

admit the existence of the tragic only means that it is impossible to develop an entirely consistent Positivistic system of ideas. The tragic quality can hardly appear if the first step is not taken by the tragic hero. After that first step freedom of choice is denied and a sudden and unexpected loss of value is inescapable. The hero is irrevocably separated from the rest of the community; he must go on and cannot alter the course of events. Once the choice has been made, it appears doubtful whether the hero could have chosen otherwise and escaped the painful process. The obvious result is the loss of some value which has been made undeniable at the beginning of the work. The appearance of the tragic needs one further change in values: the hero must turn his fear of the outcome into a safeguard and take his suffering as a painful letting in of light. He shall be scorched by the consciousness of having committed an irremediable error into an awareness of the infinite. This higher insight makes the tragic hero exceptional. Thus, the tragic involves both a loss and a birth of value; the latter is a result of the former. That is why the tragic as an aesthetic quality and a structure of values is independent of the closure of the literary work. Consequently, what we called cathartic and non-cathartic interpretations cannot be opposed to each other. Both a loss and a birth of value must be present, only the degrees of their immanence may differ in works of art.

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The "Tragic" from Romanticism to the End of the 19th Century

Mr Szegedy-Maszák has spoken of the tragic as interpreted by representatives of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. My task is to give a summary of the attitudes taken towards the tragic in the second half of the 19th century, dominated by Positivism. The tragic as an aesthetic quality will remain in the focus, though some of the principles of the treatment must be adapted to the changed historical context. Our starting point is a statement contained in the previous paper, according to which the Romantics looked upon the tragic as one of the main possibilities of the artistic representation and manifestation of the essence of humanity. The Positivists rejected that Romantic assumption, the tragic became a marginal case in their theory of art and in their ideology. The opponents of Positivism, accordingly, aimed at a rehabilitation and reinterpretation of the tragic.

Positivism has had numerous variants in history. It has been pointed out in Mr Szeged-Maszák's paper that its beginnings can be traced back to earlier periods than the 19th century, and it has survived into our period. Still, it can be safely maintained that its flowering age started about 1830 and ended about 1880, if not later, with the *fin de siècle*. With all its variants, it can be taken as an attempt at a re-furbishing of the philosophical basis of Liberalism, the ideology of a bourgeoisie that first struggled for power, then came to it, even later tried to keep it. The philosophical views of the 19th-century Positivists are well-known. On close view it becomes clear what is common in them: an inclination to systematize and regulate, rather than explain human life. A telling evidence for this is the appearance of the word sociology and the science denoted

by it. We could almost say that the exclusion of the tragic from human life is a natural consequence of attempts made at a systematization and regulation of life. Two questions, however, remain unanswered by the Positivists. They are the following: Can and should the tragic be excluded from art? What function could a representation or expression of the tragic have in a future world which is based on "positive" knowledge and for which the tragic is unknown?

To examine the fate of the tragic in the later 19th century, rejected by the adherents and re-interpreted by the opponents of Positivism, a number of points could be raised. For lack of space we shall concentrate on four questions: the relationship between the tragic and evolution, the autonomy of the individual and the tragic, determinism and the tragic, and, finally, the status of science and art. Beyond doubt, all these questions are interconnected, their separation is justified only in a systematic presentation.

1) As to *evolution*, this concept had been elaborated simultaneously with the weakening of Deism. Since among all aesthetic qualities the tragic had most bearing on the interpretation of existence, the changing views on evolution had a great influence on the treatment of the tragic. So much so, that if somebody asked a question concerning evolution, he could not answer it without having decided about the nature of the tragic. Evolution and the tragic could be approached only through the domain of ethics; the problems of free action, crime, and guilt were crucial to both.

A greater significance attached to time emerged at the same point in history as the cult of evolution. It would be highly wrong to believe that time had not much to do with the Deist views on the tragic; it implied the possibility of asking, sometimes even obliging God to forgive. Still, value in a teleological sense consisted not in human, that is historical time, but in the timelessness of God, which deprived history of its significance. The man who has wasted the time given for penitence is never sublime, he is destined for eternal damnation. It is only the laicized theologues which give ground for his becoming "human" in the sense of an unfortunate soul to be pitied, or a terrifying example. The loss of belief in a rebirth necessitated that man should look for the fulfilment of value in a teleological sense in a time transformed into historical evolution, for those aims which, if reached, could make life harmonious, or, if not reached, could make the fate of the fallen hero sublimely tragic. The historically-minded philosopher-aestheticians of Romanticism put those valuable aims into a teleological perspective which gave ontological value to both the struggle for them and the fall suffered in that struggle.

Positivism (its empiricism, its cult of induction, its emphasis on the particular, and its theory of deterministic evolution) always implied an underlying, deep-seated suspicion towards ontologistic teleology. Comte spoke with contempt of what he called "vain ontological illusions". The Positivists had an almost religious belief in the omnipotence of evolution, but they regarded man as of merely natural character; and so they looked upon his life as an evolution determined by nature. They pushed aside not only the concept of human, that is ethical freedom, but also the possibility of formulating final aims. Notwithstanding his Hegelian background, Taine made painful efforts at a "psychochemical" explanation of good and evil. In this conception the tragic became a product of the unsuccessfully organized matter, instead of being the consequence of a sublime moral decision made in freedom. It was considered a misfortune, the necessary outcome of an inexorable process which could be only modified, but not produced by individual mistake or lack of insight.

2) Going to our second point, concerning the autonomy of the individual, it should be emphasized that time gained significance in non-religious thinking so far as it made man aware of the finitude of life, of the fact that one can die only once and

alone. Time became sublime, yet a source of immeasurable suffering. Romantic philosophers of history found themselves on the horns of a dilemma which they tried to solve by connecting individuals with values to be realized as results of an endless process of evolutionary history. Time was raised to a higher level, yet its identity lost its independence. It was no accident that in this field the greatest thinker on history, Hegel met with the strongest reaction. We can refer only to two disciples of Hegel: to Kierkegaard and to Hebbel. The Danish thinker is known of having pointed out a great limitation of Hegelian and other bourgeois evolutionary, teleological philosophies, and of having made an attempt to attribute religious-aesthetic autonomy to the individual. In his view the tragic was the outcome of a failure to realize autonomy, which, in turn, indicated a lack of the aesthetic experience of an identification with a providential God. Hebbel, in the longest period of his career, found neither religious nor historical solutions. He accepted evolution as the basis of existence, but he confined its relevance to the existence of the universe. For him evolution was indifferent to the individual. From the individual's point of view the world appeared as an *ab ovo* deterministic anarchy which made existence tragic. As he took into consideration only individual consciousness, he regarded the "pantragic" sense of existence as the content of human consciousness. That pantragic awareness enables man to have pity and to bear life as only a Stoic can.

Hebbel was not the first, but certainly the most characteristic representative of the early stage in a development which culminated in 20th-century Existentialism. The bourgeois thinkers of this trend did not regard the tragic as an accidental mishap, an exceptional blind alley of evolution, they looked upon the tragic as a basic feature of human consciousness which can be experienced in a more or less universal way, but in any case it is a necessary by-product of a reflective state of mind, an awareness that man can never get over. This conception made it difficult for playwrights to write truly tragic works for the stage, but in this paper it would be a digression to dwell on this question. What is more important for us is to lay stress upon the historical necessity of its emergence in a period when Romantic philosophies of history clashed with Positivism. Hebbel who could be called post-Romantic with justification, drew upon Positivist terms when pondering on determinism on his *Journals*. We do not know how far he may have been familiar with the Positivist interpretation of determinism and individual autonomy, but we cannot help observing the telling similarities between his views and those of Spencer. The difference is mainly one of tone: Hebbel's despair is a far cry from Spencer's calm acceptance. In the English thinker's estimation, changes produce a "loss of movement" in one and a "surplus of movement" in another section of social organism. The individual may fall victim to such a loss or surplus, but Spencer looks upon that fact with as much indifference as, according to Hebbel, it has been considered by adherents of the Hegelian conception of history. In the so-called "brief" summary of his philosophy, covering almost one thousand pages, Spencer, characteristically enough, included neither the tragic nor the autonomy of the moral individual among his almost 5000 key-terms. The former he mentioned only in three lines, referring to an insignificant change in stage technique, the latter received but a superficial treatment in the catalogue of psychological types.

3) Understandably enough, *determinism* is crucial to the Positivist attitude. Provided one is fully convinced that nothing can happen to any part of the organism except what has been made necessary by naturalistic evolutionary determinism, one can only regret that some part is to suffer a "loss of movement". We who observe that loss can do no more than strive for a deeper knowledge of the logic of organismic determinism, in order to adapt ourselves to it; so that nothing should surprise us. That is after all, the meaning of Comte's famous dictum: "vois pour prévoir". Even this statement

grants more than a consistent Positivist can admit, for Positivism implies that man can know the nature of determinism only so far as that determinism permits him to do so. Taking into consideration the individual motives of self-adaptation would mean that we have violated the vicious circle characterizing Positivism. And even if we accept the principle of *voir pour prévoir* as a means for preliminary, protective adaptation, in Positivist reasoning that means can be given only by science and only in the really self-conscious, Positivist age in history.

4) Having arrived at our last point, at the relationship of science to art, it can be safely maintained that the Positivists' reaction to Romanticism had been most violent in the interpretation of that relationship: they relegated art to a lower level, they appreciated art to the detriment of art. For Spencer art was a game necessitated by man's surplus of energy. Mill loved art and respected Kant too much, Taine's education had been too Hegelian to accept such a facile view, yet neither had any doubt about the primacy of science. The Classicists and the Romantics attributed a function to art and to the tragic of expressing and interpreting existence; the Positivists put aside such a function: they denied the existence of both "a secret point" in man which art could shed light upon much more than science and a characteristic feature of the human self which would "clash with totality". Science would guarantee the slackening of any such tension, it could even solve such apparent dilemmas.

The development of literature in the middle of the 19th century gave ground for such reasoning. Tragedy lost its importance, it seemed almost to disappear. Both the public and the literary coterie favoured novels based on the concept of evolution as defined in natural science and well-made plays of moralizing sociological orientation. We should not forget that the contemporary public hailed not those artists whom to-day we regard as representative of the mid-19th century. Freytag, Daudet, Shollogub, and George Eliot were read as novelists, Augier, Sardou, Dumas fils, and Pailleron were successful on the stage. It was under the influence of the decline of tragedy and the fate of truly tragic works that Taine came to one of his basic tenets as a sociologist of literature, according to which "la littérature s'accommode toujours au goût de ceux qui peuvent la goûter et la payer".

In retrospect, all these phenomena belonged to the surface. The best writers were tempted by the perspective of the "avenir de la science" only for a very brief period, their disillusionment came as early as in the middle or end of the sixth decade of the 19th century. The tragic reappeared: not in tragedies where it always implied a sudden catastrophe, but in an aesthetic quality more generalized and less confined in its field of operation. Having deserted the drama, it became an integral part of lyrics, music, and epic works: novels or short stories. In lyrics it emerged as the expression of a psychic state, in music as the dramatization of a sense of life, in the novel as a fatal situation which the author could or would not transform into a sequential plot. Baudelaire's contempt for Positivist progress, Browning's revolt against bourgeois morals, Storm's bitter resignation towards the new world, Flaubert's disparagement of Positivist science, Dostoievsky's anger toward the lies and selfishness inherent in capitalist reasoning represented not only a reaction to an historical period, but also the expression of a general sense of life, which implied that man's existence is *ab ovo* tragic.

The revolt of creative artists was soon followed by that of theoreticians. First Schopenhauer became immensely popular, then Nietzsche appeared on a scene with a theory of art that laid great stress on the expression of the tragic and identified it with great art. The Marxist explanation of this predominance of the tragic is based on the characteristic features of capitalist production and social system. As this social interpretation has been elaborated with great erudition and has become rather well-known, we

shall not dwell on it. It would be more useful for us to refer to two less-known phenomena that will prove to be decisive for 20th-century bourgeois attitudes to the tragic.

First I should refer to the rather paradoxical fact that Positivism, in spite of all its aggressive self-confidence, is, in the final analysis, a tragic, fatalistic conception. The Positivists tried to put into brackets the harassing ontological questions which they could not answer with the laws of determinism and which made their sense of the universe tragic. They attempted rather desperately to qualify ontological questions as meaningless or as to be answered at a future stage of evolution. Both attitudes had been inherited from earlier thinkers: the first from the atheistic interpreters of Nature, those representatives of the Enlightenment who adhered to the "l'homme-machine" conception; the second from certain thinkers of the Enlightenment, from Hegel, and mainly from the Hegelians whose tentative pre-Positivist ideas have not been sufficiently analyzed by scholars.

Hebbel's historical importance is made exceptional by the fact that he could accept neither the Hegelian nor the Positivist view; and so he discovered the possibility of a third conception which proved to be especially influential for later bourgeois interpreters of the tragic. Unlike Schopenhauer, he did not deny evolution on a large scale, on the level of the universe. Still, he considered this evolution indifferent from the point of view of the individual who had a wish for autonomous identity. That indifference is tragic for the individual; and so the tragic becomes an ontological characteristic of individual existence. What is more, it must be viewed as the most important of these characteristics, because all conscious human beings become aware of themselves as individuals so far as they recognize that tragic indifference. From the point of view of the universe everybody is able to act the role granted him by natural and, in a narrow sense, by temporal determinism. But if he has realized his pitiless, deserted individual state, he may transform his individual life into a sort of evolution, and so may go beyond the passive acceptance of and adaptation to a ruthless history.

Hebbel was the author of tragedies, yet in his *Journals* he clearly indicated that he looked not for sudden, catastrophic tragic guilts and punishments. Tragic fault, as it appeared to him, was nothing else than man's inescapably individual existence. As to punishment and catharsis, they became identical with the fault. Our awareness of a guilt and a punishment without crime gives us power, makes us sublime, and purifies us. The more advanced the evolution of the universe, the more complete the individual as an individual may become. So, evolution leads not to an exclusion but to a greater awareness of the tragic. As a result of this, the tragic experience will more and more fully act the ontological role which nothing else can do. With such a line of thought, Hebbel made the tragic more valuable than any of his predecessors. Apparently, he arrived at a solution of the antagonism between the demand for a tragic sense and the totality of evolution, but this had been made possible only through a re-interpretation of evolution: instead of excluding the tragic, he turned it from an everyday catastrophe into an inevitable fact of consciousness. In his hands the tragic lost its dramatic exclusivity and became a general sense of life. It is probably superfluous to mention that pantargic and sense of life are among his oft-repeated terms.

Hebbel's conception has obvious similarities with that of Nietzsche. For Nietzsche the most tragic is the most human and the most valuable. The most tragic art expresses most about man, it is the most faithful to truth; therefore, it is the highest form of art. Still, the difference between Hebbel's and Nietzsche's views are not slight. Nietzsche had only a few, a minority in mind, having accepted Darwin's law of natural selection. The true disciples of Hebbel appeared only with those 20th-century Existentialists who heartily concurred in the view that the tragic was manifested not so much in sudden

dramatic events as in the tragic of life underlined by the determinism of temporality. It was with them that the ontological function of the aesthetic experience of the tragic became fully elaborated.

As a final note, another rejection of the Positivist history of philosophy, that of Marx, the founder of dialectical historical materialism, should at least be mentioned. His critique inevitably led to a new conception of the tragic. This theory, however, had not been worked out in the 19th century, it was not until the early 20th century that Marxist aestheticians and literary critics made their first attempts at a fuller elaboration.

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The Interpretation of the Tragic at the Beginning of the 20th Century

The first conclusion one can draw from the twentieth-century theories of the tragic is like a paradox. Having done their utmost to preclude the possibility of the artistic representation of the tragic, students of aesthetics complain of a great lack of the tragic in contemporary literature. It is declared almost unanimously that the tragic has been thrust into the background in modern art.

Those who take their arguments from poetics seem to be right: our age has not produced great tragedies. Still, that does not mean the absence of the tragic in works of literature. Mr. Szegedy-Maszák has laid stress on the German Romantics' distinction between tragedy and the tragic. The possibility of this distinction was given at the end of the nineteenth century and after, but theoreticians abstained from using it for ideological reasons or for reasons reflected in ideology. Let me name only a few of them here.

Theoreticians concentrated on tragedy because they wished to devote their attention to the "purely tragic". That intention was manifest in an early work of Lukács, entitled *Die Metaphysik der Tragödie* (published in 1911). "Life is the anarchy of twilight" he wrote. "In life nothing is entirely fulfilled or completed. [...] People are fond of life because it is airy and uncertain, [...] they like it as the monotonous, soothing lullaby of a great uncertainty". Life and tragedy are poles apart, the latter is a miracle of illumination and consummation, free from the accidents and compromises of life; it "strips the veil of bright moments and fine atmospheres off the soul; the soul is forced to face tragedy in its stark naked essence, with its sharp outlines inexorably drawn".

In his early phase Lukács believed that the incessant compromises of everyday "life" make it impossible for man to take a full responsibility for himself, the world of that "life" is transcendent and is in need of divine interventions which can smooth away conflicts. In contrast with this, man's immanence consists in the purely tragic. The very essence of tragedy is not a fall, but its acceptance, an acceptance of ourselves. God can be no more than a "witness" to it. The tragic is based on the opposition between ideas and reality, human essence and existence. By the turn of the century bourgeois society had come into conflict with its won classical ideas: that was the hypothesis underlying the views of the young Lukács.

His theory is open to criticism for various reasons. He interpreted the tragic in an extremist, "unambiguous" way, but that was possible only because he used the term in reference to a mentality, an attitude rather than an objectivated *Weltbild*. For him