

Nicholas Mosley — *Impossible Object* [1968]

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Freedom implies discoverable meaning in an act — Frederick Turner

The individual, and groupings of people, have to learn that they cannot reform society in reality, nor deal with others as reasonable people, unless the individual has learned to locate and allow for the various patterns of coercive institutions, formal and also informal, which rule him. No matter what his reason says, he will always relapse into obedience to this coercive agency while its pattern is with him. — Idries Shahj

Nicholas Mosley, one of the most prolific exploratory novelists of our time, admits that all his novels have always been concerned with one theme only: freedom. His novels could thus be seen as chapters of a single novel in which a single theme evolves: the possibility of man's freedom through overcoming the paradox of freedom. The paradox—or, as Mosley often calls it, the 'impossibility'—of freedom arises due to man's awareness of the necessity of limiting structures for freedom. Hence the question is: how could man fulfil the paradoxical task of overcoming these structures in order to attain freedom?

Each phase of his writing career dramatises one aspect of this endeavour which consequently leads onto the next phase and supersedes the previous one by addressing the possibility of overcoming the paradox of freedom on a higher level and in a more complex context. The existentialist, 'Sartrean' novels of a restless young soldier returning home from WWII are followed by writings of a man who finds meaning

and freedom in Anglo-Catholic Christianity. These are in turn superseded by highly exploratory novels—*Accident* (1966); *Impossible Object* (1968)—that both depict the paradox of freedom and try to resolve it through the aesthetic observation of this paradox. For Mosley an ‘Impossible Object’ is thus both the embodiment of paradox and the overcoming of paradox: “*something impossible, like a staircase climbing a spiral to come out where it started or a cube with a vertical line at the back overlapping a horizontal one in front. These cannot exist in three dimensions but can be drawn in two; by cutting out one dimension a fourth is created. **The object is that life is impossible**; one cuts out fabrication and creates reality.*”*

In his following ‘scientific phase’, Mosley incorporates the views of scientists such as Gregory Bateson, Fritjof Capra and R. D. Laing, in order to show that humans are not at the ‘mercy’ of their genes, body, and brain, and can overcome the determining structures and workings of these, only if they learnt to ‘watch’ and ‘allow’ for them from a higher level of observation. From here it was only a matter of course that Mosley—up to the present day—became interested in the highest place of observation; namely, the Eye of God. In the subsequent phase of his novels he explores the mystical traditions—such as Taoism, Sufism, Gnosticism and Agnosticism—within major religions that try to lift humans to a higher level of being and *seeing*. It is only in this sphere that humans could find the possibility of *living freedom*.

* Mosley (*IO*), p218; original italics; my emphasis.