

THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION

Four Essays

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III. Ancient Biography and Autobiography

Moving on to the third type of ancient novel, we must from the outset make one crucial reservation. By this third type we have in mind a *biographical novel*, although antiquity did not produce the kind of novel that we (in our terminology) would call a "novel," that is, a large fiction influenced by biographical models. Nevertheless a series of autobiographical and biographical forms was worked out in ancient times that had a profound influence not only on the development of European biography, but also on the development of the European novel as a whole. At the heart of these ancient forms lies a new type of *biographical time* and a human image constructed to new specifications, that of an individual who passes through the course of a whole life.

From the point of view made available by this type of time and new human image, we will briefly survey ancient autobiographical and biographical forms. In our survey we will not pretend to any completeness of the data, nor to an exhaustive analysis of it. We will select only those details that bear a direct relationship to our subject of inquiry.

We note two essential types of autobiography in classical Greece.

Provisionally we will call the first type *Platonic*, since it found its earliest and most precise expression in such works of Plato as the *Apology* of Socrates and the *Phaedo*. This type, involving an individual's autobiographical self-consciousness, is related to the stricter forms of metamorphosis as found in mythology. At its heart lies the chronotope of "the life course of one seeking true knowledge." The life of such a seeker is broken down into precise and well-marked epochs or steps. His course passes from self-confident ignorance, through self-critical scepticism, to self-knowledge and ultimately to authentic knowing (mathematics and music).

This early Platonic scheme of "the seeker's path" is made more complex in Hellenistic and Roman times by the addition of various highly important motifs: the seeker's passage through a series of philosophical schools with their various tests, and the marking of this path by temporal divisions determined by their own biographical projects. We will return later to this more complex scheme, for it is one of great importance.

In the Platonic scheme there is also a moment of crisis and re-

birth (the words of the oracle as a turning point in the course of Socrates' life). The specific nature of this "seeker's path" is all the more clearly revealed when contrasted with an analogous scheme: the course of the soul's ascent toward a perception of the Forms (the *Symposium*, the *Phaedra* and others). In such works the mythological and mystery-cult bases of the scheme are clearly in evidence. Such sources reinforce the kinship between this scheme and those "conversion stories" we discussed in the previous section. Socrates' life course, as it is revealed to us in the *Apology*, is a public and rhetorical expression of the same metamorphosis. Real biographical time is here almost entirely dissolved in the ideal (and even abstract) time of metamorphosis. What is important about the figure of Socrates is therefore not to be found in this idealized-biographical scheme.

The second Greek type is the *rhetorical* autobiography and biography.

At the base of this type lies the "encomium"—the civic funeral and memorial speech that had replaced the ancient "lament" (*trenos*). The form of the encomium also determined the first autobiography of ancient times, the advocatory speech of the Attic orator Isocrates.

When speaking of this classic type one must above all keep the following in mind. These classical forms of autobiography and biography were not works of a literary or bookish nature, kept aloof from the concrete social and political act of noisily making themselves public. On the contrary, such forms were completely determined by events: either verbal praise of civic and political acts, or real human beings giving a public account of themselves. Therefore, the important thing here is not only, and not so much, their internal chronotope (that is, the time-space of their represented life) as it is rather, and preeminently, that exterior real-life chronotope in which the representation of one's own or someone else's life is realized either as verbal praise of a civic-political act or as an account of the self. It is precisely under the conditions of this real-life chronotope, in which one's own or another's life is laid bare (that is, made public), that the limits of a human image and the life it leads are illuminated in all their specificity.

This real-life chronotope is constituted by the public square (the *agora*). In ancient times the autobiographical and biographical self-consciousness of an individual and his life was first laid bare and shaped in the public square.

When Pushkin said that the art of the theater was "born in the public square,"^s the square he had in mind was that of "the common people," the square of bazaars, puppet theaters, taverns, that is the square of European cities in the thirteenth, fourteenth and subsequent centuries. He also had in mind the fact that the state and "official" society (that is, the privileged classes), with their "official" arts and sciences, were located by and large beyond the square. But the square in earlier (ancient) times itself constituted a state (and more—it constituted the entire state apparatus, with all its official organs), it was the highest court, the whole of science, the whole of art, the entire people participated in it. It was a remarkable chronotope, in which all the most elevated categories, from that of the state to that of revealed truth, were realized concretely and fully incarnated, made visible and given a face. And in this concrete and as it were all-encompassing chronotope, the laying bare and examination of a citizen's whole life was accomplished, and received its public and civic stamp of approval.

It is fully understandable that in such a "biographized" individual (in such an image of a man) there was not, nor could there be, anything intimate or private, secret or personal, anything relating solely to the individual himself, anything that was, in principle, solitary. Here the individual is open on all sides, he is all surface, there is in him nothing that exists "for his sake alone," nothing that could not be subject to public or state control and evaluation. Everything here, down to the last detail, is entirely public.

It is fully understandable that under such conditions there could not in principle be any difference between the approach one took to another's life and to one's own, that is, between the biographical and autobiographical points of view. Only later, in the Hellenistic and Roman era, when the public unity of the individual began to disintegrate, did Tacitus, Plutarch and various rhetoricians specifically pose the question: is it permissible to write

s. The line occurs in Pushkin's unpublished 1830 essay in response to Pogodin's new play, "On National [*narodnaja*] Drama and on *Marfa Posadnitsa*": "We saw that national tragedy was born in the public square, that it developed there, and only later was called to aristocratic society. . . . How can our tragedy, written on the Racinian model, unaccustom itself to aristocratic habits? How is it to shift from its measured, pompous and fastidious conversation to the crude frankness of folk [*narodnaja*] passions, to the license that is granted statements on the public square?"

an appraisal of one's own self? This question was resolved in the affirmative. Plutarch, by selecting material going back to Homer (whose heroes glorified themselves) established the permissibility of self-glorification and indicated those forms by which it should be molded, so as to avoid anything offensive. A second-rank rhetorician, Aristides, likewise sorted through a wide body of material on this question and concluded that proud self-glorification was a pure Hellenistic trait, and as such was fully permissible and correct.

But it is highly significant that such a question should arise at all. Self-glorification, after all, is but the most sharply focused, most vivid distinctive feature of a biographical and autobiographical approach to life. Thus there lurks beneath the specific question of the propriety of glorifying oneself a more general question, namely, the legitimacy of taking the same approach to one's own life as to another's life, to one's own self as to another self. The very posing of such a question is evidence that the classical *public wholeness* of an individual had broken down, and a differentiation between biographical and autobiographical forms had begun.

But there could be no talk of such a differentiation under the conditions of the Greek public square, where the self-consciousness of the individual originated. There was as yet no internal man, no "man for himself" (I for myself), nor any individualized approach to one's own self. An individual's unity and his self-consciousness were exclusively public. Man was completely *on the surface*, in the most literal sense of the word.

This utter exteriority is a very important feature of the human image as we find it in classical art and literature. It manifests itself in many ways, and by the most varied means. I will mention here only one familiar example.

Already by Homer's time, Greeks as reflected in their literature were individuals who behaved in a most unrestrained manner. Homer's heroes express their feelings vividly and noisily. We are particularly struck by how often and how loudly they sob and weep. In the familiar scene with Priam, Achilles weeps so noisily in his tent that his moans are heard throughout the entire Greek camp. This trait has been variously explained: it has been attributed to the peculiarities of a primitive psychology, to the arbitrary prerequisites of literary canon, to the particular nature of Homer's language—in which varying degrees of emotion could be transmitted only by indicating the varying degrees of its *exter-*

nal expression; or allusion is sometimes made to general "relativity" of methods for expressing emotions [it is well known, for instance, that people of the eighteenth century—the rational men of the Enlightenment themselves—wept often and willingly]. But what is important is the fact that this is not an isolated feature in the ancient hero: it fits harmoniously with his other features and is rooted in a principle that is larger than is usually supposed. This feature is but one manifestation of that complete exteriority of public man we have been discussing.

For the classical Greek, every aspect of existence could be *seen* and *heard*. In principle (in essence) he did not know an invisible and mute reality. This applied to existence as a whole, but pre-eminently to human existence. A mute internal life, a mute grief, mute thought, were completely foreign to the Greek. All this—that is, his entire internal life—could exist only if manifested externally in audible or visible form. Plato, for example, understood thought as a conversation that a man carries on with himself (the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*). The concept of silent thought first appeared only with the mystics, and this concept had its roots in the Orient. Moreover, in Plato's understanding of the process, thought conceived as a "conversation with oneself" did not entail any special relationship to one's self (as distinct from one's relationship to others); conversation with one's own self turns directly into conversation with someone else, without a hint of any necessary boundaries between the two.

There is no mute or invisible core to the individual himself: he is entirely visible and audible, all on the surface. But in general there are no mute or invisible spheres of existence either, of the sort in which a man might take part and by which he might be shaped (the Platonic realm of Forms is thoroughly visible and audible). To locate the basic controlling nodes of human life in centers that are mute and invisible was even further from the classical Greek world view. This is the defining characteristic of the remarkable and immediate exteriority we find in the classical individual and in his life.

It is only with the Hellenistic and Roman epochs that we have the beginnings of a translation of whole spheres of existence—within the individual himself, as well as in the world outside him—onto a *mute register*, and into something that is in principle invisible. But this process was also far from completed in ancient times. It is significant that even today one cannot read St.

Augustine's *Confessions* "to oneself"; it must be declaimed aloud—to such an extent is the spirit of the Greek public square still alive in it, that square upon which the self-consciousness of European man first coalesced.

When we speak of the utter exteriority of Greek man we do so, of course, from our own point of view. It is precisely our distinction between internal and external which the Greek did not know, therefore he did not acknowledge the categories "mute" and "invisible." Our "internal" was, for the Greek's conception of man, laid out on the same axis as our "external," that is, it was just as visible and audible and it existed on the surface, for others as well as for oneself. Therefore, all aspects of the human image were related to one another.

But this utter exteriority of the individual did not exist in empty space ("under a starry sky, on the bare earth") but rather in an organic human collective, "in the folk." For that reason this "surface," on which the entire man existed and was laid bare, was not something alien and cold ("the desert of the world")—it was his own native folk. To be exterior meant to be for others, for the collective, for one's own people. A man was utterly exteriorized, but within a human element, in the human medium of his own people. Therefore, the *unity* of a man's externalized wholeness was of a *public* nature.

This explains the unrepeatable distinctiveness of the human image in classical art and literature. In it, everything corporeal and external is made more high-spirited and intense, while everything that is (from our point of view) spiritual and internal is made corporeal and externalized. This image had "neither core nor shell," neither an inner nor an outer, and was similar to nature as Goethe saw it (it was in fact just this image that provided the *Urphaenomenon*). In this it differs profoundly from the concept of man held in succeeding epochs.

In following epochs, man's image was distorted by his increasing participation in the mute and invisible spheres of existence. He was literally drenched in muteness and invisibility. And with them entered loneliness. The personal and detached human being—"the man who exists for himself"—lost the unity and wholeness that had been a product of his public origin. Once having lost the popular chronotope of the public square, his self-consciousness could not find an equally real, unified and whole chronotope; it therefore broke down and lost its integrity, it be-

came abstract and idealistic. A vast number of new spheres of consciousness and objects appeared in the private life of the private individual that were not, in general, subject to being made public (the sexual sphere and others), or were subject only to an intimate, conditional, closeted expression. The human image became multi-layered, multi-faceted. A core and a shell, an inner and an outer, separated within it.

We will show below that the most remarkable experiment to re-establish the fully exteriorized individual in world literature—although without the stylization of the ancient model—was made by Rabelais.

Another attempt to resurrect the ancient wholeness and exteriority, but on an entirely different basis, was made by Goethe.

But let us return to the Greek encomium and the first autobiography. As we have analyzed it, the defining characteristic of the ancient world's peculiar consciousness of self was the fact that biographical and autobiographical approaches to life were identical, and were, therefore, both necessarily public. But in the encomium the image of man is extremely simple and pre-formed; in it there is almost no quality of "becoming." The starting point for an encomium is the idealized image of a definite life type, a specific profession—that of military commander, ruler, political figure. This idealized form is nothing but an accumulation of all the attributes adhering to a given profession: a commander should be *like this*, followed by an enumeration of all the qualities and virtues of a commander. All these idealized qualities and virtues are then discovered in the life of the man being eulogized. The ideal is fused together with the figure of the deceased. The figure of the eulogized man is one that is already formed, and the figure is usually given us at the moment of its greatest maturity and fullness of life.

It was on the basis of biographical schemes developed for the encomium that the first autobiography arose, in the form of an advocacy oration: the autobiography of Isocrates, which was to have an enormous influence on all of world literature (and especially on Italian and English humanists). This was a public accounting of a man's own life, in the form of an *apologia*. Human image in such a form was shaped by the same principles as shaped the image of the deceased in the encomium. At its heart was the ideal of a rhetorician. Isocrates glorifies rhetorical activity as the loftiest of life's activities. Isocrates' professional self-conscious-

ness is fully particularized. He gives us the details of his material circumstances, even mentioning how much money he makes as a rhetorician. Elements which are (from our point of view) purely personal, or (again from our point of view) narrowly professional, or matters relating to society and the state, or even philosophical ideas, are all laid out in one detailed series, tightly interwoven. All these elements are perceived as completely homogeneous, and they come together to form a single human image that is both complete and fully formed. The individual's consciousness of himself in such cases relies exclusively upon those aspects of his personality and his life that are turned outward, that exist for others in the same way they exist of the individual himself; in those aspects alone can self-consciousness seek its support and integrity; it knows of no aspects other than these, aspects that might be intimately personal, unrepeatably individual, charged with self.

Such is the normative and pedagogical character of this earliest autobiography. At its conclusion a formative and educational moral is baldly stated. But this same normative and pedagogical quality suffuses the entire autobiography.

One must not forget, however, that the epoch that produced the first autobiography witnessed as well the initial stages in the breakdown of the Greek public wholeness of the human image (a wholeness that had manifested itself in epic and tragedy). Thus, this autobiography is still somewhat formal, rhetorical and abstract.

Another real-life chronotope is responsible for Roman autobiographies and memoirs. Both sprang from the soil of the Roman *family*. Such autobiographies are documents testifying to a family-clan consciousness of self. But on such family-clan soil, autobiographical self-consciousness does not become private or intimately personal. It retains a deeply public character.

The Roman patrician family—which was not a bourgeois family—is the symbol for all that can be private and intimate. The Roman family, precisely as a family, fuses directly with the state. Certain functions the state usually fulfills are entrusted to the heads of families. The religious cults of the family or clan (whose role was enormous) function as a direct extension of the cults of the state. The national ideal is represented by ancestors. Self-consciousness organizes itself around the particularized memory of a clan and ancestors, while at the same time looking toward future

descendants. The traditions of the family and clan had to be passed down from father to son. Thus every family had its own archive, in which written documents on all links in the clan were kept. Autobiography "writes itself" in the orderly process of passing clan and family traditions from link to link, and these were preserved in the archive. This made even autobiographical consciousness public and historical, national.

The specific historicity that Rome gave to autobiographical self-consciousness distinguishes it from its Greek counterpart, which was oriented toward living contemporaries, toward those who were actually there on the public square. Roman self-consciousness felt itself to be primarily a link between, on the one hand, deceased ancestors, and on the other, descendants who had not yet entered political life. Such self-consciousness is thus not as pre-formed as in the Greek model, but it is more thoroughly saturated with time.

Another specific peculiarity of Roman autobiography (and biography) is the role of the *prodigia*, that is, of various auguries and their interpretations. In this context they are not an external feature of the narrative (as they become in seventeenth-century novels), but an important means for motivating and shaping autobiographical material. Tightly tied up with them is the important, and purely Roman, autobiographical category of "fortune" (*fortuna*).

In the *prodigia*, that is, in the auguries of a man's fate—his separate acts and undertakings as well as his life as a whole—individualized and personal elements indissolubly fuse with state and public elements. The *prodigia* are an important moment at the beginning and at the completion of all state acts and undertakings; the state takes no step without having first read the omens. The *prodigia* are indicators of the fate of the state, predicting for it either fortune or misfortune. From the state level they move to the individual personality of the dictator or military commander, whose fate is indissolubly bound up with the destinies of the state, and readings of the *prodigia* for the state fuse with his personal destiny. The dictator of the lucky arm (Sulla) and of the lucky star (Caesar) appear. In this context the category of luck has a distinctive life-shaping significance. It becomes the form for expressing a personal identity and the course of a whole life ("faith in one's own star"). Such is the origin of Sulla's consciousness of self in his autobiography. But, we repeat, in the good fortune of a

Sulla or a Caesar, the destinies of the state and of single persons fuse into a single whole. There can be no question of anything narrowly personal, any private luck. This is, after all, a luck measured in deeds, in projects of state, in wars. This good fortune is absolutely inseparable from deeds, creative activity, labor—from objective, public and state-oriented content. Thus this concept of good fortune includes as well our concepts of "talent," "intuition" and that specific understanding of "genius"⁷ that was so important in the philosophy and aesthetics of the late eighteenth century (Young, Hamann, Herder, the *Stürmer und Dränger*). In succeeding centuries this category of good fortune became more fragmented and private. Good fortune lost all its creative, public and state attributes—and came to represent a principle that was private, personal, and one that was ultimately unproductive.

Hellenistic Greek autobiographical traditions functioned alongside these specifically Roman ones. In Rome the ancient laments (*naenia*) were likewise replaced by funeral speeches, the so-called *laudatiae*. Here Greek and Hellenistic rhetorical schemas reigned supreme.

Works "on one's own writings" emerged as an authentic autobiographical form in the Roman-Hellenistic context. As we have shown above, this form reflected the crucial influence of the Platonic schema, that of the life course of a seeker after knowledge. But an entirely different objective support was found for it in this new context. What we get is a catalog of a man's works, an exposition of their themes, a record of their successes with the public, autobiographical commentary on them (Cicero, Galen and others). It is the sequence of one's own works that provides solid support for perceiving the passage of time in one's own life. The continuity of one's works provides a critical sequential marker for biographical time, its objectification. And furthermore, consciousness of self in this context is not revealed to some general "someone," but rather to a specific circle of readers, the readers of one's works. The autobiography is constructed for them. The autobiographical concentration on oneself and one's own life acquires here a certain minimum of essential "publicness," but of

7. In this concept of luck, the ideas of genius and success are fused together; thus an unrecognized genius was a *contradictio in adjecto* [a contradiction in terms].

a completely new type. St. Augustine's *Retractationes*^t belong to this autobiographical type. In more recent times a whole series of humanistic works (for example, Chaucer) could be included in this type, but in later periods this type is reduced to a single stage (albeit very important) in artistic biographies (for example, in Goethe).

Such are the types of ancient autobiography, which might all be called forms for depicting the *public self-consciousness of a man*.

We will briefly touch upon the mature biographical forms of the Roman-Hellenistic epoch. Here one must note, first and foremost, the influence of Aristotle on the distinctive methods of the ancient biographers, and in particular his doctrine of entelechy as the ultimate purpose of development that is at the same time its first cause. This Aristotelian identification of ultimate purpose with origin inevitably had a crucial effect on the distinctive nature of biographical time. From here it follows that a character at its most mature is the authentic origin of development. It is here that we get that unique "inversion in a character's development" that excludes any authentic "becoming" in character. A man's entire youth is treated as nothing but a preliminary to his maturity. The familiar element of "movement" is introduced into biography solely as a struggle of opposing impulses, as fits of passion or as an exercise in virtue—in order to invest this virtue with permanence. Such struggles and exercises serve to strengthen qualities of character that are already present, but create nothing new. The base remains the stable essence of an already completed character.

Two models for structuring ancient biography were created on this base.

The first may be called the "energetic" type. At its heart lies the Aristotelian concept of *energia*: the full existence, the essence of a man is realized not by his condition, but by his activity, his active force ("energy"). This "energy" manifests itself as the unfolding of his character in deeds and statements. And these acts, words and other expressions of a man are not merely external manifestations (that is, for others, for a "third person") of

t. In his *Retractationes* (427 A.D.) Augustine criticizes his own superabundant output of ninety-three works from a religious point of view he felt he had only recently achieved, although he had sought to conform to it most of his adult life.

some internal essence of character existing apart from its effects, predating them and located outside them. The manifestations themselves constitute the character's being, which outside its energy simply does not exist. Apart from its surface manifestations, its ability to express itself, its visibility and audibility, character possesses no fullness of reality, no fullness of being. The greater the power of self-expression, the fuller the being.

Therefore human life (*bios*) and character may no longer be portrayed by means of an analytical enumeration of the characterological qualities of the man (his vices and virtues) and through their unification into a single stable image of him—but rather, one must portray him by means of his deeds, his speeches and other extensions and expressions of the man.

This energetic type of biography was first established by Plutarch, who has had an enormous influence on world literature (and not only on biography).

Biographical time in Plutarch is specific. It is a time that discloses character, but is not at all the time of a man's "becoming" or growth.⁸ It is true that outside this disclosure, this "manifestation," there is no character—but in keeping with the principle of "entelechy," character is predetermined and may be disclosed only in a single defined direction. Historical reality itself, in which disclosure of character takes place, serves merely as a means for the disclosure, it provides in words and deeds a vehicle for those manifestations of character: but historical reality is deprived of any determining influence on character as such, it does not shape or create it, it merely manifests it. Historical reality is an arena for the disclosing and unfolding of human characters—nothing more.

Biographical time is not reversible vis-à-vis the events of life itself, which are inseparable from historical events. But with regard to character, such time is reversible: one or another feature of character, taken by itself, may appear earlier or later. Features of character are themselves excluded from chronology: their instancing can be shifted about in time. Character itself does not grow, does not change, it is merely *filled in*: at the beginning it is incomplete, imperfectly disclosed, fragmentary; it becomes *full* and well rounded only at the end. Consequently, the process of

8. Time is phenomenal; the essence of character is outside time. It is therefore not time that gives a character its substantiality.

disclosing character does not lead to a real change or "becoming" in historical reality, but rather solely to a *fulfillment*, that is, to a filling-in of that form sketched at the very outset. Such is the Plutarchian biographical type.

The second type of biography may be called *analytic*. At its heart we have a scheme with well-defined rubrics, beneath which all biographical material is distributed: social life, family life, conduct in war, relationships with friends, memorable sayings, virtues, vices, physical appearance, habits and so forth. Various features and qualities of character are selected out from the various happenings and events that occur *at different times in the hero's life*, but these are arranged according to the prescribed rubrics. To prove the rubric valid, only one or two examples from the life of a given personality need be provided.

In this way, the temporal progression of the biographical sequence is broken up: one and the same rubric subsumes moments selected from widely separate periods of a life. Here as well, what governs from the outset is the *whole* of the character; and from such a point of view time is of no importance at all, nor is the order in which various parts of this whole make their appearance. From the very first strokes (the first manifestations of character) the firm contours of the whole are already predetermined, and everything that comes later distributes itself within these already existing contours—in the temporal order (the first, energetic Plutarchian type) as well as in the systematic (the second, atemporal, type).

The major representative of this second ancient type of biography was Suetonius.^u If Plutarch had exercised a profound influence on literature, especially on the drama (for the energetic type of biography is essentially dramatic), then Suetonius primarily influenced the narrowly biographical genre, particularly during the Middle Ages. Biography structured by rubrics survives to our very day: the biography of "a human being," "a writer," "a family man," "an intellectual" and so forth.

The forms that we have mentioned so far, autobiographical as well as biographical (and there was no distinction, in principle, between the approaches toward the individual adopted by each), had an essentially public character. We must now touch upon

u. Reference here is to *De viris illustribus*, written during the reign of Trajan, and consisting of biographies of Roman literary men arranged according to classes, such as "De grammaticis et rhetoribus," etc.

those autobiographical forms in which the breakdown of this public exteriority of a man is already evident, where the detached and singular individual's private self-consciousness begins to force itself through and bring to the surface the private spheres of his life. In the area of autobiography as well, we get in ancient times only the beginning of the process by which a man and his life become private. New forms for autobiographical expression of a *singular self-consciousness* were therefore not developed. Instead there ensued merely specific modifications of already available public and rhetorical forms. We will note three basic kinds of modifications.

The first modification consists of a satirico-ironic or humorous treatment, in satires and diatribes, of one's self and one's life. Special note should be taken of the familiar ironic autobiographies and self-characterizations in verse by Horace, Ovid and Propertius, which include an element of the parodying of public and heroic forms. Here personal and private topics, unable to find a positive form for their expression, are clothed in *irony* and *humor*.

A second modification, and one that has had important historical resonance, is represented by Cicero's letters to Atticus.

Public and rhetorical forms expressing the unity of the human image had begun to ossify, had become official and conventional; heroization and glorification (as well as self-glorification) were felt to be stereotyped and stilted. Moreover, the available public and rhetorical genres could not by their very nature provide for the expression of life that was private, a life of activity that was increasingly expanding in width and depth and retreating more and more into itself. Under such conditions the forms of *drawing-room rhetoric* acquired increasing importance, and the most significant form was the *familiar letter*. In this intimate and familiar atmosphere (one that was, of course, semiconventionalized) a new private sense of self, suited to the drawing room, began to emerge. A whole series of categories involving self-consciousness and the shaping of a life into a biography—success, happiness, merit—began to lose their public and state significance and passed over to the private and personal plane. Even nature itself, drawn into this new private and drawing-room world, begins to change in an essential way. "Landscape" is born, that is, nature conceived as horizon (what a man sees) and as the environment (the background, the setting) for a completely private, singular individual who does not interact with it. Nature of this kind differs sharply from nature as conceived in a pastoral idyll or

georgic—to say nothing of nature in an epic or tragedy. Nature enters the drawing-room world of private individuals only as picturesque “remnants,” while they are taking a walk, or relaxing or glancing randomly at the surrounding view. These picturesque remnants are woven together in the unstable unity of a cultured Roman’s private life; but they did not come together to form a single, powerful, animating independent nature complex, such as we see in epic or in tragedy (nature as it functions in *Prometheus Bound*, for instance). These picturesque remnants can exist only in the isolation created by closed verbal landscapes that surround them. Other categories as well undergo analogous transformations in this new little private drawing-room world. Numerous petty details of private life begin to take on an importance; in them, the individual feels himself “at home,” his private sense of self begins to take its bearings from these petty details. The human begins to shift to a space that is closed and private, the space of private rooms where something approaching intimacy is possible, where it loses its monumental formedness and exclusively public exteriority.

Such is the characteristic space of the letters to Atticus. There is, nevertheless, a great deal in them that is still public and rhetorical, conventionalized and ossified—as well as much that is still vital and dynamic. It is as if the old public and rhetorical unity of the human image had been drenched with fragments of a future, thoroughly private man.

The third and final modification we will call the *stoic* type of autobiography. First and foremost, we must include in this group the so-called “consolationes” (consolations). These consolations were constructed in the form of a dialogue with Philosophy the Consoler. For our first example (one which has not survived) we must take the *Consolatio* of Cicero, which he wrote after the death of his daughter. Cicero’s *Hortensius* belongs here as well. In succeeding epochs we meet such consolations in Augustine, Boethius and finally in Petrarch.

We must also include in this third modification Seneca’s letters, Marcus Aurelius’ autobiographical book (“To Myself”) and, finally, *The Confessions* and other autobiographical works of St. Augustine.

v. The reference is obscure here, but must be to the *Meditations* that Marcus Aurelius originally jotted down in notebooks for his own guidance. Only later, after his death, were they transcribed.

Typical of all the above-named works is the advent of a new form for relating to one’s self. One might best characterize this new relationship by using Augustine’s term “Soliloquia,” that is, “solitary conversations with oneself.” Conversations with Philosophy the Consoler in the consolations are, of course, also examples of such solitary conversations.

This is a new relationship to one’s own self, to one’s own particular “I”—with no witnesses, without any concessions to the voice of a “third person,” whoever it might be. Here the self-consciousness of a solitary individual seeks support and more authoritative reading of its fate in its own self, without mediation, in the sphere of ideas and philosophy. There is even a place here for struggle with “another’s” point of view—for example, in Marcus Aurelius. The point of view that “another” takes toward us—which we take into account, and by which we evaluate ourselves—functions as the source of vanity, vain pride, or as the source of offense. It clouds our self-consciousness and our powers of self-evaluation; we must free ourselves from it.

Another distinctive feature of this third modification is a sharp increase in the weight of events pertaining to one’s own personal and intimate life; events enormously important in the private life of a given individual have no importance at all for others, and almost no larger social or political significance—for example, the death of a daughter (in Cicero’s *Consolatio*); in such events a man feels himself to be preeminently alone. In events that have a public significance, however, the personal side of these events now begins to be accentuated. As part of this process, such issues as the transitoriness of all that is good, man’s mortality, become very prominent; in general, the theme of personal death (and diverse variants on that theme) begins to play a crucial role in an individual’s autobiographical self-consciousness (in public self-consciousness its role had been, of course, reduced almost to zero).

Despite these new features, even this third modification remains to a significant extent public and rhetorical. There is, as yet, nothing of that authentically solitary individual who makes his appearance only in the Middle Ages and henceforth plays such an enormous role in the European novel. Solitude, here, is still a very relative and naive thing. A sense of self is still rooted firmly in the public sphere, although this influence is well on the way to being ossified. The very Marcus Aurelius who excluded “another’s point of view” (in his struggle to overcome his sensitivity

to insult) is, nevertheless, filled with a profound respect for his own public dignity, and he is haughtily grateful to fate and to other men for his virtues. And the very form assumed by autobiography in this third modification bears a public and rhetorical stamp. We have already said that even Augustine's *Confessions* require a noisy declamation.

Such are the basic forms of ancient autobiography and biography. They were to exercise enormous influence on the development of similar forms in European literature, as well as on the development of the novel.

IV. *The Problem of Historical Inversion and the Folkloric Chronotope*

In concluding our survey of ancient forms of the novel, we will note some general characteristics of the methods used to express time in these works.

How is the fullness of time treated in the ancient novel? We have already seen that in any temporal representation some minimum sense of time's fullness is inevitable (and literature's primary mode of representation is temporal). Moreover, there can be no question of reflecting an epoch outside of the passage of time, outside any contact with past or future, outside time's fullness. Where there is no passage of time there is also no *moment* of time, in the full and most essential meaning of the word. If taken outside its relationship to past and future, the present loses its integrity, breaks down into isolated phenomena and objects, making of them a mere abstract conglomeration.

Even the ancient novel had a certain minimum fullness of time peculiar to it alone. Such time is, so to speak, minimal in the Greek novel, and only slightly more important in the adventure novel of everyday life. In the ancient novel, this fullness of time has a dual character. In the first place, its roots are in a popular and mythological understanding of time's fullness. But these fixed, temporal forms were already in decay and, under conditions of sharp social differentiation beginning to be felt at that time, they could not of course incorporate and adequately shape new content. But these folkloric forms for expressing the fullness of time nevertheless functioned in the ancient novel.

On the other hand, the ancient novel also contained the feeble

first efforts at *new* forms for expressing time's fullness—forms related to the uncovering of social contradictions. Every such uncovering inevitably pushes time into the future. The more profoundly these contradictions are uncovered and the riper they become in consequence, the more authentic and comprehensive becomes time's fullness as the artist represents it. We have seen the first beginnings of such a real-life unity of time in the adventure novel of everyday life. But these first efforts were too feeble to stave off the collapse of the major epic forms into novelness.

Here it is imperative to pause on a distinctive feature of that feeling for time that exercised an enormous and determining influence on the development of literary forms and images.

This distinctive feature manifests itself preeminently in what might be called a *historical inversion*. The essence of this inversion is found in the fact that mythological and artistic thinking locates such categories as purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like in the *past*. Myths about paradise, a Golden Age, a heroic age, an ancient truth, as well as the later concepts of a "state of nature," of natural, innate rights and so on, are all expressions of this historical inversion. To put it in somewhat simplified terms, we might say that a thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the *future* is here portrayed as something out of the *past*, a thing that is in no sense part of the past's reality, but a thing that is in its essence a purpose, an obligation.

This peculiar "trans-positioning," this "inversion" of time typical of mythological and artistic modes of thought in various eras of human development, is characterized by a special concept of time, and in particular of future time. The present and even more the past are enriched at the expense of the future. The force and persuasiveness of reality, of real life, belong to the present and the past alone—to the "is" and the "was"—and to the future belongs a reality of a different sort, one that is more ephemeral, a reality that when placed in the future is deprived of that materiality and density, that real-life weightiness that is essential to the "is" and "was." The future is not homogeneous with the present and the past, and no matter how much time it occupies it is denied a basic concreteness, it is somehow empty and fragmented—since everything affirmative, ideal, obligatory, desired has been shifted, via the inversion, into the past (or partly into the present); en route, it has become weightier, more authentic and persuasive. In order to