of these comments on aesthetics. It is a question of the intellectual reflection of a coherent contradiction, which Goethe and Schiller themselves did not recognize: namely their situation as great poets who aspired to and attained the heights in the last progressive and deeply contradictory period of bourgeois art. Their theory and works form the bridge between the first—one might say naïve—period of ascendancy of the bourgeois class from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, and the last period of ascendancy, which was already consciously contradictory, from 1789 to 1848. A historical analysis of the views of Goethe and Schiller distinctly shows their mediating function between these two periods. Fully aware of what they were doing, Goethe and Schiller assumed the heritage of the whole bourgeois ascendancy from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and transformed it in terms of the new problems of the early nineteenth century, the period following the French Revolution. Thus they were at once heirs to the Enlightenment and writers who overcame it. An intensive study of their views would show naturally that on several points they remained bound by the weaknesses and prejudices of the period which on the whole they overcame (for example, as regards some of the methods used to compose *Wilhelm Meister* and Schiller's approval of these methods as "epic machinery"). Such a study would also show that on certain points they retreated with respect to the clear and combative spirit of the Enlightenment. And a similar contradiction can be observed as to their way of posing and solving the problems of the new epoch. The contradictions in their theory of art, which we have analysed briefly on the basis of some of the larger problems, originated in this situation at the turning-point of two periods in the development of bourgeois society. Without such a historical analysis of the social foundations of the contradictory character of their theories of art, it would be impossible to make these theories come

[1] The pun is on "Faust", which also means "fist".

alive for our age. The value of their views for the present can come alive for us only if we clearly understand their historical context, their social basis; if we do not isolate these views, but conceive them rather as elements of a heroic struggle on the part of great bourgeois artists, for a great realism opposed to the character of capitalist society which is inimical to art. Then the intellectual content of the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller will not only be a historical document of the highest importance for an understanding of the aesthetic theories of a great turning-point in time, but an important, currently significant aesthetic heritage of which the critical, historical and systematic study will encourage and enrich in the most fruitful way our present practical and theoretical efforts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Schiller's Theory of Modern Literature

I

SINCE THE emergence of the bourgeois class, the development of the theory of modern literature, the theory of its specific characteristics and their justification, has always been very closely related to the development of a theory of antiquity. The domination of the bourgeois class would have had to be very consolidated, very matter-of-course, in order for it to have created a theory of modern literature without this historical parallel, purely on the basis of the internal and external conditions of the rise of modern literature. However, in the period during which the economic foundations of bourgeois society became obvious, bourgeois ideology had already entered into its apologetic period; it was no longer sufficiently impartial and courageous to undertake a scientifically objective study of the ideological and artistic possibilities of its literature on the basis of a critical consideration of the corresponding social conditions. The great period of bourgeois literary theory, which terminated with the imposing world-historical synthesis of the history of literature and art in Hegel's aesthetics, is based entirely on the conception of antiquity as the canon of art, as the unattainable model for all art and literature.

It is not our task here to enumerate the various phases, methods, and results of the comparison between ancient and modern literature from the Renaissance to the age of classical German idealism.

In order to determine correctly the special place of Schiller in this development, we must limit ourselves to ascertaining first that these literary theoretical refl ctions from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century were either predominantly of a purely empirical or abstract technical character which very rarely ascended to the level of a philosophical-historical analysis. Then, in a very brief summary, we must enumerate and analyse at least the main motifs which formed the social basis of this parallel in the theory of literature.

As regards its immediate problems of form and content, early

bourgeois literature continued the heritage of the Middle Ages much more than it did that of antiquity. This is understandable, since the modern bourgeois class did indeed develop economically out of the medieval urban middle-class to become subsequently the force which overthrew the feudal system. Even where the first great representatives of bourgeois literature came into the sharpest ideological conflict with the declining feudal system, and, out of this struggle, developed completely new forms of artistic creation, this new literature remained tied—often, it is true, in a satirical, ironical form, destructive of the old ideologies and their modes of artistic expression —to these medieval forms and content (e.g. Ariosto, Rabelais, Cervantes). The modern *Novelle*, the modern novel, the modern drama of the Shakespearian type, the modern lyrical form (rhyme, etc.) all preserve an immeasurable heritage from the world of forms which appeared in the Middle Ages. Of course, there is a series of important forms (the classical drama, the renewal of the epos, satire, the didactic poem, ode, etc.) which arose out of a more or less direct reception of ancient models. And it is quite characteristic of modern bourgeois literary theory in its early period that in its analyses it took into account these latter forms almost exclusively and discarded the others as being barbarously formless. (See Voltaire's judgment on Shakespeare). The new forms specially characteristic of bourgeois literature, notably the novel, developed almost entirely apart from literary theory and were disregarded by it.

Of course, one must not imagine this ideal of antiquity even from an artistic point of view, as being a stable one. In the course of the development and consolidation of the bourgeois class, in the course of its becoming increasingly independent and liberating itself from its alliance with the absolute monarchy against the feudal nobility, the form and content of its ideal of antiquity changed. Expressed in historical terms, the ideal shifted progressively from Rome to Greece; Seneca was replaced by Sophocles, Virgil by Homer, etc. This transference, which proceeded moreover in a very uneven and contradictory manner, with numerous backslidings, already proves how false would be any form of vulgar sociological schematization, any relating of certain tendencies, taken in a formal sense, to certain class attitudes.

The model of antiquity was the necessary political ideal of the bourgeois class struggle for its independence and for political power. More and more the ancient *polis* became the political model of the bourgeois revolutionaries, until this development found its practical fulfilment in the great French Revolution. It was a practical fulfilment, to be sure, which revealed in a blatant manner the difference between ancient and modern society and showed vividly to

what extent the ancient *polis* and the ideal of the *polis* citizen were unable to provide either the content or the form of the modern bourgeois revolution and of modern bourgeois society; to what extent they were simply the (necessary) vestment, the (necessary) illusion of its heroic period. "Robespierre, St.-Just, and their party perished," Marx says, "because they confused the ancient, *realistic-democratic community*, based on real slavery, with the modern *spiritualistic-democratic representative state*, which is based on the *emancipated slavery of bourgeois society*." The deep social necessity of this heroic illusion appears also in the fact that, immediately after its first failure vis-à-vis bourgeois reality, it again became—in different forms, of course, and with a partially (but only partially) altered content—the dominant ideology in the Napoleonic period.

In his fundamental analysis of the necessary cleavage of the bourgeois political and social consciousness, Marx reveals in a penetrating manner the social foundation of this necessary illusion. This cleavage followed necessarily from the relationship of modern bourgeois society to its own state, from the relationship of the individual member of bourgeois society to this state, and from the necessary relationship of the capitalist substructure to its state superstructure. About these relationships, Marx says: "Where the political state has attained its true development, man leads, not only in thought and in consciousness, but in *reality*, in *life*, a double life, one celestial and one terrestrial; his life in the *political community*, where he has value as a *public being*, and his life in *bourgeois society*, where he acts as a *private man* who regards other men as means, is reduced himself to a means, and becomes the plaything of hostile forces. The political state has just as spiritualistic a relation to bourgeois society as heaven has to earth. It stands in the same opposition to bourgeois society and surmounts it in the same way that religion surmounts the limitations of the profane world, i.e. by being obliged to recognize and constitute it anew, by allowing itself to be dominated by it. Man in his *most proximate* reality, in bourgeois society, is a profane being. Here, where he has value to himself and to others as a real individual, he is an *inauthentic* phenomenon. In the state, on the other hand, where man has value as a species-being, he is the imaginary member of an imaginary sovereignty; he is robbed of his real individual life and filled with an unreal generality." At the same time, however, it follows from this very relationship that citizen and bourgeois nonetheless form an indissoluble unity in reality; the "cleavage" takes place always in one and the same individual. And in this real unity the bourgeois always really predominates, although for the consciousness the "cleavage" is necessary, the

consciousness pretending—illusorily or hypocritically—that the citizen predominates.

The social division of labour under capitalism reproduces this contradiction on an ever higher level. For it specializes more and more emphatically the various spheres of social activity, increases relative autonomy, and, in the course of this development, raises the state ever higher into the spiritualistic region of a "generality" which is opposed to the particular interests of the individual bourgeois. The illusion of the autonomy of the state with respect to bourgeois society, of the predominance of the imaginary general interests over the real particular interests of the bourgeois, is just as necessary a product of the social division of labour under capitalism as is the actual inter-relationship of both and the actual predominance of the real economic development over all the illusions which accompany it. Here too, of course, we must not reduce mechanically every illusion and every expression of false consciousness to a common denominator. The heroic illusions of the combative bourgeoisie in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are something quite different from the apologetic concealments of the already obvious contradictions of advanced bourgeois society.

In the period of the rising bourgeoisie, the return to the ancient *polis* and the analysis of its experiences for the development of a contemporary political theory is clearly a progressive movement. There is the double illusion that *polis* democracy is possible as a future revolutionary task and that the realization of the revolutionary demands of the bourgeois class could solve the real contradictions underlying its economic existence. But behind this illusion lies the heroic and relentless struggle of the best ideological leaders of the bourgeoisie. Thus the return to a remote past in this case is a progressive utopianism very much in opposition to the later Romantic return to the Middle Ages as an ideal, which actually was based on the wish—in the sincere representatives of this current—to resolve the contradictions of capitalist society by reducing it economically to a stage where these contradictions had not yet come to life.

II

If the political and social theory in which antiquity is a model and pattern rests on an illusion, then the literary theory which arose in connection with this class struggle and which is directly linked to this political conception must be an illusion raised to the second power. But this double illusion was nonetheless no obstacle to the grand and sincere expression in this theory of the great con-

temporary problems of the development of the bourgeoisie on the highest literary level. It was precisely in Greek literature and art that the humanist struggle against the degradation of man by the capitalist division of labour found a shining example, for these were the expressions of a society which—for its free citizens, the only ones who count in this matter—still stood this side of such a social structure. Thus it could serve as the ideal and model of a movement which wrote the restoration of the integrity of man on its banner. Accordingly, the fact that Homer and the Greek tragedians replaced the artistic models drawn from imperial Rome played an important role in this development. For the early and classical literature of antiquity gives expression to a society and its problems in which certain remnants of gentile society were still alive and active. So when the poets and theorists of the eighteenth century speak of nature and the naturalness of human life, when they combat the unnaturalness and degeneration of their age, they always have before their eyes, not a barbarous state of nature, but precisely this period in the evolution of mankind.

As an ideal of literary creation then, the ideal of antiquity implies the negation of the opposition between abstract stylization and the naturalism which slavishly holds to immediate reality. This opposition in bourgeois literature does not emerge by accident nor by any means on purely literary or artistic grounds. On the contrary, it is constantly produced and reproduced by the contradictions of capitalist society. Indeed, the more developed capitalist society is, the more developed are both its poles; the increasingly abstract and empty stylization as well as the increasingly servile and photographic naturalism which clings to immediate surfaces.

The basic contradiction of capitalist society, the contradiction between social production and private acquisition, makes the real motive forces of its peculiar social character increasingly difficult for the bourgeois writer to comprehend. On the surface only purely personal, purely private events are seen directly; the social forces which intervene in these private destinies, determining them in the last analysis, assume for the bourgeois observer an ever more abstract, ever more enigmatic form. The more the capitalist economy expands, the more do the forms of the superstructure (especially the state) appear in ever more ethereal forms elevated above the real life of individuals, and the more does the citizen side of the bourgeois become a meaningless abstraction. Parallel to that, moreover, the bourgeois appears increasingly as an isolated "monad", and the less objective social reality corresponds to this appearance, the more directly does the latter manifest itself in this form. The apologetic tendencies of bourgeois ideology naturally utilize these contradic-

tions for their own purposes, to conceal the contradictions of capitalism, and influence even those ideologists who—subjectively—are determined to approach the problems of life honestly. Since it becomes increasingly difficult then for the bourgeois consciousness to grasp the real relationship between the appearance and essence of social life in their real interaction (and consequently to express it), the process of artistic creation of bourgeois literature must become increasingly polarized toward these two false extremes.

This opposition already exists for the Enlightenment, but only in embryo. In literature the false extremes are already present, but very strong counter-forces are also still at work. Still present is the courage relentlessly to expose social contradictions. This is all the more the case as the heroic illusions of the preparatory period of the French Revolution and those of the revolution itself consist precisely in the illusion—historically justified and fruitful—that the consummation of the bourgeois revolution would surmount the contradictions already felt and articulated very forcefully by the great thinkers and poets of this era.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the critical voices multiply which consider the theory and practice of Greek art to be the model for grand new realism reproducing the essence of things. In the name of Shakespeare, Lessing leads the fight against the abstract idealization of the drama, especially in Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire. But his argumentation is based on the view that the real requirements of ancient poetry, the poetics of Aristotle, are satisfied in spirit by Shakespeare (and by Sophocles), whereas the literal fulfilment of these requirements by the French classicists results in an abstract caricature. And Herder and the young Goethe see, especially in Homer, the ideal of a genuine, realistic, and at the same time, monumental and popular national poetry in opposition to the partially abstract, partially trivial literature of an artistically degenerated and decayed present.

The growing veneration for the realism of antiquity by no means remains limited to the sphere of aesthetic forms, but constantly expands into a contrast between the splendidly naïve moral ingenuousness of the Greeks and the empty, exaggerated, and false conventions of bourgeois society. Ferguson gives an extremely interesting and instructive comparison of this kind which we must quote in full here on account of its highly probable influence on Schiller.[1] "Our

[1] Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), Scottish philosopher and historian, who taught moral philosophy at Edinburgh, had an absorbing interest in the genesis and development of human arts and institutions in early history. The following passage is quoted directly from his *Essay on the History of the Civil Society* (Edinburgh, 1767), pp. 307 f.—*Tr.*

system of war differs not more from that of the Greeks, than the favourite characters of our early romance differed from those of the *Iliad*, and of every ancient poem. The hero of the Greek fable, endued with superior force, courage, and address, takes every advantage of an enemy, to kill with safety to himself. . . . Homer, who, of all poets, knew best how to exhibit the emotions of a vehement affection, seldom attempts to excite commiseration. Hector falls unpitied, and his body is insulted by every Greek."

There follows a detailed analysis by Ferguson of the modern contradictions of a "refined courtesy" and a "scrupulous honour". As a summary statement concerning the modern hero, Ferguson says: "If victorious, he is made to rise above nature as much in his generosity and gentleness, as in his military prowess and valour." With the Greek hero it is quite otherwise. "The hero of Greek poetry proceeds on the maxims of animosity and hostile passion. His maxims in war are like those which prevail in the woods of America. They require him to be brave, but they allow him to practise against his enemy every sort of deception. The hero of modern romance professes a contempt of stratagem, as well as of danger, and unites in the same person, characters and dispositions seemingly opposite; ferocity with gentleness, and the love of blood with sentiments of tenderness and pity."

Now it is very interesting to note that, at a decisive point in his contrast between ancient and modern poetry, Schiller speaks of this very problem. His handling of the question is much less concrete socially than Ferguson's, but in return, as we shall see later, he infers more clearly from this contrast the consequences as regards style. In his essay, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, he compares two scenes from Ariosto and Homer. In Homer, the two friendly hosts Glaukos and Diomedes encounter each other on the battlefield; in Ariosto chivalrous magnanimity triumphs over hostility. "These two examples, however, different in other respects, have almost the same effect on our hearts, because both portray the noble victory of moral feeling over passion and touch us by the naïveté of sentiments. But how differently the two poets comport themselves in their description of these analogous deeds! Ariosto, the citizen of an advanced world, where simplicity of morals no longer existed, cannot conceal his own astonishment and emotion in relating this event. The feeling of the disparity between these morals and those which characterize his own age overwhelms him. He suddenly abandons the painting of his object and comes out in his own person." Homer, on the other hand, relates the event quite simply and straightforwardly, and there is no question with him of a personal appearance or an emotional judgment; "as if he were

reporting an everyday occurance—indeed, as if he himself had no heart beating in his breast," he continues with dry veracity:

> But Zeus the son of Kronos stole away the wits of Glaukos who exchanged with Diomedes the son of Tydeus armour of gold for bronze, for nine oxen's worth the worth of a hundred.[1]

In this glorification of the moral ingenuousness of ancient realism, all these theorists do a certain injustice to their contemporaries, the great bourgeois realists. Throughout the period of the ascendance of the bourgeoisie, there were always important realists who showed a magnificent impariality with respect to the social phenomena of their age and expressed it in their works.

But this injustice is also not without a certain element of truth which is justified in a world-historical sense. For in the impartiality of modern realists as regards their portrayal of contemporary reality, there is necessarily a certain degree of cynicism (in the sense of Ricardo), a hidden scorn, a contempt for the degradation of man in bourgeois society; a feeling whose absence in Homer was as socially necessary as was its presence in Balzac.

Here, in a contrast with early Greek realism, the insoluble contradiction of bourgeois realism becomes apparent. The heralds of the ideal of antiquity demand a realism capable of giving, with a true and deep grasp of the essential, a bright and affirmative picture of the portrayed reality. But the deep artistic contradiction of bourgeois realism lies just in the fact that such an affirmation of bourgeois society is not possible in principle for its truly great and genuine ideological representatives. The affirmation of bourgeois society, even during its ascendant period, remains always an affirmation "in spite of everything". This internal contradiction of bourgeois realism, which manifests itself most revealingly precisely in its greatest representatives, at the same time forms for the realist literature of the bourgeoisie the problem of the positive hero; a problem which even the greatest representatives of this literature have been unable to resolve.

Bourgeois literature can create a positive hero only by idealizing him. It lies in the essence of bourgeois society, the insurmountable duality and contradictory unity of citizen and bourgeois, that—provided no apologetic embellishment appears—the bourgeois can become the hero of a great realistic literary work only if he is depicted more or less ironically, humorously, and satirically. For the great realists of the bourgeois class it is likewise an insoluble task to put the citizen side of the hero realistically at the centre of a work in a purely positive manner, without irony, satire, or humour.

[1] Bk. VI, lines 234-36, Lattimore trans.—*Tr.*

In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes furnished a model, never attained again, of such a satirical creation of the "ideally positive" hero. Only certain concrete situations in the class struggle against the feudal remnants make it possible under certain circumstances to create realistically, in a purely positive manner, a positive bourgeois type, e.g. when it is not his greatness but his resistance to the persecutions and temptations of the nobility which is the centre of action. But even in these cases a certain idealistic exaggeration is almost inevitable (Richardson).

From this general situation of the bourgeois class emerged the inevitable necessity for a stylizing, idealist, and pathetic literature. Beginning with the epic poems and dramas of Milton and Addison's *Cato* down to Alfieri's republican classicism and the revolutionary idealistic pathos of Shelley, an idealist style of this kind—continually undergoing changes, of course—persisted necessarily beside the great stream of realist social literature. The poetry of Schiller also belongs in this class.

The idealist stylization of the positive hero as representative of the citizen side of the bourgeois must, even more than realist literature, see its unattainable model in Hellenism, in Greek tragedy. But behind this exemplary model, hidden under a fairly transparent veil, is a social problem: that of the public character of ancient life, and as its aesthetic consequence, the large-scale yet realistic, political, and at the same time human atmosphere which pervades Greek tragedy. Whatever the subject for the Greek tragedian, it could always be treated openly as a matter of public interest.

The cleavage of bourgeois man into citizen and bourgeois removes the problems connected with the real material life of man to the merely private sphere and offers only the rarified ethereal abstraction of the citizen as a theme for public pathos. Bourgeois literature never found an artistically adequate means to unite the public and private spheres of life in its creations. Either it resolutely rejected the expression of the particular and the private as Alfieri did the most consistently, or, as in the Germany of Lessing and "Storm and Stress", it attempted to develop organically, on the basis of a realistic representation of social conditions, whatever was public in them. In the former case, large-scale but lifeless and abstract outlines of potential tragedies were created. In the latter case, the specific features of the characters, the private destinies, always retain a necessarily unresolved, accidental character. The fact that Lessing lost his way in a labyrinth of unresolved psychological contingencies at the end of *Emilia Galotti* is no more a coincidence than the fact that the dramas of young Schiller form a maze of improbable intrigues which prove successful or unsuccessful purely by chance. And indeed, so much the more, the

more public is the object in view and the more seriously the synthesis of the public and the private is attempted *(Fiesco, Don Carlos)*.

III

In the course of his development, Schiller becomes increasingly aware of this problem. In his introduction to *The Bride of Messina*, he centres on this problem. In accordance with the general tendency of his later period, he proceeds from the aesthetic problem of the dramatic style and makes the experiment in this tragedy to restore aesthetically, by the introduction of a chorus, the public aspect lacking in modern drama. He correctly states, however, that this aesthetic difference is based on the social differences of the two epochs. On ancient tragedy he writes: "The deeds and destinies of heroes and kings are in themselves already public and were even more so in the simplicity of ancient times. The chorus in ancient tragedy then was more a natural organ; the result no doubt of the poetic character of real life. In modern tragedy it becomes an artistic organ; it helps to produce poetry. The modern poet no longer finds the chorus in nature; he must create and introduce it poetically. . . ." It follows that in tragedy the chorus is no longer a means of realistic artistic creation, but rather an idealistic means of stylization since "it transforms the commonplace modern world into the ancient poetic world."

In what follows, Schiller gives a very accurate and essentially correct description of the reason why modern life, considered as material for the great public poetry of the drama, is so unfavourable for poetic creation. His remarks also show to what extent his dissociation from revolution made his material even more unfavourable for him than it already was in itself. "The palaces of the kings are closed now. The tribunals have withdrawn from the gates of the cities to the interior of the houses; writing has supplanted the living word; the people itself, the palpable living mass, when it does not operate as a brute force, has become the state, and thereby an abstract idea; the gods have returned within the bosom of man. The poet must reopen the palaces, bring the tribunals out in the open air, resurrect the gods; he must restore everything immediate which the artificial frame of real life has abolished. . . ."

The contradictory character of Schiller's attitude toward modern bourgeois society and accordingly toward modern poetry clearly comes to light here. It also becomes evident here, however, that Schiller's limitations are by no means exclusively personal, but result rather from the tragic contradictions of bourgeois humanism. Schiller clearly perceives that only in revolution does modern bourgeois life

acquire a public aspect—in the sense of his own claims based on antiquity. The people, he says, are becoming today an abstraction in the state; *the only exception is when the mass "operates as a brute force"*, i.e. *the revolution.*

This remarkably deep insight into the essence of modern bourgeois society, which Schiller formulates here as a great poet and qualified judge of its adequacy as material for great drama, shows clearly the tragic contradiction of bourgeois humanism. For what comes to light here is everything that the rejection of the plebeian forms and content of the continuation of the bourgeois revolution closed off, even poetically, to these great humanists: the expansion of the horizon of poetry—especially drama—in a manner equal to that of the Greeks. The tragic thing about their situation consists in the fact that this rejection was socially necessary; and that not exclusively for "psychological-sociological" reasons in the personality of Schiller, for example. There were always individuals who did not join in this rejection, who, as *individuals*, did not shrink back in the face of the ultimate consequences of the bourgeois revolution (in Germany, for example, Georg Forster and Hölderlin). Much more decisive, however, is that in this period the great current of the bourgeois class had to be this kind of rejection of the plebeian continuation of the bourgeois revolution: the current of Goethe, Hegel, and Balzac compared with whom Forster and Hölderlin, despite their fidelity to the consummation of the bourgeois revolution, are still only episodic figures. And this objective, socio-historical necessity is not modified at all by the fact that even the greatest ideological representatives of the bourgeois class, by their rejection of the plebeian, were destined to lose a great deal on the philosophical and artistic level; nor by the fact that these losses and renunciations occasionally dawned on them, as in the case of Schiller here. The necessity of their separation from these plebeian tendencies, the parting of the ways in Western Europe just in this epoch, manifests itself in a practical and political sense in the conversion of the plebeian Jacobin tendencies for the continuation of the bourgeois revolution into the first onset of proletarian and revolutionary tendencies in Babeuf.

Schiller decided against these plebeian tendencies. This is why he was necessarily unable to solve the historical and material problem of the unfavourable character of modern bourgeois life considered as the subject of a great and thereby necessarily public dramatic creation. He did not seek to cultivate the features of modern life which contain something public, but attempted rather to create by artistic means an artificial milieu in which the purely private realm is inflated idealistically into the public realm. Into this artificial milieu of an artificially stylized public realm, he had to insert dramatic

figures whose purely private relationships are equally submitted to a subjectivist exaggeration of this sort.

Accordingly, in Schiller the chorus is not a concrete representation of the public, but a universal concept. "The chorus itself is not something individual but a universal concept. . . . The chorus quits the narrow sphere of the action to enlarge upon the past and future, upon distant times and peoples, upon the human in general in order to draw the great conclusions from life and to articulate the teachings of wisdom." Schiller—and this shows again the important characteristic of clarity in his thinking—had no illusions about the possibility of achieving thus the real artistic union of the private and public, of the particular and the general. "For if two elements of poetry, the ideal and the sensible, do not act *together* in close union, then they must act side by side or poetry is finished. Thus, according to Schiller's own conclusions, the chorus can only bring about artistic results; as it "brings *life* into speech, so it brings *tranquillity* into the action." The great advance of late Schiller in the direction of making private life public, of surmounting the unfavourable character of modern bourgeois life considered as material for great drama, ends in an aestheticizing classicism.

In this context German classicism occupies a special position. It emulates antiquity in order, despite the contradiction of bourgeois life and the extremely unfavourable material that these offer to literary art, nevertheless to create an art worthy of the Greeks. But the irretrievably past character of Hellenism becomes increasingly clear to German classicism, and the appropriate conclusions as regards the nature of modern poetry are drawn. This clarity is closely related to the assessment of the French Revolution. Marx, as we have shown, trenchantly pointed out the tragic illusions of the radical Jacobins who sought to recreate the democracy of the *polis* on the foundation of modern bourgeois society. The ideological rejection of the revolution in German classicism, in a spirit of false consciousness it is true, follows a similar course. The development of young Hegel shows with the greatest clarity how closely related to each other in Germany at that time were the two complexes: on the one hand, approval of the French Revolution and the cultural programme of renovating antiquity, and on the other, the Thermidorean renunciation of revolutionary methods and the conception of antiquity as conclusively past. It is very significant that the intensive concern of young Hegel with English classical economy is at the centre of the critical period during which this change in the valuation of the Greeks occurs. Schiller lacked Hegel's understanding of economics; he always formulates his problems pertaining to philosophy of history in a purely ideological manner, although under this ideo-

logical veil is often concealed an appreciable amount of historical knowledge. With regard to Greek antiquity as irretrievably past, he writes in his *Aesthetic Letters*: "The phenomenon of Greek humanity was undoubtedly a maximum which could neither continue at this level nor rise higher. . . . The Greeks had attained this degree, and if they wanted to progress to a higher level of culture, they, as we, would have had to surrender the totality of their nature and pursue truth along different and separate ways."

IV

Of course, even in the Germany of that time, there was another revolutionary and Jacobin conception of antiquity. Its chief ideological representative was the future Jacobin revolutionary of Mainz, Georg Forster, whose teachings were revived in part by the young Friedrich Schlegel in his pre-Romantic period. Corresponding to the social and political differences between Germany and France, this theory was bound to have a pronounced pessimistic character in Germany with reference to the present. For in Germany a practical and revolutionary realization of the ideal of antiquity was out of the question. So a comparison of antiquity with the present was bound to result in a harsh and severe condemnation of all the literature and culture of Germany at that time.

This is the line taken in Georg Forster's literary, cultural, and political writings which were very influential in those days. They exercised a great influence on the young Hegel, a fact always passed over in silence by bourgeois history of philosophy. In an analysis of the greatest products of modern painting in his *Ansichten vom Niederrhein* [*Views from the Lower Rhine*], Forster contrasts ancient and modern art on the basis of a contrast between ancient and modern life:

> Greek figures and Greek gods no longer correspond to the form of the human species; they are as foreign to us as the Greek sounds and names in our poetry. What is said about the divine perfection of the two master-works of Phidias, his Minerva and Jupiter, may be quite true; but the more majestic they may sit or stand there, their imposing heads, in our eyes, touching the sky, the more terrible they are for our imagination; the more perfect they may be as ideals of the sublime, the stranger they seem to our weakness. Men able to exist for themselves alone had a bold enough consciousness to look these colossal divinities in the eye, to feel related to them, and because of this relationship,

to expect aid from them in case of need. Our indigence changes things. We are constantly in want and yet never act on the basis of our own forces. To find a confidant to whom we can bemoan our misery, to whom we can pour out our hearts with all their contradictions, errors, and secret desires, from whom we can entice aid and compassion by our continual prayers and outpourings of tears, since we ourselves are forbearing and compassionate—this is the principal need of our lives and that is why we create gods in our image. . . . The weak cannot embrace the perfect; he seeks a being of his own kind by whom he can be understood and loved and with whom he can communicate. It is to this species of man that our artists belong, and it is for it that they work.

It is obvious that this view implies a rejection of the whole of contemporary German literature as being servile and weak. The ideal of antiquity of the Paris Jacobins is here a head of Medusa before which everything turns to death. When young Friedrich Schlegel, influenced to some extent by Schiller's aesthetic writings, but more strongly influenced in his political and aesthetic views by the current represented by Forster, began to revive and propagate these teachings in a vaguer, more dilutedly ideological and aesthetic form in his writings on Greek poetry, Schiller turned against him in the most vehement way. He closed to Schlegel the journals which he directed, and ridiculed him in verse and prose.

Scarce has the cold fever of Gallomania taken leave from us
Then another, a hot one, breaks out in Graecomania.
Greece, what was it? Reason, measure, clarity. Thus I should think
You would have a little patience, gentlemen, before you speak to us of Greece!
A worthy cause you defend; only do it with intelligence
I beg, so that it does not become an object of scorn and laughter.

[Kaum hat das kalte Fieber der Gallomanie uns verlassen,
Bricht in der Gräkomanie gar noch ein hitziges aus.
Griechheit, was war sie? Verstand und Mass und Klarheit, Drum dächt' ich,
Etwas Geduld noch, ihr Herren, eh' ihr von Griechheit uns sprecht!
Eine würdige Sache verfechtet ihr; nur mit Verstande
Bitt ich, dass sie zum Spott und zum Gelächter nicht wird].

At the height of his own efforts on behalf of antiquity, Schiller thus bluntly rejects the Jacobin renovation of Hellenism, regarding it as "Graecomania".

The struggle against "Graecomania" is an old heritage of classical German philosophy which grew out of the Enlightenment. Surpassing not only his German contemporaries, but also contemporary English and French critics, Lessing defined with the greatest clarity of principle the new ideal of the renewal of antiquity at the peak of the pre-revolutionary Enlightenment with respect to that of the preceding period, and he condemned French Classicism and its dramatic successors, Voltaire among them, as being by nature deeply unclassical and un-Greek. Lessing's criticism of French classicism, his refusal to see it as an intermediary link between antiquity and the present; that is, his rejection of absolute monarchy with its compromise of classes between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy as being a necessary connecting link between feudalism and the bourgeoisie, remains from now on decisive for the theory of modern literature. This applies especially to Germany where a national literature could develop only as a bourgeois revolutionary literature of combat against the culture of the petty courts which copied Versailles and impeded national unification.

This rejection, however, takes place under the specific conditions of the development of the classes and the class struggle in Germany. And despite this forceful and well-founded theoretical rejection, these conditions make impossible a complete break with the style of the *tragédie classique*. Indeed, it seems as if the break with these traditions were more complete in "Storm and Stress" than in Lessing himself. But Goethe especially, in his first Weimar period, turns back again to a profoundly transformed and interiorized continuation of *tragédie classique* with his *Iphigenie*, *Tasso*, *Elpenor* fragment, etc.

In view of this development, the tendency of psychological interiorization in the drama of Racine is of particular importance, and —in spite of the necessary brevity of this essay—it must be emphasized that the drama of Goethe in this period greatly surpasses Racine in interiorization. But despite the transformation of the still occasionally external and conventional problems of morals into apparently purely psychological problems, the bourgeois and courtly character of these problems, and mediated by them, that of the construction and style of Goethe, is very apparent (especially in *Tasso* where the problem of poet and court patronage forms the tragic conflict). And these problems—and the style determined by them—play a rather important role as a subsidiary stylistic current in the subsequent development of German drama. (One need only think of Grillparzer and Hebbels' *The Ring of Gyges*.)

But this does not yet exhaust the continuation of the "French style" in German drama. The very reference to a stylistic line of development—Racine-*Iphigenie*-*Gyges*—shows that the problem of

style posed by *tragédie classique* cannot be closed by pasting on the tag "courtly". The courtly art of the age of Louis XIV was the result of the great class struggles in France between the nobility and the bourgeoisie; it was the artistic expression, not only of the various tendencies of this struggle, but also of its different stages. (One need only compare Corneille and Racine). Corresponding to the nature and to the objective tendencies of the classes in the unfolding of these struggles is the fact that the bourgeois component makes itself felt more and more in each of the results. Voltaire's attempt to make *tragédie classique* the organ of the Enlightenment is by no means only a stylistic compromise, however problematical may have been the result of this attempt. And it is a well-known historical fact that the drama of the French Revolution—that of its immediate preparation and that of its international after-effects—merges again with *tragédie classique* after undergoing, it is true, a thoroughgoing transformation in form. It suffices to refer to M.-J. Chénier and Alfieri.

Nor did Schiller himself remain unaffected by this movement. His *Don Carlos*, which expresses a critical confrontation with the Stoic Jacobin idealism of his youth, is closely related stylistically to this stage in the development of *tragédie classique*. Wieland, who had a very fine sensitivity, even if he was biased in favour of French taste, drew Schiller's attention in a conversation to this relationship. Schiller protested vigorously and stressed the differences. Both were partially right since, on the one hand, *Don Carlos* was influenced only by one particular tendency in this development of *tragédie classique*, and on the other, its style was determined precisely by the German manner of coming to terms with the problem of Stoic bourgeois-revolutionary idealism. In his assertion of this relationship, however, despite the necessity of stressing also the great differences, Wieland was right to a certain extent.

The renewal of antiquity proceeds along different lines during the collaboration of Goethe and Schiller. It is no more a continuation of the line of *Iphigenie-Tasso* in Goethe than it is the continuation of the line of *Don Carlos* in Schiller. For Germany (with respect to the French Revolution) it signifies a post-revolutionary phase. Thus this renewal of antiquity becomes an attempt to monumentalize bourgeois life in poetry. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Reynard the Fox*, and Schiller's dramas, his great poems like *The Walk*, *Song of the Bell*, etc. pursue this goal without exception. In most cases the approximation to Greek poetry is quite minimal. The efforts of both—despite all the differences in interpretation and style—tend precisely to work out in a clear and concrete manner the specific features of modern bourgeois life. The

preservation and the increasingly sharp accentuation of the ideal of antiquity express, on the one hand, the high degree of self-assurance and the great demands which the ascending bourgeois class placed upon itself. In this preoccupation with antiquity there is the self-assurance of being able to emulate antiquity in the modern sphere and being able to oppose to ancient art a modern art equal to it in value.

On the other hand, their preoccupation with antiquity signifies a return in their analysis to the conditions of artistic creation, to the objective and subjective presuppositions of the various genres of art, and to an examination of their essential laws. Here the reaction against the mechanistic theory of imitation reaches its most advanced stage. Schiller and Goethe attempt to retrace the various genres of literature to their ultimate principles and to extract from these principles the most general aesthetic laws which result from the nature of the artistic genre in question. Hellenism forms the necessary model for these inquiries since it possesses in its products this unity of the palpable and realistic expression of the particular and the clear grasp of the universal and essential. Even if Schiller and Goethe devoted themselves to the theoretical analysis of the artistic laws of this unity, in doing so they were always striving to arrive at the artistic conditions for the monumental poetic representation of modern bourgeois life toward which they aspired. In its dominant tendency then their clear grasp of specifically artistic principles is not an aestheticism remote from life, nor a trifling with forms, but on the contrary, is an attempt to save the development of bourgeois literature from an impending inartistic deterioration into petty detail which is merely accurately observed.

Elsewhere we have devoted a special detailed analysis to the concrete aesthetic problems of the collaboration between Goethe and Schiller. Here we must content ourselves with calling attention briefly to some of its essential features. The negative aspects of this collaboration, especially those on the part of Schiller, are generally well-known. In their epistolary criticism of Lassalle's *Sickingen*, Marx and Engels give a sharp and penetrating characterization of the incurably idealistic weaknesses of Schiller's dramatic works. And these weaknesses do not stem from any failing of Schiller's creative poetic power—his philosophical poems show to what extent even the most abstract ideas become for him personal and palpable, expressive and alive—but from a fundamental tendency in his mode of creation. In his review of the poems of Matthison, Schiller manifests this tendency in the most pointed and extreme form: the poet "must therefore produce the conditions under which a definite emotion in the soul must necessarily result. Now in the constitution

of a subject nothing is necessary except the character of the species; hence the poet can determine our feelings only insofar as he evokes them from the species in us, not from our specifically different selves. But in order to be certain that he really addresses the pure species in the individual, he must first of all have effaced the individual in himself." In this blunt and exclusive opposition of the individual and the species, we find again, subjective idealism with its rigid and abstract character as the basis of Schiller's poetic weaknesses.

But our recognition of these weaknesses does not diminish Schiller either as a poet or a thinker. However often his struggle against trivial, photographic, superficial naturalism may degenerate into idealistic exaggeration, in its ground line it is nonetheless a just and aesthetically progressive struggle. How well Schiller recognized in this struggle an essential tendency of the subsequent decline of bourgeois literature is shown most clearly perhaps in the letter in which Engels criticizes Lassalle's Sickingen drama. As is well-known, this drama was written entirely under the influence of Schiller, and Marx and Engels very sharply criticize the Schillerian idealism of its style. But, at the same time, Engels credits Lassalle with having emphasized in a clear manner the essential tendencies of the period he depicts (with a decisive error of content, it is true—his underestimation of the peasant movement). "The principal characters *are* representatives of certain classes and currents, and consequently of certain ideas of their age; they do not find their motives in petty individual desires, but precisely in the historical current by which they are borne along. . . . You are perfectly right to oppose the currently dominant *bad* tendency to individualize which amounts to nothing but a series of petty insults to the intelligence and is an essential sign of a literature of epigones on the way to extinction."

V

The definite specific formulations which Schiller finds to characterize modern literature bear the double stamp of the greatness and limitations of German idealism as coloured by Schiller. In his great treatise, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller distinguishes two types of poets: those who are in union and accord with nature, and those who only seek this unity. The philosophical and historical foundation of this typology of poets is the distinction, which we have analysed in detail, between antiquity and the modern age. Accordingly, Schiller, as after him, Hegel, in his aesthetics, views Shakespeare in terms of Vico's theory of recourse [*ricorso*] as a poet related stylistically to antiquity, as a poet of the heroic age.

Schiller's conception of the fundamental difference between the two periods is that the culture of the capitalist division of labour engenders the dissociation of reason and sensibility and thus estranges man from nature. So long as this estrangement does not manifest itself historically, as in the case of the Greeks, the poet can remain naïve. But when it is present, when the poet seeks to surmount it through art, when his creativity does not derive from a unity with nature, but from a yearning—unrealizable for him—after this unity, then he is modern, sentimental. "Now if we apply to these two states the concept of poetry, which is nothing other than *giving to mankind its most complete expression possible*, it follows that in the state of natural simplicity, in which man still acts with all his forces as a harmonious unity, in which then the totality of his nature expresses itself entirely within reality, it is the most complete *imitation of the real which must make the poet*—whereas in the state of culture, in which this harmonious co-operation of his whole nature is only an idea, it is the elevation of reality to the ideal, or what amounts to the same thing, the *representation of the ideal which must make the poet.*"

It seems then that Schiller simply would define *idealism as the specific mode of creation of modern literature.* This formulation indicates—not only in its sharply paradoxical character, but also in its content and methodology—the idealistic distortedness and limitations of Schiller. But these questions, and especially the problems relating to realism in Schiller, are by no means so simple and rigidly rectilinear as one might suppose at first glance and as his subsequent commentators have conceived them.

It is true that Schiller attributed the poetic portrayal of reality only to the naïve poet, hence only to antiquity. His definition of the "representation of the ideal" as a mode of creation proper to the modern age, however, is not merely a declaration of the sovereignty of idealism, but at the same time provides a point of departure for a deeper understanding of a series of specific difficulties pertaining to modern realism. Above all, Schiller shows the great difficulty of expressing palpably in a poetic manner what is essential and real in modern life. He perceives this problem with greater clarity than any of the theorists before him and analyses it with great penetration and depth. Only with him the whole problem appears turned upside down in an idealistic manner. Instead of analysing the difficult, often superhuman task of the modern poet, who must immerse himself deeply enough in the paltry prose of bourgeois life to bring to the surface in a poetically concrete manner the essential determinants of bourgeois life, Schiller gives the problem an idealistic twist. He does not uncover the concrete dialectical relationship

between the particulars drawn directly from life and the essential determinants concealed within and basic to them. Rather he regards the realism of the particular as a mere means, a mere mediation making it possible to return from the essential features, conceived as *not conforming to experience* and thus rigidly opposed to life, to the poetized surface of life. Since he sees in art an *indirect* representation of the ideal, he naturally wants to build a bridge between appearance and essence, but because of the false point of departure of his theory he cannot do it. Nevertheless, the view that a realistic rendering of the surface is only a means to express the essential features, the view that without these essential features, which are certainly real, but not directly given, every literary work loses itself in pettiness and inevitably forfeits its poetic character, signifies—turned right side up, of course, in a materialistic manner—a permanent achievement for the theory of realism.

Schiller goes much further, however, in concretizing the modern, sentimental type of poet and gives a systematic enumeration of the possible attitudes of the modern poet toward reality. But even in this continuation and concretization, the dual character of Schiller's method manifests itself. He incessantly subjectifies his statements and thus continually transforms objective matters of fact into subjective modes of feeling and thinking. Just as he subjectified the contrast between the naïve and the sentimental, the contrast between two cultures, into a contrast of two modes of feeling, he proceeded in the same way in his other concretizations. Schiller distinguishes three genres of sentimental poetry: satire, elegy, and the idyll. And here too he subjectifies the problem in such a way that it is not so much a question of genres as of satirical, elegiac, and idyllic *modes of feeling*. In all three cases it is a question for Schiller of the disaccord between ideal and reality, between essence and appearance in modern bourgeois society; of the way in which the writer poetically surmounts this discord by satirical revolt, elegiac melancholy, or idyllic resignation; of the way in which he renders the prose of modern bourgeois life essential on a poetic level by the application of the creative activity of his ego, by his active intervention, by the expression of his own attitude toward the events described, etc.

Again, it is extremely easy and convenient to uncover and criticize the subjective idealistic limitations in Schiller's formulation of the problem. But a critique which limited itself to this alone would be very shallow and superficial. For behind every such subjectification of the great objective problems relating to the delineation of periods and genres, there is in Schiller also a justified and profound, genuinely dialectical enlargement of these problems. However ideal-

istic may be the philosophical foundation of these modes of feeling on which satire, elegy, and idyll rest, the assertion of the contrast itself is nonetheless an accurate reflection of the economic and ideological situation of capitalism.

VI

In idealist philosophy the concept of the ideal as a contrast to empirical social reality has real social roots. The situation which is basic to all human activity and which even constitutes the specific character of human labour, namely that the aim exists in the mind before its material realization, assumes a special form in capitalist society. Its decisive aspect is the contradiction between social production and private acquisition. Out of this contradiction arises the contradiction between socially necessary individual aims and the laws operative without the knowledge of the individual. (Let us think of how the striving for individual super-profit, precisely in the process of being realized, causes a reduction of the profit rate). Closely dependent on this central contradiction of capitalist society are also the contradictions between the capitalist division of labour and the humanist ideals of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. The dialectic of the heroic self-deception necessary to the emergence of capitalist society gives a new accent to this relationship between the aim and its realization, between human claims on social reality and this reality itself. Without a doubt the general characterization of every pre-socialist society is that men themselves do indeed make their own history, but "until now (i.e. in class society—G.L.) without a collective will and without a common plan." But in capitalist society this opposition appears in an especially extreme form whereby the idealogical expression is precisely the ideal.

At the time of the struggle for power aimed at making capitalist production the dominant economic form of society, the ideal appears as an opposition of humanist claims to the social reality of feudalism and feudal absolutism. In the age of the dominance of capitalism, the ideal appears as a reflection of the internal contradictions of the capitalist system itself, the most important of which we enumerated above. The ever greater, ever more insurmountable distance which, with the evolution of capitalism and the development of its contradictions, separates the ideals of bourgeois humanism from the reality of bourgeois society, reacts necessarily on this society and on the way in which it is represented. In the main line of the development of the bourgeoisie these ideals are bound to become increasingly empty, increasingly conventional, and to involve more and more a hypocritical double book-keeping.

The dualism of ideal and reality cannot be surmounted in terms of bourgeois ideology. The apparent triumph over it in the realists of the late phase of bourgeois development could only produce the image of a desolate desert, a reality stripped of all invigorating and elevating elements—a reality behind which a more exact analysis will always discover the carefully concealed criterion of the ideal which is denied in public, but which is still unconsciously employed in secret. Let us think, for example, of Flaubert or Maupassant. Many important realists are aware of being obliged to approach life in their poetic creation with the criterion of the ideal. Balzac, for example, writes in the preface to his *Comédie humaine*: "History is or should be like reality, whereas the novel . . . should be the 'better world'. But a novel would be nothing if in this sublime lie it did not give the truth in detail."

In his treatment of the differences between the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, Marx always stressed this particular difference. The working class, Marx says, "has no ideals to realize; it has only to liberate the elements of the new society which have already developed in the midst of the collapsing bourgeois society." That is to say that the resolute and purposeful actions of the revolutionary proletariat rest on the correct recognition of the real laws of evolution and the tendencies of objective reality. The criterion which applies, and which must always apply to these actions and to the situations resulting from them in order to continue and to accelerate evolution consciously, is inferred from an understanding of objective reality. This understanding is the result of practice itself, is corrected by it, and in this way becomes increasingly deeper and increasingly approximates reality. The dilemma of inflated idealism and cringing empiricism, in the last analysis insurmountable for the bourgeois consciousness, is surmounted in practice by the revolutionary action of the proletariat which eliminates the objective social bases of this dilemma.

But this negation of the bourgeois ideal by an elimination of its social bases, the unmasking of the false alternatives arising from them as pseudo-problems, does not mean that the whole question of this ideal was merely a pseudo-problem limited exclusively to the bourgeois class. In bourgeois society the dialectic of appearance and essence assumes quite special forms. The objective reality of this dialectical relationship, however, does not cease to exist in nature and society with the cessation of its particular manifestations in capitalist society. Behind the concept of the ideal in bourgeois aesthetics there is also the problem of the artistic demands for an outward form which expresses the essence in an immediate and palpable manner. This problem remains to be solved even after the dis-

appearance of the capitalist economy and its ideological reflection in the minds of men, and it cannot be transformed into something immediately given and self-evident. On the contrary, only after the disappearance of capitalist limitations on social existence (and with them, after them, of the confusing pseudo-problems in the realm of ideology) can this problem be posed in its real purity and clarity. Only then will the really materialist solution of the dialectic of appearance and essence in the sphere of aesthetics be able to show what important preparatory work was done on this problem—despite all the idealist distortions and socially inevitable pseudo-problems—by German classical aesthetics.

The historical position of Schiller in the evolution of the contrast between the ideal and reality is determined by the level of development of his age: by the sunset of the period of heroic illusions of the *avant-garde* of his class. A sunset, however, which did not yet allow the definitive close of this period to become visible. (Schiller died before the Napoleonic era). His position is determined by the beginning of the extension of the true capitalist division of labour (the industrial revolution in England) which first really brings to full fruition the contradictions of capitalism. Hence, the contrast between ideal and reality in him is already the contrast between the ideals of bourgeois revolutionary humanism and bourgeois society itself; only in the second place does the existence of feudal remnants determine the basic formulation of the problem. On the other hand, this contrast does not yet have in Schiller that accent of despair with the ideal, that Romantic pessimism which soon afterward it acquires —most markedly in the aesthetics of Solger.

VII

Schiller is the precursor of Hegel in aesthetics in that the sense of important social determinants of bourgeois life is basic to his aesthetic categories; in that he accepts without reservation the existence of these social determinants and their aesthetic reflection, and by studying them works out the specific characteristics of modern literature. Finally, Schiller is Hegel's precursor in that he does not content himself with a mere assessment of the structure and peculiar character of bourgeois art, but strives for a universal artistic criterion with the aid of which he is able not only to understand its bourgeois phase of development, but at the same time is able to judge its value.

Further on we will speak about the differences which separate Schiller from Hegel in this regard. For the moment it is important to refer to their methodological affinity. In his methodological subjecti-

fication of the problems pertaining to periods and genres (modes of feeling), there are in Schiller not only unsubdued vestiges of Kant's subjective idealism, but this subjectification is at the same time an important precursor of the methodology of the *Phenomenology of Mind*. It shows directly the same confusing duality that is to be found in Hegel himself: the direct conversion, seemingly unmediated and unfounded, of historical categories into general philosophical categories.

But here too this confusing duality originates in real profundity. Marx rightly says about these "forms of consciousness" in Hegel: "But insofar as it (the *Phenomenology*—G.L.) retains the *alienation* of man . . . *all* the elements of the critique are concealed in it, often *prepared* and *worked out* in a manner which far surpasses the Hegelian standpoint." And with regard to certain particular "forms of consciousness," he adds: "These particular sections contain the *critical* elements—though still in an alienated form—of whole spheres, such as religion, the state, civic life, etc."

Schiller's treatment of the problems of modern art also has real depth of this kind. He transforms the sentimental poetic genres, satire, elegy, and idyll into "forms of consciousness". He speaks, for example, not about satire, but about the characteristics of the mode of feeling of the satirist, the mode of feeling which gives rise to a satirical perspective in all the genres. In this way writers of satire, elegy, and idyll become in Schiller these "forms of consciousness" in which, according to him, the necessary and typical kinds of approach of the modern poet to modern life must be embodied. All three are variations of the contrast between the humanist ideal and the capitalist reality, a contrast the nature of which we have analysed above. "The poet is satirical," Schiller says, "when he takes as subject . . . the distance of things from nature and the contradiction between reality and the ideal. . . . If the poet opposes the ideal to the real in such a way that the representation of the first predominates and the pleasure that it engenders becomes the dominant feeling, I call him an *elegiac* poet. . . . Either nature and the ideal are objects of sadness . . . or both are objects of joy by being represented as reality. The first is *elegy* in the narrower sense; the other is *idyll* in the broadest sense of the word." (The fact that nature and the ideal —in the sense of Rousseau and Kant—are almost synonymous for Schiller here requires no commentary).

This statement ingeniously uncovers and brings to light the deepest emotional foundations of modern poetry. Since the contrast between ideal and reality—to vary a sentence of Marx on Ricardo—did not pass from philosophy to reality but, on the contrary, passed from social reality to philosophy, this contrast, consciously or not, is basic

to every kind of bourgeois creativity. And, of course, as Schiller correctly recognized, this contrast is independent of the genre in which the poet artistically expresses the reflection of reality which motivates his creative work. It is true that in certain poets these modes of feeling intermingle much more freely than in the analysis of Schiller: the rustic idylls in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, for example, are enveloped by an elegiac aura of the social necessity of their demise and would be impossible without the satirical portrayal which Tolstoy gives of the aristocracy in Moscow and Petersburg adapting itself to the growth of capitalism. Elegy, idyll, and satire are just as inseparably intermingled in the representations in which Balzac portrays the decline of the last vestiges of the nobility of the *ancien régime*. And we find similar mixtures of these three forms of feeling—and precisely these three—in Dickens, Goncharov, and other great realists of the nineteenth century. The fact that one predominates in one writer, the others in other writers (elegy and the idyll in Turgenev, satire in Flaubert, etc.), or that not all of the three modes of feeling can be found in many of them proves nothing against Schiller's ingenious insights in his characterization of the main features of modern literature. For in this literature, taken as a whole, the three tendencies identified by Schiller actually do dominate. It can even be said that almost everywhere where none of these tendencies is to be found, bourgeois realism of the nineteenth century has sunk to the level of a soulless naturalism, a mechanical copy of the surface of reality. In conclusion let us note briefly that in his characterization of Balzac, Engels also emphasizes especially the elegiac and satirical quality of his writings: "His great work is a unique elegy on the irrevocable decline of respectable society. . . . But despite this his satire was never more daring . . . than when he dealt with the men and women with whom he deeply sympathized—the aristocracy."

VIII

Not only the problems related to the genres, but also those pertaining to historical periods were subjectified by Schiller as "forms of consciousness". Thus we must extend our analysis to the basic categories of his treatment of historical periods: to the naïve and the sentimental. Here the methodological connection between Schiller and the ingenious and confusing duality of the *Phenomenology of Mind* is even more evident than in the problem we have considered up to now. The naïve and the sentimental in Schiller are first of all historical categories of periodization of distinction in principle between the essential aspects of ancient and modern poetry. In view

of this application, there is no real contradiction in the fact that Schiller treats Shakespeare as a naïve poet.

The difficulty first arises in the analysis of modern writers in the stricter sense of the word, in the analysis of the realists of the eighteenth century and of his own time. Here revenge is taken on Schiller by the inflexibility of his idealist opposition of two periods, by the rigidity of his transformation of two periods into two principles of creativity: "Imitation of reality" and "representation of the ideal". If Schiller had wished to carry through his own conception consistently, he would have had to exclude all naïveté, all imitation of reality, hence all realism in the proper sense with respect to the literature of his own time. However, his insight into the character of art in general and into modern art in particular was much too comprehensive and profound to permit him to draw such rigid and distorted conclusions. On the contrary, his conception of modern poetry is permeated with a deep understanding of the specific features of its peculiar realism.

In his treatment of naïve poetry these correct observations and cognitions break through even more forcefully and threaten to burst completely the narrow idealist framework of his schema, precisely by virtue of the enrichment and deepening of his analysis. Schiller sees clearly that his stylistic criterion of naïve poetry, the imitation of reality, exists visibly in a number of modern writers and stands in sharp opposition to his own conception of the modern literary treatment of reality. Since he is a scrupulously honest thinker, it is impossible for him not to recognize this fact, even if it conflicts with his schema. He even goes much further in providing a consistent analysis of this fact which is so inconvenient for his schema. He recognizes that the imitation of reality—the principle of naïve poetry—is indispensable for *all* true poetry and quite simply represents *the* artistic principle. Accordingly, he says: "Every true genius must be naïve or he is no genius. His naïveté makes him a genius. . . . Only to the genius is it given to be at home outside the known and to *enlarge* nature without *going beyond* it." Now if we consider that Schiller designates realism, the artistic portrayal of reality, as the specific mode of creation of the naïve poet, then it is evident that he uncovers here—in an unconsciously self-critical manner which is in open contradiction to the basic line of his theory—the realistic current which is contradictorily manifest in his "indirect representation of the ideal". He quite simply identifies realism in the great historical sense, the realism of Homer and the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, Fielding, and Goethe with the artistic principle as such.

But Schiller's conception of the distinction and opposition be-

tween the naïve and the sentimental is objectively much more than a mere schema: it is a determination of the specific character of modern poetry, one which is no doubt idealistic and consequently contradictory and distorted, but nonetheless profound. As such, it is also a profound intellectual reflection of the reality of his time with its contradictions. This objective profundity leads Schiller in his later development to an insight into the problematical character of the naïve literature of spontaneous realism in the capitalist epoch. In the course of his comparison between Homer and Ariosto, he speaks of the destiny of the naïve poet in his own time: "Poets of this naïve type are scarcely any longer in their places in this artificial age. Accordingly, they are scarcely possible in it anymore, or at least they are only possible on condition that they *run wild* in their age and are protected by some good fortune from its mutilating effect. Out of society itself they can never come, but outside of it they still appear occasionally, though more as strangers who excite wonder or ill-bred children of nature who give offence."

It seems as if Schiller thus were denying again his claim, mentioned earlier, that naïve poetry is true poetry. For here he bluntly asserts that in modern bourgeois society the naïve poet is socially impossible as a central figure of literature, which is precisely what he was supposed to be according to Schiller's theory. If he exists, he is an "accidental" phenomenon, a bizarre outsider, a literary curiosity.

No doubt there is a contradiction here. But this contradiction also reflects the reality itself, the economic structure of capitalist society. Both the internal contradictions of the sentimental "representation of the ideal" as a theory of modern realism, and the contradictions between the eternal necessity and the present possibilities of the naïve "imitation of reality" are based on the feeling for the objective contradiction between great art and capitalist society; the sense of its hostility to art, clearly expressed and solidly substantiated by Marx. Thinking through both series of contradictions inevitably must lead us to the realization that they are only different expressions of one and the same fundamental contradiction of modern bourgeois art. In showing, from different sides, the same contradictions in the naïve and sentimental literary types which he opposes to one another, Schiller arrives at a feeling for the problematical character of literature in capitalist society and stands at the threshold of the solution of the stylistic problems of modern realism.

But he was destined to remain standing at the threshold, for his idealist philosophical method did not permit him to press forward to the contradictory yet real unity of these contradictions. A historical and systematic dialectic of the development of art is possible only

on a materialist basis. Only on this basis is it possible to avoid both the exaggeration of the historical elements of art into timeless entities and the reduction of the universal, objective laws of the artistic reflection of reality into historical relativism. Only on this basis is it possible to grasp the unity and diversity, the abiding and the transitory elements of the phenomena in their concrete and vital mutual effect, without jumbling them, without dissolving one into the other, and without separating them by a Chinese wall.

Schiller was compelled by his method to adopt the latter approach, although, as we have seen, the ingenious generalization of his poetic experience often led him beyond the narrow limits of his own method. Nevertheless, in clinging to the difference between the naïve and the sentimental in modern literature, he was incapable of grasping intellectually their dialectical unity. He was incapable of doing this because he rigorously separated the poetic comprehension of the essential from the immediate and sensible world of appearance and opposed them in a mutually exclusive manner. This is why his "representation of the ideal" was bound to retain a rigidly idealistic character and his "imitation of reality" was destined to remain restricted to the immediate world of appearance which made possible the existence of a greater art only in the first stages of human culture. Schiller acquired his ingenious insights into the real relationships *despite* his method. In the systematization of his results, however, he still remained bound by this method.

The limitations of Schiller's method is very closely related to the Kantianism which he did not overcome. But the real dialectic of historical development was never completely attainable even for the highest stage of idealism as represented by the objective idealism of Hegel. The historical dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Mind* suffers from the fact that it can only occasionally justify as really objective the stages, of which it correctly identifies the element of necessity, the typical forms, and the essential contradictions, by exaggerating them into "eternal moments" of a "timeless process", a "trans-historical history"; that is, by transforming the personifications of history directly into logical categories.

The content of the resultant "forms of consciousness" is often remarkably deep and accurate. But the method by which the objective truth of these contents is obtained sometimes turns the real relationships upside down, distorts and mystifies them. And this happens in a twofold sense. On the one hand, separated from the real historical process, they no longer appear as reflections of its most general characteristic features, but having become autonomous, they appear in an immediate dialectical relation with other, equally

autonomous "forms of consciousness". The necessary result of this is a distortion of the real relationships whereby the interpenetration of these "forms of consciousness" appears to be a dialectical development independent of the real historical process instead of its conceptual reflection.

On the other hand, and closely related to this, such "forms of consciousness" are endowed with a series of empirical features which often are not even essential enough to correspond to this high level of abstraction. First, the "form of consciousness" is torn from the ground of reality by the idealist method; then the bond thus severed is supposed to be patched up again by the addition of empirical accessories. But neither accessories nor ornaments can heal a methodological fissure. Instead of re-establishing the unity, this kind of procedure creates an iridescent twilight zone between history and logic.

On the one hand then, as reflections of the real, dialectical stages of the historical process, the "forms of consciousness", rendered autonomous, distorted, and inflexible by idealism, stand in a more rigid and exclusive opposition to one another than the real tendencies of the real process. On the other hand, as autonomous intellectual images, they can be unified and synthesized more easily, with less friction—though often in a wrong way—than such syntheses can actually come to pass in historical reality itself. Thus they are at once more rigid and more pliant than the reality which they are supposed to reflect. Marx rightly says that in the *Phenomenology of Mind* there already exists the "uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel's later works. . . ."

The method of Schiller, the way in which he subjectifies historical periods into modes of feeling, shows a great similarity to the *Phenomenology of Mind*. This confusing twilight of historical and theoretical-aesthetic analyses predominates in this work also. Schiller shares with the *Phenomenology of Mind* the contradictory duality —its virtues as well as its vices—of a too rigid separation and a too facile unification. We have already spoken in detail about the problem of the too rigorous separation. The problem of the too hasty synthesis also has its roots in Schiller's deep understanding of the essence of art in general, of modern art in particular, and in his idealist conception of their relationship.

IX

We have already drawn attention to the contradictory fact that, on the one hand, Schiller opposes the naïve and the sentimental to each other in a rigid manner and, on the other hand, comes to the

conclusion that only the naïve element (the "imitation of reality") makes the poet truly a poet. For Schiller this position is by no means merely a concession forced upon him by the weight of correctly observed facts. On the contrary, it is the necessary consequence of the central personal and objective problem of his mature literary theory: his coming to grips with the personality and works of Goethe.

There can be no doubt that the whole opposition of the naïve and the sentimental poet, as great "eternal" types, arose—biographically—from Schiller's comparison of Goethe's literary practices with his own. The impressive historical idea of working out the peculiar character of modern poetry and proclaiming it in its specificity as historically necessary and justified *alongside* that of antiquity merges almost indissolubly with the personal problem of justifying his own literary practices *alongside* those of Goethe. This biographical explanation of the new variant of this decisive opposition, namely, the conception of Goethe as a naïve poet and Schiller as a sentimental poet, shows the personal sources of these methodological problems. First, the fact that the "forms of consciousness", raised into aesthetic categories, are adorned with far too empirical features —this we discussed above as one aspect of the methodological relationship of Schiller's text to the *Phenomenology of Mind*. Secondly, and this also relates Schiller to Hegel, the fact that the decisive categories (*viz.* naïve and sentimental) are, in a contradictory and fluctuating manner, both universal aesthetic categories, encompassing all periods in the evolution of art and, in direct and unresolved opposition to this, determinants, characterizing the specific features, the specific differences of historical periods.

What is important here, however, is not the biographical explanation, but the objective content of these contradictions. They express a new aspect of the brilliant depth and the idealist distortedness of Schiller's conception of modern literature. With rare penetration he grasped the ideological and artistic individuality of Goethe. In a letter to him, in which he epitomizes, as it were, the sum of Goethe's existence, he speaks of the "great and truly heroic idea" which guided all of Goethe's activity: "You ascend, step by step, from the simple to the more complex organizations in order finally to construct genetically, from the materials of the whole edifice of nature, the most complex of all: man. By recreating him in nature as it were, you seek to fathom his hidden technique." It goes without saying that, on the basis of such an understanding of his essence, Goethe was bound to become for Schiller not only a naïve poet, but the very prototype of the naïve poet.

This view of Goethe, however, engendered a double contradiction

in Schiller's conception. On the one hand, with the rigidity of a true idealist, he overstrained the concept of the naïve and divested it of all characteristics of the modern. Indeed, for him, the distinctive element of the naïve and the sentimental is the immediately given or irrevocably lost unity with nature. "Nature has granted this favour to the naïve poet, to act always as an undivided unity, to be at each moment a self-contained and perfect whole, and to represent, in the real world, humanity at its full value. To the sentimental poet it has imparted the power, or, rather, a vital urge to restore by his own efforts that unity destroyed in him by abstraction, to complete humanity in his person, and to pass from a limited state to an infinite state." On the other hand, Schiller was too intimately acquainted with Goethe's works to be able to indulge in any illusion about the sentimental elements and tendencies they manifest. In his essay he expresses this quite clearly with the reservation—not worked out in its final consequence—that with Goethe it could only be a question of the treatment of sentimental themes by a naïve poet. But despite this reservation he thereby defines in a profound and original manner the peculiar position of Goethe in his age and in the development of modern realism. "This is, it seems, an entirely new task, and one of special difficulty (namely the treatment of sentimental subjects by a naïve poet—G.L.); for, in the ancient and naïve world, no such *material* existed and in the modern world the *poet* would be lacking." And from this point of view, Schiller analyses with great sensitivity the peculiar character of *Werther*, *Tasso*, etc.

But is it true that it is a question here *only* of the material and not also of the way in which it is handled? Can Goethe be called a naïve poet in the sense of Homer, or even in the sense of Shakespeare? Does not a more penetrating analysis of his work yield precisely the characteristics of specifically modern realism which Schiller, with such depth and accuracy, designated as satirical, elegiac, and idyllic? In his analysis of Goethe the contradictions of Schiller's schema reappear on the surface. There is both the unconsciousness of the fact that the sentimental mode of feeling is precisely the foundation of modern realism as well as the fact that Schiller makes the law of realism valid only for the naïve poet. The example of Goethe shows precisely where Schiller's conception is really correct and profound in opposition to his conscious intentions and the idealist distortions of his own conception. Goethe's realism manifests itself in the period of their collaboration precisely in idyll *(Hermann and Dorothea)*, and in satire *(Reynard the Fox)*; and no searching analysis is needed to show that Goethe, the author of *Werther*, *Wilhelm Meister (Wilhelm Meister's Travels* or *The*

Renunciants), the *Elective Affinities*, the *Trilogy of Passion*, etc. is also a poet of elegy in the great historical sense envisaged by Schiller.

X

The deepest contradiction in Schiller's theory, however, is that between the historical and aesthetic sides of his own fundamental concepts. With respect to his antithesis of the naïve and the sentimental, Schiller stresses that "it is necessary to think less of the difference in period than of the difference in style." But such remarks do not refute the fact that the deepest objective basis in the distinction between naïve and sentimental is nonetheless of the *historical* order. The conception of antiquity as past, as something irrevocably lost, is one of the most important aspects of Schiller's conception of history and thus of his judgment of the present. We know with what decisiveness he placed the irrevocably past character of Greek culture and art at the centre of his philosophy of history, with what animosity he fought against the Jacobin enthusiasm for a revolutionary renovation of antiquity. We know also that the concept of "nature", the unity of reason and sensibility, the union with nature, did not mean in his philosophy of history a pre-historical state of nature, but precisely classical Greece. (Here too his philosophy of history is closely related to that of Hegel).

And Schiller shows—again anticipating Hegel—that, as regards content, modern poetry must surpass that of antiquity, because modern life has surpassed antiquity in many respects and has become richer in content. In showing this he gives the example of love and says: "Without defending enrapturement which, of course, forsakes rather than ennobles nature, it is to be hoped that one may assume that, with regard to the relationship of the sexes and the sentiment of love, nature is capable of a more noble character than that conferred on it by the ancients." And in a more interesting way, he opposes to antiquity not only Shakespeare but also Fielding as being richer in content. Related to this opposition is his accentuation of the more productive, more active role of human subjectivity in the Middle Ages and in the modern period which makes Schiller again a precursor of the periodization in Hegel's aesthetics. As for the objective content of his statements, we need only recall Engels' *Origin of the Family* in order to see to what extent even in this matter Schiller mingles a deep sense of historical relations with ideological constructions.

The peculiarity of Schiller's position with respect to Hegel's aesthetics manifests itself in the fact that Schiller considers antiquity (the naïve) not only as past but also as future, not contenting

himself only with separating the principles of the naïve and the sentimental, but striving for their synthesis. In close connection with his estimation of Goethe as a naïve poet, Schiller postulates in this essay a synthesis of the naïve and the sentimental, their union in a resurrected naïveté. As regards the objects of nature in their relation to us, he says: "They *are* what we *were*; they are what we *must become*. We were nature like them, and our culture must lead us back to nature by way of reason and freedom." And in a more concrete statement: "This course followed by modern poets is moreover the same which must be followed by man generally, individuals as well as the species. Nature unites man with himself; art divides and disunites him; through the ideal he returns to unity." The sentimental principle then is that of a great historical transition which is supposed to lead back again to the naïve, to the unity of man with nature.

Here too there is a series of hidden contradictions which once again manifests the contradictory profundity of Schiller's thinking. For by generalizing in certain places his conception of "nature" so that it extends beyond Hellenism, Schiller, like so many important poets and thinkers of this period, reveals the obscure, confused, never fully conscious notion of a negation of the contradictions of bourgeois society to take place beyond bourgeois society itself. These presentiments and illusions, however, are inseparable from the bourgeois-humanist hopes of Schiller for the realization of the ideals of the bourgeois revolution. Despite his sharp opposition to the Jacobin illusions, Schiller still shares the most essential of these illusions: the hope that the "pure" form of bourgeois society would lead to a negation of these contradictions of capitalism. We have already analysed Schiller's recognition of these and their influence on his works.

In this connection the difference between Schiller's conception of antiquity and that in Hegel's aesthetics proves to be less a difference in personal conceptions than a difference between two phases in the development of bourgeois humanism: the difference between the period of Thermidor and Napoleon, one the one hand, and the period following the fall of Napoleon, the period of the "Holy Alliance" and the Restoration on the other. It is plain that in Hegel's aesthetics bourgeois society appears in a much more developed form, such that the illusions of the heroic period must be considered already as conclusively ended with regard to their potentialities for further development. It goes without saying that *in this respect*, other factors still play a rôle in Hegel's relative freedom from illusions, such as his fully developed objective idealism, his deeper insight into the economic structure of capitalist society, etc. This progress in

knowledge, however, is not merely a personal advance made by Hegel in comparison with Schiller, but above all the conceptual reflection of the further development of bourgeois society itself.

Nonetheless, Schiller's evaluation of Goethe plays a great role in this illusory philosophical-historical conception. In terms of the illusion according to which it was anticipated that the development of bourgeois society itself would produce the negation of its fundamental contradictions, the figure of Goethe, his character as a naïve poet, constitutes a kind of guarantee, a hope for the future realization of this prospect firmly anchored in the present. Such as evaluation of Goethe is not confined to the élite of the German intelligentsia during this time. After overcoming his youthful revolutionary period, Friedrich Schlegel sees in the French Revolution, in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* [*The Science of Knowledge*], and in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* the three dominant tendencies of the century. Conceptions like these manifest the illusory perspectives which the flower of bourgeois society, which German classicism set itself: realization of the demands and results of the bourgeois revolution, that is, the revolutionary and voluntary liquidation of feudal survivals, in a non-revolutionary way.

The reader of the preceding pages already knows that the principal contradiction that Schiller seeks to surmount by his illusions is that created by the capitalist division of labour. Schiller also speaks of it in this essay as an obstacle to human culture. "The mental state of most men is, on the one hand, fatiguing and exhausting *work* and, on the other, debilitating *pleasure*." And Schiller sees—not without justification—two dangers for poetry arising out of this social situation: the view that art exists only to provide pleasure and relaxation, and the view that it should serve only to ennoble mankind morally. Schiller recognizes that both of these principles contain a kernel of justification. But at the same time he recognizes that the way in which they become operative in the modern age can only lead to the deterioration of poetry and literary culture. Thus he judges quite correctly the cultural dangers which are not only those of his own age. His analyses provide broad vistas on the subsequent development of bourgeois literature and its relations with the public.

It is true that the way out of this situation which Schiller seeks and believes he finds is purely idealistic and distorted. The tendencies which he correctly recognizes he is incapable of tracing back to their social roots. He reduces them rather to the two "purely spiritual" tendencies of idealism and realism and views the onesidedness and conflict within this onesidedness as the source of the evil. This is why he seeks in the intellectual and emotional synthesis

of the realist and the idealist, in the surmounting of their onesided character, the way to overcome this contradiction. This is why he sees—just as formerly in his "aesthetic state" in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*—the way out in a flight into a utopian dream of a circle comprised of an intellectual and moral élite. We would have to "seek a class of men which is active without working, which can idealize without becoming ecstatic, which unites all the realities of life with as few limits as possible, and is carried by the current of events without becoming its prey. Only such a class of men can preserve the beautiful unity of human nature which all work destroys momentarily and a lifetime of work destroys permanently (here Schiller's idealist limitation manifests itself most blatantly: the criticism of the destructive effect of the capitalist division of labour on culture becomes in him a condemnation of work itself as a principle hostile to culture.—G.L.); such alone can, in all that is purely human, give by its *feelings* universal laws of judgment. Whether such a class really exists, or, rather, whether the class actually existing in like external conditions corresponds to this concept internally is another question with which I am not concerned here." Here too then Schiller's great beginnings end in an idealist impasse. The final word of his rich, profound, and fruitful analysis is once again: "flight into exalted misery".

1935.

CHAPTER SIX

Hölderlin's *Hyperion*

Oh! were there a banner . . . a Thermopylae upon which I could spill my blood with honour, all that solitary love for which I can have no use.

[O gäb'es eine Fahne . . . ein Thermopylä, wo ich mit Ehre sie verbluten könnte, all die einsame Liebe, die mir nimmer brauchbar ist].

HOLDERLIN'S GLORY is that he is the poet of Hellenism. Everyone who reads his work senses that his Hellenism is different, more sombre, more tortured by suffering than the radiant utopia of antiquity envisaged during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. But his vision of Hellas has nothing in common either with the tedious, trivial, academic classicism of the nineteenth century or with the hysterical bestiality with which Nietzsche and the imperialist period envisaged Greece. The key to Hölderlin's view lies then in the understanding of the specifics of this conception of Hellenism.

With inimitable clarity Marx uncovered the social basis of the veneration for antiquity during the great French Revolution. "As unheroic as bourgeois society is, it nonetheless had need of heroism, the spirit of self-sacrifice, terror, civil war, and wars between nations in order to engender it. And it is in the rigorous classical traditions of the Roman Republic that its gladiators found the ideals and the art forms, the illusions which they needed to conceal from themselves the limited civic content of their struggle and to keep their passion at the pitch of the great historical tragedy."

The peculiar situation of Germany during the transition of the bourgeoisie from its heroic to its unheroic period consists in the fact that the country itself was still far from being mature enough for a real bourgeois revolution, but that in the minds of its best ideologists the heroic flame of these "illusions" was bound to flare up; in the fact that the tragic transition from the heroic age of the *polis* republic dreamed by Robespierre and Saint-Just into capitalist

prose had to be effected in a purely utopian and ideological manner without a preliminary revolution.

In the Tübingen seminary three young students witnessed with enraptured rejoicing the great days of the revolutionary liberation of France. With youthful enthusiasm they planted a tree in honour of liberty, danced around it, and swore eternal loyalty to the ideal of the great struggle for liberation. Each of these three youths—Hegel, Hölderlin, Schelling—represented in his later development a typical possibility of the German reaction to the course of events in France. Toward the end of his life, Schelling lost himself in the narrow-minded obscurantism of an abject reaction, of a revived Romanticism during the preparatory period of the '48 revolution. Hegel and Hölderlin did not betray their revolutionary oath. But when it was a question of realizing it, the difference in their interpretation reveals clearly the ideological courses which the preparation of the bourgeois revolution could and had to follow in Germany.

The intellectual absorption of the ideas of the French Revolution by Hegel and Hölderlin was still far from being accomplished when in Paris Robespierre's head fell, and Thermidor and afterwards the Napoleonic period came into being. The consolidation of their *Weltanschauung* had to be achieved then on the basis of this turning-point in the revolutionary development of France. With Thermidor, the *prosaic content* of the heroic form of antiquity in bourgeois society, with its progressiveness and also—inseparable from this—its frightfulness, appeared more and more clearly in the foreground. And the altered heroic character of the Napoleonic period placed the German ideologists before an insoluble dilemma: on the one hand, Napoleonic France was a radiant ideal for the national greatness which could flower only on the soil of a victorious revolution, but on the other hand, this same French imperium brought on Germany a condition of the deepest national disunion and degradation. Since the objective conditions were lacking in Germany for a bourgeois revolution, which would have been capable of opposing to the Napoleonic conquest a revolutionary defence of the fatherland similar to that of 1793, the embryonic bourgeois-revolutionary longing for national liberation and unification faced an insoluble dilemma that was destined to lead to reactionary Romanticism. "All the wars of independence waged against France bear the common stamp of a regeneration which is coupled with reaction" (Marx).

Neither Hegel nor Hölderlin lapsed into this Romantic reaction. But their intellectual coming-to-grips with the post-Thermidorian situation develop in diametrically opposed directions. To be brief, Hegel comes to terms with the post-Thermidorian epoch and the

close of the revolutionary period of bourgeois development, and he builds up his philosophy precisely on an understanding of this new turning-point in world history. Hölderlin makes no compromise with the post-Thermidorian reality; he remains faithful to the old revolutionary ideal of renovating *polis* democracy and is broken by a reality which had no place for his ideals, not even on the level of poetry and thought.

In a contradictory manner, both approaches reflect the unbalanced development of bourgeois-revolutionary thinking in Germany. And this unbalanced development—which Hegel himself designates in an idealist and ideological manner as the "ruse of reason"—manifests itself especially in Hegel's intellectual accommodation to the post-Thermidorian reality which led him into the main current of the ideological development of his class, from which point further intellectual development was possible until the transformation of bourgeois-revolutionary methods of thinking into proletarian-revolutionary methods was achieved (i.e. the materialist inversion by Marx of Hegel's idealist dialectic). Hölderlin's intransigence ended in a tragic impasse. Unknown and unmourned, he fell like a solitary poetic Leonidas for the ideals of the Jacobin period at the Thermopylae of invading Thermidorianism.

On the one hand, of course, Hegel's accommodation leads to a defection from the revolutionary republicanism of his Bern period. It leads him from his enthusiasm for Napoleon to an intellectual reconciliation with the wretchedness of a Prussian constitutional monarchy. But on the other hand, it leads—although in an idealistically distorted and inverted manner—to the intellectual discovery and elaboration of the dialectic of bourgeois society. In Hegel, classical English political economy appears for the first time as an element of the dialectical conception of world history which is only an ideological form, an idealistic reflection of the fact that for Hegel the dialectic of capitalism itself became the foundation for the dialectic of the present. The Jacobin ideal of the struggle against the inequality of wealth and the Jacobin illusion of the economic levelling of a society based on capitalist private property disappears in order to give place to a cynical realization of the contradictions of capitalism inspired by Ricardo. "Factories and manufacturing are founded precisely on the misery of a class," Hegel writes a few years after his turning to an evaluation of contemporary events. The *polis* republic disappears as an ideal to be realized. Greece becomes a thing of the past, irrevocably gone, never to return.

The world historical significance of Hegel's accommodation consists precisely in the fact that he grasped—as only Balzac beside him —the revolutionary development of the bourgeoisie as a unitary

process, one in which the revolutionary Terror as well as Thermidor and Napoleon were only necessary phases. The heroic period of the revolutionary bourgeoisie becomes in Hegel—just as antiquity does—something irretrievably past, but a past which was absolutely necessary for the emergence of the unheroic prose of the present considered to be progressive; for the emergence of advanced bourgeois society with its economic and social contradictions. The fact that this conception is marred both by all the faults of an accommodation to the wretchedness of the Prussian and German situation and by all the mystifications of the idealist dialectic cannot diminish its world-historical significance. But with all its defects it is one of the great paths which leads to the future and to the elaboration of the materialist dialectic.

Hölderlin always refused to recognize this as the correct way. But even his thinking could not remain unaffected by the reality which emerged after Thermidor. Hegel's Frankfurt period, the period in which he turns to historical methodology, is precisely the period of their second, more mature association and collaboration. But for Hölderlin, the post-Thermidorian development suggests only a sloughing off of the ascetic elements of the ideal conception of Hellenism, only a greater accentuation of Athens as a model as opposed to the unbending Spartan and Roman virtue of the French Jacobins. He continues to remain a republican. Even in his later work, *Empedocles*, the hero answers the Acragantines who offer him the crown: "This is the age of kings no longer," and he preaches—in mystic forms it is true—the ideal of a radically revolutionary renovation of mankind:

> What is told and taught you from the lips of the fathers,
> Laws and customs, the names of the ancient gods,
> Boldly forget them and, like new born men,
> Lift your eyes to divine Nature!
>
> [Was euch der Väter Mund erzählt, gelehrt,
> Gesetz' und Bräuch', der alten Götter Namen,
> Vergesst es kühn und hebt, wie Neugeborne,
> Die Augen auf zur göttlichen Natur!]

This Nature is that of Rousseau and Robespierre, the dream of a transformation of society which—without Hölderlin's raising the question of private property in a clear manner—restores the perfect harmony of man with a society which is adequate to him, with Nature itself through a society which has become natural again. "The ideal is what Nature was," says Hölderlin's Hyperion some-

what in the manner of Schiller, but going far beyond him in revolutionary fervour. And for Hölderlin, Hellenism is precisely the ideal which was living reality, Nature. "Formerly the peoples started from a childlike harmony," Hyperion continues. "The harmony of the spirits will be the beginning of a new universal history."

"All for each and each for all!" This is Hyperion's social ideal when he enters the revolutionary struggle for the liberation of Greece from the Turkish yoke. It is the dream of a revolutionary war for national liberation which is supposed to become also the war of liberation for all mankind: almost what the radical dreamers of the great revolution itself—Anacharsis Cloots, for example—hoped from the wars of the French Republic. Hyperion says: "No one must recognize by its flag alone our people to come; it is necessary that all be rejuvenated, that all be radically different, that joy be filled with seriousness and all work be gay! Nothing, not even the least significant, the most commonplace without spirit and the gods! Love, hate, and every sound we utter must astonish the vulgar world, and not *once* are we to be reminded, even for a moment, of the insipid past!"

Hölderlin thus takes no notice of the limitations and contradictions of the bourgeois revolution. This is why his social theory must lose itself in mysticism, a mysticism it is true, filled with confused forebodings of a real upheaval of society and a real renovation of mankind. These forebodings are even more utopian and mystic than those of the isolated visionaries of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France. For in a Germany undeveloped from the point of view of capitalism, Hölderlin is unable to perceive in a concrete manner the seeds and beginnings of social tendencies which point beyond the limited and contradictory capitalist horizon. His utopia is purely ideological. It is a dream of the return of the golden age, a dream in which the presentiment of the development of bourgeois society is joined in an illusory manner with the utopia of something beyond this society, of a real liberation of mankind. It is very interesting to note that everywhere, and especially in *Hyperion*, Hölderlin struggles ceaselessly against the overestimation of the State, and that his utopian conception of the future State, reduced to its essentials, verges very closely on the thinking of the first liberal ideologists of Germany, e.g. Wilhelm von Humboldt.

The mainstay of a social renovation for Hölderlin therefore can only be a new religion, a new church. In the social development of Germany the bases for his utopias could not be found: objectively because in fact they did not exist in the bourgeois reality; subjectively because the seeds of a development tending to surmount

capitalism could not possibly lie within Hölderlin's purview. So it was inevitable that he should seek the source of a social renovation in a new religion. This turning to religion, despite a complete break with the old religions, is inevitable for all revolutionaries in this period who wish to pursue the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion, but who shrink back at the same time from its necessary result: the unleashing of capitalism with all its social and cultural consequences. Robespierre's cult of the "Supreme Being" is the greatest practical historical example of this inevitable return to religion.

It is clear that Hölderlin also could not escape this dilemma. If his Hyperion wishes to limit the effect of the State, he nonetheless dreams of the rise of a new church which is supposed to become the bearer of his social ideals. The inevitability, and at the same time, the bourgeois-revolutionary character of this conception manifest themselves in the fact that Hegel also, still during the period of his transition to a complete acknowledgment of the capitalist development of the revolution, is seized by the idea of a new religion. It is a religion "in which the infinite anguish and the whole weight of its opposite are admitted but resolved without trouble and in a genuine manner when there is a *free people* and Reason will have regenerated its reality as a moral spirit which is able to have the audacity *to assume its pure form on the basis of itself and its peculiar majesty.*"

This is the ideological framework within which the action of *Hyperion* unfolds. The point of departure of the action is the attempt of the Greeks to revolt against the Turks in 1770, an attempt which occurred with the support of a Russian fleet. The contradictory character of this theme, which is both revolutionary and reactionary, is highly characteristic of Hölderlin's historical situation. But it is also highly characteristic that he has a certain insight into the reactionary tendencies of the situation he depicts; an insight which is incomparably more penetrating and progressive than the illusions of the national revolutionaries of the war of liberation with regard to Russia. Hölderlin's martial heroes view the Russian aid without illusions and with a Machiavellian and realistic political attitude. "One poison thus destroys the other," says Hyperion when the Turkish fleet is demolished by the Russians. On this point also then Hölderlin was not a Romantic reactionary.

The internal plot of the novel is formed by the ideological struggle of two tendencies competing to realize Hölderlin's revolutionary utopia. The warrior hero, Alabanda, who is endowed with certain Fichtean characteristics, represents the tendency of armed insurrection. The heroine of the novel, Diotima, incarnates the tendency of

the religious and ideological, peaceful *Aufklärung*. She wants to make of Hyperion the educator of his people. At first the conflict ends with the victory of the martial principle. Hyperion joins with Alabanda to prepare and carry out the armed uprising. The fame of Alabanda awakens him to self-reproach as regards his hitherto contemplative inactivity. "I have become too idle . . . too ethereal, too indolent. Yes, to be soft at the right time is fine, but to be soft at the wrong time is odious because it is cowardly! And to the warning of Diotima: "You will conquer and forget what for," Hyperion replies: "Servitude kills, but a just war enlivens every soul." Diotima too sees the tragic conflict which at this point confronts Hölderlin-Hyperion. "Your whole soul bids you to it; not to obey it often leads to ruin, but to obey no doubt also does."

The catastrophe begins. After a few victorious skirmishes the insurgents take Misistra, formerly Sparta. But the conquest is followed by pillage and massacre, and Hyperion, deceived, turns his back on the insurgents. "In truth, it was an extraordinary project to entrust the planting of my Elysium to a gang of thieves." Soon afterwards, the insurgents suffer a crushing defeat and are dispersed. In the battles of the Russian fleet Hyperion seeks death, but in vain.

Hölderlin's attitude to armed revolution is not new in Germany. The repentance of Hyperion after the victory repeats on a higher level the despair of Schiller's Karl Moor at the end of the *Robbers*: "that two men like me should destroy the whole structure of the moral world." It is no coincidence that the phil-Hellenic classicist Hölderlin esteemed so highly until the end of his conscious life the youthful dramas of Schiller. He justifies this esteem by means of analyses of their composition; but the true reason lies in the similarity of their formulation of problems, in their longing for a German revolution, and at the same time—inseparable from this—in their shrinking back from the facts and consequences of such a revolution. Along with the similarities, however, it is also necessary to stress the differences in their approach to problems. Young Schiller does not merely recoil from the severity of *revolutionary methods*, but also from the radical *content of the revolution itself*. He fears that the moral foundations of the world—of bourgeois society—might collapse in a revolution. This Hölderlin does not fear: he does not feel inwardly related to any of the visible manifestations of bourgeois society. As we have seen, what he hopes for is precisely a radical revolution of his world whereby nothing of the present would survive. He shrinks from the revolutionary methods about which he fears, very much like the idealistic ideologists of

the revolution, a perpetuation of the evils of the present in another form.

This tragic discord of Hölderlin was insurmountable for him since it resulted from the relations of the classes in Germany. For all the historically necessary illusions concerning the renovation of the democracy of the *polis*, the revolutionary Jacobins of France derived their verve and energy from their association with the *democratic-plebeian* elements of the revolution, with the petty bourgeois and semi-proletarian masses of the towns and with the peasantry. Relying on these elements, they could combat—only temporarily, of course, and in a very contradictory manner—the egoistic baseness, the cowardice and avarice of the French bourgeoisie and drive the bourgeois revolution forward along plebeian lines. The anti-bourgeois characteristic of this plebeian method of revolution is very salient in Hölderlin. His Alabanda says of the bourgeois: "One does not ask if you want! Slaves and barbarians, you never want! It is not you we wish to improve, for this would be in vain! We wish to take care only that you get out of the way of the victorious advance of mankind." A revolutionary Jacobin in Paris in 1793 could have spoken such words amid the rejoicing of the plebeian masses. In Germany in 1797, such a view signified a despairing and disconsolate solitude, for there was no social class to which these words could be addressed, none in which they could have found so much as an ideological echo. After the failure of the Mainz uprising, Georg Forster could at least take refuge in revolutionary Paris. For Hölderlin there was no homeland either inside or outside Germany. It is no wonder that, after the failure of the revolution, the way of Hyperion gets lost in a despairing mysticism, and that Alabanda and Diotima perish with the downfall of Hyperion. It is no wonder that the next and last great work of Hölderlin, the tragedy *Empedocles*, which remained a fragment, has for its theme mystic self-sacrifice.

The reaction always fastens on to this mystic dissolution of Hölderlin's *Weltanschauung*. After official German literary history had long treated Hölderlin episodically as a representative of a secondary current of Romanticism (e.g. Haym), he was rediscovered in an openly reactionary manner in the imperialist period and utilized for the ideological aims of the reaction. Dilthey makes him a precursor of Schopenhauer and of Nietzsche by the simple trick of completely detaching the Hellenism and the effects of classical German philosophy from the influence of the French Revolution and by reducing these latter in significance to the level of an episode. Gundolf already separates in Hölderlin the "original experience" [*Urerlebnis*] and the "acquired experience" [*Bildungserlebnis*]. "Acquired experience" is everything revolutionary, everything

"merely temporal"; and as such all this is irrelevant to the understanding of the "essential" Hölderlin. The "essential" Hölderlin is an "Orphic mystic". In Gundolf also the lines lead from Hölderlin to Nietzsche, and beyond him to the "deification of the body" by Stefan George. The Hölderlin, who fell tragic victim to a belated Jacobinism, becomes in Gundolf a precursor of rentier parasitism. Hölderlin's tragic elegy on man's loss of political, social, and cultural liberty ends up in Stefan George's decadent *Parklyrik*. Hölderlin's Hellenic and republican cult of friendship, for which his models were the [would be] tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogiton,[1] is transformed into a prefigurement of the aestheticist, decadent, homosexual George circle.

Both Dilthey and Gundolf imagine they are able to get at the essential core of Hölderlin by leaving out the "temporal" aspects of his life and work. Hölderlin himself knew very well that the mournful elegiac aspect of his poetry, his longing for vanished Greece, in a word, the essential quality of his poetry was altogether temporal. Hyperion says: "But this, this anguish, which is like no other, is a ceaseless feeling of total annihilation when our lives lose their significance, when the heart tells itself: you must descend and nothing more remain of you: no flowers have you planted, no cottages have you built only that you might say: I leave a trace behind on earth. . . . But enough! enough! Had I grown up with Themistocles or lived among the Scipios, my soul surely would never have come to know this side of life."

And for a liberated fatherland—in his sense of the term—Hölderlin celebrates a heroic death:

Oh, take me, admit me into the ranks,
So that one day I may never die a common death!
To die in vain is not my wish, but
To be killed on the altar of sacrifice

For the fatherland . . .

And heralds of victory descend: the battle
Is ours! Live on above, oh fatherland,
And reckon not the dead! For you
Beloved, not *one* too many has fallen.

[1] Harmodius and Aristogiton, said to be lovers, conspired to assassinate Hyppias and the tyrants of Athens (514 B.C.). The plot failed and the two conspirators were killed, but the tyrants were eventually overthrown. Both men then were celebrated in song and the sculptor Antenor built a monument in their honour.

[O nimmt mich, nimmt mich mit in die Reihen auf,
Damit ich einst nicht sterbe gemeinen Tods!
Umsonst zu sterben, lieb ich nicht, doch
Lieb ich, zu fallen am Opferhügel

Fürs Vaterland . . .

Und Siegesboten kommen herab: Die Schlacht
Ist unser! Lebe droben, o Vaterland,
Und zähle nicht die Toten! Dir ist,
Liebes! nicht *einer* zu viel gefallen].

He also celebrates his own destiny as a poet, his longing for at least one fulfilment of that which is of central concern to his soul:

Grant me but *one* summer, you mighty ones!
And one autumn to ripen my song.
So that my heart, sated with sweet play,
Might die then more willingly.

The soul, denied in life its divine right,
Rests not even in Orcus below;
Yet should I ever achieve that sacred thing,
The poem which is my heart's desire,

Then welcome, repose of the world of shadows!
I am content, even if the music of my strings
Does not escort me down; *once*
I shall have lived like the gods, and there is no need of more.

[Nur *einen* Sommer gönnt, ihr Gewaltigen!
Und einen Herbst zu reifem Gesange mir,
Dass williger mein Herz, vom süssen
Spiele gesättigt, dann mir sterbe.

Die Seele, der im Leben ihr göttlich Recht
Nicht ward, sie ruht auch drunten im Orkus nicht;
Doch ist mir einst das Heil'ge, das am
Herzen mir liegt, das Gedicht gelungen.

Willkommen dann, o Stille der Schattenwelt!
Zufrieden bin ich, wenn auch mein Saitenspiel
Mich nicht hinabgeleitet; *einmal*
Lebt' ich wie Götter, und mehr bedarf's nicht].

Nothing can be considered in isolation here. Hölderlin is too genuine a poet, he always echoes the momentary and concrete occasion of his experience, he has no need therefore to rehearse constantly in abstract terms the ultimate bases of the individual experience he expresses. And especially with Hölderlin, the yearning after poetic fulfilment cannot be understood in a formal-artistic sense. Form and content here too are inseparable. Poetic success presupposes that the central content of the poetry will somehow be realized in life, in his life. And Jacobin principles constitute the whole atmosphere of his poems. Only he whose perspective is dulled or blinded by class conformity will not perceive this all-determining atmosphere.

But what about the mysticism of nature; the fusion of nature and culture, man and the godhead in the experience of Hellas? This is what a modern admirer of Hölderlin, influenced by Dilthey and Gundolf, might perhaps retort. We have already alluded to the Rousseauesque and Robespierrian character of Hölderlin's cults of nature and Greece. In his great poem, *The Archipelagus* (which Gundolf made the point of departure for his interpretation of Hölderlin), Greek nature and the grandeur of the Athenian culture which grew out of it is expressed with overwhelming elegiac pathos. But toward the end of the poem, Hölderlin speaks with equally moving pathos and equally accusatory elegy about the *cause* of his sorrow over vanished Greece:

> Alas! It wanders in the night, it dwells as in Orcus,
> With nothing godlike, our race. To their own bustle
> Alone they are fastened, and in the raging workshop
> Each hears only himself, and the wild ones with mighty arms
> Work much without respite; yet ever more
> Sterile, like the Furies, remains the toil of the poor.
>
> [Aber weh! Es wandelt in Nacht, es wohnt, wie im Orkus,
> Ohne Göttliches unser Geschlecht. Ans eigene Treiben
> Sind sie geschmiedet allein, und sich in der tosenden Werkstatt
> Höret jeglicher nur, und viel arbeiten die Wilden
> Mit gewaltigem Arm, rastlos, doch immer und immer
> Unfruchtbar, wie die Furien, bleibt die Mühe der Armen].

This conception is neither incidental nor unique in Hölderlin. After the Greeks are defeated in their struggle for liberty and Hyperion experiences his disillusionment, we find at the end of the novel the terribly accusing chapter on Germany, the enraged ode in prose on the degeneration of man into misery, into the narrow philistinism of *early* German capitalism. The invocation of Greece as

a unity of culture and nature is in Hölderlin always an indictment of his age, a vain appeal to action, an appeal for the destruction of this miserable reality.

The "refinement" of the analysis of Dilthey and Gundolf, their eradication of all traces of the great social tragedy in the life and works of Hölderlin, forms the foundation of the grossly demagogic and flagrantly false disfigurement of his memory by the Brownshirts of literary history. Just as fascist ideologists berated the unconscious, or not yet conscious, petty bourgeois with the hopelessness of their path, the literary S.A. men befouled the memory of many sincerely despairing German revolutionaries by juggling away the true social cause of their despair and by explaining it as despair over the fact that they could not witness the "deliverance" by the Third Reich and the "saviour" Hitler.

This is also how Hölderlin fared at the hands of German fascism. Among German fascist writers it is good breeding today to idolize Hölderlin as an important precursor of the Third Reich. Naturally, the attempt to carry through this claim in a concrete manner, the attempt to show concretely the evidence of fascist ideology in Hölderlin involves serious difficulties. They are much more serious than they were for Gundolf whose formalistic, art-for-art's-sake viewpoint, emptied of all content, allowed for the adoration of the formal aspects in Hölderlin, the idealization of his supposedly mystical conception of Hellas, without any immediately apparent inner contradiction. (The contradiction existed "merely" between Gundolf's image of Hölderlin and the true Hölderlin).

On this basis Rosenberg makes Hölderlin a representative of "authentic" Germanic yearning. He tries to harness Hölderlin to the social demagogy of National Socialism by turning his critique of the times into a fascist critique of "the bourgeois". "Did not Hölderlin suffer from these people even at a time when they did not yet hold sway as omnipotent bourgeois, even when Hyperion, in search of great souls, was obliged to state that they had only become barbarous by their diligence, their science, and their very religion? Hyperion found artisans, thinkers, priests, and title-holders, but no human beings, only fragmented beings without inner unity, without inner drive, without wholeness of life." But Rosenberg also takes care to concretize as little as possible this social critique of Hölderlin. This whole great sally ends with a leap into the void. Hölderlin is simply stamped as a representative of Rosenberg's nonsensical "aesthetic will".

The same mixture of bombastic grandiloquence and anxious evasion of all facts characterizes the later evolution of the fascist image of Hölderlin. In a series of essays a "major turning-point" in the

life of Hölderlin is discovered: his renunciation of the "eighteenth century", his conversion to Christianity and with it to the fascist and Romantic "German reality". In a Romanticism constructed to be the prelude to fascism, Hölderlin is inserted into a series extending from Novalis to Görres. The worth of this falsification of history is shown by the fact that even the official side of National Socialism had to reject it as being "deviant" and "erroneous". This occurs in an article by Matthes Ziegler in the *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* in which Meister Eckart, Hölderlin, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche are presented as the great precursors of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. But whereas Bäumler could succeed in delineating the romantic, anti-capitalist, irrationalist-mystic features of Kierkegaard without overt historical lies, only with some light brown retouching, Ziegler's article remains a pitiful stammer encased, of course, in crude apodictic bombast. Scrupulously avoiding anything concrete in the quotations, he too only centres on Hölderlin's opposition to contemporary culture (to the "bourgeoisie") and his longing for a form of community. And he twists this longing, of which we already know the true social basis and the true social content, into a longing for Hitler, into anticipation of the Third Reich. Summarizing, he writes: "It was the tragedy of Hölderlin that he had to separate himself from the community of men without it being allotted him to contribute to the formation of the community of the future. He remained a solitary man who was misunderstood in his time but who bore within him the future as a certainty. He wished no revival, no new Greece, but he rediscovered in Hellas the Nordic heroic attitude to life which was atrophied in the Germany of his time, the only attitude, however, from which the community of the future could grow. He was obliged to express himself in the language and in the conceptions of his time, which is why it is often difficult for us, men of today, formed by the experience of our age, to understand him properly. But our struggle for the formation of the Reich is the struggle for the same achievement that Hölderlin was unable to accomplish because the time was not yet ripe."

The objective result, even measured by a standard applicable to a National Socialist literary history, is extremely pitiful; Ziegler himself lets slip the admission that he scarcely understands Hölderlin, if at all. National Socialist writers are obliged to make the image of Hölderlin even more abstract than it is in Dilthey and Gundolf, even more devoid of all individual as well as social and historical features. The Hölderlin of the German fascists is some sort of Romantic poet who is scarcely distinguishable any longer from Georg Büchner—also repeatedly slandered of late—who has been twisted in turn into a protagonist of "heroic pessimism", and thereby into a

precursor of the "heroic realism" represented by Nietzsche and Bäumler. In the spiritual night of the fascist falsification of history, every figure becomes brown.

But the "methodology" of these falsifications nonetheless shows, if unintentionally, a result: namely the intrinsic relation between the inability of liberalism to understand German history and the increasingly conscious falsification of it by fascist imperialism. Dilthey challenges the interpretation of Hölderlin by Haym as being a "lateral shoot of Romanticism", but only to enrol Hölderlin among the decadent belated Romantics of the end of the century and to make him a precursor of Nietzsche. Gundolf goes further and makes Hölderlin a precursor of Stefan George. And the National Socialists misuse the romantic and anti-capitalist features of Hölderlin, which at that time were still by no means unequivocally reactionary, in order to mount this deformed image of the tragic revolutionary as an ornament on the façade of the fascist prison for working Germany.

In his essence, however, Hölderlin is no Romantic, although his criticism of emerging capitalism is not without some Romantic traits. But whereas the Romantics, from the economist Sismondi to the mystic poet Novalis, see a refuge from capitalism in a simple merchandise economy, and oppose to anarchic capitalism the "ordered" Middle Ages, oppose to the mechanistic division of labour the "totality" of artisan labour, Hölderlin criticizes bourgeois society from another side. In a Romantic manner, he too hates the capitalist division of labour. But in his eyes the most essential aspect of the degradation to be combated is the loss of liberty. And in him this conception of liberty strives to transcend—in mystic forms, as we have seen, and with a vague utopian content—the narrow notion of political freedom in bourgeois society. The difference in choice of themes between Hölderlin and the Romantics—Greece versus the Middle Ages—is not merely a difference in themes then but a difference in ideology and politics.

When Hölderlin celebrates the festivals of ancient Greece, he celebrates the vanished democratic public character of life. In this respect he not only follows the same course as the friend of his youth, Hegel, before his transformation, but ideologically he moves also in the direction of Robespierre and the Jacobins. In his great speech to the Convention on the introduction of the cult of the "Supreme Being", Robespierre declares: "The true priest of the Supreme Being is Nature; his temple the universe; his cult virtue; his festivals the joy of a great people united under his eyes in order to draw tighter the bond of universal brotherhood and to offer him the veneration of pure and sensitive hearts." And in the same speech he refers to

the Greek festivals as an example of this strengthening of a democratic republican education aimed at realizing the virtue and happiness of a liberated people.

It is true that Hölderlin's mysticism far surpasses the inevitable and heroic illusions of Robespierre. Moreover, it is a flight into mysticism and a mysticism of flight: a mysticism of yearning for death, the death of self-sacrifice, death as a means to become united with nature. But this nature mysticism in Hölderlin is by no means uniformly reactionary.

In the first place, its Rousseauian revolutionary source is always perceptible. The immediate point of departure of Hölderlin's flight into mysticism lies precisely in the fact that he was obliged to raise the *socially* necessary hopeless tragedy of his idealistic aspirations to the level of a *cosmic* tragedy. Secondly, his mysticism of self-sacrifice has a distinctly pantheistic and anti-religious character. Before going to his death, Alabanda speaks of his life "that no god created". "If the hand of a potter has fashioned me, then let him smash his vessel as he pleases. But what lives must be uncreated; must be of divine nature in its origin, superior to any power and all art, and thus invulnerable, eternally." And in a similar manner, in her farewell letter to Hyperion, Diotima writes of the "divine freedom which death gives us". "And if I should become a plant, would the loss be so great? I shall still exist. How could I vanish from the sphere of life wherein the eternal love, which is common to all, joins all natures? How could I sever myself from the union which links all beings?"

If the modern reader wishes to gain a historically correct perspective on German nature mysticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he must never forget that at that time the dialectic of nature and society was discovered and elaborated of course in idealistic and mystical forms. It is the period of the nature philosophy of Goethe, young Hegel, and young Schelling. (Marx speaks of the "honest thoughts of Schelling's youth"). It is a period in which mysticism is not merely a dead weight carried over from the theological past, but frequently, and very often in a manner difficult to distinguish, an idealistic haze which veils the still unknown future methods of dialectical thinking. Just as at the beginning of the development of the bourgeoisie, in the Renaissance and in the emerging materialism of Bacon, the intoxication of new knowledge assumes exuberant and fanciful forms, so too now, in the intoxication of the dawn of the dialectical method, a philosophy emerges "on which no member is not drunk" (Hegel). What Marx says about the philosophy of Bacon is valid—*mutatis mutandis*—also for this period: "Matter smiles on the total man with a poetically sensuous

radiance; the aphoristic doctrine itself, on the other hand, still abounds in theological inconsequentialities."

Hölderin himself takes a very active part in the formation of the dialectical method; he is not only the friend of youth of Schelling and Hegel, but also their philosophical fellow-traveller. In his important discourse on Athens, Hyperion speaks also of Heraclitus. And the "One differentiated in itself" of Heraclitus is for him the point of departure of thought: "It is the essence of beauty, and before this was found, there was no philosophy." For Hölderin also then philosophy is identical with dialectic.

Identical, it is true, with an idealistic dialectic which loses itself in mysticism. And the mysticism is particularly obvious in Hölderlin because in increasing measure it has the task for him of glorifying on a cosmic plane the social tragedy of his existence and of pointing an apparent way out of the historical impasse of his situation in a meaningful death. But this horizon, which gets lost in mystical haziness, is also a common characteristic of the whole epoch. The end of Hyperion and Empedocles is no more mystical than the fate of Makarie in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* or that of Louis Lambert or Seraphitus Seraphita in Balzac. Just as this mystic horizon, which cannot be disjoined from the work of the great realists, Goethe and Balzac, also cannot invalidate the fundamental realism of their work, so too Hölderlin's mysticism of death cannot impair the fundamentally revolutionary character of his heroic elegy.

Hölderlin is one of the purest and most profound elegiac poets of all time. In his important definition of elegy, Schiller writes that "in elegy, the sorrow must result only from an enthusiasm aroused by the ideal". And with perhaps too much severity, Schiller condemns all elegists who lament a purely private fate (e.g. Ovid).

In Hölderlin's poetry individual and social destinies fuse into a tragic harmony rarely achieved. Throughout his life Hölderlin was a failure. He never got beyond the general transitional stage in which the destitute German intelligentsia existed at that time: tutorship; moreover, he did not even succeed in creating an existence as a tutor. Despite the benevolent protection of Schiller and notwithstanding the commendation of the most significant critic of the period, A. W. Schlegel, he remained completely unknown as a poet and without the prospect of a livelihood. His great love for Suzette Gontard ended in a tragically despairing resignation. Both his outer and his inner life were so desperately hopeless that many contemporaries and biographers have perceived something fatefully necessary even in the insanity which put an end to his youth.

But the elegiac sorrow of Hölderlin's poetry never has the character

of a petty private recrimination for his ruined personal life. Even if Hölderlin cosmically mystified the social necessity for the failure of his decisive aspirations, this mystification also expresses the feeling that the failure of his private aspirations was only the inevitable consequence of this great general failure. This is always the point of departure of the elegiac lament running through his poetic works.

The contrast between vanished Hellas, which must be renewed in a revolutionary manner, and the miserable condition of contemporary Germany constitutes the constant, though always variously recurring, content of his lament. His elegy is therefore a pathetic and heroic accusation against the age and not a subjective and lyrical lamentation of a private fate, however pitiable.

It is the complaint of the best bourgeois intellectuals over the loss of the revolutionary "illusions" of the heroic period of their own class. It is the grievance over a solitude, a cry of distress issuing from a solitude which is insurmountable because, although manifesting itself in all moments of private life, it was created by the iron hand of economic and social development itself.

The revolutionary fire of the bourgeoisie is extinguished. But the heroic ardour of the great Revolution gives rise everywhere in the middle class to fiery souls in whom this brand continues to smoulder. Their ardour, however, no longer inflames the class as a whole. The revolutionary flame of Jacobinism still burns in Stendhal's Julien Sorel just as it does in Hölderlin. And if the hopelessness of the situation of that belated Jacobin differs deeply in an external sense from Hölderlin's destiny, if Julien's fate is not an elegiac lament, but rather a power struggle carried on with hypocritical and Machiavellian means against the ignoble society of the Restoration, the hopelessness is nonetheless the same and has similar social origins. Julien Sorel also gets no farther than to take flight, at the end of an unsuccessful life, into a pseudo-heroic and tragic death; than to fling his plebeian and Jacobin contempt in the face of society after a life of shameful hypocrisy.

The creative form in which this last late-born Jacobin of France appeared was ironical and realistic. In England, such late-comers also manifest classicist, elegiac, and hymnic qualities: Keats and Shelley. But whereas the fate of Keats presents, even externally, a great many features relating him to Hölderlin, a new sun pierces the horizon of Shelley; a new rejoicing intrudes into his elegiac lament. In his greatest poetic fragment, Keats mourns the fate of the Titans overthrown by the ignoble new gods. Shelley too poetizes the destiny of an ancient god, the struggle of the miserable new gods against the ancient gods of the golden age (the golden age, the "reign of

Saturn" being in most mythologies the myth of the period prior to private property and the state), and the struggle of Prometheus bound against the new god, Zeus. But in Shelley the new usurper gods are vanquished and his hymns celebrate the liberation of mankind. Shelley has already glimpsed the rising new sun, the sun of the proletarian revolution. He was able to celebrate the liberation of Prometheus because already he could summon the men of England to revolt against capitalist exploitation:

> Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap;
> Find wealth—let no imposter heap;
> Weave robes—let not the idle wear;
> Forge arms—in your defence to bear.

In Shelley the prospect of a transition to the real struggle for the liberation of humanity presents itself to Jacobins born too late for their own class.

What was possible socially in England around 1819 for a revolutionary genius, at least as a poetic visionary prospect, was not possible for anyone in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. Because of the contradictions of the internal and world situation of Germany at the time, the course generally followed by the German bourgeois intelligentsia led to the spiritual morass of Romantic obscurantism. The accommodation of Goethe and Hegel saved and continued the best of the heritage of bourgeois thought, although in a form which in many ways is distorted and trivial. The heroic intransigence of Hölderlin was bound to lead him into a desperate impasse. He is truly a unique poet who did not have and could not have any successors. He is unique, however, not in the sense of those who defile his memory today by singing the praises of his shortcomings and obscurities, but because his tragic situation could no longer recur for the bourgeois class.

A later Hölderlin who did not follow Shelley's course would not have been a Hölderlin, but rather a narrow classicist liberal. When Arnold Ruge begins his letter in the *Correspondence of 1843* with Hölderlin's famous lament on Germany, Marx replies: "My dear friend, your letter is a good elegy, a breathtaking dirge; but politically it is nothing at all. No people despairs; and even if for a long time its hope is based only on stupidity, after many years all its pious wishes are fulfilled by a sudden intelligence."

Marx's praise applies to Hölderlin, for Ruge does nothing more than to vary his quotation in a trivial manner. His rebuke applies to all who have revived the lament of Hölderlin after the basis upon which it was founded, the objective hopelessness of his situation, was negated by history itself.

Hölderlin could have no poetic successors. The later elegists of the nineteenth century bewail, on the one hand, much more private destinies, and on the other hand, in their lament on the misery of their age, are incapable of preserving their faith in humanity with the same purity it had in Hölderlin. This contrast raises Hölderlin far above the generally false dilemma of the nineteenth century. He is neither an insipid optimist nor a despairing irrationalist pessimist. His style neither sinks into an academic classicistic objectivism nor into an amorphous, impressionist subjectivism; his poetry is neither dryly and didactically intellectual not atmospheric and void of thought.

Hölderlin's lyricism is a lyricism of ideas. Its point of departure is formed by the inner contradiction of the bourgeois revolution raised to the level of a *Weltanschauung* (and mystified, of course, in an idealistic manner). Both aspects of the contradiction exist in this poetry of ideas: the Jacobin Hellenic ideal and the ignoble bourgeois reality. The imperishable greatness of Hölderlin lies in his superb stylistic mastery of the insoluble contradiction which was basic to his social existence. He not only fell bravely as a belated martyr on an abandoned barricade of Jacobinism, but he also expressed this martyrdom—the martyrdom of the best sons of a once revolutionary class—in immortal song.

His novel *Hyperion* also has this lyric and elegiac character. It is less epic than plaintive and accusatory. Nevertheless, the bourgeois critics are wrong who see in *Hyperion* a lyric dissolution of the epic form such as in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen.* Even stylistically Hölderlin is no Romantic. On the theoretical level he goes beyond Schiller's conception of the ancient epos as "naïve" (in opposition to modern "sentimental" poetry). But he does so in the direction of a revolutionary objectivism. He writes: "The epic poem, naïve in appearance, is heroic in its significance. It is the metaphor of great aspirations."

The historical tragedy of Hölderlin affects his artistry in that its epic heroism never advances beyond a mere beginning; in that he was only able to express the elegiac metaphor of the great aspirations. The epic fulness must be transferred from the action into the souls of the actors. But to this inner action Hölderlin imparts a very palpable plastic and objective character, having an intensity such as was possible only on account of the tragically contradictory foundations of his conception. In this respect also, his failure is not only heroic, but is transformed into a heroic song. To Goethe's "educational novel", which teaches adaptation to the capitalist reality, he opposes an "educational novel" which teaches heroic resistance to this reality. He does not wish, like Tieck or

Novalis, to "poetize" in a Romantic manner the "prose" of the world of *Wilhelm Meister*; rather he opposes to the German paradigm of the great bourgeois novel the project of a novel of the citizen.

Hyperion also bears stylistically the marks of the hopelessly problematical character of this genre. The attempt to depict the citizen in epic was bound to fail. But from this failure emerged a unique style which is both lyrical and epic: the objective style of a profound indictment of the abjectness of the bourgeois world after the light of its heroic "illusions" is extinguished. The lyric novel of Hölderlin, of which the action is almost solely "metaphorical", remains then, even in terms of style, isolated in the evolution of the bourgeoisie. Nowhere else has purely internal action been shaped in a manner so palpable and objective; nowhere else has the lyrical attitude of the poet been so thoroughly integrated into an epic work.

Unlike Novalis, Hölderlin never criticized the great bourgeois novel of his age. Nonetheless, his opposition to *Wilhelm Meister* is more profound, for he opposes to it a completely different type of novel. Whereas Goethe's novel grows organically out of the social and stylistic problems of the French and English bourgeois novel of the eighteenth century, Hölderlin takes up the threads of the problem at the point where the revolutionary ideals for the transformation of life by the bourgeoisie gave rise to the attempt to create an epos of the citizen; where Milton had made the great unsuccessful attempt to depict, with classical plasticity, the necessarily idealistic existence and destiny of the citizen. The epic plasticity for which Milton strove, however, breaks up into magnificent lyrical descriptions and purely lyrical-pathetic explosions.

From the very start Hölderlin renounces the impossible aspiration to create an epos in a bourgeois world. In accordance with the requirements of the novel, he situates his characters and their destinies in a setting—however stylized—of everyday bourgeois life. This compels him to depict the citizen without separating him entirely from the world of the bourgeois. And even if he is understandably unable to endow the idealized citizen with a full-blooded material life, he nonetheless approaches much more closely than any of his predecessors a really plastic creation in his depiction of the citizen.

His historical and personal tragedy, the fact that the heroic "illusions" of the bourgeoisie could no longer be the banner for real revolutionary heroism, but only that of the yearning for such heroism, constitutes precisely the stylistic presupposition of this (relative) success. Never have the emotional conflicts expressed by a bourgeois

poet been less exclusively emotional, less exclusively private and personal, so *directly public* than in his works. Hölderlin's lyric and elegiac novel—despite its inevitable failure, precisely because of its failure—is the most objective epic poem of the citizen to be written in the course of the development of the bourgeoisie.

1934.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Faust Studies

PUSHKIN CALLS *Faust* an Iliad of modern life. This is an excellent characterization which requires only an emphasis on the word "modern" to be made concrete. For in contemporary life it is no longer possible, as it was in antiquity, to derive all the determinants of thought and poetic creation directly from the individual human being. Now, intellectual depth, the totality of social and human categories, and artistic perfection are no longer joined in a naïve and self-evident unity; rather they are sharply at odds with one another. In reconciling these conflicting tendencies, Goethe produced a unique creation in the truest sense of the word. He himself called it an "incommensurable production".

It depicts the fate of one man, but the true content of the poem is the destiny of all mankind. The most important philosophical problems of a great transitional epoch are put before us, and not only on the conceptual plane, but indissolubly fused with palpably gripping (or at least resplendently decorative) representations of ultimate human relations. And, in increasing measure, these relations become problematical. Only in the first part is an unimpaired sensible and spiritual unity able to prevail. The intellectual content, the discovery of relations which pertain to society, history, and the philosophy of nature strain the sensible unity of the forms and characters and, in increasing measure, tend to burst it. This is the general process in the development of nineteenth century literature, a process which destroys the unity and beauty of the world of forms, sacrifices it to the inexorableness of the new great realism, and thereby brings about the "end of the artistic period".

It is no accident that the completion of the second part of *Faust* coincides almost exactly with the appearance of Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin* [*The Wild Ass's Skin*]: the realism which puts an end to the "artistic period" appears in this work as yet in fantastic-romantic forms, whereas in *Faust* the great realism of the "artistic period" takes its leave in fantastic-allegorical forms. In Balzac we find the phantastic prelude to the modern novel wherein the character of capitalist life, at once real and phantom, finds expression. In

Goethe we find the last phantastic chords of the final period of formal perfection in bourgeois literature. Both Balzac and Goethe experience in like manner this overflow of new life, the bursting of the dams of the old forms by this tidal wave. But Balzac seeks to fathom the internal lines of force of this overflow itself in order to produce a new epic form on the basis of this knowledge; Goethe attempts to control the current by means of old forms newly conceived.

Such an undertaking, however, cannot adequately succeed. As paradoxical as it may seem, Balzac's final solution is closer to the major —modern—traditions of epic literature than is *Faust* to any inherited form. The first part already goes beyond the scope of epic or dramatic literature; the second even more so. *Faust* is neither dramatic nor epic; still less is it a collection of lyrical impressionistic pictures such as were created in the late nineteenth century, in the wake of *Faust* (Lenau). It is an "incommensurable production".

1. *Origins*

For the history of literature, however, such a designation—"incommensurable production"—is not a definition but a problem. The only time the "incommensurable" is not a mere curiosity, a mere biographical fact, is when a significant historical process is reflected in it as in an enduring model, when it is not a desperate individual way out of difficult, or even insoluble, personal problems, but proves in its very uniqueness, its transcending of norms, to be necessary.

For this reason—and not for purely philological reasons—a history of origins is of particular importance here. Time and again, the older Goethe claimed that the conception of *Faust* was already firm in his mind for fifty to sixty years. There have been major controversies among literary historians as to the truth of this claim. We consider this dispute pointless: Goethe was both right and wrong. Without doubt, he sensed, even in his youth, that *Faust* was a universal poem. What attracted him were precisely the possibilities contained in the legend. But it is equally beyond doubt that he did not write the same poem he envisaged in his youth. The growth of *Faust* with the life and experiences of Goethe is not simply a process of maturation, the development of an original germ; it is at the same time a radical transformation. This is why the fact that Goethe repeatedly abandoned the work for decades and that for a long time he considered it as necessarily a fragment no more contradicts the continuity of work on *Faust* than do Goethe's contemporary notes which testify that originally there was no unitary plan of *Faust*

but only some scenes worked out and arranged in a series. (In some cases, even the correct sequence was uncertain. The scene, "Forest and Cave", first appears in the fragment of 1790 but is put in its proper place only in 1808). And very late even there are some decisive changes, in particular with regard to the appearance of Helen in the second part, the dramatic conception of which led to the creation of the "Classical Walpurgis-Night". All this, however, does not exclude a constant fundamental idea, even if it is subjected to modifications; all the less so as this idea must not be understood here in the sense of an abstract formula, but as a concrete determination, a horizon, a perspective on the development of a specific character. In preserving the general outline of his destiny, it was possible to effect slight "subterranean" transformations of the problems, and even their gradual metamorphosis into their opposite, without thereby destroying the unity of the Faust figure.

The basis in legend facilitates such a history of origins. Gorky was quite right in believing that legends like that of Faust "are not 'fruits of fancy' but exaggerations which are necessary and in perfect accord with the laws of real facts". They are great real and historical tendencies of life restored to their essence and concentrated on this level into concrete characters by the poetic effort of the people. In these characters young Goethe saw the deepest problems of an epoch, alive and palpable; and at the same time he saw in them the symbols of the most tormenting problems of his own life and age.

The identification of his own destiny with this legend and his original transformation of the legend, gradually resulting from this identification, are not then an "introjection", not an unwarranted interpolation of his own subjectivity into an alien theme, but a peculiar, independent development of national self-consciousness, indeed of the self-consciousness of mankind. The age of Goethe, especially that of the young Goethe, was still capable of modelling organically the folkloric traditions of myth. The young Goethe in particular differs from most of the contemporaries of his own age and generation in that his favourite themes are popular myths of this kind (Faust, the wandering Jew, Prometheus) or historical figures to whom popular tradition has contributed (Mahomet, Caesar, Götz von Berlichingen), themes in which the person, or at least the period, possesses such an aura of popular tradition. Thus, he stands in sharp opposition to the dramatized historical anecdotes which are random in theme or the isolated incidents of everyday life which are to be found in the products of "Sturm und Drang".

Such an aura of folk tradition is extremely favourable for the development of great themes. It makes for the vital growth of the bond between legend and the present without dissolving the organic

unity of the legend. And since the transforming effect of folklore on great themes is unceasing, the work of a great poet can legitimately continue the mental and poetic activity of the people. In this way, as an organic continuation of the folk tradition, the individual poet's new conception, too, contains the internal possibility for growth and self-change whereby the human contours of the leading characters are only altered without being destroyed.

But, of course—depending on the epoch—all legends are not of equal value. Each possesses a different degree of vitality, of rootedness in the present, and thus different possibilities for inner transformation. The legends to which the young Goethe was attached—with the two decisive exceptions of *Götz* and *Faust*—are biblical and religious in the broadest sense of the word, or else classical. They emerged then from the shifting imaginative constellations of which the first dominated the revolutions of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of the modern period until the time of Cromwell, but which began to fade away in the Germany of young Goethe—despite the great initial success of Klopstock's *Messias*. The second of them was, from the Renaissance forward, a banner of the spiritual revival of Europe and became, during the French Revolution and under Napoleon, the foundation of the final "heroic illusion" in Western Europe.

It is no wonder that in Germany, which awakened to an intellectual life in this period for the first time since the Reformation and the Peasants' War, all the ideological elements of the bourgeois revolution were in the air, so to speak—often without being recognized as such—and enriched the work of young Goethe. But the actual immaturity of the bourgeois revolution, its remoteness in the future, reacted on the vitality of the old legendary themes, robbing their characters of flesh and blood. Thus, this complex of themes generated in young Goethe only lyrical fragments, only feelings and thoughts; and these felt thoughts come to life more than the actors.

It is no accident that the two exceptions, *Götz* and *Faust*, which are specifically German in character rather than European in the general sense, give rise to great consummate works. (In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* [*Poetry and Truth*], Goethe himself confirms the simultaneous and identical origin of the choice of these themes). His attachment to legend and to a semi-legendary past attests the profound instinct of the young Goethe for actuality in a good sense. His enthusiasm in Strasburg for "Gothic" has nothing to do with the Middle Ages, nor does it prefigure Romanticism. Goethe refers rather, in the two major projects of his youth which he actually completed, to the first (and last) great struggle in which Germany strove to liberate itself from the Middle Ages: to the Reformation,

the German Renaissance; to the struggle between petty principalities and nobility, to the Peasant's War. (The poem of 1776, *Hans Sachsens poetische Sendung* [*The Poetic Mission of Hans Sachs*], is an echo of these concerns.)

The genius of youth Goethe is already apparent in the choice of these themes: his subjects are not of a peripheral, merely private character, but, growing directly out of his personal experience, they coincide spontaneously with the most important national tendencies. The spiritual awakening of bourgeois Germany—an outpost far in advance of its political awakening—is related by this poetry back to its origins: to the time when the thread of its organic development was snapped. The poetic revival of this age would take up again, ideologically, the thread of history. The return to this past is indeed a necessary start toward something new, a taking-stock of the historical heritage.

No people can renew itself without this condition. But how it renews itself, how and to which point in the past it links itself, what it considers as a heritage is of utmost importance. The return to the Middle Ages in Romanticism is, on the one hand, a symptom of the reactionary tendencies in the national revival and is, on the other, a serious obstacle which misguides the subsequent ideological development of Germany. Friedrich Hebbel, who was always far from any radical democratic thinking, rejects passionately, nonetheless, this return to the Middle Ages. He sees the greatness of Shakespeare in the fact that he did not return to the antiquated elements of old English history, but to the Wars of the Roses, the effects of which were still active in his time. And he demanded the same of the relationship of German poets to German history: "Is it then so difficult to recognize that the German nation as yet has no history of life to show, but only a history of sickness, or are we to believe in all seriousness that the sickness can be cured by preserving in alcohol the Hohenstaufen tapeworm which has eaten away its entrails?" In reading the works of Walter Scott, the older Goethe arrives at similar conclusions. He admires not only Scott's poetic talents, but especially the wealth of English history itself with which he compares the poverty of German history. This is one reason why, almost immediately after *Götz von Berlichingen*, a shift to the private realm takes place owing to the want of German historical themes.

According to the historical conception of young Goethe, *Götz* and *Faust* belong together historically on both the objective and subjective levels as "self-reliant men [*Selbsthelfer*] in a savage anarchical age". Both belong to the age of the Reformation; both are also historically palpable expressions of young Goethe's longing for national, political, and ideological liberty, a longing which was, in its

multiformity and depth, in its pathos and its limitations, a symbol of the desire for liberty for a whole epoch in Germany. What *Götz* represented politically and socially to young Goethe, *Faust* represented with regard to all ideological problems and their realization in life.

This is why the dialectic of freedom in *Götz*, intellectually and politically very confused, is an important key in answering why the youthful draft of *Faust* was destined to remain fragmentary. The limitations in the comprehension of German history, human freedom and its political expression—which young Goethe shared with the most important ideologists of his youth, with Herder and Justus Möser—are not so much the individual limitations and shortcomings of particular personalities, but rather a necessary ideological reflection of the development of Germany itself. In contrast to England and France in the West, and Russia in the East, where the political unification of the nation was already essentially accomplished when the economic development of capitalism made a bourgeois democratic revolution the order of the day, the development of Germany contained a contradiction, namely that the emerging bourgeois society first had to achieve national unity, that the realization of national unity becomes the central problem of its bourgeois democratic revolution (Lenin).

This peculiar situation in Germany, the specific result of the delayed development of capitalism, weakened the revolutionary democratic tendencies. In the Germany of young Goethe, the plebeian masses which in England, among the Puritans, and in France, among the Jacobins, carried through the democratic revolution against the bourgeoisie, did not exist even in embryo. Thus, the ideology of the *avant-garde*, even that of the most advanced, could not show that boldness which is so characteristic of the preparatory period of revolution in France and England. A revolutionary daring appears only in isolated individual outsiders without influence. Only the leading theorists of the German proletariat could bring forward an effective programme for the revolutionary and democratic transformation of Germany: in the *Communist Manifesto* and in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

This is why a return to the earlier revolutions could find expression in an effective and historically accurate manner only in Engels' *Bauernkrieg* [*The Peasants' War*]. (He has, of course, a few precursors in the democratic movement of the '40's, such as Zimmermann). For young Goethe, it is impossible to comprehend the Peasants' War as a democratic revolution and, in connection with this, democratic revolution as the foundation of a free and unified Germany. From beginning to end, Goethe, like most of the important

enlighteners, has a negative attitude toward revolution in general, and toward democratic revolution in particular. Like the major enlighteners, he has a great and warm sympathy for the oppressed people; like them, he sharply criticizes the oppressors. He possesses a real understanding of the heroic sufferings and even of the heroic revolt of certain individual figures. But the revolutionary transformation "from below" of even the most reprehensible social order goes against his grain. Like Hobbes formerly, he regards the rebellious people as a "puer robustus sed malitiosus", as a "robust but malicious child".

Despite this insurmountable limitation, the German Enlightement —born late but rapidly evolved—soon falls under the influence of the plebeian critique of progress in capitalist civilization. Lessing still has an essentially negative and critical attitude toward Rousseau. But Herder and Goethe (like the young Kant) are vitally indebted to him. Naturally young Goethe cannot be considered just a disciple of Rousseau; but his German patriotism, his embitterment over the disunity of his fatherland turns, often with accents of Rousseau, against the victors of the Peasants' War, against the beneficiaries of the Reformation, against the princes, against the politics, morality, culture, and civilization of the German courts. The fact that this critique "from below" becomes in Goethe a defence of the aristocratic democracy of *Götz*, Sickingen, etc., blurs and confuses his perspective, induces him to idealize the reactionary hero of his youth whom Marx called a "miserable fellow". But this plebeian and Rousseauian hatred gives rise to a ruthlessly truthful picture of the upper world, the world of the petty courts: its hollowness and depravity, its petty egoism, its destruction of the best energies of the German nation. And if the positive counter-image, the wholesome world of below, is represented in a politically false manner by the petty nobility, most of the fine and genuine characteristics of this counter-image are the product of bourgeois and plebeian simplicity and honesty, the revolt against the pseudo-culture of the courts. From this point of view, *Götz* is intermediary between Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* and Schiller's *Intrigue and Love*, however far young Goethe stands from the accusatory pathos of both.

Götz's robber chivalry is for young Goethe only a symbol, an expression of the untamed, uninhibited need for freedom of the new man, of the ideological *avant-garde* of bourgeois society in Germany which was taking stock of itself. The lack of development in social and political differentiation resulted in the isolation of these ideologists who relied only upon themselves. ("One can speak neither of estates [*Stände*] nor of classes, but at most of estates which once existed and classes not yet born," says Marx). The enemy stands

clearly before them in the form of courtly feudalism. As bourgeois revolutionaries, they wish to purge the emerging bourgeois class of its philistinism. But the mass of intellectuals itself is partially contaminated with the courtly spirit, partly submerged in the rootless epigonism of a diluted Enlightenment (which is also an adaptation to the philistinism). Thus arises the ideal of the "self-reliant man". And the poetic originality of young Goethe manifests itself and brings about a "triumph of realism" in that, despite his lyrical bias in favour of his hero, despite the idealization of this character, he sees clearly not only Götz's defeat, but also the necessity of this defeat, of which he exposes poetically—in opposition to his bias—the social and historical determinants. However subjective may be his evaluation of the revolt of Götz and its result, the poetic representation of this revolt is true to life and historically authentic. This is why Marx, despite his sharp rejection of the Götz figure, could show a positive attitude toward Goethe's work.

The idea of the "self-reliant man" is even broader and deeper in *Faust*. The legend itself requires Goethe to pose the problem in all its universality. To this extent, the later recollection of Goethe, that the representation of both the "great" and the "little" world, of both the public and the individual life, was intended from the beginning, is surely correct. And as the subsequent execution shows (Acts I and IV of the second part), the "great world" in *Faust* could be none other than that depicted in the courtly life in *Götz*. The rejection of this world is no less decisive fifty to sixty years later; only the illusions about the "self-reliant" knights have vanished without a trace. Here the knights appear as a phenomenon of dissolution just as the courts, the Church, etc.

This realization, however, is the product of a long development. The allusions to the "great world" in *Urfaust* and in the fragment of the *Wandering Jew* show that a universalism in the representation of the German sixteenth century, the age of the labour-pains and the miscarriage of a new Germany, could only have resulted at that time in an enlarged duplication of the background of Götz. The Faust of the first fragment would have had to perish in this world in the same way that Götz and Werther perished in the Germany that emerged from this chaos.

Of course, this argument is still not sufficient to explain why the *Faust* of young Goethe had necessarily to remain a fragment. There is no documentary proof showing that the first conception of *Faust* was not tragic; nor any, it is true, showing the contrary. The community of historical background of *Götz* and *Faust* manifests itself only here and there in the immediate thematic results, though it is still of consequence for the tragic atmosphere common to both early

works. In *Faust*, however, problems of quite a different range and depth are posed, and, as regards the common social and historical problems, their insoluble character (or else their solubility only on the tragic level) far from exhausts the sets of problems that Goethe had to think through and feel in a radically new manner in order to arrive at the real nucleus of *Faust*.

The problem of understanding nature, the problem of knowledge in general, and that of the relationship between thought and action (all three questions in the last analysis form only one) stand in the foreground in *Faust*. The legend already posed all these problems, but in a distorted form. And not by accident, for all the traditions of the Faust legend come from "enemy country". The "enemy" are the Lutherans, enthusiastic partisans of the Reformation, who handled the Renaissance legend—the tragic conflicts arising out of the limitless demands of man, liberated from the Middle Ages, for omniscience, for boundless activity, for the infinite enjoyment of life—from the religious standpoint according to which such aspirations are sinful, and they made the tragic hero of the Renaissance into a fearsome deterrent.

Naturally the original greatness and profundity of the Renaissance legend also shine through these distortions. A great poet like Marlowe attempted very early to revive the true spirit of the original legend. But his attempt to restore it lacked sufficient poetic and intellectual force; too often he dwelled on its external aspects (the witchery, charlatanry, the grandiloquence, the magical and mystical) so that its counter-effect could not be effective and enduring.

The great figures of the German Enlightenment, Lessing and Goethe, did not know Marlowe at all and approached the Faust legend independently to rescue its genuine content in the spirit of the Enlightenment. This sort of revival was completely organic and legitimate, for the Enlightenment is the true and legitimate heir of the Renaissance. At the same time, however, this attempt was bound to entail a radical transformation of the basic conception, since the result of a development of more than two centuries had been a great transformation of all the problems posed by the Faust legend (that of the creative personality, that of good and evil, that of knowledge and life, etc.).

Lessing's project signifies a radical variation of the legend in terms of the Enlightenment at its apex. The temptation of evil sinks to the level of mere appearance; Faust's adventure with the devil, his pact with him, is only a dream; finally, the relationship of knowledge to life is unproblematical.

Young Goethe adheres much more closely to the legend. But while he is less critical in the Enlightenment sense than Lessing, he has,

at the same time—only in embryo, however—a different and more profound perspective on evil and its contradictory role in the history of mankind. This dissension reflects the development of the German Enlightenment. Under the specific conditions of Germany, certain disintegrating tendencies of the Enlightenment give rise in young Goethe and in Herder to the first signs of transition to the idealist dialectic. This movement forward of bourgeois thought to its final culmination sometimes manifests itself under extremely retrograde conditions (though these are often divided, and only retrograde in appearance). The increasing understanding of contradiction as the basis of life and knowledge stands at the centre of this movement. This is not the place to analyse, even in a cursory manner, the history of the emergence of the dialectic in Germany; we must restrict ourselves to a few references. First of all, there is Hamann's revival of the *coincidentia oppositorum* (the unity of opposites) which Hamann and young Goethe believed they took over from Giordano Bruno. Then there is the subterranean influence of Vico of whom the first reading in Italy reminded Goethe of Hamann, although the latter, in every respect, is only a feeble echo of the great Italian. Then there is the dialectic—not consciously conceived as such—of the great enlighteners themselves, especially Rousseau. There is the influence of Spinoza which also works in the direction of the dialectic. All these currents of thought profoundly influence the *Weltanschauung* of young Goethe.

Thus, with Hamann, Herder, and especially Goethe, the German Enlightenment enters a new, contradictorily higher phase of development. The discovery that contradiction constitutes the centre of life and thought is inseparably bound up with the historization of the total life process. Development in nature and society becomes the central problem, and in the process the Germans play a leading role in this transformation of philosophy which culminates in Hegel, in the creation of a new science of history. Of course, this new science is in part a continuation and further development of Enlightenment tendencies (Montesquieu, Gibbon, etc.), but in part it shapes historicism into a universal *Weltanschauung*. In this respect, this movement goes farther than the Enlightenment; it utilizes the findings of the mounting international revolution in the physical sciences, makes use of the emerging doctrine of evolution, etc.

For the time being, of course, all these tendencies exist in young Goethe only in an intuitive and confused form. Their totality, which is grasped emotionally, determines Goethe's attitude toward the Faust legend. They carry the Faust theme to quite different depths and heights than was possible in *Götz*; they relate in both to the age of the legend as well as to that of Goethe. Young Goethe's

occupation with Gottfried Arnold's history of heresies, with Paracelsus, Helmont, etc., forms the intellectual point of departure for his taking up of the Faust theme, just as the autobiography of Götz von Berlichingen called forth the Götz drama.

Thus, young Goethe approaches the original legend much more closely than Lessing, and not only in the sense of a more poetic attachment, but especially in his renewal of the Renaissance spirit, of the original thought content scuttled by Lutheran revisions. But this renewal results from the spirit of the German Enlightenment, from the tendencies, just mentioned, of this epoch of transition in the direction of dialectical thinking. The conscious formation of this new *Weltanschauung* is the basis of Goethe's life-long work on *Faust*; its stages determine the form and content of the various phases of development of the poem. Considering this, it is characteristic that Goethe's philosophical development in this process of transformation plays the decisive role in the realization of this transition; the re-thinking of the historical and social complex constitutes only one part of this task.

We shall have to examine in detail the results of this life-long activity of Goethe with respect to the principal complexes of problems, characters, etc. In doing so, we shall single out—in anticipation and with conscious one-sidedness—only those particular aspects which help to elucidate the most significant turning-points in the development of the poem.

First of all, there is the problem of knowledge: the Earth-Spirit scene which constitutes the principal philosophical content of the *Urfaust*. Here the nascent tendency toward dialectical thinking clashes in a sharp and direct manner with the metaphysical way of thinking. The emotional awakening of this new method of thought leads to a categorical rejection of young Goethe of all academic, scholastic, and metaphysical thinking. In this opposition, Goethe closely approximates the rejection of the first Renaissance natural philosophers of the scholastic thought of their time. Thus, without any historical falsification, he is able to put into the mouth of his Renaissance hero the deepest conflicts of his own intellectual development. At this time Goethe is still far from his subsequent synthesis of understanding and reason, from the ordering of intuitive knowledge within the total process of cognition, from a correct understanding of the insurmountable necessity of reflection and its categories along with the simultaneous and inevitable necessity of overcoming them. This is why young Goethe—like Hamann, Jacobi, Lavater, and other companions of his youth—opposes in a sharp and exclusive manner intuitive knowledge to analytical reflection. From his point of view, still predominantly emotional, the presentiment of the dialectic

means: an intuitive grasp of the unity of the universe, a unity both active and acted upon, by a categorical rejection of the divisive determinations of the understanding and in polar opposition to them. But whereas Hamann, and with him the majority of the contemporaries of young Goethe, were driven to reactionary conclusions by this doctrine of intuition, which they allowed to congeal at this level, Goethe seeks the way to a true understanding of the active and contradictory character of life. *Dichtung und Wahrheit* enables us to see that this quest and the rejection of contemporary learning necessarily connected with it, formed the principal point of contact with the Faust legend.

But even in this early phase, we can observe the critical circumspection of young Goethe. His Faust follows this course to the end in a much more radical manner than Goethe himself. And this radically critical state of mind gives rise to the tragedy of the Earth-Spirit scene. Faust longs for the same thing for which young Goethe longs: a philosophy which transcends the solely contemplative, dead objectivity, and the disunity between the knowledge of nature and human activity. Thus, after his intoxicating perception of macrocosmic relationships in the sense of Renaissance natural philosophy, Faust, full of deep disillusion, says:

> What a drama! But, alas, a drama only!
> Boundless Nature, where shall I grasp thee?
>
> [Welch Schauspiel! Aber ach! ein Schauspiel nur!
> Wo fass ich dich, unendliche Natur?]

In his longing to arrive at this knowledge, Faust conjures the Earth-Spirit. But here the tragic abyss opens. In vain does Faust feel infinitely near the Earth-Spirit invoked by him; the spirit crushes him with the words:

> You resemble the spirit your mind conceives,
> Not me!
>
> [Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,
> Nicht mir!]

A tragic spirit thus runs through *Urfaust* as well as *Götz*. It is not by chance—we shall speak about this later in detail—that the youthful representation of the tragic conflict between man and woman here assumes its most rent and dissonant form in the Gretchen tragedy. This tragedy dominates the *Urfaust*, the first redaction of the *Fragment*. And, if we consider directly the love tragedy in

itself, its representation is already complete in the *Urfaust*. What was added later only served to integrate this tragedy into the great pattern of philosophico-historical relations in the *Weltanschauung* of the mature Goethe. But without this pattern of relations, it could not but have a mournful and tragic complexion. It is in keeping that at the end of the *Urfaust* only the words of Mephisto regarding Gretchen are heard: "She is judged!"; the response from above, "She is saved!" appears only in the final redaction of 1808.

Between the *Urfaust* and the resumption of work on *Faust*, which results in the *Fragment* of 1790, there is Goethe's ministry of Weimar and his flight to Italy. His attempt to convert his *Weltanschauung* into political activity failed and led to deep disappointment. At the same time, of course, it led—as is usual with Goethe—to a great enrichment of his experience and his historical and social horizon of which the consequences, however, manifest themselves consciously only much later. The Weimar period, however, is also the time during which he turns to a systematic preoccupation with the natural sciences and surmounts the emotional intuitionism of his youth. This preoccupation stems first of all from practical needs, but already in Weimar and in Italy it leads to some important discoveries in the new field of natural science; to the conception of nature as a unitary process of development (through his discovery of the intermaxillary bone in man, the archetypal plant, etc.).

Although this splendid start already began to crystallize into a definitive *Weltanschauung* in Weimar, the Italian sojourn meant for Goethe above all a restoration, a consolidation of his own personality, his recovery as a poet, the resumption of his creative production so frequently interrupted. Thus it is by no means an accident that in Italy the main stress does not fall on the creation of new works, but on the completion of old fragments begun during, and even before, the Weimar period: *Iphigenia*, *Egmont*, *Tasso*, and *Faust*.

Of all these works, only *Faust* was not completed. Again, this is no accident. Goethe's work on the fragment written in his youth shows a radical ideological change, but not yet the ability to carry it through effectively. The scene, "Forest and Cave", as well as the first fragment of the dialogue between Faust and Mephistopheles, already allow us to glimpse quite clearly the direction of this change. The subsequent universal poem begins to take shape; the plan of *Faust* begins to surpass the pure tragedy of *Urfaust*. As we shall see later, this is not a superficial disavowal of tragedy. Goethe's life-work contains tragedies at least as numerous and profound as those of other great poets. (It is precisely in this period that *Egmont* and *Tasso* assume their final form). But for Goethe the tragic is no

longer an ultimate principle; he perceives a process of universal evolution which proceeds victorious through individual tragedies.

This ideological change manifests itself most clearly in the new scene "Forest and Cave". (The transitional state in which Goethe finds himself at this time is characterized by the fact that in the *Fragment* of 1790 this crucial scene of the Gretchen tragedy is still situated in a purely random place which impedes the psychological development of the tragedy; only in 1808 does it appear, unchanged, but in its correct place, as an ideological and dramatically human turning-point). Only the purely ideological side need concern us here. Faust takes refuge in nature and now finds there a completely different response to the question he posed to the Earth-Spirit. Faust's words reflect Goethe's new conception of nature which he arrived at in Weimar and elaborated and deepened in Italy. These words refer directly to the Earth-Spirit and are an immediate philosophical and poetic continuation and overcoming of the first tragic encounter in *Urfaust*:

> Spirit sublime, thou hast given me all, all
> for which I prayed. Not in vain didst thou thy
> countenance reveal to me in the fire.
> Thou gav'st me glorious Nature as a kingdom,
> the power to feel and enjoy it. Not
> just a cold, astonished visit grant'st thou,
> but dost allow me in her inmost breast
> to gaze, as into the bosom of a friend.
>
> [Erhabner Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles,
> Worum ich bat. Du hast mir nicht umsonst
> Dein Angesicht im Feuer zugewendet.
> Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,
> Kraft, sie zu fühlen, zu geniessen. Nicht
> Kalt staunenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,
> Vergönnest mir, in ihre tiefe Brust,
> Wie in den Busen eines Freunds zu schauen.]

Thus was the first step taken toward transforming *Faust* into the universal poem which we have today. But in Italy, and in the Weimar period immediately following, Goethe was not nearly in a position to draw all the conclusions from his new consciousness of the world and to apply it poetically and philosophically to all the phenomena of nature and human life. For this, it was necessary, on the one hand, that he experience the political upheaval in Europe from the outbreak of the French Revolution to the fall of Napoleon,

and, on the other, that he consciously associate himself with the new dialectical philosophy emerging in Germany.

After his return from Italy, Goethe follows, on a political as well as a philosophical level, an apparently antithetical course. He is literally beside himself with fright with regard to the French Revolution. Often he accentuates, and even over-accentuates, the purely empirical character of his scientific research. He wishes to stand aloof from any influence of philosopical generalization. It is clear that the universal poem of *Faust* could not be completed in this transitional stage; in a certain sense, the *Fragment* of 1790 is even more fragmentary than *Urfaust*. It contains, as we have shown, some important scenes which indicate the direction of its further development, without Goethe having succeeded in specifying the philosophical and poetic significance of these new scenes in terms of their consequences. On the other hand, feeling that he has begun to overcome the pure tragedy of *Urfaust*, he omits the final scenes of the Gretchen tragedy; the *Fragment* ends in the middle of the Gretchen tragedy without giving it a poetically organic conclusion.

Reality very soon showed, however, that the superficial symptoms in which Goethe's new stage of development manifested itself represented only an appearance and concealed the decisive, still subterranean currents. We cannot speak here in detail about the change in Goethe's attitude toward the French Revolution; once again we must limit ourselves to emphasizing some of its decisive aspects. In view of this, it is especially important to emphasize that the first great shock to Goethe did not come from the French Revolution itself, but from the Necklace Scandal (1785)[1] which revealed to Goethe the deep corruption of the ruling French upper stratum and the

[1] An extortionist hoax of which the dull-witted Cardinal de Rohan allowed himself to become the dupe. Persuaded through forged letters that he could regain favour with the queen by procuring for her a necklace she secretly desired worth 1,600,000 *livres*, the Cardinal obtained it and, at a pre-arranged nocturnal meeting, presented it to a woman impersonating the queen. The whole affair was exposed when the jeweller, believing the necklace to be in the possession of Marie-Antoinette, went to Court seeking the payment he had not yet received. The Cardinal was arrested and denounced to the Paris *parlement* for lèse-majesté. The *parlement*, always eager to embarrass the Court, and especially the already unpopular queen—who was altogether blameless in this instance—declared, after the scandal had dragged on for several months, that the Cardinal was innocent.

This scandal is comparable to the later Dreyfus affair in that it focused a number of general social and political tensions in France. Its effect on Europe was well described in the words of Carlyle: "Astonished Europe rings with the mystery for ten months; sees only lie unfold itself from lie; corruption from the lofty and low, credulity, imbecility, strength nowhere but in the hunger."—*Tr.*

debility of the whole régime. It is generally known that Goethe rejected the plebeian tendencies of the French Revolution. But it is also known that in the cannonade of Valmy (1792)[1] he clearly perceived the beginning of a new epoch of world history. And some years later, he began to view with growing sympathy the new bourgeois society and state produced by the French Revolution, a sympathy which culminated in his admiration for Napoleon, in his partisanship for him and against the Germany of his time. Goethe's rejection pertains then only to plebeian methods for carrying out the Revolution, to certain plebeian demands; but in increasing measure he approves the essential social content of the French Revolution. What Goethe has Mephistopheles say (in a passage subsequently omitted) is characteristic:

> Were only there wisdom with youth
> And republics without virtue,
> The world would be near its highest goal.
>
> [Bestünde nur die Weisheit mit der Jugend
> Und Republiken ohne Tugend,
> So wär die Welt dem höchsten Ziele nah.]

(That "virtue" here refers to the Robespierrian phase of the Revolution requires no commentary.)

The anti-philosophical tendencies of Goethe after the Italian journey are no more than an appearance. Very soon, in his friendship with Schiller, a time begins for Goethe during which he makes an intensive effort to come to grips with classical German philosophy just entering its crucial period of development: the period in which Fichte and young Schelling make their appearance and the period in which Schiller's aesthetic writings take shape. It is the period during which German philosophy begins its transition from the subjective idealism of Kant and Fichte to the objective idealism of Schelling and Hegel; the period of the formation of the idealist dialectic. Goethe never entirely associates himself with any one current of this philosophy, but he has a deep sympathy for young Schelling's attempts at a philosophy of nature and later his thinking shows far-reaching parallels with the objective dialectic of Hegel.

To what extent the anti-philosophical tendencies of the period following the Italian journey were surface phenomena, a mere appearance, is shown most clearly by the literary effect of the *Faust-Fragment* of 1790. In literary circles it was received rather coolly: the important philologist Heyne, Wieland, Schiller's boy-

[1] At Valmy the advance of the Prussian Army of the Allies on Paris was checked and Republican France was "saved".—*Tr.*

hood friend, Huber, and even Schiller himself, in his pre-philosophical period, were critical and reserved. By contrast, all the important representatives of classical German philosophy, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, received the *Fragment* with enthusiasm and immediately recognized its significance as a universal poem. And this effect by no means remained limited to the highest crests of the philosophical revolution, but rather extended to the entire youthful following of this movement. In a conversation in 1806, the historian Luden related to Goethe the attitude of the younger philosophical generation in his student days. The students of Fichte and Schelling are supposed to have expressed themselves thus:

> If this tragedy is someday completed, it will represent the spirit of the whole of world history; it will be a true image of the life of mankind embracing past, present, and future. Humanity will be idealized in Faust; he will be the representative of humanity.

Alluding to Dante, they called the *Faust-Fragment* a "divina tragoedia."

In this reverberation of the tragedy among the representatives of the philosophical movement, the concurrence of this movement with the development of Goethe himself, such as we have sketched it, is clearly perceptible. But if Goethe henceforth turns consciously to philosophy, it must be repeated that he never associated himself unconditionally with any of the emerging systems, but rather allowed himself to be nurtured by the total process of the new objective dialectic. It is no accident that this transition also entails his definitive break with his youthful tendencies and with their intellectual and literary representatives, particularly Herder. This break, however, pertains only to certain specific tendencies of the late phase of the German Enlightenment. Goethe never broke with the ideology of the enlighteners itself. His philosophy represents a surmounting of Enlightenment though in the direction of the dialectic, a surmounting which contains an Enlightenment heritage preserved much more intact than is discernible even in Hegel. A radical break, like that of Schelling, was altogether alien to Goethe.

Thus, it is an organic bridge, the expression of a personal sublation of the ideology of the eighteenth century into that of the nineteenth. Therein lies the uniqueness of his ideological position: the tradition of Montesquieu and Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau (including the tendencies toward materialism) never dies in him; but his final development extends forward to Hegel and Balzac and occasionally even approaches the sphere of ideas of the utopians.

Goethe's consciousness of this philosophical upheaval forms the ideological foundation of the completion of the first part of *Faust*

(1806, published in 1808). What was only intimated in the *Fragment* becomes an explicit reality here. Goethe finishes the first major dialogues between Faust and Mephistopheles and, in so doing, for the first time puts the role of Mephistopheles in the Gretchen tragedy in the right light: the Gretchen tragedy ceases to be the focus and becomes instead a crucial tragic stage in the course of Faust's life, in the course of the development of mankind. Also the "Prologue in Heaven," which raises the great struggle between good and evil above the destiny of the individual human being, is first written in this period. Only now does *Faust* become an expressly universal poem. The absolute necessity, from the ideological as well as the artistic standpoint, of a concluding second part only arises out of this conception and treatment of the first part.

And work on the second part is actually begun at this time. (Goethe worked mainly on the episode of Helen, but it is probable that many other episodes originated in this period). Once again, however, a long interruption precedes the drafting of the second part. The renewal of the serious work of detailed composition and actual elaboration does not begin until 1816 and only comes to completion in the very last years of Goethe's life. It is certainly not by accident that those parts of the poem which connect with the world of *Götz* on the political, social, and historical level (Acts I and IV of Part Two) were the very last to assume their definitive form. Here Goethe had to carry on the most difficult inner struggles in order to clarify conclusively his views on history. The conclusion to the whole work had already long been clear in his mind and was essentially finished much earlier, as was Faust's detour through revived antiquity.

The older Goethe formulates the sense of the action of part two as "joy in action and joy in creation" in contrast to the "joy in life" of part one. But in order to grasp clearly the first two kinds of joy both intellectually and poetically, a definitive view of the entire historical period from the French Revolution to the Restoration, a perspective on the consequences of the development of capitalism, was necessary. For only such a perspective provided the possibility of conclusively surmounting the historical conception of his youth which found its poetic expression in *Götz von Berlichingen*. The political and social elements of the second part of *Faust*, as we have said repeatedly, represent the same world as the early work. But the historical conception and perspective on history have changed completely. Accordingly, the representation of this historical picture transcends the narrow, specifically German milieu without losing, however, its specifically German character. Now Goethe no longer criticizes only the phenomena of decline peculiar to German

feudalism, but gives a profound and comprehensive picture of the decline of feudalism in general, of its decay in the life of the courts, along with a depiction of the forces which really shatter it: the development of productive forces through capitalism. This is why Goethe can with justice say to Eckermann that the basic conception of the second part also is very old. "But," he adds, "the fact that I am writing it now, after having become so much more clear about the things of this world, may be for the best."

2. *The Drama of the Human Species*

The *Fragment* of 1790 contains a dialogue between Faust and Mephistopheles beginning with the following words which express the programme of the new redaction of the work:

> And what is allotted the whole of mankind,
> I wish to savour in my inner being,
> To grasp with my mind the highest and deepest
> To gather in my heart its weal and its woe,
> And thereby extend my own being to its being,
> And, like it, come to grief in the end.
>
> [Und was der ganzen Menschheit zugeteilt ist,
> Will ich in meinem innern Selbst geniessen,
> Mit meinem Geist das Höchst' und Tiefste greifen,
> Ihr Wohl und Weh auf meinen Busen häufen,
> Und so mein eigen Selbst zu ihrem Selbst erweitern,
> Und, wie sie selbst, am End' auch ich zerscheitern].

These words clearly express the specific formulation which makes *Faust* a unique universal poem: at the centre stands an individual whose experiences, destiny, and development are supposed to represent at the same time the progress and destiny of the whole species.

It is necessary, however, to make this formulation more definite and concrete. For each genuinely and profoundly typical figure in the poem extends to the problems of all mankind. But each does so only with one side of its character as it were, only as an expression of its highest poetic development, only as a sort of horizontal generalization of the whole work. In order to appear as a real human being, each literary figure must be genuinely specific, particular and allow the general only to be glimpsed. Any pedantic, encyclopaedic endeavour to reflect the whole world, the whole world process, must

destroy the poetic vitality of characters and situations. This occurs even in so great a poet as Milton and certainly in Klopstock. Dante, on the other hand, portrays the unity of the process, the hierarchy of objective reality, only in the subjective moods and reflections of the first person and his guides, Virgil and Beatrice: the wealth of life, the human activity, the internal drama of the world represented find expression in the many hundreds of concrete individual characters who pass before Dante.

With respect to the theme of a Faust tragedy, the "divine comedy" and the "human comedy" converge—despite all the oppositions produced by the intervening centuries.

The odyssey of Faust, from misery to salvation, has, just as it is, to form an abbreviation of the evolution of mankind itself, without thereby suppressing the individuality, the historical and human concreteness of the hero, and without causing the various stages of his development to evaporate into abstract conceptual generalities.

This conception sets *Faust* off from the series of other great epic and dramatic masterpieces and makes it an "incommensurable production." But—in an apparently paradoxical, though actually very natural way—this conception enables us to arrive at an understanding of the hidden relations of its composition and to discover the historical roots of the poem.

Goethe's *Faust* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* belong together as the greatest artistic and intellectual achievements of the classical period in Germany. (It is interesting to note that the *Phenomenology* was completed in 1807, almost at the same time as the first part of *Faust*). The methodological side of Hegel's work, which is essential for us here, Engels characterizes as a "parallel between the embryology and paleontology of the spirit", as an "evolution of the individual consciousness through its various stages conceived as an abbreviated reproduction of the stages traversed by the consciousness of men in the course of history".

But Hegel's *Phenomenology* is only the product that synthesizes most succinctly all the tendencies of the time and rises to the highest level attainable at the time. The currents which lead up to this work are evident long in advance. Herder's *Ideen* [*Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, 1784-91] were already a start in this direction, although Herder was destined to fall short because of his lack of understanding of the dialectical problems involved. In the idealist dialectic, the notion that history manifests itself in an abbreviated form in the life of the individual already appears in embryo in Kant and Fichte. Schelling in turn conceives the historical process operative in nature and society as an "odyssey of the spirit", as its return to itself, and he visualizes the various stages traversed

by philosophical thought from perception to adequate knowledge of the world as epochs.

All these tendencies, however, are only nascent and find their real fulfilment, their effective methodological realization only in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Here three related conceptions of history intersect and interpenetrate. First, there is the historical progress of the individual from simple perception of the world to a perfect philosophical cognizance of it. Second, there is the historical progress of mankind from its most primitive beginnings to the cultural level of Hegel's time, to the great French Revolution and its conquest by Napoleon and the modern bourgeois society which emerged from this earthquake. And, finally, this whole historical development is conceived as the work of man himself: man creates himself through his labour. As one characteristic of the greatness of the *Phenomenology*, Marx emphasizes particularly that Hegel "grasps the essence of *labour* and comprehends the objective man, who is man proper because he is real, as the result of *his own labour*".

According to Marx, this process is possible only because man "really externalizes . . . all his *generic powers*". This assertion is also a general philosophical formulation of the problem of *Faust*. How these generic powers are engendered in the individual, how they develop, what obstacles they surmount, what fate they encounter, how the given natural and socio-historical world acts on him as a reality independent of him, how it is at the same time the product or (in the case of nature) the object of his self-creating activity, whence this process takes its point of departure and whither it leads—this is the theme of *Faust*.

It goes without saying that in Goethe, even more than in Hegel, the individual is the immediately visible vehicle of the process represented. For Hegel, the individual consciousness is a concentrated image of the evolution of the species. This is why in his work the various stages of the evolutionary process are embodied in "forms of consciousness" which are individually characterized with great conceptual preciseness. But if the destiny of the species is to appear in an abbreviated form in the individual, then the conceptual series of consecutive categories and stages involved in this abbreviated evolution of the species cannot have the objective and logical sequence of successiveness and separateness of absolute philosophy. This sequence must be torn apart and replaced by a new one which depends on the development of the individual consciousness. And although, from the standpoint of normal logical thinking, this method seems to result in something arbitrary, the new order of succession, the concentrated reflection of the whole (i.e. the species) in the individual, the need for this apparently distorted reflection in such

an abbreviation must be understood in terms of the logic peculiar to this evolution. What seems confusing in the roundelay of "forms of consciousness" in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, where the Parisian Terror comes after Diderot's Rameau only to be followed by Antigone, becomes clear if we consider it from the standpoint of the logic of this abbreviation and discern in the various concrete stages the strict ordering principle.

The composition of *Faust* is also conceived in this manner. Goethe always refused to admit that he had sought to embody in *Faust* any "idea" whatsoever. Such remarks made by Goethe only apparently contradict his defence against the pure empiricists. When, for example, the historian Luden rejected any philosophical explication of the *Fragment* of 1790 and wanted readers to stick only to the particulars, Goethe referred to the efforts of the philosophers to find the intellectual focus of his work. "But what has engendered this need? Undoubtedly the *Fragment* itself. The particulars with which you seem to be content, have not satisfied others, and yet they have not thrown away the book but have held on to it or have taken it in hand time and again. So there must be something in this little book which pervades it and indicates the focus, the idea which manifests itself everywhere." Goethe gives here a clear description of what he considers to be a poetic idea: an invisible focus in which the central problem of his conception of the world is concentrated and on the basis of which, without this focus being explicitly represented or even expressed conceptually, the relationship between all the parts is coherent and comprehensible and acquires its general generic character without thereby losing the immediate tangibleness of its individualization.

This composition of Goethe gains its inner truth by virtue of the concurrence—which is neither mechanical nor schematic—of the problems involved in the evolution of the individual and the species. The poet Goethe proceeds from the individual and each step the work takes must be justified in terms of the individual, or else the unity of the individual character breaks down. But the dialectical process taking place within the different stages of evolution, their sequence of succession, the intermediary stages skipped over as being superfluous or self-evident, this dialectical process transcends the individual and conveys its truth in the historical, social, and anthropological evolution of the species itself.

The fantasy of the plot arises out of this dialectical dual unity of individual and species raised to an artistic and organic unity. The entire action sometimes pauses stubbornly where the individual impatiently rattles the prison bars of the iniquitous present; it rushes along with seven-league boots when the evolution of the species makes

a leap. So in *Faust* we find a fantastic-discontinuous, subjective-objective time and time-sequence just as in the *Phenomenology*. Goethe himself is conscious of this. With the publication of the Helen fragment (1826), he writes to Wilhelm von Humboldt: "From time to time I continue to work on it, but the piece could not be completed except in the fulness of time, for it has now acted out its full three thousand years from the fall of Troy to the capture of Missolonghi.[1] This, therefore, can also be counted as a unity of time in a higher sense; the unity of place and action, however, is rigorously observed in the usual sense."

This fantasy has its roots in Goethe's very realism. Goethe never exaggerated the generic, he neither allows it to congeal into an autonomous entity with respect to the individual, nor to obscure the particularity of the individual characters. Goethe views the reality of the human species in a sober and realistic manner. He writes: "The rational world must be viewed as a great immortal individual which ceaselessly produces the necessary and thereby makes itself master even of the fortuitous." And just during the period when he is at work on *Faust*, he writes Schiller that nature "is unfathomable because one man cannot comprehend it, although all mankind could very well do so." The fantasy of the generic, conceived on this ideological foundation, serves to provide a real milieu but one devoid of naturalistic pettiness. For out of the fantastic situation and the individual characters whom it enhances problems are raised to the height and typicality of the generic without constraint.

Thus, the course of this poetic *Phenomenology* of the human species in Faust's individual consciousness and destiny is spontaneous, alive, removed from any pedantic logic and pedantic "completeness"; it soars unrestricted, in romantic, balladesque leaps over intermediary stages. Yet at the same time it is imbued with a deep historical, social and therefore genuinely human, necessity which encompasses in like manner the individual and the species.

Goethe calls *Faust* a tragedy. In reality, it is more than that: it is the simultaneous affirmation and negation of the tragic. The individual destiny of Faust contains more than one tragedy (the Earth-Spirit, Gretchen, Helen, Conclusion), but for the evolution of the species each of them is only a transitional stage. This attitude of the mature Goethe toward tragedy was often misunderstood—at times even by Goethe himself. On one occasion he writes to Schiller that tragedy presupposes a "pathological interest" and that he is convinced that "the mere attempt" to treat a tragic subject "could

[1] A Greek fortress that fell to the Turks the same year Goethe wrote these words.—*Tr.*

destroy" him. In this instance, Schiller understands Goethe's nature better than Goethe himself. "In all your poems," he writes, "I find all the tragic power and profundity which would suffice for a perfect tragedy; as for feeling, there is more than a tragedy in Wilhelm Meister." And summing up, he says that if Goethe is unable to write a tragedy, "the reason must lie elsewhere than in the poetic exigencies." Decades later, with the completion of the second part, Goethe is much clearer about his attitude toward the tragic. To Zelter he writes that "the irreconcilable seems to him altogether absurd" and that on this account "the purely tragic case does not interest him."

Here the philosophical place of the universal poem is consciously fixed. Goethe is equally far from the false profundity and one-sided pessimism of the nineteenth century (which is sometimes labelled "pan-tragic") as he is from the banal optimism of the liberal literature and philosophy of the same period which denies the necessity of the tragic in general or at best seeks to subjectify it. Goethe and Hegel see in this precisely the problem of the relationship between the species and the individual. The evolution of the species is non-tragic, but it unfolds through countless objectively necessary individual tragedies.

Both Goethe and Hegel hold the Enlightenment conviction that the human race is capable of indefinite perfection once it has freed itself from the fetters of the Middle Ages. Both expressed this conviction on countless occasions. Let us recall once more Goethe's opinion of Valmy and the place that the "glorious dawn" of the French Revolution assumes in Hegel's philosophy. But this Enlightenment faith in the progress of the human race undergoes an essential modification in them and assumes a peculiar character owing to the historical events through which they lived. The concrete contradictions of the capitalist society, which emerges from the French Revolution, take central place in the way they perceive and reflect on the world. They seek neither to blur or diminish these contradictions, nor to admit their dissonant character as an ultimate principle of history. With this, they arrive at the most advanced bourgeois perspective conceivable as regards the progress of humanity; not until the socialist utopians, like Fourier, does a more advanced perspective on the contradictions of the pre-socialist age, particularly those of capitalism, become possible.

This conception determines the difference in the way in which Goethe and Hegel regard the fate of the individual and the destiny of the species. As regards the first, both of them are marvellously unsentimental. On one occasion Goethe says to Eckermann (this is the complementary side of the letter to Zelter just cited): "*Man*

must be ruined again! Every exceptional man has a certain mission which he is called upon to fulfil. Once he has done so, he is no longer needed on earth in this figure. . . ." In his philosophy of history, Hegel expressed the same thought as follows: "The particular has its own interest in world history; it is something finite and must perish as such. It is the particular which exhausts itself in struggle with its like and is partially destroyed. But from the struggle, from the destruction of the particular, the universal results." So for Goethe and Hegel both, the unceasing progress of the human species results from a chain of individual tragedies. The tragedies occurring in the microcosm of the individual are the disclosure of the ceaseless progress in the macrocosm of the species: this is the philosophical factor common to both *Faust* and the *Phenomenology of Mind.*

The poetic representation of such interaction between individual and species gives rise to the balladesque fantasy as the adequate poetic expressive means of this contradictory unity. This is what most commentators have misunderstood as regards both content and form; especially Friedrich Theodor Vischer who—in Kantian fashion —always applied the criterion of purely individual morality to transitions and stages of evolution which, from the standpoint of the species, must necessarily transcend this level. Thus, he finds fault with the beginning of part two where Ariel and the elves, symbolizing the moral indifference of nature and the natural character of human evolution, help Faust get over the Gretchen tragedy:

> Be he holy, be he wicked,
> Pity they this man of woe.
>
> [Ob er heilig, ob er böse,
> Jammert sie der Unglücksmann.]

Vischer objects to the absence here of any expression of remorse in Faust. But in the course of the Gretchen tragedy, Goethe did repeatedly and with great forcefulness give expression to it: in the scene *Dreary Day*, in Faust's attempt to rescue Gretchen, and in the failure of this attempt which reaches its culmination in Faust's cry of despair: "Oh! were I never born!" [*Oh, wär' ich nie geboren!*]

Vischer likewise overlooks the fact that the Gretchen tragedy is the culmination of tragic contradictions only at the stage of the "joy of life", of the "little world"; he overlooks the fact that the evolution of the species necessarily requires precisely the transcendence of *this world in its entirety*. This transcendence is tragic not only for Gretchen but also for Faust himself (which we shall discuss later in

detail); yet for the destiny of the species—which is indifferent to individual tragedies—such progress is necessary. The tragedy of Faust lies in this very necessity which goes deeper than the simple individual moral remorse such as Goethe treated in Weislingen, Clavigo, etc.[1] Vischer's objection seeks to reduce Faust to the level of Weislingen.

It is only logical, then, that the representation of the "great world", of the "joy in action and creation", should begin with the fantastic scene of Ariel and the elves in which this trans-individual, trans-moral elevation of the species is expressed with great poetic clarity. (It is interesting to note that individual and moral problems still appear in Goethe's first drafts, but these were eliminated in the course of his work.)

Beyond that, however, the fantastic character of *Faust* is *historical*, though in a very broad and free sense. It has the historicity of a folk-legend which, even in its most audacious empirical improbabilities, never leaves the real ground of history but only augments its essential determinations lyrically, pathetically, or satirically, without ever sloughing off thereby the complexion of the period. Although Goethe's poem diverges greatly from the legend in particulars and transforms many of its transmitted elements into their opposite, it is nonetheless the continuation of a folk creation—the creation of a great figure who could represent a folk destiny. His work strengthens the legend-making, historical popular fantasy, preserves it in poetry and immortalizes it. For Goethe's alterations of the legend are mostly purgations of its orthodox Lutheran distortions and the dregs they introduced into it. This is why not only the real personae, such as Wagner, Valentin, etc., are profoundly genuine historically, but even Mephistopheles is a sixteenth-century Gothic apparition:

> Become youthful in the age if mists,
> In the morass of chivalry and priest-craft . . .
>
> [Im Nebelalter jung geworden,
> Im Wust von Rittertum und Pfäfferei . . .]

This fantastic historicity, however, has different functions in the "little" and in the "great" world. Goethe expressed himself clearly to Eckermann on this stylistic difference between the first and second parts: "The first part is almost completely subjective; it proceeds from a more disconcerted, more passionate individual. . . . In the second part, though, almost nothing at all is subjective;

[1] Clavigo, the central figure in a work by the same title (1774), and Weislingen, a character in *Götz*, are both weak and faithless lovers.—*Tr.*

what appears here is a higher, larger, brighter, more dispassionate world. . . ."

In the first part, we have before us—notwithstanding the role of Mephistopheles—a completely closed, historically genuine world of reality in which the fantastic plays quite a clearly distinguishable part; sometimes in scenes specially devoted to the fantastic (Witches' Kitchen, Walpurgis-Night), sometimes as the result of a transformation of realistic genre-pictures into the phantomesque (Auerback's Wine-Cellar). Nonetheless, just as in *Götz*, the foundation of the first part of *Faust* is a realistic representation of sixteenth-century Germany, only here it is more agitated, more dramatic, poetically at a higher level.

Goethe's objectivity with respect to the "great world" no longer sustains this sort of realism. Accordingly, the essential, typical determinations, and only these, are represented. Here Goethe's realism aspires to a representation in which such a milieu, conceived as given and real, could constitute a real counterpoise to the actions of Faust the individual. This is why—notwithstanding all the historical fidelity of the *content—everything* is impregnated with the fantastic: there is no longer a boundary between the real and the spectral; we have before us a spectral reality.

This mode of poetic representation is closely linked to Goethe's objectivity, to the preponderance given to the destiny of the species. The naïve historicism of the first part changes into a reflected historicism, immediate history into a lived philosophy of history.

This transformation determines the structure, the tone and the style. The first part is a ballad-like drama which often approaches the style of "Storm and Stress", but always remains immediately dramatic. In the second part, the drama too is reflected. However, this does not mean that it is transformed into epic, for the waning feudalism of the sixteenth century (the period of Götz) appears before us as the dramatically moving present, as a complex of persons acting in our presence, and not as a report on something past recounted by a contemporary narrator. Yet the subsequent development (Goethe's own day) illuminates the evoked sixteenth century and makes it transparent. This happens not because any social categories or sentiments peculiar to Goethe's time were projected into it, but because the dissolution of feudalism, which becomes evident only from the standpoint of the subsequent advance of history, already manifests its openly spectral character: hence, the immediately represented present is the Götz period seen in a historically correct perspective. This period is no longer viewed from the standpoint of the insurgent knights, but from a broad historical perspective in terms of which even the favourite heroes of Goethe's

youth appear as phenomena of dissolution, as phantoms among phantoms. The totality of the present thus reveals determinates which did indeed exist in themselves at the time, but which subsequent history alone has made clear and lucid for us. This is why the historical foundation of the second part (acts I and IV) is a grotesque *danse macabre* in which—as in the ancient *danses macabres*—not mere individuals appear but social types; a *danse macabre* in which even people appear as phantoms, so that Mephistopheles can say with good reason:

> There's no need here, I think, for incantations,
> The spirits come of themselves to this place.
>
> [Hier braucht es, dächt' ich keine Zauberworte,
> Die Geister finden sich von selbst zum Orte.]

Even the distribution of this material in two acts is not fortuitous or determined solely by technical considerations. It is a question rather of the rhythm of the philosophy of history, of the social and human content of the waning Middle Ages. In the first act, the spirit of antiquity ideologically explodes this spectral world which Goethe then contrasts in the third act to the true age of chivalry, covering the emergence of the new poetry and the discovery of individual love and the human dignity of woman. What we find in the fourth act, depicted in a historically accurate manner as a privileged feudal "intermundium" at the very heart of feudalism, is its real grave-digger: capitalism.

However, this ideological explosion also has its real economic prehistory which Goethe correctly understood: the invention and introduction of paper money by Mephistopheles. (Further on we shall discuss why here it is he—and not, as in the case of the development of capitalist productivity, Faust himself—who is the initiator). Goethe's deep understanding manifests itself in the fact that, without a revolution of the economic and social conditions of production, the chaos of feudalism in decline could only increase with the ascendancy of money—paper money being here only a visible symbol for money in general. The predominance of money only hastens the disintegration of feudalism, and even the emperor, after the first ecstasy, is obliged to state with respect to the effect of paper money:

> In spite of all this treasure-burst, I see:
> You remain just as you were formerly.
>
> [Ich merk' es wohl, bei aller Schätze Flor:
> Wie ihr gewesen, bleibt ihr nach wie vor.]

And the fourth act shows us a more advanced stage of dissolution. The struggle of all against all, the civil wars of the outgoing Middle Ages engender that condition of petrifaction which Germany was obliged to live through after the defeat of the Peasants' War, after the thirty years' War: the rule of petty princes who were previously vassals and a purely ornamental unification of the disunited and impotent nation in the empire.

In the midst of this dissolution, the beauty of antiquity twice rises resplendent: once as an apparition, the second time as reality. Goethe borrowed the invocation of Helen from the legend but thoroughly transformed its intellectual content. In the legend it is as a diabolical phantom that Helen is invoked by Mephistopheles; her appearance and her living with Faust represent to Faust the pinnacle of his "epicurean" excesses. The Helen episode of the legend, in the versions transmitted to us, is an important factor in the struggle of the Lutheran Reformation against the spirit of the Renaissance.

Goethe completely reverses this relationship. The conceptions of the Reformation itself, the aspirations of the semi-mystical philosophy of nature which emerges in Germany at this time, have been left a long way behind by the second part. For Goethe, Helen signifies as a reality the renascence of antiquity, by which the spectral world of the Middle Ages is exposed for what it is; that renascence whose gradually ascending and brightening light forever dispels the realm of darkness.

This is why it is so important that—in sharp contrast to the legend—Helen is called into being both times by Faust himself. Even the first time, when it is simply a question of conjuring up her phantom, Mephistopheles can only give counsel and draw Faust's attention to the difficulties of the task:

> Think you Helen so easily summoned forth
> As the phantom of paper florins?
>
> [Denkst Helenen so leicht hervorzurufen
> Wie das Papiergespenst der Gulden?]

When the real Helen is re-awakened, Mephistopheles becomes a passive and impotent onlooker, and it is repeatedly stressed in an ironical manner that, as a medieval apparition, he has nothing and can have nothing in common with antiquity.

At first, then, only the phantom of Helen is conjured up and that for the amusement of the courtly feudal society which desires to see her and Paris. Goethe emphasizes very clearly the sharp contrast between Faust and his entire medieval entourage, Mephistopheles included, with respect to Helen whose appearance for all of them

is but one indifferent amusement among many other courtly diversions. Paris and Helen are criticized from the standpoint of the courtly conception of beauty; the onlookers find them "pretty though not refined". For feudal absolutism in decline, the resuscitation of antiquity cannot really be fructifying, cannot signify a new element of reality. By contrast, Faust sees even in the phantom of Helen the ascending new reality he has long yearned for:

> Here's a firm footing! Here are realities!
> From here the spirit can struggle with spirits,
> Make ready for a grand, a double domain!
> She so far, how can she be brought nearer?
> I'll rescue her, then she'll be doubly mine . . .
> Who's known her cannot be deprived of her.
>
> [Hier fass ich Fuss! Hier sind es Wirklichkeiten!
> Von hier aus darf der Geist mit Geistern streiten,
> Das Doppelreich, das grosse, sich bereiten!
> So fern sie war, wie kann sie näher sein!
> Ich rette sie, und sie ist doppelt mein . . .
> Wer sie erkannt, der darf sie nicht entbehren.]

Faust's attempt to seize Helen's phantom ends in catastrophe. Faust unconsciously retains but a single longing: to reach the real Helen, ancient beauty come to life. The second appearance of Helen is intended to represent just this reality in contrast to the phantom character of the first.

Often revising his rough drafts, Goethe worked a long time on these transitions so that, as he writes to Zelter: "*Helen* might form a third act which would fit in naturally and, because adequately prepared, would no longer appear phantasmagoric and superimposed but in a sequence in conformity with aesthetics and reason." Now what is this aesthetic conformity with reason? Goethe undertakes the task of showing, first, that Helen, the beauty of antiquity, is not a propped up product of sorcery, an optical illusion, but a truly natural creation; secondly, that she forms the spiritual and human foundation of contemporary life, the point of departure for something really new and fruitful; and, thirdly, that—for these very reasons—she is at once both past and present. The classical Walpurgis-night which develops these determinations is not, therefore, a symbolic—fantastic episode like the medieval Walpurgis-night in the first part where Mephistopheles enjoys the transitory success of distracting Faust from the tragedy of Gretchen by means of coarse sensual debauches. Rather it is the organic, ideal aesthetic prepara-

tion for the real appearance of Helen. (This is to be understood with the reservations indicated above.)

Accordingly, the classical Walpurgis-night expresses most clearly the "phenomenological" history of the evolution of the species. Subjectively, it is Faust's way to Helen; but objectively it is at the same time the evolution of Greek beauty from its primitive, still natural, partially oriental beginnings. To trace this in detail would be the task of a more exhaustive commentary. Goethe's original plan was to have Faust descend into ancient Hades and by favour of Proserpina re-awaken Helen to life. Later he changed this plan. Faust does, of course, go down to Proserpina during Walpurgis-night, but we do not witness their encounter. Instead, there appears at the end, engendered by the play of natural forces, the triumphant beauty of Galatea. The way leading from the griffins, sphinxes, dwarfs of the beginning to the triumphal procession of the beauty born of the sea is the realization of Goethe's programme, as stated in the letter to Zelter cited above. Now when Helen appears in person in the third act, her presence is no longer the product of sorcery but rather the result of that natural process we witnessed in the classical Walpurgis-night. Once beauty is born of nature, then the appearance of Helen is no greater a miracle than the birth of Galatea.

The substance of the Helen scenes is the birth of the new, the specifically modern out of the appropriation of antiquity by a humanity liberated from the Middle Ages. Helen is now real, no longer a phantom—but what sort of reality has she? Even the classical Walpurgis-night oscillates between dream and reality and has a "phenomenological"-fantastic time sequence. It begins already with the end of ancient liberty which, according to Winckelmann —and also Goethe—was the foundation of Greek harmony and perfection of form. If, then, after the downfall of true antiquity, long after the battle of Pharsalus,[1] the battle-field where ancient republicanism finally perished, the process of the genesis of ancient beauty is recapitulated dramatically before our eyes, this process must necessarily oscillate between dream and reality and its enactors between real characters and phantoms of memory.

The reality of the Helen scenes is, then, only a thin surface of ancient beauty, appearing and taking shape; a veil behind which forces of the past and others not yet born struggle for the future of mankind. It is true that Helen appears with the dignity and majesty of a true queen, filled with a sense of the present and certain of the irresistible power of her beauty; but when Mephistopheles as Phorkyas reminds her in a duel of words of her own past, of the various partially contradictory legends from which she was

[1] The site of Pompey's defeat by Caesar in 48 B.C.—*Tr.*

woven into this incomparable symbolic figure, her own existence becomes sinister, schematic, and unreal to her:

> An idol I, to him an idol then was joined.
> It was a dream, so say even the words themselves.
> I faint away, and to myself become an idol.
>
> [Ich als Idol ihm dem Idol verband ich mich.
> Es war ein Traum, so sagen ja die Worte selbst.
> Ich schwinde hin und werde selbst mir ein Idol.]

This atmosphere of unreality is manifested even more clearly at the beginning of the Euphorion scene. The tragedy of Euphorion's endeavour has not yet come to light. Everything still seems fine and hopeful, when Faust has the distinct feeling of a dream-world that must dissolve:

> Where this only finished!
> This game of conjuring
> pleases me not.
>
> [Wäre das doch vorbei!
> Mich kann die Gaukelei
> Gar nicht erfreun.]

But this unreality is in complete contrast to that of the imperial court. The latter is an empirical reality which phosphorizes like a ghost because of its inner rottenness—the former the ideal climax to the centuries-long struggle of modern mankind for light, clarity, and beauty; the most sublime ideal of reality postulated as real, but only postulated, not empirically real. And for that very reason it is negated, destroyed again by reality.

This destruction is the function of the Euphorion scene. A great deal has been written about the identity or non-identity of Euphorion with Byron. Undoubtedly Byron's death at Missolonghi crystallized the final form of the Euphorion scenes. But a merely philological explication of this figure, with Byron as the frame of refence, does not adequately explain the historical, philosophical, and poetic content of these scenes. In order to do so, we must bear in mind how Goethe viewed Byron, why he considered him to be the representative of this new age which moves beyond the renewal of antiquity toward a new future filled with new tragedies.

In a conversation with Eckermann, Goethe says: "Byron is neither classical nor romantic but like the present day itself. I had to have someone like this." (So every explanation is false which seeks a *rapport* here between Classicism and Romanticism). In an

earlier conversation, Goethe relates even more concretely how he conceives this non-classical and non-romantic modernity of Byron. He formulates Byron's "symbolum" thus: "*Much money and no authority.*" He sees him, then, as the greatest representative of a liberal anarchical individualism, the ideological representative of the nascent capitalist era which succeeds the last renascence of antiquity, the period of Goethe and Napoleon.

Goethe feels very strongly that this new era is no longer that of his own poetic prime. But he feels just as distinctly that he stands before something legitimate and progressive that must be approved from the standpoint of a philosophy of history. Thus, he always defends Byron against the philistine objections of Eckermann who denies that Byron is an asset to "pure human culture". "Then I must differ with you," says Goethe, "Byron's courage, daring, and grandiosity—is not all this cultivating? We must guard against seeking it always in what is decidedly pure and moral. Everything great cultivates as soon as we become aware of it."

This figure, the symbol of the dawning new age, shatters the classical dream-world in the same way as the beauty of antiquity shattered the medieval world of phantoms. Even before the appearance of Euphorion, Mephisto as Phorkyas says:

> Be quick to free yourselves of fables!
> Your gods, that multitude of old,
> Leave behind; they're all passé.
>
> [Macht euch von Fabeln frei!
> Eurer Götter alt Gemenge,
> Lasst es hin, es ist vorbei.]

Thus, we find in Euphorion the ideology of the most modern age in a finished, though tragically defeated, form. But the defeat is such that once more new ascents must necessarily follow from it and the vanquished figure be ever reproduced anew from the same soil which engendered him. This is why the chorus's dirge over Euphorion's death closes with the words:

> Who shall achieve it?—Gloomy question
> to which destiny wears a mask
> when on a day of great misfortune,
> bleeding, all mankind falls dumb.
> But revive yourselves with new songs,
> stay no longer deeply bowed:
> for earth engenders them again
> just as always it has done.

[Wem gelingt es?—Trübe Frage,
Der das Schicksal sich vermummt,
Wenn am unglückseligsten Tage
Blutend alles Volk verstummt.
Doch erfrischet neue Lieder,
Steht nicht länger tief gebeugt:
Denn der Boden zeugt sie wieder,
Wie von je er sie gezeugt.]

This conception is profound and imposing. Its specifically Goethean character lies in the fact that the renewal of antiquity is viewed, with a certain one-sidedness, only from the aesthetic and moral standpoint, as a vestment of the last "heroic illusions". The conception of antiquity of the revolutionary Terror, and also that of the entirely different Napoleonic period, are absent in Goethe's symbolically represented image of history, although objectively he could never have reached his philosophical and poetic zenith without this historical development. In this connection, Goethe is far less resolute than Hegel in later life for whom the French Revolution as the past, as a necessary link in the historical dialectic was indispensable; in the *Phenomenology*, the French Revolution even forms the direct foundation of the dawning new age. Goethe always approved the social and political content of the French Revolution, and with age his approval assumes ever more resolute forms; but he consistently rejected the political course of revolution. In this, he remained until the end of his life a son of the Enlightenment. We must not forget, however, that the French heirs of the Enlightenment, the great utopians whose perspectives on the future were a great deal more advanced, also always considered the political course of revolution to be impracticable and pernicious.

Accordingly, Goethe's positive attitude toward the content of the French Revolution manifests itself in *Faust* only incidentally and indirectly, for example, in the Walpurgis-night of the first part where the French émigrés, the various sorts of "çi-devants", are derided with so much contempt; or in the Euphorion scenes, or, as we shall see further on, as a perspective in Faust's last monologue.

This is why the historical picture of the second part is lacking in political action. It goes without saying that Faust is quite unable to act at the imperial court. The posthumous fragments show this even more pointedly than the text itself. In one rough draft Goethe has Faust propose some grandiose plans to the emperor. The emperor listens without understanding anything. When Mephistopheles observes that the situation is becoming impossible, he assumes the form of Faust and babbles all kinds of nonsense where-

upon emperor and court alike become enraptured by the profundity and grandeur of this new magician. And when Faust returns to life after the disappearance of antiquity, he is interested in nothing but the economic and technical struggle for the subjugation of nature.

In the preparatory scenes of this last stage, the humanly resigned tone of Faust is striking. He rejects all enjoyment: "Enjoyment debases" [*Geniessen macht gemein*]. He pays no heed to fame: "Only the deed counts, not fame" [*Die Tat ist alles, nichts der Ruhm*]. Goethe even has Mephistopheles parody the Temptation of Christ by Satan and offer Faust "the kingdoms of the world and all their glory" [*die Reiche der Welt und ihre Herrlichkeiten*]. But Faust refuses and wants nothing but a field of action for his new plans. Here, too, certain fragments are clearer than the work itself; in one, Faust even breaks with Mephisto.

This conception of social activity of the older Goethe has often been criticized in the literature on *Faust*, especially by F. T. Vischer who even proposes a plan as to how Goethe ought to have written the second part. He demands Faust's participation in the Peasants' War and does so as a liberal who wishes to avoid all the "horrors" of the Revolution. Mephisto, however, with whom Faust has already broken earlier, should have insinuated himself into the insurgent movement and as a "radical" pushed it to extremes, provoked "excesses" which Faust would not have wished but which he would have been responsible for. Faust's repentance would lead then to his purification. Now we have seen that Goethe refused in advance to use in part two categories of purely individual morality like repentance. The subjectivist and moralizing narrowness of Vischer's conception expresses a liberal philosophy of history according to which the true representatives of the Mephistophelian principle would have been the plebeian revolutionaries, the Münzers and the Robespierres.

For all his lack of understanding of the aspirations of a consistent revolutionary democracy, Goethe stands far above such a conception. It is true that moods bordering on this conception appear occasionally in his youthful work, *Götz von Berlichingen*. But, since this is the work of a pre-revolutionary apostle of the Enlightenment, these moods have quite another significance. Vischer's ideal was realized in Maximilian Klinger's *Faust* where the disillusionment, the dislocation of a writer of the "Storm and Stress" *vis-à-vis* the French Revolution is clearly manifest. Goethe could not possibly seek the path of democratic revolution, but never in his decisive works do we find a reactionary or liberal struggle against it. His genius finds a way out—though one obviously not devoid of utopian elements—that of the development of the productive forces by capitalism.

Vischer characteristically disapproves of this alternative too. He

thinks that Faust is right to have brought about reconciliation through practical activity, "but not of a prosaic-industrial kind". The liberal Vischer, whose attitude toward capitalism is incomparably more positive and less critical than that of Goethe, thus criticizes—in a petit-bourgeois and romantic manner—precisely what is most noble in the conclusion of *Faust*: the discovery of a new and practical heroism, of a new and profound tragic conflict at the very centre of the prose of capitalism.

But although Vischer heedlessly passes over the most magnificent poetic moments of the second part, he at least sees the facts correctly, despite his liberal romantic bias. The reactionary romantic of the imperialist period, Friedrich Gundolf, is so deeply indignant over the fact that Goethe turned away from his youthful "titanism" that he is not even capable of absorbing correctly the conclusion of the text and thinks at the end Faust enters into "government service".

The conclusion to the second part grew organically out of the ageing Goethe's view of society. No-one acquainted with the pronouncements of his last decades can be surprised at this ending. Goethe ironically rejects the confused illusions of the wars of liberation but later thinks that good highways and railroads will necessarily bring about the unity of Germany. He takes a passionate interest in every technical and economic achievement of capitalism and even expresses the desire to be able to live long enough to witness the construction of the Danube-Rhine canal and the Suez and Panama canals. Here too belongs his envious recognition—very rare in Germany then—of the nascent ascendance of the United States.

This perspective allows Goethe the illusion that such an unrestricted and grandiose development of productive forces will render the political revolution superfluous. This is one of the most important inadequacies and limitations of his *Weltanschauung* which is also reflected in his philosophy of nature, in his conception of the dialectic, in his over-emphasis on evolution, and in his rejection of any "theory of catastrophe". (Our recognition of this one-sidedness, however, should not prevent us from seeing what a great step forward Goethe's philosophy of nature signified in relation, for example, to that of Georges Cuvier). And it is just this one-sidedness in Goethe which is so closely related to his unique position we have frequently emphasized: the specific way in which he forms a bridge between the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century.

But however we may criticize this limitation of Goethe, it is certain that his poetic "phenomenology of the spirit" ends with the real development of the productive forces, as the power which leads

from the phantasmagoric existence of feudalism to the world of the real development of human capabilities, to the real world of human activity. As we shall see further on, Goethe does nothing to mitigate the diabolical character of the capitalist form of this progress; but at the same time he shows that here the true field of human activity presents itself for the first time. Only this practical and prosaic ending provides an adequate answer both to the Renaissance problem posed at the beginning, which is insoluble in terms of tragedy, and to the tragedy of the Earth-Spirit scene. By relying less than Lessing on Enlightenment epistemology for his conception of Faust, and by adhering more closely to Renaissance traditions, Goethe found a springboard to the modern unity of theory and practice brought about by the development of industry.

No doubt this is only a perspective on the answer. Goethe's horizon does not extend beyond capitalism. His deep intellectual and poetic honesty results, therefore, in a presentation in naked and irreconcilable antitheses. Accordingly, capitalist activity is indeed the fulfilment of Faust's life-longing, but at the same time, and inseparable from it, this activity constitutes a new and maximal field of activity for Mephistopheles after he has sunk almost to the level of a mere onlooker in the scenes dealing with antiquity. The structure of the most modern age appears, then, in a discordant and contradictory form. On the one hand, we have before us the revolutionary juvenility of Euphorion and, on the other, Faust as a blind old centenarian. Without being able to attain to a conceptual historical clarity, Goethe feels the capitalist era to be at once both old and young, a beginning and an end.

In this whole complex of problems, the contradictions are clearly represented, but not only do they remain unresolved, they stand over against one another in a more sharply dissonant manner than anywhere else in the work of Goethe. The prospect of solving the tragic contradictions contained in Faust's final monologue, is expressly only a prospect of the future. Faust's hopeful words are in shrill opposition to the actual situation in which they are spoken: while lemures, on the instructions of Mephisto, dig Faust's grave, Faust dreams of great productive works which would lead mankind forward. The celestial Christian transcendence at the very end is the intellectually and aesthetically necessary consequence, as we shall see in detail further on, of the final conclusions of Goethe's philosophy of history and of the contradictions of life, which were fundamentally insoluble in the actual world known to Goethe the thinker and poet. Hence, all critics who demand a purely terrestrial ending are only apparently more radical than Goethe was; behind this demand is an essentially shallow liberal view of the world,

namely the demand for a "resolution" of all the contradictions of life under capitalism within capitalist society itself. Goethe's vision is incomparably more profound: he believes in an incorruptible *nucleus* in man, in mankind and its development. He believes in the salvage of this nucleus even *in* (and above all *despite*) the capitalist form of development.

3. *Faust and Mephistopheles*

The struggle for this inner nucleus of man is the subject of the real plot of *Faust*, of which we have just sketched the historical and social framework. This struggle is concentrated in the duel between Faust and Mephistopheles. What is its subject and what its main stages?

Mephistopheles states his programme plainly in the "Prologue in Heaven": "Dust shall he eat, and that with zest" [*Staub soll er fressen, und mit Lust*]. This programme is based on his conception of man and man's use of reason:

> He calls it reason but only uses it
> to be more beastly than any beast.
>
> [Er nennt's Vernunft und braucht's allein,
> Nur tierischer als jedes Tier zu sein].

These words clearly define his view of life and the direction of his will. Goethe's concrete representation—and it is precisely here that his poetic depth manifests itself—takes on the most varied hues never reducing itself to an abstract principle, Mephistopheles thus emerges as a live poetic figure and not as a mere embodiment of the principle of evil. This is why all attempts to "define" his character are futile and misleading.

It is much more important to determine the radius of his activity, his field of force. His aim, as in the legend, is to win the soul of Faust. But in his concrete representation of this aim, Goethe's radical ideological departure from the legend becomes apparent. The legend is still largely medieval; it takes its point of departure from the autonomous and sharply opposed principles of good and evil in conflict for the human soul. Even Lessing's dream-play retains elements of this sharp and non-dialectical separation of the two conflicting forces; although Lessing, living at the height of the Enlightenment, sees in this struggle only an apparent conflict.

In Goethe, the duel is entirely internal. Mephistopheles possesses

power only to the extent that he constitutes an aspect of Faust's own psychological-historical development. And the great poetic accomplishment of Goethe consists precisely in the fact that, despite this, Mephistopheles does not remain a mere component of Faust's subjectivity but becomes a figure with distinct and autonomous contours. However, the diabolical element of Mephisto, as something which lies outside the human sphere, is thereby consciously eliminated. (This is the reason why everything extrinsic and magical in the legend is omitted in Goethe's *Faust*. In the course of his work, this elimination becomes more stringent. For example, we need only compare the scene "Auerbach's Wine-Cellar" in the *Urfaust* with its later version). Indeed, Goethe even goes so far as to have Mephisto repeatedly deny and ironically suppress his own diabolical nature (for example, in the "Witches' Kitchen") or has him declare in earnest that Faust's way to salvation or damnation depends only on Faust himself and not at all on the devil or any diabolical influences. Thus, as the conclusion of his major monologue following his conversation with Faust, Mephisto says:

> And e'en had he not consigned himself to the devil,
> he still would have had to perish.
>
> [Und hätt' er sich auch nicht dem Teufel übergeben,
> Er müsste doch zugrunde gehn.]

This tendency to negate the supernatural characters is sustained effectively by Faust's professions of faith in an exclusively terrestrial world and his disavowal of any hereafter. In the major dialogue at the beginning, Faust says to Mephistopheles:

> The hereafter scarcely concerns me:
> were you to dash this world to pieces,
> the other may follow thereon.
> This earth it is which is the source of my joys,
> and this sun it is which beholds my sorrows;
> were I to divorce my life from them,
> then let happen what can or will.
> No more of it do I wish to hear . . .
>
> [Das Drüben kann mich wenig kümmern;
> Schlägst du erst diese Welt zu Trümmern
> Die andre mag darnach entstehn.
> Aus dieser Erde quillen meine Freuden,
> Und diese Sonne scheinet meinen Leiden;
> Kann ich mich erst von ihnen scheiden,

Dann mag, was will und kann, geschehn.
Davon will ich nichts weiter hören . . .]

And even more resolutely at the end of the second part:

A view of the beyond is denied us:
a fool is he who turns a furtive eye there
and visualizes his peers o'er the clouds!
Let him stand fast and take a look around:
to the capable this world is not mute.
What need has he to rove in eternity?

[Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt;
Tor, wer dorthin die Augen blinzelnd richtet,
Sich über Wolken seinesgleichen dichtet!
Er stehe fest und sehe sich hier um;
Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen!]

Faust and Mephisto, then, are both basically atheists. Once again, we see how much Goethe drew on the historical authenticity of the legend. With these words, Faust is able to destroy any hereafter, concentrate the action radically on the terrestrial level, and yet not lose the historical colour. For, despite their specifically Goethean quality, thoughts of this sort correspond to the age of Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, and Francis Bacon of Verulam.

Beyond this, however, in Goethe the legend is intensified into a struggle for the preservation and perpetuation of the human nucleus over against the diabolical and satanic possibilities within man himself.

In Goethe's *Faust*, Satan himself does not appear, although he does so in fragments of the "Walpurgis-Night" which were later omitted. The poetically marvellous strophes that Goethe put in the mouth of Satan show his essence as naked greed for gold and naked sexuality. The striving after these two "supreme goods" is the wisdom of Satan, i.e. the undiluted and absolute perfection of what Mephistopheles characterized, in the words already cited, as the use to which human reason is put. Mephisto is simply a subordinate representative of this principle, but precisely because he stands lower than Satan in the hierarchy of the nether world, he is more spiritualized and more spiritual than Satan. He must elevate the diabolical principles to a sufficiently high level spiritually, sublimate them in order to arrive at a common field of action with Faust, in order to attain, although often only externally, to the inner problems of Faust. Hence, he must dilute the satanic "wisdom" into human language.

Only in this way is the Mephistophelian principle able to become a motive force of Faust's (and Goethe's) subjectivity itself. This is

why Goethe could concur with the critique of Ampère who discovered in Mephisto some of Goethe's own traits. This is why a great many of Mephisto's repartees are objectively accurate and even express Goethe's deep convictions. For example, Goethe can make Mephisto appear in the "Parade of Masks" [*Maskenzug*] (1818) and have him express his innermost convictions thus:

> I gave him to understand that life
> is properly given us to live . . .
> While we have life, let us be alive!
>
> [Ich macht' ihm deutlich, dass das Leben
> Zum Leben eigentlich gegeben . . .
> So lang man lebt, sei man lebendig!]

Only the exact function in the given concrete stage of development determines whether a feeling, a thought, or an action is human or diabolical. Sometimes it is not even possible to come to a decision about this on the basis of the isolated moment, but only on the basis of the direction of the process it reveals and which will become visible only later.

This dialectic is the foundation of Goethe's unshakeable faith in the future of mankind. The struggle between good and evil engenders the forward direction of evolution; even evil can be a vehicle of objective progress. The famous remark of Mephisto concerning himself as being "a part of that force which always wills evil and always produces good" [*Ein Teil von jener Kraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft*] is only the most succinct expression of this Goethean world-view. Of course, this is by no means an original invention of Goethe. It is clearly articulated by several Enlightenment figures, especially those who had a vital interest in the specific aspects of capitalist development (Mandeville). But only in *Faust* and in the philosophy of Hegel as the "ruse of reason" did this view become the foundation of the new faith in dialectical progress which followed the French Revolution.

So there emerges a struggle involving consequences which are always uncertain, a perpetual danger for Faust. The seeds of good can lie hidden in evil, but at the same time, there can be something satanic in the most lofty feeling, or the satanic can even grow out of it. This balancing on the razor's edge is what constitutes the inner drama of *Faust*. But as in all dramatic, tragic wisdom, this constant and dangerous oscillation does not engender nihilism. Goethe incorporates moral and social relativism poetically as an element in the total dialectic in the same way that Hegel does philosophically.

It is no accident that this new form of the dialectic of good and evil was first perceived by the most penetrating observers of the development of capitalism. Satan's naked greed for gold is something widespread and general, something which holds good for all societies divided into classes. The specifically capitalist significance of money as an "extension" of man, as his power over men and circumstances, is represented only by Mephistopheles:

> If I can pay for six stallions,
> are not their powers also my own?
> I race about and a real man am I,
> as if I had four and twenty legs.
>
> [Wenn ich sechs Hengste zahlen kann,
> Sind ihre Kräfte nicht die meine?
> Ich renne zu und bin ein rechter Mann,
> Als hätt' ich vierundzwanzig Beine.]

The young Marx recognized the meaning of this passage for a characterization of capitalism. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, he analyses it thus: "What exists for me through the medium of *money*, what I can pay for, i.e. what money can buy, is what I *am* as the possessor of the money. The properties of the money are my own (its possessor's) properties and essential powers. What I *am* and *can do* is, then, not at all determined by my individuality. I *am* ugly, but I can buy myself the *most* beautiful woman. Hence, I am not *ugly*, for the effect of *ugliness*, its power to repel, is nullified by money. In my individuality I am *lame*, but money provides me with twenty-four legs; hence, I am not lame. I am a wicked, dishonest, unscrupulous, dull-witted man, but money is honoured and so too is its possessor. Money is the highest good, so its possessor is good. Besides, money saves me the trouble of being dishonest; hence, I am presumed honest. I am *dull-witted*, but since money is the *real spirit*, of all things, how could its possessor be dull-witted? Moreover, he can buy himself clever people, and is not he who has power over the clever more clever than they? I who can possess, by means of money, *everything* for which the human heart longs, do I not possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all incapacities into their opposite?"

If we consider the magical effects produced by Mephistopheles, especially in the first part, we see in essence this magical enlargement of the radius of human action by means of money such as Marx analysed it. In the second part, as we have seen, Mephisto recedes into the background in the scenes which deal with antiquity. In the other scenes of the second part, however, his role, correspond-

ing to the transformation of the whole scenario into that of the "great world", becomes the concrete expression of something explicity social. Thus, as we have already seen, in the waning feudal world Mephisto becomes the inventor of paper money, the symbol of the dominion of money over conditions in general. And, without a revolution of the relations of production, without a development of the productive forces, the petrifaction and decomposition of these conditions is accelerated by the infiltration of money.

Finally, by having recourse to the magic of Mephisto, Faust finds his field of activity in the subjection of nature to human action. Here, however, Mephisto becomes in turn an inseparable companion to his most noble aspirations. The assistance of Mephistopheles not only gives rise to the capitalist "intermundium" within feudalism, but its extension and flowering are also due to this aid given by the devil. Faust has a harbour built and develops a thriving commerce of which Mephisto acts as the executive organ in this way:

> The free sea makes the spirit free . . .
> It only needs a speedy grip,
> you snare the fish, you seize a ship,
> and once one is lord over three,
> the fourth is grappled easily;
> the fifth is then in evil plight,
> one has power, then one has right.
> One counts the What, and not the How.
> Either I know no navigation,
> or war, commerce and piracy
> are three in one, without separation.
>
> [Das freie Meer befreit den Geist . . .
> Da fördert nur ein rascher Griff,
> Man fängt den Fisch, man fängt ein Schiff,
> Und ist man erst der Herr zu drei,
> Dann hakelt man das vierte bei;
> Da geht es denn dem fünften schlecht,
> Man hat Gewalt, so hat man Recht.
> Man fragt ums Was, und nicht ums Wie.
> Ich müsste keine Schiffahrt kennen:
> Krieg, Handel und Piraterie,
> Dreieinig sind sie, nicht zu trennen.]

He renders similar assistance to Faust when Faust finds that the idyllic small-holding of Philemon and Baucis prevents him from rounding out his domain. Faust would like to compensate the poor

old people and relocate them elsewhere. But they do not consent to this, and so the expropriation is carried through by Mephistopheles and his helpers with fire and sword. The assistance rendered Faust by Mephisto, assistance which alone makes Faust's great work realizable, manifests everywhere those features which characterize the so-called "primitive accumulation" of capital and which were described superbly by the important English writers of the eighteenth century in literature and the journals. But only in Mephistopheles are all these features concentrated in one symbolic poetic figure.

The fact that the diabolical and cynical aspects of capitalism thus come to the fore in Mephisto does not mean that he would be the "representative" of capitalism or even only of its "evil sides". Nonetheless, we must energetically emphasize here the partially capitalist basis of Mephisto's character, because in the literature on *Faust*—with the exception of the remarks by Marx which we have cited—an understanding of this crucial aspect of his character is naturally altogether lacking. (The fact that certain romantic reactionary critics, like Wilhelm von Schütz,[1] touched on this problem means very little, since everything in them is distorted). However, the spiritual and moral duel between Faust and Mephistopheles presented by Goethe necessarily extends far beyond this basis we have sketched, although most of its manifestations can be traced back to it through more or less complex mediations. This duel extends to all the important problems of human life; it shows a dramatically vigorous up and down movement in the effect of the Mephistophelian elements and tendencies on the soul of Faust. And only the total course of the struggle provides the answer to the wager between God and the devil, shows the denouement of the destiny of Faust, and expresses the Goethean perspective on the future prospects of the human race.

Gold and sexuality: this is what the "wisdom" of Goethe's Satan reduces to. His goal, which the magic and cynicism of Mephisto serve, is the bestialization of man, the creation of a "spiritual animal kingdom" (Hegel).

Here, Goethe's departure from the legend is particularly conspicuous. For medieval religiosity—and Lutheran orthodoxy in this respect carries over a great deal from the Middle Ages—sensuality, the natural existence of man, is sinful. Accordingly, even nature itself is the domain of the devil; Satan is master of terra firma, of "the kingdoms of the world and all their splendours" [*der Reiche der Welt und ihrer Herrlichkeiten*]. And only by obeying the ascetic precepts

[1] Wilhelm von Schütz, 1776-1847, author of *Goethes Faust und der Protestantismus*, 1844.—*Tr.*

of the Christian hereafter is man able to subdue the devil. For the Enlightenment, on the other hand, for Goethe who grew out of it, there is a completely opposite relation to nature, both to external nature, which forms the field of human knowledge and activity, as well as to man's own naturally given essence. For Goethe, both constitute the organic foundation of all human development and greatness. This is why Goethe is not only hostile to the manifest vestiges of the medieval *Weltanschauung*, but also rejects, even in his otherwise progressive contemporaries, everything which is even a distant reminder of it. This is why it is altogether false to read into *Faust*, as many commentators do, any essential relationship between Goethe and Kant. On the one hand, from his early youth, Goethe rejected the Kantian postulate of the unknowableness of nature, the unknowableness of the thing-in-itself. (In a letter to Merck, for example, he writes: "Observe that nature lives thus—uncomprehended, yet not incomprehensible"). But, perhaps even more passionately, he rejects the Kantian conception of the "radical evil" in man's empirical and physical nature.

This antithesis seems to contradict the tragic Earth-Spirit scene which we have already analysed. Once again, however, it must be emphasized that the Earth-Spirit states nothing more about himself than that which constitutes the essential point of Goethe's philosophy of nature: the ceaseless transformation and self-renewal of nature. And in what does the Earth-Spirit reject the relationship with Faust? What knowledge does he consider impossible? It is the immediate mystical identification of man and nature which the young Goethe represents here as a heroic, tragically futile pursuit of knowledge and which he overcomes at the same time.

This overcoming is also known to us already. Its first stage is the scene, "Forest and Cave", in which Faust surmounts the youthful form of immediate knowledge and follows a course leading to a true knowledge of nature. But Faust (and with him, Goethe) still finds himself, according to Goethe's own words, in the "philosophical natural state". This knowledge is still unable to serve as a guiding principle for Faust's life. On the contrary, it leads him into another tragedy. (Further on, we shall see it is not by chance that this scene forms the peripeteia of the Gretchen tragedy).

The next stage, the opening scene of the second part, we have also encountered already in the course of our analysis. In this scene, Goethe shows that beyond man and morals is the healing power of nature. Here, however, he also gives a clearer and more concrete response to the tragic dilemma of the Earth-Spirit scene. Faust, now healed, sees the sunrise. Blinded by its rays—as formerly by the appearance of the Earth-Spirit—he is obliged to turn away. But the

result is no longer a tragic conflict. Faust no longer believes that he is debarred from the understanding and enjoyment of nature. He maintains—"the sun at my back" [*die Sonne mir im Rücken*]—a a joyous and understanding attitude toward nature: "Life we have in its colourful reflection" [*Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben.*] This is the poetic expression of the rebirth of nature philosophy and its close connection with the emergence of the new aesthetics: that period in the development of the knowledge of nature which young Marx called "the upright ideas" of Schelling's youth. And the whole scene forms the philosophical prologue to the Helen tragedy, just as "Forest and Cave" forms the peripeteia of the Gretchen tragedy.

The two scenes just mentioned, however important they are for the total composition, are not in and of themselves dramatic. They are summary pauses, turning-points, points of deliberation. Both are based on monologue; Mephisto is absent in both. (In "Forest and Cave", he appears toward the end; in the last-named scene, he does not appear at all). Only at the beginning of *Faust* does the attempt to understand nature form the focus of the tragedy; only at the end does the understanding of nature coincide with social action to form the foundation of the last decisive discussion between Faust and Mephistopheles.

A correct understanding of Goethe's attitude toward nature is not only very important for the ideological structure of *Faust*; it is indispensable for an understanding of the relationship between Faust and Mephisto. For there is a whole school of *Faust* commentators—inaugurated by Kuno Fischer—who view Mephistopheles as an emissary of the Earth-Spirit. Apart from the practical worthlessness of this hypothesis (which makes the "Prologue in Heaven" meaningless and shows at most that Goethe worked so negligently that in the revised work he left unchanged vestiges of a conception he had surmounted), it transforms the whole Goethean conception of nature into one that is Christian and medieval. For, in this case, the Earth-Spirit is not a natural principle, but a diabolical principle. This is a resurgence of orthodox Lutheran tendencies in the traditional Faust legend and has nothing to do with Goethe.

The central idea of the Goethean conception of nature is the independence of nature from man and from his viewpoints, moral and otherwise. Of course, from the fact that nature so conceived manifests itself as a healing force in the first scene of the second part, it does not follow at all that Goethe had an idyllic conception of nature. The conclusion to the whole tragedy is rather man's fierce and ever-changing struggle with the forces of nature. And if, at the end, Mephistopheles establishes as a perspective the destruction of Faust's

whole life-work by natural forces, he thereby expresses—with sarcastic exaggeration, but nevertheless justly—one side of nature and Goethe's view of it. Goethe himself relates that his ballads were an artistic factor which stimulated him to resume work on *Faust*. One need only think of ballads like *Erlkönig* [*Erlking*] in order to realize to what extent Goethe perceived and expressed in a poetically adequate manner the non-idyllic, the sinisterly beautiful, the alluring yet menacing and destructive side of nature.

Of course, these ballads of Goethe not only depict nature in itself, but also the internal and external interaction between nature and man. Thus, the struggle to master nature never ceases to be important for Goethe. The essentials are always the tragic and tragicomic conflicts which arise out of the release of forces that are automatically destructive if man does not come to know their innermost secrets, their laws (*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*).

Here, too, the fundamental line of Goethe's thinking runs parallel to that of Hegel. The result of human action is always objectively something other than what men intended in their passion. The movement, the development of human society proceeds from the passions of individuals, but its results transcend individuals and make the men who act dependent on the consequences of their own actions. This conception pervades the whole structure of *Faust* and is one of the reasons why Goethe was bound to transcend intellectually and poetically any merely individual morality. Mephisto says:

> In the end we still depend
> on creatures of our own making.
>
> [Am Ende hängen wir doch ab
> Von Kreaturen, die wir machten.]

According to Goethe, man lives in the net of his relations. At the same time, he is himself a part of nature, a microcosm in which the same natural forces are operative as in the macrocosm. Goethe regards the human passions as a sort of natural force which—viewed directly—arise out of unknown sources, flare up on occasion (seemingly by chance), and, once set free, launch out toward an unforeseeable goal.

But passion for Goethe is of nature only and not simply identical with nature. For the passions encompass the whole of cultural life and are related to its highest objects. Progress in culture, but at the same time, its endangerment, its destruction, its transformation into chaos and barbarism are impossible without passion. The mastery of passion, its ennoblement, its orientation toward the really great goals of the human species—this is Goethe's ethic! Goethe is never amoral,

as Kantian philistines have supposed; still less is he asocial, as radical philistines have claimed. His morality seeks a way which would allow *every* passion to express itself and develop in the interest of the species. By the mastery of the passions, he does not mean their rigorously ascetic suppression, as Kant does; he has in mind rather —like the great men of the Renaissance, and also Fourier—a state of humanity and human relations in which the interaction of men, the test of the passions in human activity, would lead men to a real consciousness of themselves; that is, to a complete development of all their potentialities, to a harmonious equilibrium of the unfolding passions—and that in such a way that the inner harmony of man would be the motive force of his accord with his fellow-man.

Goethe is fully aware that in his age these aspirations are necessarily fraught with conflict and even have a tragic character. But this awareness does not lead him to renounce these aspirations. On the one hand, he projects utopian images of human relations, of social conditions in which such tendencies seem realizable to him. (Both *Wilhelm Meisters* are, in different ways, answers to this problem). On the other hand, he portrays individual destinies which realize a (relative) maximum, a (relative) intactness of these possibilities of development. *Faust* is a poetic synthesis of both tendencies.

Only from this perspective does the duel between Faust and Mephistopheles become comprehensible. The "Prologue in Heaven" formulates the problem of good and evil (God and the devil) objectively for all mankind; the destiny of Faust appears here only as an illustration. In the literature on *Faust* there is relatively little controversy about the wager, but a great deal more about its subjective and moral outcome. Time and again the commentators raise the question of whether it was not Mephisto who really won the wager with Faust, or whether Faust's last words ("Linger yet, you are so fair!" [*Verweile doch, du bist so schön!*]) do not satisfy the conditions of the wager.

In reality, the encounter between Faust and Mephisto, even as regards the wager, is only an encounter on the field of battle, a clash of arms. Although they both consent to the wager, each understands the same words to mean something completely different. Mephisto offers Faust the pleasures of life, the full enjoyment of life, which not only contrasts positively with Faust's previous scholarly existence, but—viewed abstractly, though only abstractly—corresponds to Faust's longing. Concretely, Faust has something quite different in mind: not the enjoyment of life (this is only a means and medium) but the realization, the development of all his individual possibilities, so that, by being put to the test in the world, he might penetrate, come to know, and dominate reality. Disillusioned both with abstract

knowledge as well as with immediately intuitive knowledge, Faust, driven to despair, becomes passionately anti-ascetic. But even then, although he is not yet fully aware of his innermost inclinations, he scorns mere hedonism, the enjoyment of life for the sake of sensual pleasure—life in the sense of Mephistopheles.

The way in which Goethe understood life and the enjoyment of life has frequently been misconstrued, although time and again he expressed himself on this subject in the most unambiguous manner. I cite only one example, a passage from a letter written during his early Weimar years to Lavater: ". . . so I sincerely enjoyed with the others a sampling of the multicoloured ferment of the world. Discontent, hope, love, labour, misery, adventure, ennui, hate, stupidity, folly, joy, the expected and the unexpected, the shallow and the profound, just as the dice fall. . . ."

This Goethean conception of life and the enjoyment of life resounds in the words of Faust which introduce the wager with Mephisto:

> If ever I should seek repose in the lap of sloth,
> then promptly let my end occur!
> If you can dupe me with flattery,
> so that I am self-satified,
> if with enjoyment you can trick me:
> let that day be the last for me!
> I offer the bet!
>
> [Werd' ich beruhigt je mich auf ein Faulbett legen,
> So sei es gleich um mich getan!
> Kannst du mich schmeichelnd je belügen,
> Dass ich mir selbst gefallen mag,
> Kannst du mich mit Genuss betrügen:
> Das sei für mich der letzte Tag!
> Die Wette biet' ich!]

The "linger yet" is conceived as the consummation of *this* longing. According to Goethe's conception of reality, however, it is not realizable. And even in the poem it is not realized. Faust's last words are a fantasy, a vision of the future. It is with reference to this vision, and *only to it*, not to the present moment experienced, that he says:

> To the fleeting moment I dared say:
> "Linger yet, you are so fair!" . . .
> In anticipation of such great bliss,
> I now enjoy the moment most sublime.

[Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:
Verweile doch! Du bist so schön . . .
Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
Geniess' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.]

As in the immediately preceding verses, Goethe stresses here, even by the language he uses, the non-contemporary, optative character of the realization. (He says: "would like", "dared", "in anticipation of"). And this is illustrated and emphasized even more by the reply of Mephistopheles. For him, the enthusiasm of Faust is altogether incomprehensible. He sees no fulfilment here at all, no enjoyment of life; he regards the enthusiasm of the old Faust as a state of confusion due to old age:

This last, poor, empty moment,
the poor old man wishes to cling to.
Me he withstood with such vigour;
But Time is lord, the old man lies on sand.
The clock stands still—

[Den letzten, schlechten, leeren Augenblick,
Der Arme wünscht ihn festzuhalten.
Der mir so kräftig widerstand,
Die Zeit wird Herr, der Greis hier liegt im Sand.
Die Uhr steht still—]

The unfolding of the struggle between the two is quite clear here. Faust never "ate dust" as Mephisto intended he should; the fulfilment which he sees before him in a vision, though not in reality, has nothing in common with that enjoyment of life in which Mephisto believed, and never did have anything in common with it. When it was a question of the meaning of enjoyment of life, Faust and Mephistopheles always spoke past one another.

Nonetheless, their duel is no sham struggle, for Mephistophelian elements exist even in Faust's most sublime moments. The cynical disdain of Mephisto often comes to the fore of Faust's spiritual struggles, and it is by no means always certain whether, in each individual case, Mephisto is right or wrong, or even whether he is beaten in the battle at all.

In the various situations there is naturally a different proximity and distance, a different configuration of the specific stresses. And the rhythm of the threat that Mephisto represents to Faust does not at all constitute a simple descending line; still less is this rhythm the same as that of the respectively elevated or lowly, private or public spheres of action. In the "Witches' Kitchen", in "Auerbach's Wine-Cellar", just as in the "Walpurgis-Night" (which, in its ideal

content, represents only a fantastic intensification of the first two scenes), Mephisto is the guide, whereas Faust is an observer who is sometimes interested, sometimes bored. Likewise—with the exception of the appearance of Helen—Faust traverses the court scenes more than he intrinsically participates in them; here, too, Mephisto is the principal active character. All the base instincts of mere sensual pleasure which are stirred up in these scenes (gorging, drinking, whoring), all the petty ambitions of careerism (in their historical form as sorcery and charlatanism) never produce a decisive effect on Faust's essential nature. On the other hand, as we have seen, the role of Mephistopheles in the rebirth of antiquity is reduced to that of a mere chorus. Thus, in order to gain an understanding of the Goethean conception of enjoyment of life and sensuality, it is necessary to emphasize that Goethe expresses Faust's love for Helen in terms of a sensuality that is naïve and frank in the ancient sense, not secretive; which provoked the moral indignation, for example, of F. T. Vischer. The opposition between Faust and Mephisto is, then, not at all the antithesis of asceticism and sensualism, but rather the real and concrete dialectic of the human and the diabolical within the framework of the sensuous enjoyment of life.

Accordingly—apart from these interludes which are extremely important in an aesthetic and moral sense precisely in their negativity—the duel between Faust and Mephisto has three culminating points: the wager we have just discussed, the Gretchen tragedy, and the stage of Faust's practical activity.

All the problems of the "little world", all those involved in the development of the personality as such, find their culmination in the Gretchen tragedy; society and history figure only as background, as milieu. The importance of this tragedy is so great that we must treat it separately, especially since the conclusion to the whole work can only be understood on the basis of it. Here, we can only devote a few remarks to the aspect of it which pertains to Mephistopheles.

We said that Faust passes through Auerbach's wine-cellar as a bored onlooker, that the undisguised naked sensuality which exists there has nothing to do with his longing for life. Nevertheless—and this is a very deep "phenomenological" characteristic—Faust's love for Gretchen is not from the outset that elevated and decisive human relationship which it becomes in the course of the action. Rather Faust traverses all the essential stages of individual love from the most common sensual pleasure, with its attendant cynical and inhuman phenomena, to genuine and tragic, spiritual and physical passionate love. (Here, too, the development of Faust's passionate love represents, in an abbreviated form, the genesis of love in the human race; and this is what distinguishes the Gretchen tragedy

from the other representations of love in the young Goethe). And since—we shall discuss this further on in detail—the presence of Mephistophelian elements in the love relationships in class society is almost inevitable (especially when, as in this case, the social situation and education of the lovers are very different), the intensity of the struggle between Faust and Mephisto increases concurrently with the intensification and higher development of the love relationship. This is why we earlier called the scene, "Forest and Cave", the peripeteia of Faust's love for Gretchen. Faust flees from this love into solitude. Enthusiasms for love and contemplation of nature give him that spiritual and emotional stimulus which enables him inwardly to surmount the tragedy involving the Earth-Spirit. At the same time, his pure and noble love for Gretchen is inflamed. He flees Gretchen in order to spare and save her, but at the same time he burns with longing for her. And if Mephisto now cynically unmasks every stimulus as self-deception, if he sees only the nakedly sensual facet of Faust's longing, he touches on, if not the innermost core, then at least one central problem of Faust's inner conflict.

Mephistopheles:
Completely gone the earthly son,
and then this lofty intuition—
(with an obscene gesture)
I daren't say how—to consummate it.

Faust:
Fie on you!

Mephistopheles:
This does not agree with you;
you are right to cry "fie" with such good-breeding.
One may not mention before ears so chaste
what chaste hearts cannot do without.

[Mephistopheles:
Verschwunden ganz der Erdensohn,
Und dann die hohe Intuition—
(Mit einer Gebärde)
Ich darf nicht sagen, wie—zu schleissen.

Faust:
Pfui über dich!

Mephistopheles:
Das will Euch nicht behagen;
Ihr habt Recht, gesittet pfui zu sagen.
Man darf das nicht vor keuschen Ohren nennen,
Was keusche Herzen nicht entbehren können.]

It is plain that Mephistopheles is relatively right here. Very similarly, in the moving prose scene, "Dreary Day", his words, "She is not the first" [*Sie ist die erste nicht*] and "Who was it that brought her to ruin, I or you?" [*Wer war's, der sie ins Verderben stürzte, Ich oder du?*], really illuminate the centre of the moral conflict in Faust, who, torn by remorse, can find no word of retaliation because Mephisto is completely in the right.

The depth and breadth of Goethe's representation of this love tragedy manifest themselves in the fact that, directly or indirectly, all the moral problems of life find expression in it, and that Mephistopheles almost everywhere is able to make his cynicism valid with great justification over against the scruples and pathos of Faust. We shall cite only one more example. For the seduction of Gretchen, Mephisto needs from Faust a false testimony confirming the death of the husband of Martha Schwerdtlein. At first, Faust refuses to make such a false statement, whereupon Mephisto presents an interesting and profound argument which stresses not the practical necessity of it for the realization of their plan, but rather poses a problem much more central for Faust:

O holy man! Now, that's what you are!
Is this really the first time in your life
that you will have borne false witness?
Of God, the world, and all that moves within it,
of man, and all that stirs his heart and head,
have you not given definitions with force aplenty,
with brazen face and daring heart?
And, if within yourself you'll deeply probe,
you knew as much about these things—confess is frankly—
as you do of Mister Schwerdtlein's death!

[O heil'ger Mann! Da wär't Ihr's nun!
Ist es das erste Mal in Eurem Leben,
Dass Ihr falsch Zeugnis abgelegt?
Habt Ihr von Gott, der Welt und was sich drin bewegt,
Definitionen nicht mit grosser Kraft gegeben?
Mit frecher Stirne, kühner Brust?
Und wollt Ihr recht ins Innre gehen,
Habt Ihr davon, Ihr müsst es grad' gestehen,
So viel als von Herrn Schwerdtleins Tod gewusst!]

The whole love tragedy, in the broadest sense of the word, turns, then, on Mephistopheles. Naturally he cannot penetrate the innermost core of the love—he himself admits that he is unable to exercise any direct influence over Gretchen—but the whole love tragedy is

nonetheless permeated everywhere with his influence and diabolical elements. His terrible, "Come with me!" [*Her zu mir!*] at the end of the first part, which some have interpreted as a complete victory over Faust, is a necessary aesthetic and moral outcome of this total situation.

The concluding scenes of the second part unfold quite differently. Externally, they are marked by more monologue; internally, they are perhaps even more dramatic and tragic. They are constructed with an emphasis on monologue because Mephistopheles personally does not participate directly in the most crucial inner struggle, in the tragic combat Faust carries on against him. As we have seen, Faust devoted himself to the practical, to the subjugation of nature. He even overcame the aesthetic enjoyment of the world, treating it, of course, as something surpassed yet imperishable. But practical action, the one really possible way out of the diabolical and magical chaos of the Middle Ages for the human race, is even more menaced by the spirit of Mephistopheles than individual love is. We need only think of his deep inner relationship to capitalism which we have already analysed.

Faust's guilt—for example, in the destruction of Philemon and Baucis—is not individual in these scenes, as it is in the Gretchen tragedy. To conceive it as such shows the superficiality of most commentators. After the death of Philemon and Baucis, it is true that Faust curses Mephisto, but his subsequent inner struggles no longer have anything to do with the individual moral remorse he suffers during his attempts to save Gretchen. These struggles go deeper and bear on the *total context*, on the social and human *bases* of his whole way of acting, of his whole situation from which the destruction of Philemon and Baucis necessarily resulted. This is why his reflections no longer linger at all on the individual case which induced them.

What Faust encounters at this point, is the personification of Care. In her spiritual content, she is an emissary of Mephistopheles: the sense and meaning of her appearance is the vanity of all human striving for improvement, the only difference being that with her this tendency does not find expression in sarcastic cynicism, as with Mephisto, but rather in a frankly despairing and pessimistic form. She embodies an inner despair as regards the possibility of realizing human aspirations, as regards her insight—to use Hegelian terms —into their "wretched endlessness" [*schlechte Unendlichkeit*], as regards the impossibility of achieving them in principle:

> Whom I once take possession of,
> finds this whole world useless;

eternal gloom descends upon him,
the sun neither rises nor sets . . .
He starves in the midst of plenty;
be it joy or sorrow,
he defers it to the morrow;
to the future only he cleaves,
and so naught does he accomplish.

[Wen ich einmal mir besitze,
Dem ist alle Welt nichts nütze;
Ewiges Düstre steigt herunter,
Sonne geht nicht auf noch unter . . .
Er verhungert in der Fülle;
Sei es Wonne, sei es Plage,
Schiebt er's zu dem andern Tage,
Ist der Zukunft nur gewärtig,
Und so wird er niemals fertig.]

Faust resolutely rejects this temptation also, this cynical "wisdom" of Mephistopheles changed into frank despair. He does so, however, not without feeling that it, too, expresses a diabolical caricature of his deepest aspirations which in large measure is to the point:

Depart! This wretched litany
could infatuate even the wisest man.

[Fahr hin! Die schlechte Litanei,
Sie könnte selbst den klügsten Mann betören.]

For he is conscious of having expressed immediately before as his deepest psychological conviction that:

in moving forward, bliss and agony he finds,
yet, at every moment, dissatisfied!

[Im Weiterschreiten find' er Qual und Glück,
Er, unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick!]

Care, then, has no psychological or moral power over Faust. All she can do is blind him physically but not, as most other men, spiritually.

However, this struggle, which Faust endures triumphantly, is closely bound up with another in which he has the upper hand only on the subjective level, only on that of the tendency, the aspiration. Between the episode involving Philemon and Baucis and the

appearance of Care, just after he hears some suspicious ghostly voices outside his door, Faust wishes to review his life and advance a new programme:

> I still have not fought my way to freedom.
> If I could but banish magic from my path,
> unlearn forever all magic spells and charms;
> stood I, O Nature, but a man before thee:
> then were it worthwhile to be a man!
> That was I, before I sought it in the obscure,
> ere I wickedly cursed myself and the world.
> Now is the air so full of such phantoms
> that no one knows how he might escape it.
>
> [Noch hab' ich mich ins Freie nicht gekämpft.
> Könnt ich Magie von meinem Pfad entfernen,
> Die Zaubersprüche ganz und gar verlernen,
> Stünd' ich, Natur, vor dir ein Mann allein,
> Da wär's der Mühe wert, ein Mensch zu sein.—
> Das war ich sonst, eh' ich's im Düstern suchte,
> Mit Frevelwort mich und die Welt verfluchte.
> Nun ist die Luft von solchem Spuk so voll,
> Dass neimand weiss, wie er ihn meiden soll.]

This is the *first time* that Faust speaks explicitly of his pact with Mephistopheles, the first time that he resolves to renounce Mephistophelian magic.

With regard to his inner moral problems, he succeeds on the subjective level in the scene with Care. He suppresses the desire to remove her with the aid of magic spells, but he has few illusions about the possibility of his liberation from magic: "From demons, I know, 'tis hard to escape" [*Dämonen, weiss ich, wird man schwerlich los*]. And when he rejects the temptation of Care and devotes himself with all his energy to the great task that he still desires to complete before dying, he continues without hesitation to avail himself of the assistance of Mephisto and his spirits.

Now that he is approaching the limits of his perfectibility, what is this magic which Faust wishes to reject and can only to a limited extent? It is precisely in the magic that the superficial modern cult of genius sees the "superhuman" character of Faust. According to Hermann Türck,[1] Faust becomes a mere philistine after he renounces magic. This is Schopenhauer and not Goethe. For the former,

[1] Hermann Türck, 1856-1933, author of *Das Wesen des Genies* (Faust und Hamlet), 1888, *Der geniale Mensch*, 1896, trans. into English as *The Man of Genius*, 1914, and *Goethe und sein Faust*, 1921.—*Tr.*

genius was a "monstrum per excessum"; for Goethe, it was just the normal man fully developed. In reality, and also according to Goethe's view, Faust never stands higher than in the scenes in which he seeks to free himself from magic.

The meaning of magic in *Faust* is never defined with poetic exactness. As we have already seen, Faust himself conceives it as a consequence of his pact with Mephistopheles: hence, as the sum and principle of those forces by means of which he realized all his accomplishments in their specific form. And it is here—at the peak and climax of the poem, the point where the technical and economic activity proves fruitful for the mastery of the forces of nature—that the capitalist component in Mephisto, already mentioned, becomes of decisive importance. We repeat: Mephistopheles is not only this. He is, in a manner of genius, inseparably a medieval spectre. And the genius of the poetic generalization lies precisely in the size and extent of the realm which he rules. He controls all the social forces, as well as the natural forces and human passions transformed into social forces, in which prevail the tendencies, or at least possibilities, for the "spiritual animal kingdom".

Hence, Mephistopheles has no power over Gretchen. "I have no power over her!" he says [*Über die hab' ich keine Gewalt!*]. He is able to insinuate himself into her presence only by giving her gifts, by stirring her curiosity, her vanity, her love of finery, by means of Martha's mediation, by arousing all the evil instincts lying dormant in her. His power consists in his ready aid in transforming into effective reality every existing evil possibility, every hidden dormant tendency toward evil. His magic consists in his unlimited mastery of all the external means which are useful to that end, means by which he overcomes with the greatest ease all psychological resistances which are not deep-rooted.

But Goethe always emphasizes that the magical constructions of Mephisto do not differ at all from men acting according to their real moral essence. Thus, the "allegorical scoundrels", Bully, Grabber, and Holdfast, with whose magical assistance Mephisto gains the victory over the Counter-Emperor and carries out his piratical expeditions and destruction of Philemon and Baucis, are psychologically nothing more than brutal Landsknechte; and the difference between the latter and "honest soldiers" of the period is more a matter of words than reality. ("The honesty, which is so well-known, is called contributions" [*Die Redlichkeit, die kennt man schon; sie heisset: Kontribution*]). Only the enlargement of their external power, of their individual sphere of action, makes them appear magical. And, from Marx's interpretation of the six stallions of Mephistopheles, we have an adequate understanding of the social significance of this magic.

Therefore, when Faust seeks to liberate himself from magic, he is striving after a normal human life in which he would be able to realize practically what he regards as right only through his *own* force, his *own* activity. However, as Goethe knows and Faust suspects, this is impossible. Without Mephisto's help, Faust would have to return to the desperate impotence of his study room. Whether or not this return takes the form of accepting a subordinate position as an engineer in a capitalist firm is irrelevant to the problem.

In his subtle and heedful fashion, Goethe stresses this aspect both at the beginning and at the end. In Faust's first major monologue, in which he enumerates all his ideological conflicts, he says, among other things:

> And I've neither land nor money,
> nor wordly honour or glory.
> No dog would continue to live like this!
> This is why I've taken to magic.
>
> [Auch hab' ich weder Gut noch Geld,
> Noch Ehr' und Herrlichkeit der Welt;
> Es möchte kein Hund so länger leben!
> Drum hab' ich mich der Magie ergeben.]

And before the scene involving Care, she does not appear alone but is only one of four grey women. However, three of them—Want, Debt, and Woe—cannot cross Faust's thershold: "A rich man lives within . . ." [*Drin wohnet ein Reicher . . .*]. Hence, only because Faust is rich and powerful—thanks to the help of Mephistopheles—does he have to contend just with Care, with ideological pessimism, but not with Want or Debt. This is expressed even more plainly in a fragment subsequently omitted. In it, as we have already mentioned, Faust wishes to break conclusively with Mephistopheles. However, Mephisto does not take the matter tragically:

> For each thinks he has within himself enough counsel;
> more quickly does he feel the lack of cash.
>
> [Denn Rat denkt jeglicher genug bei sich zu haben;
> Geld fühlt er eher, wenn's ihm fehlt.]

Goethe was always aware of this situation of the individual in class society and especially under capitalism. This can be verified by countless passages in his works, letters, and conversations. We will cite only one very characteristic example. The older Goethe had a searching conversation with Soret about the "radical fool", Bentham. Soret took his defence and suggested that if Goethe lived

in England, he, too, would have been an exposer of abuses. "What do you take me for?" replied Goethe who now assumed completely the mein and tone of his Mephisto. "Am I to have discovered abuses and, into the bargain, exposed and named them publicly, I who would have lived in England off these abuses? Born in England, I would have been a rich duke or rather a bishop with an annual income of 30,000 pounds sterling."

It is precisely the practical activity with which Faust ends and in which is fulfilled his ideological longing for a unity of theory and practice and for the practical progress of the human species that is objectively impossible without the active assistance of Mephistopheles. The development of the productive forces in bourgeois society is possible only under capitalism. This is why Faust's attempt to turn away inwardly from magic is futile. This is why his dream of a bright future for mankind is only a dream.

But the *content* of the dream is very important. Like Goethe, Faust is an opponent of all revolution. Here, however, where he breaks with Mephistophelian magic—at least subjectively—there is expressed for the first time, in his striving for the highest goals of the human species, which he has realized until now only in himself, only in the development of his own personality (for the human species, of course), this conscious desire: to struggle for these goals in common with his fellow-men on the basis of *freedom*. This is why his final monologue, which concludes with the "fulfilment" of the wager, is so crucially important—as the highest and most resolute form of the subjective renunciation of the diabolical principle:

> Let me open spaces for many millions
> to dwell in, though not secure, yet free and active.
>
> Up to the brink the flood may rage without,
> and as it gnaws, soon violently to burst through,
> men in common hasten to close the breaches.
> Yes! to this thought I've given myself wholly,
> this is wisdom's ultimate end:
> he alone deserves liberty and life
> who daily must win them anew.
> So here, surrounded by danger, pass
> childhood, manhood, old age their fruitful year.
> And such a throng I'd like to see,
> stand on free soil with a people free.
>
> [Eröffn' ich Räume vielen Millionen,
> Nicht sicher zwar, doch tätig-frei zu wohnen.

Da rase draussen Flut bis auf zum Rand,
Und wie sie nascht, gewaltsam einzuschiessen,
Gemeindrang eilt, die Lücke zu verschliessen.
Ja! Diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss:
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
Der täglich sie erobern muss.
Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
Solch ein Gewimmel möcht' ich sehn,
Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.]

We already know that the reality stands in sharp contrast to this dream: while Faust speaks thus, the lemures, by order of Mephistopheles, dig his grave. This contrast, which is not mitigated in the least nor (visibly) mediated, corresponds exactly to that spiritual ambivalence in the evaluation of capitalist progress which we have so often been able to identify in Goethe. Without being able to grasp conceptually the socio-economic life of capitalism, Goethe expresses with poetic intuition its contradictory role in the development of humanity. Precisely in the unresolved and unresolvable character of its dissonance, the cruel rhythm of destruction, which accompanies and annotates Faust's dream of the future, gives adequate expression to Goethe's view.

Hence, it is important to stress that with Goethe it is never a question of romantic sorrow over the destruction of the pre-capitalist idyll (which is why in Faust himself there is no remorse as regards his guilt in the destruction of Philemon and Baucis). Goethe views the problems of capitalist evolution just as Hegel and Ricardo do. What ideally mediates the oppositions, which stand in sharp contrast artistically is the objective impossibility of separating the Mephistophelian principle from the capitalist development of the productive forces, from the human activity which was objectively the most important and correctly orientated. No more than Ricardo and Hegel could Goethe suspect that this course would later give rise on that soil to forces which would really deliver mankind from Mephistopheles. But because Faust was obliged to put the realization of his life-work in the hands of Mephisto, he also put in the hands of the devil the possibility of its demonic perversion and even its destruction (i.e. the life-work of the individual, not that of the species).

These complex contradictions are objectively irresolvable in terms of Goethe's perspective, the highest perspective attainable by the bourgeois consciousness. Goethe's poetic greatness consists in the fact that he represented them without abating in any way their

irresolvable character. In this, he is as truthful as Ricardo and Hegel.

To the sharp dissonances of objective reality he is able to oppose only the subjective dream of the future. But this is no small thing, especially since the contradiction is also intensified from within. The fact that the human nucleus could remain intact in Faust in his conflict with Mephistopheles, could even become clearer and purer in a situation in which it becomes perfectly apparent that Mephistopheles is unconquerable from without, provides, even on the objective level, a perspective, a real basis for the belief that—despite Mephisto, despite capitalism—mankind is not condemned to fall into the diabolical and to "eat dust".

For Goethe, however, this was the only hope which could be founded "phenomenologically" and thus expressed in a convincing manner, the only hope which could be attested aesthetically as a future perspective. This is why, without falling into subjectivist Kantian moralizing, he was altogether right in seeing the subjective element as the decisive factor in Faust's salvation. In a conversation with Eckermann, he calls the renowned lines of the conclusion a key to the understanding of the entire work:

> He who ever strives and aspires
> we are able to redeem.
>
> [Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,
> Den können wir erlösen.]

Since Goethe could not see in the world he knew any objective social force which would have been able to combat Mephistopheles successfully, he did not wish to give poetic expression to such a force.

4. *The Tragedy of Gretchen*

The *Urfaust* and the *Fragment* of 1790 are still dominated by the Gretchen tragedy. And however the proportions change in the later, completed version, it is this tragedy which preponderates in the popular imagination. In the broad, mass effect of *Faust*, the Gretchen tragedy, along with the tragedy of immediate knowledge and that of the pact with the devil, is dominant even today. In large measure this is justified. For the immediate poetic impression of the "little world", in which what pertains to the species forms only a backdrop and determines only the peculiar form of typical characterization and the direction of the plot, is inevitably bound to be

stronger than the impression made by the rigorously objectified philosophic and poetic profundity of the "great world" in part two.

Whatever the clarity or vagueness with which the youthful Goethe envisaged the outline of the entire poem, there is no doubt that, even then, he was most affected poetically by the tragedy of Gretchen. And this is understandable. For this was something young Goethe could adequately enlarge on. Indeed, it was a central theme not only of his own early writings, but of all German literature of this epoch.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe mentions that the friend of his youth, Heinrich Leopold Wagner, plagiarized him by making use of what he had related concerning the Gretchen tragedy. Now, to what extent can this really be considered plagiarism? Wagner presents the tragic fate of a girl seduced in accordance with the spirit of the age: as a glaring example of class oppression of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie by the nobility. A large number of similar dramas were written during the period, of which the most outstanding from among the young generation are those by Reinhold Lenz. The handling of this example of class oppression at that time reached its apex in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* and Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*.

The popularity of this theme is by no means accidental. It also plays a considerable role in the English and French literature of the Enlightenment from Richardson to the *Figaro* of Beaumarchais. In the class conflict between nobility and bourgeoisie, individual cases of flagrant injustice were necessarily bound to be placed in the foreground, so long as the oppressed class was not yet sufficiently developed. One need only think of Voltaire's great campaigns on behalf of justice of which Lessing's *Rehabilitations* [*Rettungen*][1] and the appearance of young Lavater constitute feeble analogies in Germany. The seduction of bourgeois girls by aristocrats and the resultant tragedies understandably form an important part of this still insufficiently developed revolt against feudal domination. And it is obvious that all these tendencies were bound to appear even more in the foreground in Germany, where the bourgeoisie was weaker, than in France.

From the social standpoint, then, the tragedy of the bourgeois maiden seduced is only one of many abuses perpetrated by degenerate feudalism. From the standpoint of poetic creation, however, this theme has advantages such that it became, not by chance, the principal dramatic theme of the German Enlightenment. Above all, in a

[1] Lessing's *Rettungen* are a series of papers in which he attempts to vindicate the reputation of various literary figures of the past, such as Horace and the Reformation writers, Cochlaeus and Cardanus.—*Tr.*

palpable and terse manner, it concentrates, in a typical individual case which is easy to relive imaginatively, the most repugnant features of the oppression, features apt to rouse spontaneously to indignation the whole bourgeoise (even its least developed elements). In doing so, this theme provides just the possibility of differentiating, with social exactness and vividness, the typical necessity involved; the possibility of indicating poetically the most varied forms in which it manifests itself (e.g. the court in Lessing and Schiller, the officer life in Lenz and Wagner, the tutors in Lenz, etc.). It is precisely this theme, moreover, which presents, with the greatest efficacy, the antithesis of the first importance: that of the two moralities—the moral depravity, the moral nihilism of the nobility and the wholesome moral sensibility of the bourgeoisie. Finally, the weakness of the bourgeois, their impotence in the face of the nobility can be presented in a perfectly truthful manner in this theme; yet it is able to give expression successfully to their passive and authentic heroism which is neither violent nor affected. So it is not by chance that, even in the politically most passionate dramatist of "Storm and Stress", in the young Schiller, the sale of soldiers by the princes forms only an episode in the central love tragedy.

The poetry of Goethe's youth also forms part of this current, but, right from the beginning, Goethe has a unique position and unique formulation of the problem. He presents something broader and deeper than do his contemporaries: he gives a critique of the love relationship in bourgeois society in general. Engels describes in detail how the social earthquake which gave the bourgeoisie its leading economic position also brought forth the modern forms of love and marriage, but, at the same time—with the same socio-economic necessity—made their realization in life very rare exceptions. It is this internal contradiction of bourgeois society that forms the point of departure for the creative work of young Goethe. And it does so, in accordance with his whole tendency, from the standpoint of the full development of the personality, which also belongs to that complex of problems that the emergence of capitalism and the ripening of the bourgeois revolutions put on the agenda; problems of which, however, the economic and social structure of this same bourgeois society also prevents even an approximate solution. The love tragedies of young Goethe present, in deeply experience individual destinies, different combinations of both these groups of social contradictions. The problem of the class conflict as it bears on sexual relations, a problem brought to the fore by his contemporaries, remains an important factor for him also, but, nonetheless, only one factor of this totality.

The rare realization of the unity of individual love and marriage

among the ruling classes of bourgeois society—Engels never tires of repeating that this problem is quite different from the plebeian strata and especially for the proletariat—has economic and social foundations. But this realization occurs in individual cases only through crises and tragedy. The conflicting social tendencies fight out their battles in the emotional life, the thought, and the social activity of men. The most primitive form of these contradictions is that between emerging passionate love and the economic and social well-being of the individual. Stated crudely, it is the problem of whether love and marriage are or are not advantageous to his "career"—where the "career" may be of the most varied kinds, from the brutal material pursuit of success to the inner unfolding of the personality, from the most base and narrow egoism to really tragic conflicts.

This is the way in which young Goethe poses the problem in *Götz* and *Clavigo*. With Clavigo, the problem seems more plain and simple; in Weislingen it is complicated by his concomitant love for Adelheid. But we must not overlook the fact that his love for Adelheid is closely bound up with the question of his "career": whether Weislingen will rally to the opposition of the knights, Götz and Sickingen, or whether he will seek recognition at court. In both cases—although Goethe carefully balances out the real causes—all his sympathy is on the side of the girls sacrificed. Weislingen and Clavigo are depicted as weaklings, as wavering characters who fail disgracefully when it comes to proving their human worth. With Goethe, this sort of characterization is a judgment on himself, but one that is one-sided and simplified. This simplification manifests itself also in the fact that the victims, surrounded with all his sympathy, appear pale and bloodless in their poetic depiction. In the poetic reality of *Götz*, Adelheid not only triumphs over Marie; as a poetic figure, she is also more vital, fuller, more convincing, more exciting.

The reason for this is precisely the poet's judgment on himself. Goethe proceeds here mainly on the basis of blame without considering the problem in its most complex and psychologically deepest aspects. But this is how he experienced it in his own being. We know how Goethe conceived the development of man's potentialities. This development is impossible without love. The ascetic is an incomplete human being. The passion of individual love, precisely because it is both the most elementary, the most natural of all passions, and also, in its present individualized form, the finest fruit of culture, represents the most genuine fulfilment of the human personality, so long as its development is regarded as a "microcosm", as an end in itself. It can attain to this fulfilment only when the

passion of love becomes a sweeping current into which flow, in their supreme perfection, the noblest spiritual and moral strivings of the individual; when the power of love, which unifies the personality, effectually raises everything in man to the highest level attainable.

Goethe's lyric love poetry often expresses this world-feeling in a poetically perfect form. His poem, *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, shows most clearly how closely bound up this feeling is with his world-view—especially his philosophy of nature. This is not a didactic philosophical poem. If Goethe expounds poetically the evolution of the plant world in the form of an explication to Christiane Vulpius, she herself is not a constructed and fictitious listener of an abstract exposition. The law of the growth and nature of love grows, in the intellectual as well as in the poetic sense, directly and organically out of Goethe's poetic and intellectual explication of natural phenomena. This is why Goethe can end his poem thus:

Oh, think also how, from the seed of our acquaintanceship,
sweet habit has gradually grown within us,
how friendship has powerfully issued from our hearts,
and how at last Amor engendered blossom and fruit.
Think how multifarious the forms—now this one, now that,
silently evolving—Nature has lent to our feelings!
Rejoice also in the present day! Holy love
aspires to the noblest fruit of like-mindedness,
a like view of things, so that, in harmonious contemplation,
the pair may unite and discover the higher world.

[O gedenke denn auch, wie aus dem Keim der Bekanntschaft
Nach und nach in uns holde Gewohnheit entspross,
Freundschaft sich mit Macht aus unserm Innern enthüllte,
Und wie Amor zuletzt Blüten und Früchte gezeugt.
Denke, wie mannigfach bald die, bald jene Gestalten,
Still entfaltend, Natur unsern Gefühlen geliehn!
Freue dich auch des heutigen Tags! Die heilige Liebe
Strebt zu der höchsten Frucht Gleicher Gesinnungen auf,
Gleicher Ansicht der Dinge, damit in harmonischem Anschaun
Sich verbinde das Paar, finde die höhere Welt.]

This ideal of a harmonious love which promotes the highest harmonious development of the personality grew out of the ground of bourgeois society. But the realization of this ideal is obstructed by the development of the very social reality that engendered it. And this is directly due not only to economic and social factors, such as the economic drawbacks of a marital union, nor only to external differences in class and internal differences in culture which

are difficult to bridge: the immanent logic of personality development also sets limits to the realization of this ideal in bourgeois society.

From this point of view, the impossibility of a real equality of man and woman in bourgeois society appears in the most varied forms, from the most brutal to the most spiritual. Without love, the self-perfection of the personality is impossible, or at least very incomplete. But in a society divided into classes, this self-perfection, to which the deep spiritual and sensual comradeship between man and woman belongs, necessitates a solitary development whereby the man imposes on himself an unfettered and unattached existence without family, without wife and children. This is true at least at the beginning of his quest, at the stage of (inevitable) erring, until he finds the course of action proper to him—mastery in his command of the given realities of the world and of his own potentialities.

In a society divided into classes, therefore, a premature union, even one founded on the deepest and most genuine love, can become the starting-point of irresolvable tragic conflicts. If it endures, the young man involved in the union will be the victim; if, under the pressure of his fettered possibilities for development, he breaks away, then the girl must be sacrificed.

These are the contours of young Goethe's tragedies of love. Because of his deep human decency and ever alert sense of responsibility, swift renunciation became the recurring leitmotif of his youth. Precisely because he became aware of this conflict at a very early age, the inevitable parting already cast its shadow on his intense, most enriching, and happiest love. At the age of eighteen, at the height of his intense passion for Käthe Schönkopf, Goethe writes to his friend, Behrisch: "I often say to myself: if she were yours now, could anyone but death contest your claim to her or deprive you of her embrace? Imagine what I feel, everything I think about—and when I come to the end, I pray God not to give her to me."

Here we have the archetype of all young Goethe's subsequent love tragedies, from Friederike Brion to Lili Schönemann, in which material factors in general could play no role. In his drama, *Stella*, Goethe presents the whole complicated inner dialectic of these feelings. He has Cecilia, forsaken by Fernando, say: "He always loved me, always! But he needed more than my love. I had to share in his wishes. . . . I pity the man who clings to a girl. . . . I consider him a prisoner. Even they are always saying it is so. He is drawn from his own world into ours, one with which he has basically nothing in common. He deceives himself from a time, but woe to us when he opens his eyes!"

The various forms of (unconscious) deception and self-deception, which result from such situations as a matter of course, are also presented with great finesse in this drama. If Goethe had succeeded in making his male heroes convincing expressions of all the motifs which led in his own case to these conflicts; if he had not limited himself in his characterization of Fernando merely to the psychology of love, hesitancy, and infidelity, then he would have written in *Stella* one of the greatest love tragedies of the age.

Egmont and the poem, *Before Justice* [*Vor Gericht*] (1776-77), show another aspect, no less tragic, of the same conflict. Whereas the girls of the upper strata of the bourgeoisie can only be innocent wilting victims of the love tragedy, the plebeian girls have the courage to accept love with all its uncertainty, insecurity, all its social and psychological consequences. They have the courage to defy proudly the prejudices of bourgeois society and find in love itself—for all its transitoriness—in loving and being loved, their self-consciousness and their moral support. To her mother's groans of alarm that she has become a depraved creature, Klärchen proudly answers: "Depraved? Egmont's beloved depraved?" And in the poem cited above, Goethe has his unwed mother say:

> I will not tell you by whom I had it,
> this child in my womb.—
> "Shame!" you spit out: "a whore!"—
> But I'm an honest woman.
>
> [Von wem ich es habe, das sag' ich euch nicht,
> Das Kind in meinem Leib.—
> Pfui! speit ihr aus: die Hure da!—
> Bin doch ein ehrlich Weib.]

The tragedy of Gretchen is the most typical of all these dramas. We have already pointed out that in Faust, as in Gretchen, Goethe gives expression not only to the passion of love itself, but also to all its stages of development, from its frivolous and half-conscious beginnings to the deepest tragedy. All the great tendencies of evolution are concentrated in the person of Faust. When, turning to life, he approaches Gretchen, the sad burden weighs on him of the scarcely surmounted tragedy of immediate knowledge and his pact with the devil. And, at the height his ecstasy with Gretchen, enraptured by the charm of her person and her nearness, there is at work in him the invincible aspiration: to go further, higher! Faust knows, even if he does not wish to admit it to himself, that he cannot long stay in the "little world" of Gretchen. But his urge to take leave of it has nothing more in common with the external social

goals of success of a Weislingen or Clavigo or with the purely subjective unrest of Fernando. With him, it is actually a question of a restless urge to perfection.

Hence, his love for Gretchen is also tragic for Faust himself. The tragic intensification manifests itself most clearly in the fact that the opposed forces which produce the conflict no longer assume the form of distinctly different characters as in Goethe's other youthful dramas. It is from within rather that Faust's upward striving and his relationship with Gretchen mutually reinforce and at the same time destroy each other. The scene that we have already examined, which forms a turning-point in the destiny of Faust's love, shows this irresolvable tragic connection. Faust flees Gretchen in order to save her; flight and solitude give a new and unexpected uplift to his spirit, to his world-view. But it is precisely his love for Gretchen which bears him aloft, so that his flight is rendered futile—not, of course, without the assistance of Mephistopheles, too. Thus the highest and most spiritualized stage of Faust's love becomes fateful for the destiny of Gretchen. That Faust is fully aware of his destiny mitigates nothing; his awareness is only a subjective consciousness of the irresolvable character of the situation. Even at the height of natural-philosophical fervour Faust's *Weltanschauung* is unable to answer Mephistopheles' cynicism: it is unable to resolve the moral dilemma:

> What heavenly joy exists within her arms!
> Let me warm myself on her bosom!
> Don't I always feel her distress?
> Am I not a fugitive roaming homeless,
> a monster without aim or rest,
> that, like a waterfall, rushes down from rock to rock
> eager to plunge raging into the abyss? . . .
> What must come, let it come quickly!
> Let her destiny crash down upon me,
> and let us perish together!
>
> [Was ist die Himmelsfreud' in ihren Armen?
> Lass mich an ihrer Brust erwarmen!
> Fühl' ich nicht immer ihre Not?
> Bin ich der Flüchtling nicht, der Unbehauste?
> Der Unmensch ohne Zweck und Ruh'
> Der wie ein Wassersturz von Fels zu Felsen brauste
> Begierig wütend nach dem Abgrund zu? . . .
> Was muss geschehn, mag's gleich geschehn!
> Mag ihr Geschick auf mich zusammenstürzen
> Und sie mit mir zugrunde gehn!]

We find the same high level of typicality in Gretchen. She is neither a heroine, like Klärchen, nor an anaemic sacrificial lamb, like the two Marias. (Even as regards social class, she stands between two extremes). All the spiritual and moral prejudices and weaknesses of a girl from the lower middle class are present in her. But, at the same time, her feelings are absolute and intact, her devotion is unconditional, and she possesses courage, selflessness, and clarity of feeling with respect to persons and even ideas.

It is true that objectively the—very complex—factor which leads to separation manifests itself just here. It is important that, after the peripeteia in "Forest and Cave", Faust also seeks an ideological *rapport* with Gretchen. And if, in his discourse on God since become famous, he goes a long way in adapting his (and Goethe's) wholly immanent pantheism to the religious mentality of Gretchen, this is not the mere mimicry of a lover who wishes to bring about at any price a psychological and spiritual union, but rather a tendency, often manifest in Goethe himself, to make his Spinozism unpolemical, to show a far-reaching tolerance in the presence of sincere faith if only it is faith in something and not nihilistic indifference. This is why Gretchen's words

> All this sounds very fine and good;
> much the same as the pastor tells it,
> although in slightly different words.
>
> [Das ist alles recht schön und gut;
> Ungefähr sagt das der Pfarrer auch,
> Nur mit ein bisschen andern Worten.]

have a double meaning. At the moment of ecstasy, the two of them achieve a psychological and spiritual *rapport* on the subjective level; objectively, however, and without their being aware of it, the abyss which will separate them is already opening up here. Whence the complicated dialectic involving, on the one hand, deep sincerity and mutual self-revelation, and one the other, deception and self-deception which, in a society divided into classes, are characteristic of love, even in its most exalted form. Accordingly, Cecilia says in *Stella*: "We believe the men ! If, in moments of passion, they deceive themselves, why should *we* not be deceived?" And at the height of the tragic involvement, when Gretchen is already in prison, Faust says : "And her crime was an error of goodness !"

But the fact that Gretchen does not understand Faust's philosophy, or else misinterprets it on her lower level of culture, also has two aspects in which the justification and the tragedy of her situation find expression. When she reproaches him with the words: "You

are not a Christian," this is intellectually, no doubt, the uncomprehending reproach of a petty bourgeois girl; but, from a human and moral standpoint, it refers to the decisive tragic point in the highest development of Faust's personality: to his indissoluble liaison with Mephistopheles. And Faust can only confront it with embarrassed and evasive excuses, for he is aware, and has just admitted to himself in the scene, "Forest and Cave", that Mephistopheles has become indispensable to him. The impossibility here of breaking through the barrier of unintended tragic insincerity lies, then, not in the intellectual difference between Faust and Gretchen, nor in the inability of Gretchen to understand Faust completely, but rather in the involvement of the Mephistophelian in even the highest human aspirations.

This is why—despite the depth of Faust's love, his pity and compassion—Mephistopheles is in very large measure (relatively) right when, confronted with the highest ideological and moral uplift of Faust's love, he merely points cynically to the consequences of the bed and rejoices in it. Both the function and the limitations of Mephistopheles clearly manifest themselves here. The essence of Gretchen is inaccessible to him; nor does he understand the core of Faust's real inner conflicts—but the course of this tragedy is nonetheless paved all along with the stones of his "wisdom". Because Gretchen is inaccessible to Mephisto, her love is also completely unproblematical. And her tragedy unfolds with the same necessity from this straight and narrow character of her undoubting and unreflecting love as does the tragedy of Faust from the fact that he is torn between his desire to immerse himself in his life-work and the ecstatic happiness of his love.

The greatness of Goethe's typification consists, therefore, not only in the general truthfulness to life of all the elements of this evolution up to its tragic climax, but also in the fact that its unfolding, the antagonistic mixture of high and low motifs, always remains deeply typical. The result is that the entire history of the love, from its—half fortuitous—origins to its—inevitably tragic—break-up is expressed here in all its important stages of development. This is why Gretchen, like the other heroines of "Storm and Stress", has to be a girl from the lower social strata who is seduced and whose seduction leads to her downfall. But Goethe's depiction of this downfall, which contains all the social motifs of "Storm and Stress", goes deeper. Not only is the development which leads to this downfall more complete, but it is also more abundant in dramatic contradictions. For "Storm and Stress" there were only two possibilities: either frivolous, casual seduction and abandonment after the satisfaction of lust, or true love which remains constant as love, but proves

unavailing against the irresistible might of class stratification. The Gretchen tragedy unites both series of motifs on Goethe's own higher level. Faust loves Gretchen right to the end. But—as his passion increases—he is nonetheless inwardly untrue to her, because the elements of his development which transcend her gain strength along with the strengthening of his passion for her and its fulfilment. And Gretchen not only sacrifices for her love her honour and existence, her mother and brother, but—in the prison scene—despite all her passionate attraction to Faust, who appears unexpectedly at the moment of her greatest need as lover and rescuer, she also senses the end of his love:

> Your love for me, where
> has it gone?
> Who has taken it from me?
> . . . . .
> It's as if I had to force myself on you,
> as if you were pushing me from you.
> And yet it is you, with look so kind, so good.
>
> [Wo ist dein Lieben
> Geblieben?
> Wer brachte mich drum?
> . . . . .
> Mir ist's, als müsst' ich mich zu dir zwingen,
> Als stiessest du mich von dir züruck;
> Und doch bist du's, und blickst so gut, so fromm.]

Into the tragic fluctuations of this omnipotent passion with its irreconcilable abysses; into this psychological-spiritual development of love enters Mephistopheles. Tearing it apart he presses for a decision on the terrestrial, practical rescue of Gretchen. At this point, Gretchen makes her final decision: she will not be rescued by a Faust to whom Mephistopheles is indispensable. This is why the voice from above can proclaim: "She is saved!"

This—transcendent—salvation of Gretchen, which was appended to the version of 1808 and does not exist in the *Urfaust*, forms just as much a part of the "phenomenological" foundation of the complete work as does the subsequent transcendent salvation and perfection of Faust. In both cases, it is obviously not a question of any religious belief of Goethe in the hereafter, but of the poetic synthesis of his recognition that any human perfection—whether for Faust's type or that of Gretchen—was impossible in the socio-historical reality known to him, along with his unshakable faith in a future development of mankind which would one day resolve these prob-

lems in a manner also not known to him. But since Goethe's horizon was defined by bourgeois society, he could not create even a utopian picture of this future. (*Wilhelm Meister's Travels* presents the last stage of Faust's development more broadly and concretely but does not touch on the problem of his "redemption"). Thus, Goethe's faith in the future had to remain simple faith which, as such, cannot of itself be productive of any concrete artistic reality. This explains his choice of the Catholic heaven as a concluding image—an arbitrary choice if considered from an intellectual and philosophico-historical standpoint.

Goethe himself felt that in giving expression to simple faith he would have faced the great danger of artistic vagueness. In a conversation with Eckermann, he expresses the opinion that he would have easily fallen victim to this danger "if I had not given my poetic intentions a salutary and limiting form of consistency by means of sharply defined Christian ecclesiastical figures and conceptions." And Goethe always exercised an unlimited inner freedom in his choice of such mythical embodiments of his poetic tendencies: he treated *all* myth with the greatest spiritual sovereignty. On one occasion he wrote to Jacobi: "As for myself, considering the multifarious tendencies of my nature, I cannot make do with one way of thinking. As poet and artist I am a polytheist; a pantheist, however, as scientist, and one as decidedly as the other." Once these assumptions are accepted, the Christian heaven results naturally enough from the general tone of the sixteenth century, and its Catholic character follows from the greater palpability of this mythology.

All this is only formal, however, yet there are still two factors for which the Catholic mythology could serve as a material means of expression to present themes which are entirely extraneous to it. These are the internal movement, which is always important in *Faust*, and its poetically perceptible expression. The hierarchical character of the Catholic heaven provides Goethe with a structured stage for this internal movement. In a general sense, it already exists in Dante. In his poem, however, only the poet moves upward in the hierarchical structure; otherwise—apart from a few exceptions, such as when the souls take leave of Purgatory—every soul is assigned a definite place. This hierarchy, then, is only a context within which Dante moves: in which he changes inwardly and, outwardly, moves from place to place. In Goethe, both appear much more dynamic—insofar as the brevity of the scene allows for it. A further growth and continuing development is clearly implied in the case of Faust. In Goethe, the souls redeemed move about freely in heaven. The Mater Gloriosa says to Gretchen:

Come, thou, rise to higher spheres!
If he senses thee, he will follow.

[Komm, hebe dich zu höhern Sphären!
Wenn er dich ahnet, folgt er nach.]

Hence, Goethe's heaven is Catholic only in an aesthetic and formal sense; in content it evinces the extension of Goethe's conception of an eternal perfection of the human race. It is a symbol for a unity that Goethe could not represent concretely—the unity formed by the genuine fulfilment and the boundless progress of man:

Everything transient
is but a semblance;
the unattainable
here is enacted;
The indescribable
here is accomplished . . .

[Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
Das Unzulängliche
Hier wird's Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche
Hier ist es getan . . .]

Goethe deals in the same way with the Catholic notion of grace as coming from on high and transforms it imperceptibly into its opposite by giving it a terrestrial and immanent character. Let us recall the verse, already cited, that Goethe called the key to the whole work. It continues as follows:

And if a love from on high
intercedes in his favour,
the blessed host will come to meet him
with a most heartfelt welcome.

[Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar
Von oben teilgenommen,
Begegnet ihm die selige Schar
Mit herzlichem Willkommen.]

The love still seems symbolically ambiguous here, although this milieu, which is Catholic in appearance, does echo with something resembling grace. But even this echo cancels itself out. It is not

by chance that the concluding verses just cited, which are only apparently Christian and imply an essentially pantheistic dialectic of evolution, end on an entirely earthly note:

The Eternal-Feminine
Draws us upward.

[Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.]

It is also not by chance that the entire poem ends with the love union of Faust and Gretchen; a utopian perspective, but one that is earthly in content. The few remarks preceding the conclusion make its meaning clear as expressed in the fine and delicate style typical of Goethe. Gretchen perceives the ascent and purification of Faust and turns to the Queen of Heaven with the entreaty: "Grant it to me to instruct him"; an entreaty followed by Mary's answer, cited above, and the closing verses. For Faust, then, heaven is the culmination of his development projected into the hereafter, a development of which the crowning highpoint is his reunion with Gretchen. All the rest is only milieu, mediation, decoration. Gretchen is the spirit of perfection in Faust's striving, just as Klärchen was the spirit of freedom for Egmont as he went to his death.

Now what is it that Faust learns from Gretchen, this Faust who already became the instructor of the "blessed boys" during his ascent?

Here we encounter an extremely important variation and development, in Goethe's old age, of his conception of human perfection. It involves the struggle of two tendencies for supremacy, and it follows from the nature of the case that, with Goethe, it can only be a question of another form of equilibrium between these two tendencies and not a strict choice involving the complete acceptance of one and the complete rejection of the other.

The first tendency is the maximum development of the various capacities of man, their perfection to the point of mastery. With Goethe, who conceives every activity as practical, as a consciously intensified interaction with objective reality, this means, at the same time, a broad and deep understanding of reality. The second tendency is that of the inner human harmony in the development of these capacities. Mastery in the practical sphere should not—in conformity to the internal tendency of the capitalist division of labour—make of men brilliant monsters of specialization. The growth of the discrete and dominant capacities should be accompanied rather by a harmonious growth of the *whole* man.

On the basis of this conception of Goethe, the deep impression

that Hamann made on his youthful development becomes comprehensible. Goethe formulates this influence thus: "Everything that man attempts to accomplish, whether it is realized by deed, word, or some other way, must arise out of a unity of all his powers; everything partial is objectionable. A splendid maxim, but difficult to follow. . . . In speaking, man must, for the moment, become one-sided; there is no communication, no instruction without separation."

In the reality in which he lived, Goethe knew that these two tendencies were contradictory and even irreconcilable, although only their synthesis can make men really harmonious and whole. During the happiest period of his maturity, he projected their union (in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*) in the form of a social utopia. But the social experiences of the later decades, the experience of capitalism, of which, in its role as developer of the forces of production, he approved without any sentimental reserve, and his dawning insight into its social contradictions led him to adopt an attitude of resignation in this matter. *Wilhelm Meister's Travels* and the second part of *Faust* definitely renounce his turbulent youthful demands for harmony and the utopian dreams of his mature manhood. But Goethe's renunciation was, as it were, only "Realpolitik", only practical, only an expression of what was not a renunciation in principle of his earlier hopes. This ideal continued to remain the central theme of his perspective on the future. He knew, however, that, for contemporary reality, this ideal was only just an ideal.

Nonetheless, the more Goethe became resigned and approved the practical development of the discrete human capacities which—precisely in and through their discreteness—promote the domination of the forces of nature and thereby the continuous development of the human race, the more energetically he sought everywhere in reality the real tendencies and actualities in which human harmony and perfection have been realized, even if only on the basis of an objective renunciation of another sort.

A democratic and plebeian side of Goethe's world-view is revealed here. He says: "the least man can be complete if he moves within the limits of his capabilities and aptitudes, but even good *qualities* are obscured, counteracted, and destroyed if that indispensable harmony required is lacking. This misfortune will manifest itself even more often in the modern age. . . ." This assertion contains an important rejection of any spiritual aristocracy, not to mention the cult of genius. The element which could compensate for the rupture of human harmony caused by the one-sided and monstrous development of the discrete capacities of man, Goethe did not discover in those men who find inner fulfilment in aesthetic consciousness. Rather he sought the realization of his ideal, which is engendered by life,

and therefore, guaranteed by life, in certain men of a predominantly plebeian type whose conditions of existence no doubt denied them the highest spiritual development but whose innate ability permitted their capabilities to grow in spontaneous harmony.

Goethe was far from seeing this as a Rousseauian ideal and wanting to reduce evolution to this level. His love and respect for such figures, his understanding of their (relatively) human superiority over the products of capitalism which surpass them in talent and intellect, derive precisely from the fact that he saw in them a real guarantee for the human possibility and attainability of the harmony of which he dreamed; harmony at the highest level of the development of all human capabilities.

It is not by chance, then, that Goethe found this form of human perfection more often in the plebeian ranks than in the dominant social classes, and more often among women than among men. The imperishable charm of Goethe's female characters—whether Iphigenia or Philine, Klärchen or Ottilie, Natalie or Dorothea—rests precisely on this human perfection which, if compared to that of the important men, is extensively limited but intensively harmonious. Here, too, Goethe was no Rousseauian, although on this score he did learn a great deal from Rousseau's social criticism. Not for a moment did he think of reducing Egmont to the intellectual level of Klärchen or Faust to that of Gretchen. Even the romantic longing for this sort of more primitive perfection is entirely lacking in him, and hence, in his heroes also.

But he did see in these female figures an essential aspect of human perfection in general, perfection in which a series of qualities, especially moral ones, would manifest themselves on a higher and more exemplary level than in those men who conquer objective reality with the greatest show of virtuosity, talent, and erudition. And he dreamed that at later stages of mankind's development the highest intellectual attainments, the inner and outer unfolding of individual talents would, without foregoing any of these gains, reach the inner completeness, the moral and aesthetic harmony of such women.

This contrast occupied Goethe all his life. In *Tasso*, the solution still has here and there a courtly and aesthetic flavour. The *Lehrjahre* signifies a resolute break with all social externalities (from a social standpoint, every marriage in this work is a misalliance). He presents here the utopia of a small circle of people who achieve an intensive human harmony at a high spiritual level and whose example is meant—à la Fourier—to have propaganda effect.

Only later, when he gained a clearer insight into the capitalist society developing before his eyes, did he arrive at the sharp con-

trast between "the little" and "the great world". This cleavage between the two worlds, which was always basic to Goethe's view of the erotic and its poetic expression, was bound to open up more widely given his unconditional devotion to current "demands of the day", which he neither ignored nor combatted, because he was in no respect a Romantic. However, as this contrast grew in emphasis, so, at the same time, did the necessity of resolving it in a conceptual-utopian, poetic-transcendent form. Hence, the Catholic heaven at the conclusion is the human harmony and perfection which grew out of the "little world" united with the boundless perfection of the "great world" and the perpetual development of the personality founded on mutual assistance and "instruction"; a progress that has no need of Mephistophelian forces. All this, Faust must "learn" in heaven from Gretchen.

The course leading to this perfection was the course of practical activity followed by Faust. This is why, as already mentioned, Goethe did not depict Faust's subsequent remorse, but rather the healing of his tragic wounds through a new relation to nature, to life, to action. And this means of surmounting the tragedy does not signify any forgetfulness or frivolous abandonment of the victim, but precisely the courageous recognition of the irresolvable character of such conflicts in this world, in contemporary society, along with the persistent demand for a solution which would really overcome them for all mankind. When Helen disappears, her robe becomes for Faust a magic cloud which swiftly carries him "above everything base" [*über alles gemein*]; and after alighting on a lonely rocky peak, he sees this robe gradually dissolve into cloudy images, first Juno, Leda, and Helen, then a final figure:

> Deceives me a charming image,
> semblance of youth's first supreme good, now long-forgone?
> Earliest treasures deep within my heart well up:
> So light and lively, it suggests to me Aurora's love,
> the first, swiftly felt, scarcely comprehended glance
> that, had I held it fast, all treasure had outshone.
> Like beauty of the soul ascends this gracious form,
> dissolving not, but rising into the ether,
> bearing with her the best of my inner being.
>
> [Täuscht mich ein entzückend Bild,
> Als jugenderstes, längstentbehrtes höchstes Gut?
> Des tiefsten Herzens frühste Schätze quellen auf:
> Aurorens Liebe, leichten Schwung bezeichnet's mir,
> Den schnellempfundnen, ersten, kaum verstandnen Blick,
> Der, festgehalten, überglänzte jeden Schatz.

Wie Seelenschönheit steigert sich die holde Form,
Löst sich nicht auf, erhebt sich in den Äther hin
Und zieht das Beste meines Innern mit sich fort.]

With this image, the image of Gretchen-Aurora (dawn), in his soul, Faust now rejects the temptation of Mephistopheles which would give him "the kingdoms of the world and all their splendours" and decides to follow the course of personal renunciation and devotion exclusively to the cause of practical activity. Viewed from an external and psychological standpoint, this is the point at which he is furthest removed from Gretchen's "little world" and its intensive harmony. From the standpoint of Goethe's philosophy of history, however, it is just here that he enters upon the right course. It is just here that the battlefield appears on which the Mephistophelian force is opposed by Faust with the highest consciousness and the greatest energy, although, for the time, in a manner which is also tragic and futile. But this tragedy also points the way beyond the purely tragic. In succumbing, Faust saves the innermost nucleus of the human personality and opens the way to a transcendent and utopian salvation of the human race.

"The Eternal-Feminine leads us on": not for nothing is this the last word, not only of the poem, but also of the poet, Goethe. It is his last avowal of the possibility of a perfection of man *on earth*, a perfection of man as a physical and spiritual personality, a perfection founded on his mastery of the external world and the elevation of his own nature to spirituality, to culture and harmony, without a denial of its natural character.

Since Plato's *Symposium* and Dante's Beatrice love has never carried such weight in the world-view of a genius. But the love of Plato and Dante is essentially other-worldly and ascetic. Goethe, the contemporary and champion of those tendencies which became the "three sources of Marxism", is essentially entirely immanent, entirely this-worldly. The aesthetically Catholic form of the conclusion can mislead only reactionary romantics or shallow liberals.

5. *Problems of Style: End of the "Artistic Period"*

Aesthetically, too, *Faust* is an "incommensurable" production. It is neither dramatic nor epic, although it combines the best qualities of both genres.

During the period of their collaboration, Goethe and Schiller worked out the decisive concepts for distinguishing between the

dramatic and the epic. They designated as a fundamental difference the fact that in epic everything is depicted as past, whereas in drama everything is present. From the standpoint of this decisive distinction, *Faust* can justly be called dramatic. It is precisely the "phenomenological" style of composition, the perspective of a philosophy of history involving the succession of "forms of consciousness", that prescribes imperatively this preponderance of the dramatic. What is depicted are neither transitions from one stage to another nor views on past or future, but exclusively the sensible presence of the given phase. In this sense, *Faust* corresponds also to Hegel's later aesthetic position which sees in this plastic autonomy [*Auf-sich-gestellt-Sein*], in this plastic rounding off of characters and situations, one of the essential signs of dramatic representation.

It is in complete accordance with Goethe's style that in *Faust* there are scarcely any scenes of which the function would be the creation of transitions or foundations for what is to come. "The Witches' Kitchen" is perhaps the only scene in which something of this kind is depicted; the transformation of the mature Faust into a young man. As a rule, we are always placed before the accomplished fact of the more advanced stage of evolution which then is attested—dramatically—by the scenic and spiritual unfolding of its own forces and conceived as necessary in itself, as growing organically out of the preceding stage.

Scenes like the "Classical Walpurgis-Night" or the investiture of Faust in Act IV of the second part are only apparently transitions, preparations for the appearance of Helen or the sphere of production in the final scenes. In reality, both have an independent spiritual and dramatic necessity; both also represent definite "forms of consciousness" which are autonomous and grounded in themselves. In the first of these scenes, the ("phenomenological") emergence of ancient beauty is depicted. In the second, the image of disintegrating feudalism tearing itself apart and petrifying in this process of dissolution; a feudalism in the interstices of which grows the capitalism which will devour it. Far from being accidental, it is characteristic of Goethe's style that the investiture scene itself is no more presented to us than is the liberation of Helen from the nether world. We learn that the investiture has taken place only from the conversation of the Emperor with the Archbishop, when the reactionary forces defend themselves in impotent fury. What is shown to us as a necessary and autonomous "form of consciousness" is only the historical milieu of its occurrence. Even the transcendent ending has a palpable scenic and dramatic presence. But, paradoxically, it is just these genuinely dramatic principles of composition that give rise to the epic character of the work as a whole.

This style of composition is characterized with precision in a conversation with Eckermann in which Goethe says: "This act in turn receives a character completely its own, so that, like a small independent world, it does not touch on the rest and is joined to the whole only by a loose relation to what precedes and what follows."

"Hence," said I (Eckermann—G.L.), "it will be completely in character with the rest; because, basically, Auerbach's Wine-Cellar, the Witches' Kitchen, the Brocken, the Privy Council, the Masquerade, the Paper Money, the Laboratory, the Classical Walpurgis-Night, and Helen are all small independent worlds which no doubt act on one another, but, being self-enclosed, are not very interdependent. The poet is concerned to give expression to a variegated world, and he utilizes the legend of a famous hero simply as a sort of connecting thread to string together whatever he wishes. It is no different with the *Odyssey* and *Gil Blas*."

"You are perfectly right," says Goethe, "and with such a composition it is simply a question of the individual masses being meaningful and clear while it remains incommensurable as a whole. For that very reason, however, like an unresolved problem, it will constantly stimulate men to reflect anew on it."

This is not a delayed justification of the already almost completed work. On the contrary, these ideas occur just when Goethe seriously resumes work on his youthful fragment, concludes the first part, and begins on certain scenes of the second part. In connection with these efforts, but not exclusively with reference to them, Goethe and Schiller elaborate clearly, on the conceptual level, the difference and the necessary interaction between epic and dramatic principles. In this exchange of ideas, Schiller comes to speak of the above-mentioned problem of the autonomy of the parts in a total conception, and he sees this autonomy as an important characteristic of epic literature. He writes to Goethe: "From all that you say, it becomes increasingly clear to me that the autonomy of its parts constitutes one of the principal characters of the epic poem." A few months later, Goethe applies this idea expressly to the composition of *Faust*. He writes to Schiller: "As is natural, you answer very well to my intentions and plans; only I am more at home with this barbarous composition and think rather to touch on than to fulfil the highest demands. . . . I will take care that the parts are pleasant and entertaining and provide food for thought; as for the whole, which will always remain a fragment, the new theory of the epic poem may prove useful to me."

The ideological foundation of this mode of expression is already known to us: it is Goethe's attitude toward tragedy. Because he

experienced the typical stages of the evolution of mankind as a series of tragedies of which the interrelation and totality, however, are no longer tragic, this conception of the world, if it was supposed to find both an extensively and intensively universal expression, was bound to result in such an epic-dramatic form: a form in which neither of the two principles predominates and the dialectical interpenetration of both creates a unique unity and dynamic balance. For it would be superficial not to follow the interpenetration of the two principles into the smallest detail, to visualize, for example, the whole of *Faust* as an epic wreath made up of individual dramas or as a great drama of which the parts are epic. No, each part is dramatic, for the destiny of a human type (of a stage in the evolution of mankind) is decided in it before our eyes on the basis of the immanent dialectic of its inner contradictions—most often, indeed, in a tragic or, at least, tragicomic manner. (Only the comedy of "Auerbach's Wine-Cellar" forms an exception). On the other hand, however, each part is also epic; for in order to impart to the hero in a few scenes both the necessary veracity of a human type and of a stage of evolution, it is necessary to give to the social milieu of these conflicts, to the static environment of social objects, an epic fullness which goes far beyond what is dramatically necessary, what is purely dramatic. The individual parts are thus rounded out to form small autonomous worlds and acquire an autonomy which is impossible in true drama, even in its broadest form, its Shakespearean form. Even the very broadly conceived individual episode in Shakespeare always remains only a dynamic point of transition which, because of this function in the total structure (and the resultant inner dynamism and dramatic unrest of its presentation), could never acquire such an autonomous fullness.

In the same way, the epic and dramatic principles become intertwined in the structure of *Faust* as a whole. In a certain sense, the whole of *Faust* can be viewed as an educative novel [*Erziehungsroman*], in the manner of *Wilhelm Meister*, on a grand scale. And, like every epic work, this "Iliad of modern life" contains a whole series of dramas. (Aristotle found and stressed this in Homer; Schiller does the same for *Wilhelm Meister*). However, *Faust* presents a special situation in that these dramas are not only contained in the total poem in embryo, as possibilities, but are developed to dramatic perfection in the poem itself.

This twofold character of the total conception is also accentuated by a factor of which we have already spoken: the "intermission" of the dramatic action in certain scenes, and even in certain complexes of scenes. The situation is further complicated by the fact that this "intermission" of the dramatic also has an internally dramatic form.

But the dramatic principle of the whole is determined not only by this constant and plastic presence of action, but also by the composition of the characters, by the truly dramatic concentration on a single hero in action. Faust is the most important figure in the poem who, by his acts, concentrates in himself all the essential determinations of the plot. But he is by no means a mere litmus paper registering reactions to events like Wilhelm Meister who, as the hero of a novel, is properly always overshadowed by figures greater than him in a human sense.

This intertwining and interpenetration of the epic and dramatic principles is a general tendency of modern literature which simply found in *Faust* its most succinct and paradoxical form. The modern drama—as I have frequently shown in other studies—becomes increasingly "novelized", and Balzac correctly views the dramatic element as an important distinguishing characteristic of the modern novel in contrast to that of the eighteenth century. In establishing this, he refers above all to Walter Scott. This is no doubt literally correct. But it would be false to underestimate the theoretical and practical rôle of Goethe in this development. Almost a half century before Balzac's famous preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, Goethe and Schiller had already treated in detail the necessary interplay of the epic and the dramatic as an essential sign of the new literature just then emerging. And Goethe's creative work plays a decisive precursory rôle in the emergence of this new literature. We noted that in Balzac's accentuation of the dramatic element in the novel, an accentuation identical on the intellectual level with his conscious historicizing even of the novel which deals with the present, he refers directly to Walter Scott. Let us not forget, however, that the true father of Scott's historical novel was precisely Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*.

Goethe's work, including *Faust*, cannot be understood if we do not also see in it the aesthetic bridge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the consummation and self-transcendence of the Enlightenment and, at the same time, the spiritual and aesthetic preparation for Walter Scott and Byron, Balzac and Stendhal.

In stressing this important tie, of course, we must not overlook the deep abyss that separates Goethe from the typical representatives of this specifically modern literature. With his aesthetic perceptiveness, the older Goethe not only recognized the significance of Byron, Walter Scott, and Manzoni, but also that of Balzac and Stendhal, even in their first decisive works. Nevertheless, Goethe also signifies the point of demarcation between ancient and modern art. Heine is perfectly right when he says of Goethe that with his death began the "end of the artistic period". (Belinsky similarly judges the period of Pushkin in Russian literature). With both Goethe and Pushkin,

the predominance of beauty, of harmony in the poetic presentation, is never a purely aesthetic question, but rather a problem of social existence and the forward-pointing consciousness which necessarily corresponds to it. And if, in subsequent poetry, the aesthetic formulation of the problem of beauty predominates, without this sort of social subsoil on which its historical necessity is founded, then a pale art of epigones must arise: an art torn away from the great problems of the epoch.

The "artistic period" of Goethe (and Pushkin also) could not be further removed from such art. It is obvious that a universal poem like *Faust*, in which the most important problems of a sweeping historical transition are grasped with the profundity we know, can have nothing in common with any formal aestheticism. The character of beauty in Goethe is no longer purely naïve, spontaneously organic, as it was in antiquity and (in an already enfeebled form) in the Renaissance. For all the spontaneity of his striving after beauty, this tendency in Goethe also signifies a struggle against his age, against the hostility toward art (the inhumanity, the fragmentation of man) of emerging capitalism.

This struggle has a twofold direction and function. Against the current of his age, Goethe strove to sustain that human genuineness, that simple and direct, sensuous and naïve, intelligent and spiritual, that straightforwardly moral mode of expression which constitutes the true charm of ancient art—a charm not marred by formalist and courtly distortions. At the same time, however, he feels that the counter-tendencies cannot be conceived simply as bad public taste, as lust for sensation, as hunger for brutal subject-matter and the like, but rather that they stem from material produced by life itself which imposes on the poet such themes and the forms (or formlessness) which correspond to them. This is why he considers it his task to discover in life itself, and especially in the important phenomena of his age, this simplicity of the human, this economy of poetic presentation—which is always a reflection of human conduct—and to show that this beauty can be extracted even from the life of his time.

It would be beyond the scope of this study to set forth the historical development of these tendencies in Goethe. Here, we must content ourselves with a few sketchy remarks. For example, it must be emphasized that, between Goethe's youthful development and his classical period, there is by no means so radical a shift as bourgeois history of literature usually asserts. The fact that he took folk poetry as his point of departure, which was crucial for the writing of young Goethe, rests in the first place on his conception of Homer as a popular poet. Next to Shakespeare and the folksong, the odes of

Pindar, Greek tragedy, etc., also played a directive role in his early life. And his turn to antiquity, especially during the period of collaboration with Schiller, is never purely aesthetic and never proceeds from the isolated artistic form, but always begins and ends with a realistic observation of reality, of men and their interrelations. For Goethe, artistic forms are always but the most general and most abstract syntheses of the human essence and human relations. Thus he says, for example: "What we call motifs are, then, actually phenomena of the human spirit which have recurred and will recur and which the poet only shows as being historical."

Within this total conception, antiquity has a special place for Goethe, and not only an account of the perfection of its artistic forms. He does not view antiquity in the purely aesthetic sense as an eternal model and standard. On the contrary, this perfection of form in Goethe's view is only a consequence of the fact that the essence of man and his relations in ancient life—and, therefore, in ancient art—received a purer expression than in the present which he experienced. Goethe sees in early Romanticism tendencies of this new anti-artistic confusion of life, of the feeling for life, and, consequently, of art. His great essay on Winckelmann sums up these tendencies in the form of a proclamation of the positive and a programme of defence against the negative. We cite only a few passages to show how the roots of Goethe's "Classicism" come from life itself and his accurate ideological and aesthetic reflection of it.

". . . for the final product of ever ascending nature is the beauteous man. It is true that she can produce him only rarely because too many conditions are opposed to her ideas, and her very omnipotence makes it impossible to dwell long in perfection. . . . As opposed to that is art; for being placed at the pinnacle of nature, man regards himself in turn as a nature complete which again must engender in itself a new pinnacle. In order to do this, he grows stronger by imbuing himself with all perfections and virtues and by invoking selection, order, harmony, and meaning. . . . Once it (the work of art—G.L.) is created, once it stands before the world in its ideal reality, it produces a lasting effect, the highest effect. For by evolving spiritually out of the totality of forces, it assimilates everything magnificent, everything worthy of admiration and love and, by enlivening the human form, raises man above himself, encloses his sphere of life and action, and deifies him in a present which comprehends the past and the future."

This humanism of Goethe and of the age of Goethe—humanism as a full and deep understanding of man proceeding from his physical to his social existence, from his simplest activity to art and science

as motive forces of universal progress—this humanism uses the word man, as Engels says, "in a certain emphatic sense." This pathos is the result of the French Revolution and its ideological preparation by the Enlightenment. On the one hand, all "external" distinctions (social, racial, etc.) now appear null and void before the general concept, before the concrete humanist ideal of man. On the other hand, this age develops the faith in the limitless possibilities of human power, in the ability of man ideally to transform himself and his surroundings. "It (consciousness—G.L.) is conscious of its pure personality, and all reality is only spiritual; the world is simply its will and this will is a general will. That is, it is not the empty idea of the will . . . but a real general will . . ." says Hegel of the French Revolution in the *Phenomenology*.

German Classicism naturally stresses above all the intensive, inner side of this development and, accordingly, the aesthetic, moral, and generally cultural character of the upheaval of man's role in it. The central place of art and aesthetics—the theory and practice of the "artistic period"—rests, then, on such an enhancement of the importance of man, on such a demand for his universality and harmony as a goal of the evolution of the species and of the individual, as a struggle against everything old and new insofar as tendencies are operative in them to obscure and confuse this noble concept. This is why Engels delimits Goethe's use of the word "man" during this period and separates it sharply from the faded and washed-out terminology of the forties. (It goes without saying that, later, with an even more radical transformation of historical circumstances, the distance from Goethe's real concepts grew even greater). On the subject of this terminology, Engels says: "Goethe used it, of course, only in the sense in which his age and later Hegel used it, in the sense which ascribed the predicate human especially to the Greeks in opposition to pagan and Christian barbarians, and long before these terms received from Feuerbach their mysterious philosophical meaning. In Goethe particularly, they usually have a very unphilosophical and carnal meaning."

On the basis of this sort of world-view, Goethe could discover in the life of his time a humanity worthy of stylization in the grand manner of antiquity and depict it henceforth without artistic stylization. This twofold character of Goethe's classicism is expressed in the elegy, *Hermann und Dorothea*, as a demand for the poetic representation of the present itself and, at the same time, as an admission of the poet to being the last of the Homerians. This is the essence of his "stylization" in the ancient manner at the height of these tendencies, the period of Goethe's collaboration with Schiller. This is why the closing verses of Schiller's *The Walk* [*Der Spaziergang*]

correctly express this common state of mind which Goethe, it is true, portrayed much more adequately than Schiller:

> And the sun of Homer, behold! It smiles on us also.
>
> [Und die Sonne Homers, siehe! sie lächelt auch uns.]

Even during the period of their collaboration, Goethe and Schiller are aware—and this awareness increases further in the ageing Goethe—that they are leading a rear-guard action on behalf of true art, that they are on the defensive; but they make heroic efforts to hold the positions of true art against the trends of the time. The more the general influence of capitalism extends into reality, the more difficult this struggle becomes. For, as social relations grow increasingly abstract, the less possible it becomes to disentangle the beauty of the human essence; to see and express artistically the unity of man despite his fragmentation, caused by the capitalist division of labour.

This is why the subsequent continuation of *Wilhelm Meister* already bursts the bounds of the epic art possible for Goethe. And it is characteristic of him that he bursts these bounds courageously, for truthfulness always has a higher value for him than does formal perfection. The latter has value for him only as an expression of the ultimate truth about man. Even form, of course, he does not surrender without a struggle. He seeks to return to the oldest form of the novel, with its very loose plot construction and autonomous novellas, in order to express in an adequate narrative manner the social content which had become extremely complex. But in the *Travels* this struggle is in vain.

As we have seen, Goethe poses a very specific problem in *Faust*. The very theme—the salvation of the human nucleus, and only the nucleus; the salvation of the human species through the tragic sacrifice of the individual—precludes a palpable consummation in the ancient manner: an *immediate* unity of the internal and external, of morality and action, of spirit and sensuality.

The clear and precise separation of the "little" and the "great" worlds already suggests the impossibility of this consummation. Antiquity knew no such separation. For antiquity, the "little world" of the individual life exists only insofar as it enters into the "great world" (love in *Antigone*); and in the "great world" of antiquity, the roots of the personal life of the "little world" are visible everywhere. Even in the ancient world, however, this situation, uniquely favourable to art, disappears with the decline of the ancient *polis* republics. But in the Renaissance it undergoes in Shakespeare a resurrection which is complex yet aesthetically and humanely immediate. As far as artistic themes are concerned, the struggle of

the bourgeoisie in its early phase signifies a radical rejection of the "great world" of the time, that of feudal absolutism to which the morally purer and humanly superior "little world" of the bourgeoisie stands in polemical opposition. This art, which reaches its culmination in Fielding, Goldsmith, and in Goethe's *Werther*, also plays a very important role in the construction of Goethe's youthful dramas, *Götz* and *Egmont*.

The Industrial Revolution in England and the great French Revolution, however, make the conquest of the "great world" by the bourgeoisie the order of the day. Romanticism, in the narrower sense, approaches these problems with a distorted and reactionary consciousness and consequently provides reflections of the new social situation which are necessarily distorted both in form and in content. Only in Hoffmann and, even more, in Balzac are the problems of the ugly new life of capitalism and the problems of its "great world" dealt with in terms of the spirit of the new material. This new art and aesthetics thus grow out of the terrible and grotesque, out of the distorted-sublime and the ghastly-comic. It is the paradoxically classical, artistically complete expression of the growing barbarism of the capitalist age.

The ageing Goethe is concerned to give truthful expression to the new age just as it is, insofar as he understands it. At the same time, however, he also struggles to discover in this material the elements of beauty which still exist. Thus, without any aesthetic embellishment, he depicts the problems of capitalist life without denying, attenuating, or falsifying their essence. Yet the whole is viewed in terms of the essence, the hidden human nucleus, and this nucleus then appears sensibly present in order that the total composition still remain subject to the laws of ancient, human beauty. This is why the efforts of Goethe, even where he probes deeply the specific problems of the new age (as in Part Two of *Faust*), belong to the "artistic period".

Even during their collaboration, Goethe and Schiller were aware that the beauty to which they aspired could not be purely that of antiquity. For both of them, beauty is already a struggle with barbarism, a (partial) victory over barbarism. Schiller characterizes this new situation, profoundly and exhaustively, in a letter to Goethe, just at the time when Goethe was working on the Helen episode of *Faust*. And his characterization, in its broad lines, is such that it also applies to the subsequent period, to the whole of the second part, although, between times, the barbarous elements have grown stronger both socially and artistically. Schiller writes:

"But if beautiful figures and situations appear, do not be troubled by the thought that it would be a pity to barbarize them.

The situation might recur even more often in the second part of *Faust*, and it would be good to silence your poetic conscience once and for all on this matter. The barbarous aspect of the treatment, which is imposed on you by the spirit of the whole, can neither destroy its higher content nor nullify its beauty; it can only specify the whole in a different way and prepare it for another faculty of the soul. It is precisely the more elevated and noble element in the motifs that will give the work its peculiar attractiveness, and Helen is a symbol in this drama for all the beauteous figures who will stray into it. It is a very important advantage to proceed consciously from the pure to the impure instead of seeking to ascend from the impure to the pure as is the case with us other barbarians. In your *Faust*, then, you must at all times assert your *right of fist*."[1]

We see that, even in their classical period, Goethe and Schiller are not at all blindly and unconditionally "classicistic" in their rejection of the barbarous element. Of course, it is necessary to make differentiations within this barbarous element. Here, Goethe and Schiller consider the whole of modern art as problematic, as barbarous in comparison with antiquity, and it is evident that the older Goethe saw more than a merely quantitative increase of these tendencies in the emerging new art of his age. He is aware, however, both during his collaboration with Schiller as well as later, that no great modern art is possible without an element of barbarism. It is only a question for him of salvaging from all these tendencies that which preserves—even if indirectly—the essential: the expression of the human already known to us. Hence, Goethe writes during this period (in his remarks on Diderot's *Rameau*) on the subject of the necessary reception of Shakespeare's and Calderon's fruitful artistic tendencies: "It is our duty to maintain ourselves with courage at the height of these barbarous advantages, since we probably shall never attain to the advantages of antiquity. . . ."

This is only possible because Goethe's conception of art always contains an appeal to life, an appeal that is different and more indirect, of course, than that of the later realism of a Balzac. The difference, as Schiller correctly sees in anticipation of later development, is that Goethe descends from the pure to the impure, whereas Balzac strives to extract the pure from the immanent dialectic of the impure. In confirming this contrast, it is not a question of an aesthetic value judgment, at least not primarily, but, above all, a question of understanding the necessary artistic tendencies of two periods. For Goethe's artistic conception of reality does not imply, as we have seen, any attenuation of life's dissonances. However, it

[1] See footnote on p. 99 of *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe*. —*Tr.*

does imply—and this too is historically conditioned—a different attitude toward the contradictions which propel the age forward. They have a completely different weight for Goethe than they had for the Enlightenment. But, in his view, the world is not yet torn apart by these contradictions; it moves rather in a continuous process of evolution toward the realization of reason. This is why the beauty which, for the Greeks, grew naïvely out of the sensuous perception of life is, for him, only the highest demand, the highest epistemological principle of poetic creation. Beauty (harmony and reason) must result from a consideration of the whole, and since this is not a principle alien to reality, but one inferred from its total movement, it must be applicable—in a manner no doubt complicated, indirect, and embellished with barbarous elements—to all particular phenomena.

This difference in world-view between the subsequent great realists and Goethe implies that he is the last defender of the aesthetic laws of the "artistic period" who creates, with their help, a great terminal art, whereas the others heroically plunge headlong into the new reality. And it is plain that, as Goethe grows older, the principles of the "artistic period" are bound to appear in him all the more conspicuous and defensive. They reach their culmination in the second part of *Faust*.

It goes without saying that our observations bear more on the second than on the first part, although, in the first part, the most general problems of style are also obviously conditioned by this historical dialectic of life and artistic form. In its basic form, the first part arises spontaneously from the period of "Storm and Stress" —although it is perfected only at the height of the "artistic period". But this perfection is only a conscious artistic continuation of what Goethe had instinctively begun in his youth.

The dramatic form of the first part is the highest that was possible for young Goethe and his "Storm and Stress" companions. The dramatization of a rich and comprehensive life became in *Götz* a historical novel in dialogue form in which only certain parts are dramatic, and even these do not always involve the principle character but are often completely independent of him. In the first part of *Faust*, on the other hand, the action dissolves into a series of more or less short, but always concise, scenes, all of which are, in themselves, dramatic. Almost without exception, they possess the balladesque character of a considerable portion of Goethe's lyric poetry. Even this poetry, in fact, is rarely really neutral, much less so, in any case, than in other lyric poets. It usually depicts an inner dramatic moment of tension and its resolution, and the landscape (or any other occasion which induces it) serves only to accelerate or

slacken this inner dynamic, according to the sort of lyric sentiment expressed. Accordingly, we find in Goethe the most fluid transitions between the lyrical, the balladesque, and the dramatic.

The later relation of Goethe's style to the folksong is highly characteristic. He says: "The truest value of the so-called folksongs is that their motifs are drawn directly from nature. But even the cultivated poet could avail himself of this advantage, if he understood it. The former always have the advantage, however, in that men close to nature understand laconicism better actually than cultivated men do."

This striving after laconicism is one of the most important characteristics of Goethe's poetry. The sensitive Wieland emphasized this in his review of *Götz*. It attains its purest and most perfect form in the first part, especially in the character and speech of Gretchen. Each of her concentrated scenes is a necessary stage in her tragic course of development, a dramatic nodal point lyrically synthesized with the concise folksong. Even where the entire scene is only a lyrical monologue ("My peace is gone . . ." [*Meine Ruh ist hin . . .*] or "Ah, bend in mercy . . ." [*Ach neige . . .*]), in essence it is not lyrical nor merely subjective or neutral, but forward-moving, plastic and symbolic, creating character.

It is marvellous to see how Goethe's light and floating lyrical laconicism also imparts to the entire social milieu that fullness and completeness which were indispensable to the total plan of *Faust*. With far less expenditure in description of the age, Goethe created here a picture of the sixteenth century which is at least as genuine and vital as in *Götz*, and one, moreover, which is not simply epically descriptive, but dramatically balladesque. What young Goethe elsewhere succeeded in realizing only occasionally—the development of a genuinely scenic and dramatic presentation out of the balladesque, such as in certain of the Adelheid scenes of *Götz*—becomes here the perfectly realized style of the entire work.

It is characateristic of Goethe that he almost never repeats himself as far as style is concerned; what is once artistically achieved (even if on a very high level) never becomes routine. Each of his important works has a highly individual style which is derived from the theme and content and developed organically. That unique quality of Goethe, which he himself once called his "objective thinking" [*gegenständliches Denken*], manifests itself here. He passionately demands that invention and creation proceed from the object and not the subject. He sees here, even with a certain exaggerated injustice, the crucial opposition between the poet and dilettante: "The dilettante will never depict the object, but only his feeling about the object. He flees the character of the object."

The continuation and completion of the first part was possible only on the basis of such an objective approach on the poet's part, although there was no preconceived plan of the whole and although the fundamental idea repeatedly underwent great changes in the course of the elaboration of the work. The young Goethe certainly had only the most general conception of the whole and proceeded by writing individual scenes and adding them together to form a series. But because the new Faust derived from the legend becomes "objective" for him, Goethe attains to an artistic reality and truth which enable him to carry out the subsequent intellectual work almost without any change in the poetic aspect; with only some slight editing due to his all too strict adherence to the legend at the beginning.

The balladesque character of the first part offered a form entirely adequate to the "phenomenological" evolution of the "little world". The problems of style in the second part are more difficult and problematical. In this regard, it must not be forgotten that the radical novelty of the Goethean tendency to concentrate the destiny of the human race concretely in the destiny of a single human being necessarily displays its paradoxical consequences only in the representation of the "great world". Its adequate artistic depiction, the recognition and elaboration of the major objective contradictions of the social and historical reality, especially in its specifically capitalist form, presses, on the one hand, toward a boundlessness in scope which bursts the form (Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*), a scope in which the individual figure (representing the species) must necessarily disappear. On the other hand, the depiction of the social contradictions, just mentioned, in their crude immediacy, in the abundance of their individual determinations, would go beyond those aesthetic limits which Goethe's *Weltanschauung* could not surmount.

Since Goethe seeks to portray the evolution of the human race in its entirety with regard to content, but, at the same time, also seeks to realize, precisely in this content, the already problematical demands of beauty of the "artistic period", the result is a style without precedent, even in Goethe, and one which is never repeated; a poetically magnificent style but (because of the situation in which this poem was conceived) one that could not serve as a canon or model. Goethe's designation, "incommensurable production", applies much more in this multiple and fluctuating sense to the second part than to the first.

What is decisive in this part is the conception of man in the "great world", whereby his individual destiny must now form, without any mediation, an abbreviation of the evolution of mankind. This mirroring necessarily imparts a fragmentary aspect to each person and,

even more, to each of his actions, his feelings or thoughts. Goethe himself clearly saw this new task which implied, at the same time, a certain change in his ideological attitude. He drafts an "announcement" for the second part of *Faust* of which the intellectually and aesthetically crucial lines read:

> The life of man is like a poem:
> it has a beginning, it has an end,
> but it does not form a whole.
>
> [Des Menschen Leben ist ein ähnliches Gedicht:
> Es hat wohl einen Anfang, hat ein Ende,
> Allein ein Ganzes ist es nicht.]

Goethe plainly expresses here the paradox, the peculiarity of his desire to burst all the art forms of his time. For—although he affirmed in his natural philosophy the transitory, the ever-changing and self-transforming in man—every man for the poet was always a whole precisely in that he had not only a beginning and end, but acquired, through a destiny lived to the full, a conclusive and definitive contour. In this regard, however, the characters are, from the outset, consciously formed from a different perspective which dissolves the individual contours.

This new way of observing and its stylistic expression obviously did not appear all at once, but grew gradually out of Goethe's work. We have seen how the first part is related organically to the stylistic problems of the Götz period. The second part has its stylistic precursors in Goethe's *Masquerades* [*Maskenzügen*] and, especially, in his magnificent fragment, *Pandora* (written in 1807, that is, just after the completion of the first part of *Faust*). We cannot analyse more closely in this place the peculiar character of this work of Goethe and the ideological and artistic influences which acted on it; here, too, we must limit ourselves to a few observations. The so-called by-products—in this case, the *Maskenzüge*—are always very important in Goethe, and their significance cannot be measured by their immediate aesthetic value. In each of his periods, Goethe is so rich in intellectual and poetic experiences that it is impossible for him to include all of them in his principal works. This is why, beside great fragments of important works, we find some casually written sketches which portray experiences that are sometimes episodic, though not devoid of importance, and which are sometimes, in their casual individuality, precursors of reinforcing agents of artistic tendencies that come to fruition later. Goethe once mentions (in a letter to Zelter) the importance of his youthful *Satyros* for the first part of *Faust*.

The *Masquerades*, written for courtly occasions, give Goethe, at a different stage of development, the opportunity to express in such by-products the results of his thinking and his poetic experience of the world. Intellectually as well as aesthetically, these *Masquerades* differ greatly from one another and are of varying value. In the very same work, empty courtly compliments alternate with expressions of deep and important thoughts. The only thing they have in common is their allegorical form. But, where Goethe is at his poetic height, the allegory is never bare and sterile. On the one hand, it is decorative and poetic because it preserves the pictorial surface, the pictorial gestures of significant human types. On the other hand, due precisely to this allegorical form, it sometimes attains in expression a notable poetic and laconic abstraction.

Pandora is the first work of Goethe in which these tendencies are concentrated in a poem of great value. Its basic problem is a transition, a prologue to the second part of *Faust*. It presents the opposition between contemplation and action, a problem which always greatly occupied Goethe. (We need only think of *Tasso*). Here, however, a whole series of new and important dialectical factors appear which foreshadow the second part and which are taken up in it on a higher level. Especially important is the much stronger accentuation and concretization of action in the figure of Prometheus. On the other hand, even in this work, Goethe poses the problems of the limits of action pure and simple, of its relation to the perfection of the evolution of man; the relative justification of Epimetheus in relation to Prometheus. Finally, Goethe also seeks in this work a synthesis, a higher unity of the two extremes. Although, by this time, he is far less inclined to think that it is realizable on earth, he still proceeds on the basis of the *Apprenticeship*, on the basis of the aesthetic and ethical perfection of the individual within a small community of fellow-aspirants.

Pandora remained a fragment. Apparently, Goethe was attracted more by the poetic formulation of the problem than by the intellectual responses which were then available to him. In form, the fragment adheres to antiquity, a factor determined by the theme itself. But it is a very singular antiquity, of which the style already incorporates the formal elements of the *Masquerades* and within which Goethe resolutely makes use of the "barbarous advantages".

Of great importance, as regards style, is Goethe's intensive preoccupation, during this transitional period, with Calderon and with Oriental poetry which he considers to be correlated. In both of them, he finds elements which are appropriate for the decorative and poetic expression of powerful intellectual abstractions and a comprehensive typification of men and human relations. It must never be forgotten,

however, that Goethe saw in all these tendencies only something supplementary, only bridges to his age, to the peculiar character of his themes which were conditioned by the age—only "barbarous advantages". Neither Spain nor the Orient ever overshadowed, in Goethe's view, the central position of Greek art; in this respect, he never made any decisive concessions to the Romantic trend. But since he was compelled, in the second part of *Faust*, to adopt indirect means to express the human, he sought in that literature points of departure for the new and unique style of this work.

This deepened form of the *Masquerades* forms the foundation of the second part. The allegorical element naturally plays a major role. But Goethe's conception of allegory is always poetically genuine and far surpasses the standard and sterile concept of this form. At a much earlier time, he had written to Meyer on the subject of the allegory: "These are all important figures, but they do not *signify* more than they *show*, and I certainly may not say more than they *are*." In this sense, several figures of the second part are allegorical, but this does not mean at all that they are merely codes for the decipherment of some "deep meaning" foreign to their sensible appearance, as many commentators think. (Certain ironical remarks made by the older Goethe about "interpolated mysteries" [*Hineingeheim nissen*] are partly to blame for this mischief). Apart from certain unsuccessful details, the use of allegory represents a highly *direct* typification of characters who express in a clear and distinct manner the essentials of their representative role in the destiny of the species and whose generic character is immediately evident and does not become evident only—as elsewhere in Goethe—by a gradual unfolding of the personality, by a gradual evolvement of the generic.

This is why most scenes of the second part cannot have that immediate and exciting effect on feeling and experience that almost the whole of the first part and most of Goethe's other poems have. Nevertheless, the legend about the stiffness and coldness, as well as the poetic unintelligibility of the second part, is only a legend. The figures, of course, are highly typical, but the majority of them are inwardly accurate and true. The inner conflicts, oppositions, and contradictions are not the least bit toned down or sacrificed to decorative beauty. The picture of sixteenth century Germany is magnificently comprehensive; not an intimate Old German genre-picture (as in Götz), but a magnificent historical fresco of the *danse macabre* of feudalism. This picture, however, is no less true than that of the youthful work—rather the contrary. Or, let us take the episode of Philemon and Baucis. All the essential motifs and determinants of capitalist expansion, including its devastating attack on the pre-capitalist idyll, are there in their entirety, fully developed in their

human, moral, and poetic aspects, and neither softened nor toned down in the least. Only, on the other hand, neither individual suffering nor individual sin is depicted, but rather the course of a great historical necessity.

The stylistic difficulties and dissonances of the second part lie rather in the fact that the means of expression, which were forced on Goethe as a result of his new world-view, his new objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*], come into conflict with the old poetic qualities that still dominated him. The new stylistic intent links up with literary models which, in a consistent manner, combine a wide framework with a broadly, flowing picturesque rhetoric, enabling their allegorically condensed figures to express themselves to the full. Here, too, however, Goethe retains his old laconicism, thanks to which he sometimes produces wonderfully balladesque scenes, such as that of the four grey women of whom only Care gains access to Faust. But this laconicism, this short, concise, almost bye-the-bye manner of expressing crucially important content, sometimes has the consequence that significant elements receive an inadequate scenic accentuation, that they pass half unnoticed and thus impede the understanding they are supposed to facilitate.

This dissonance is heightened further by Goethe's tendency to depict in "light strokes", a tendency which existed in his youth and did not die out in old age. In a much earlier *Novelle*, Goethe speaks about his poetic intentions thus: "Light strokes, which characterize the person, without anything of special consequence having to ensue, are worthy indeed of being preserved. . . . Only he who is pleased to comprehend humanity in quiet contemplation will welcome such strokes." This makes heavy demands on the reader. We refer to the passage, which we have already analysed in detail, where Faust believes he sees Gretchen's image in the clouds. Since this is the only mention of Gretchen in the whole of the second part, only readers with a large and fine human receptivity are able to experience the continuity here.

In this, too, Goethe proves to be the last representative of the "artistic period". He seeks, at any price, to express the inner life of man and human relations only through artistic form and to avoid all commentary. "Clarity is a proper distribution of light and shadows," says Goethe, citing Hamann, and therewith expressing one of his most important literary tendencies. But this principle of "light strokes" can only be carried out effectively where the vital material of the poem—from the aspect of the person depicted—is really homogeneous. The poetic abstraction of generic features and the return from these to sensibly manifest human singularity, of which the allegorizing tendency is the expression, creates a scenic

atmosphere in which this homogeneity between the individual and the surrounding historical world breaks up; a scenic atmosphere in which the piercing light and deep shadows of a decorative rhetoric that expresses itself directly and comments directly (as in Calderon, for example), appear as the given means of expression. Yet Goethe still strives to avoid, so far as possible, such sharp artistic contrasts and to maintain his old style of fine lights and soft shadows—methods of depicting mankind directly without a détour through the "nucleus"—and to translate even the most general relations of the evolution of the species into the language of individuals (who are artificially restored here). Thus, discrepancies arise between the objective demands of expression, which have become necessary, and the subjectively compelling mode of expression of the poet.

Goethe's great successors no longer feel this timidity. When it is a question of explaining in a direct manner the social or historical relations necessary to an understanding of the whole, such great creators as Balzac and Tolstoy have not the least scruples about resolutely abandoning, here and there, artistic portrayal and proceeding by way of purely conceptual explanation. While it is true that they burst the formal limits of the "artistic period" and attempted to surmount the prose of capitalism in completely different ways, there emerges in their work artistic difficulties and dissonances of an altogether different sort, of which the analysis lies outside the scope of these reflections.

It would be false, then, to speak of a decline of Goethe's creative power in the second part of *Faust*, or to use this as an explanation of its peculiar character. But it is unquestionable that the second part is problematical throughout. Its problematical character we suggested above. It lies in the conception, in the paradoxical and dissonant relation of the material to the style. However little Goethe is inclined to take the path of rhetoric, a decorative typification, a decorative background painting in words is inevitable. The species as the central theme and element of style often requires transitions which must seem sharp and abstract from the standpoint of the individual; transitions which Goethe could not always succeed in providing with a complete human concretization. And even if it is successful internally, poetically, its understanding presupposes so much that it cannot have a properly immediate effect. For example, in the encounter of Faust and Helen, Goethe lets Helen experience the new form of individual love which emerged in the Middle Ages. Goethe depicts this in a very subtly associative manner by making Helen suddenly remark, in Faust's castle, that the language has a rhyme unknown to her ancient ear: "One sound seems to adapt itself to the next" [*Ein Ton scheint sich dem andern zu bequemen*].

And Goethe presents us with the emerging love of Faust and Helen in such a way that the rhymed strophes of medieval and modern poetry replace ancient poetry in their dialogue:

HELEN: Then tell me how I too can learn this art.
FAUST: Quite easy, it must issue from the heart.
And when your longing overflows in you,
You look around and ask—
HELEN: Who feels it too.

[HELENA: So sage denn, wie sprech' ich auch so schön?
FAUST: Das ist gar leicht, es muss von Herzen gehn.
Und wenn die Brust vor Sehnsucht überfliesst,
Man sieht sich um und fragt—
HELENA: wer mitgeniesst.]

But such an encounter of the decorative and allegorical meaning with the human spontaneity flowing from it obviously cannot be found everywhere. In the second part, there are also sections that are cold and hard, without human transitions; sections in which the allegorical element preponderates too much (the masquerade in Act One). And not all of Goethe's poetic values can be brought into complete agreement with the style of the work as a whole.

All these dissonances show that the second part of *Faust* is really the end of a great epoch. Many call its mode of presentation a "style of old age", and with relative justification. But it is more a question of the old age of a world than that of a man. It is the ultimate artistic perfection of what cannot be perfected. It is the self-dissolution, on a high artistic level, of the "artistic period"; a truly "incommensurable" production.

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