INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted you will find a target note listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.
Dedicated to

MICHAEL GELVEN,

who initiated me into the rites of the Dionysiac.
October 28, 1951 ................ Born - Aurora, Illinois

1972 ...................... B.A. in Philosophy, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois

1972-74 ................... Teaching Assistant, Philosophy Department, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois

1975 ...................... M.A. in Philosophy, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois

1975-present ............ Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Philosophy

Studies in Aesthetics. Professors Lee B. Brown and James Scanlan

Studies in 19th and 20th century Continental Philosophy. Professors Lee B. Brown and James Scanlan

Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy. Professor Robert Turnbull

Studies in the Philosophy of Science. Professors Ronald Laymon and Alan Hausman
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION - NIHILISM AND RESOLUTENESS: THE TRAGIC CONTEXT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. A KUHNIAN METATHEORY FOR AESTHETICS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The Poetics: Is Hamartia the Cause of the Tragic Fall?</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tragic Flaw as One-Sidedness: Hegel's Theory of Tragedy</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Chorus as Mirror of Reality: Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. IN PRAISE OF THE TRAGIC HERO: AHAB AS PROMETHEUS</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE APPLICATION OF PARADIGM</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Tragedy in Ancient Greece</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Shakespearean Tragedy</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Stavrogin and Myshkin: Nihilist and Tragic Hero</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Ibsen: Bourgeois Tragedy and the Victim Play</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Literature in the Age of Anxiety</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. EPILOGUE</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

NIHILISM AND RESOLUTENESS: THE TRAGIC CONTEXT

For various reasons, modern critics and playwrights have questioned the relevance of tragedy to the contemporary scene. Some even wonder if it is even possible to write one anymore. Tragedies have traditionally been thought of as repositories of serious considerations of profound ideas. This "seriousness" has been ridiculed as absurd by such playwrights as Beckett and Genet. Somehow, in the process, it has also become fashionable to call the most life-denying or absurd dramas and novels "existential."

It is easy to equate existential philosophy with absurdism and nihilism. If one thinks in terms of Ivan's dilemma in The Brothers Karamazov, then the logical outcome of the denial of God (either his existence or his justice) is nihilism. But Ivan's is a false dilemma. There are other alternatives, which existentialist philosophers of the present century have attempted to delineate.

Given this misconception about existentialism, it might be natural to assume that "existentialist tragedy" is a contradiction
in terms. It is true that existentialist philosophers have attempted to write tragedies and have been singularly unsuccessful in doing so. Yet I believe that such tragedies are indeed possible and, furthermore, that a theory to explain the entire history of tragedy can be formulated on existentialist premises. Although Martin Heidegger demurred at being called an "existentialist", his concerns for death, guilt, suffering and authenticity clearly indicate his preoccupation with questions of existence. I shall, in what follows, borrow part of the conceptual apparatus which Heidegger generates in Being and Time in an attempt to generate a theory of tragedy which is relevant to the entire history of the genre.

There is, however, a prior question which must be addressed before this theory is proposed. It is only natural that I tend to argue for the superiority of the theory proposed below to its predecessors. But it is unclear as to what reasons count as good reasons for preferring one theory of tragedy (or of any area in aesthetics) to another. To avoid ambiguity, I will argue for a particular metatheoretical framework which specifies the limits of rationality in arguing for such a preference. The idea that "tragedy" has some kind of fixed and eternal essence has fallen out of favor in this century. This does not necessarily entail that any theory is as good as any other in explaining tragedies.

The problem, then, is how to avoid a thoroughgoing subjectivism, which would render our understanding and appreciation of tragedy "merely a matter of taste." Some theoreticians have thought that this was the
result of denying fixed essences to which theories can either succeed or fail to correspond. No consistent and adequate metatheory has yet been proposed to attempt to clarify to what extent aesthetic judgments can be 'objective.'

In my search for such a metatheory, I was moved to consult the philosophy of science. In so doing, I found an appealing model in Thomas Kuhn's notion of a paradigm, as developed in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and elsewhere. Choosing between competing scientific theories poses many of the same difficulties as choosing between competing aesthetic theories. In an analogical extension of the Kuhnian paradigm model for theories in science, I will argue that the traditional methodological desiderata for theories in science (at least as Kuhn interprets them) are equally applicable to aesthetic theories. It is in terms of such desiderata that one scientific theory is said to be 'objectively' better than its rival(s). It will be my contention that the judgments which they yield when applied to aesthetic theories are virtually as 'objective' as when they are utilized in the scientific realm.

Having established this metatheoretical framework, I will plunge into a lengthy inquiry concerning tragedy. Such an endeavor cannot be adequately accomplished in a vacuum, so I will begin with a careful treatment of the most influential of my philosophical predecessors. It would take a *magnum opus* to survey the plethora of theories of tragedy which have been proposed over the ages. I can only hope to do justice to those philosophical theories which have garnered the greatest critical following.
The traditional approach to theorizing about tragedy is to attempt to frame a definition of the term. I intend to follow this tradition, with the following crucial caveat. For reasons which will become evident in what follows, I am not pretending to give a "real" definition of this concept in terms of some set of necessary and/or sufficient conditions. My definition is unequivocally honorific; it specifies what might be called "good-making" characteristics for tragedies. Hence, this definition will not attempt to frame the minimal conditions for any work being called tragic.

Still, one of the major functions of any such definition is to clearly distinguish those works to which the concept is properly applied from other serious works of literature. Tragedy is quite properly associated with suffering. Yet not all literary depictions of suffering are tragic. The everyday usage of the term, which treats it as virtually synonymous with "calamity", tends to cloud this point. It is an essential part of my task to indicate what kinds of suffering are properly called tragic. Specifically, I will argue that suffering which is clearly deserved (e.g. in a morality play), or which is undergone passively (e.g. in so-called "victim plays") or which is actively sought out by the protagonist for its own sake (the self-destructive individual, or the suicide) is not tragic.

Traditionally, attempts to define tragedy have included one or a number of aspects of works which theoreticians have taken to be central to the genre. In his excellent treatise A Definition of Tragedy, Oscar Mandel argues that these elements break down into basically four
types: formal elements, situations, ethical direction and emotional effect. Formal elements are such things as Aristotle's famed "unities", or his claim that tragedies must be in a dramatic, not a narrative form. In definitions by situation, theorists attempt to establish a recurrent subject matter common to all tragedies, e.g. that they all depict the fall of a good man. Definitions by ethical direction claim that tragedies are, in effect, "arguments" for a particular ethical view, such as Schopenhauer's contention that tragedies teach us resignation of the will. Finally, some theorists think that tragedies have a characteristic emotional effect on their audiences. The classic example here is Aristotle's contention that all tragedies produce a catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear. These types are not mutually exclusive, and, as Aristotle's theory suggests, a single definition may have elements from many of the four types.

Mandel proposes the above typology as exhaustive of the types of definitions proposed. In this he is mistaken, for Max Scheler takes an approach to the genre which he calls transcendental. Following the famous Kantian approach to epistemology, Scheler asks the question "What makes tragedy possible?" This may seem like an entirely different question than asking for the meaning of tragedy. Yet, according to Martin Heidegger (leaving his difficult language aside), "When I ask for the meaning of something, I ask for that which makes something possible."
One of the greatest problems with previous theories of tragedy is that they sought to make tragedy subservient to a particular ethical direction. To take such a transcendental approach to the question avoids any such ethical presuppositions. No particular ethical theory need be correct in order to make tragedy possible. Still, it is a feature common to most theories of tragedy heretofore proposed that the total effect of viewing such works is characterized in positive terms. Hence, in order for tragedy to be possible, nihilism must be averted. It is for this reason that I wish to place tragedy against the backdrop of nihilism, by arguing that tragedy is impossible in a nihilistic universe.

Lee Brown, in an essay in a volume dedicated to Eliseo Vivas, remarked that "works of literature all show human beings in a certain light, or under a certain description, just as pictures show, e.g., peasants as noble, suffering patient, strong, lazy or stupid." It is my contention that all good tragedies show human beings in a similar light, namely, as living worthwhile lives which can, at times, be noble and glorious. The central task of my theory of tragedy is to explain how it is possible for depictions of such massive suffering to provide such an image of human beings.

To do so, I have mobilized a number of concepts which Heidegger utilizes in Being and Time. It is important to note, however, that my theory is independent of the overall project in Heidegger's magnum opus. He claimed that his was an inquiry into Being qua Being, and that his analysis of human being was an intermediary goal on the road to his fundamental ontological destination. Even if Being and Time as a whole
fails to fulfill these primary ontological pretensions, the account of human being therein generated is powerful and convincing in its own right.

What is essential to both my projected theory and Heidegger's is the notion that authenticity and resoluteness are not concepts in an existentialist ethical system. Our purposes are hortatory, in that we wish to call human beings to be authentic and resolute. But it is Heidegger's contention, one with which I fully agree, that the question of whether one is (or is capable of being) authentic and resolute is prior to the question of whether their actions are ethical.

It is in this sense that I am proposing authenticity and resoluteness as transcendental conditions for the possibility of tragedy. I contend that no particular ethical system need be presupposed in order to make tragedy possible. But human beings must be capable of being authentic and resolute (or at least capable of being viewed as such), or else tragedies could not hope to get off the ground.

Let me return to Max Scheler for a moment in order to clarify the nature of this approach. In his essay "On the Phenomenon of the Tragic", Scheler remarks:

The tragic is, to begin with, a characteristic of events, characters, etc., that we perceive and intuit in them. It is a heavy, chilly breath that emanates from these things themselves, a darkly glimmering light that surrounds them and in which a certain quality of the world seems to dawn on us.5
According to Scheler, the "quality of the world" which "dawns on us" is that the world is essentially Hegelian, albeit cut away from Hegel's notion of a realizable state of absolute knowledge. For Scheler, what makes tragedy possible is "the fact that the forces that destroy the higher positive value emanate themselves from bearers of positive values." In opting for such a characterization, I contend that Scheler has failed to push his transcendental approach far enough.

To my mind, the "quality of the world" to which tragedies refer is the fact that resolute individuals can be destroyed in the authentic pursuit of their values, and that such destruction is not nihilistic in its effect. Notice that such a claim does not presuppose any particular set of ethical values, or that tragic destruction must always result from a clash between two positive values, however "positive" is to be construed. It does presuppose that humans have the potentiality for being authentic and resolute. Furthermore, if such destruction is not to have a nihilistic effect, one must also have the impression that, in another set of circumstances, the projects of the protagonists could have been realized. This is to say that the "world" must be able to be viewed as not essentially hostile to any and all serious purposes, as it is often portrayed to be in absurdist writings. Just as tragedy is incompatible with a Christian world view that pictures us as essentially in harmony with a sympathetic universe, it is also incompatible with a Manichean perspective that pits the universe against us as an essentially hostile force.
The transcendental conditions for tragedy which I am proposing provide the answer to "What is the meaning of tragedy?", at least as far as Heidegger construes the 'meaning' question. This is somewhat different from offering a definition of tragedy, at least as that task has been traditionally approached. The honorific definition of tragedy which I will offer in the body of this work is framed in such a traditional form. Taking authenticity and resoluteness as the key explanatory concepts, I have also offered a hypothesis as to what the emotional effect of tragedy is, and what is its significance to human existence. Returning to the typology of definitions offered by Mandel, my theory does not require the presence of any particular formal elements; it requires no particular type of situation (only that the tragic destruction be dependent on both the purposes of the protagonists and the situations in which they find themselves); it explicitly avoids proposing any Ethical direction to tragedy. It does make contact with traditional theories in its claim that tragedies produce characteristic emotional effects in the sensitive audience.

It is appropriate (and perhaps overdue) for me to conclude this introduction with a brief explanation of the two central concepts which were mentioned throughout. To be authentic, as contrasted with being inauthentic, is to take responsibility for one's own freedom, and realize that common societal opinion need not determine the limits of one's alternatives. Heidegger characterizes inauthenticity as allowing oneself to be enslaved by the "they-self" (Das Mann). Such an individual conforms to the conventional. The most striking subject of
conventional suppression is death. Society flees from death, never personalizes its impact, approaching it at best with the abstract realization that 'one dies.' For Heidegger, the strongest reason for breaking with the conventional is a profound recognition of the inevitability of our deaths. The authentic individual could still decide to act in accordance with conventions, but not (to borrow a distinction from Kant) for the sake of their conventionality.

Heidegger makes a great deal, perhaps too much, of the significance of the experience of angst or dread in calling the individual to be authentic. He carefully distinguished angst from fear of some particular fate, for the former is a more global reaction to existence as a whole. I believe that finding oneself in a situation where the projects one holds dear can cost one his life is perhaps a more powerful call to authenticity. This, of course, is the common predicament of the tragic protagonist.

Eminent threat of death can call one to be authentic, to reject following societal conventions for their own sake. Having authentically chosen one's values, the question then becomes one of how to face the threat of destruction which holding these values causes for the protagonist. One can be resolute, showing the willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of these values, or one can shrink from the threat and preserve oneself. In tragedy, the protagonist must choose to be resolute, or else the work is not tragic. Furthermore, it is my contention that the tragic destruction which ensues must be seen to depend importantly on the particular configuration of the situation.
in which the protagonist is resolute. One must get the impression, that is, that in another situation, the projects which the protagonists value could be realized, and not at the cost of their destruction.

I have set my discussions of tragedy in what follows up against the backdrop of nihilism. Nihilism, at the very least, entails the claim that there are no projects worth suffering or dying for. The rise of nihilism in the last hundred years suggests that perhaps it is impossible to maintain the conviction that there are such worthwhile projects in the absence of the traditional transcendent underpinnings for the value of such endeavors. I contend that the feelings of exhilaration, which are the characteristic response to good tragedy, are explained by the power of tragedy to reinforce the conviction that there are such worthwhile projects. In their depiction of resolute individuals pursuing projects that could cost them their lives, tragedians lead us to identify with their protagonists. The central question in much of theorizing about tragedy has been how to account for so-called "tragic pleasure", i.e. the pleasure of exhilaration we feel from the depiction of extreme suffering. I am homing in on an answer to this classic conundrum.

Tragedies show authenticity and resoluteness in a praiseworthy light, depicting such potentiality as noble in spite of the catastrophic results for the protagonists. It is my belief that such praise is merely heightened by its ability to be effected in the face of such brutal outcomes. The greatest of human fears is not to suffer and/or die for worthy causes. It is rather the fear of nihilism, of having no
convictions, and of being unable to act as a result (or to act arbitrarily, which is even worse). In our identification with protagonists that we esteem, we are reassured that there are such worthwhile projects, if only by the sheer force of their will as depicted in tragedies.

If human beings infuse value into a world which has none intrinsically, the greatest extent to which they can go in such creation of values is through sacrificing one's life. Of course, such sacrifice can be depicted as worthless, for example, by depicting the protagonist as a mere pawn or naive dupe. But such depictions are not tragic; we continue to pity such figures, and a merely pathetic character is a powerful argument for a pessimistic world view. Hence, the protagonist must be depicted as possessing a certain degree of lucidity about himself and his surroundings, if he is not to be reduced to a merely Quixotic figure.

This then is the 'essence' of the theory which will follow. Its merits as a theory of tragedy must be judged according to the metatheoretical constraints proposed in Chapter One below. I believe that, by refusing to specify any particular ethical direction, or form, or situation as characteristic of all tragedy, I have generated a theory that is broad in scope while retaining great explanatory power.
A KUHNIAN METATHEORY FOR AESTHETICS

Contemporary aesthetics stands in acute need of an adequate metatheory. A survey of the journals will yield a number of conflicting theoretical approaches to virtually every interesting critical subject matter. No metatheory can hope to settle all such disputes. But, at present, there is a discouraging lack of self-consciousness regarding the metatheoretical foundations of such approaches. If critical disputes are to be more than mere matters of taste, there must be some rational standards for theory preference. The primary function of a metatheory, then, will be to establish the existence of such standards and discuss their limits when utilized to generate a concrete decision procedure. These fundamental issues must be addressed before one is prepared to mediate a dispute between two or more rival theories.

This much is clear, aesthetic theories, like scientific theories, are proposed to explain a certain set of phenomena. Of course, the sense of explanation which is operative in the two realms is somewhat different (e.g. scientific theories are concerned primarily with causal explanation, while aesthetic theories usually aren't). Furthermore, scientific theories have a predictive power which cannot be matched by their aesthetic counterparts. Yet I will argue in what follows that the two enterprises are sufficiently similar to allow for some fruitful analogies to be drawn between them. In the last two centuries, philosophers as diverse as Nietzsche, Dewey and Marx have mined such analogies for fruitful insights.
In my search for an adequate metatheory for aesthetics, I have found such an analogy quite useful. In what follows, I will sketch an analogical extension of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm model for scientific theories into the aesthetic realm. This bridge between the two disciplines must be built in stages. Kuhn's model emerges from out of an attack on the Postitivist's lack of an interpretation of the history of science, especially of its revolutionary periods. I will hence begin by discussing the essentials of this attack, paying particular attention to the elements in it which are particularly relevant to understanding Kuhn's positive theory. A clear outline of Kuhn's paradigm model will follow, including a critical discussion of which elements I take to be the most, and which the least, controversial. The centerpiece of this chapter will of course be an application of this model to the history of aesthetic theorizing. As it is my particular area of expertise, my most extensive discussion will concern attempts to define the concept "tragedy." This is only intended as an example of an approach which I believe can be generalized to virtually all aesthetic theorizing. In conclusion, I will compare and contrast this model with the approach of Morris Weitz, whose work is sufficiently similar to what I am proposing as to require being addressed.

1. One of the central tenets of Positivism was the notion that scientific theories are verified or falsified by direct comparison with nature. New theories succeed old ones when the old ones are falsified by such direct comparison. It is this idealized explanation of theory change that
Thomas Kuhn found inadequate to explain actual scientific practice. One of the reasonable expectations one has of a metatheory of science is that it explain what has actually occurred in the history of scientific theorizing, and it is Kuhn's contention that the Positivist model fails to do so. "No process yet disclosed by the historical study of scientific development at all resembles the methodological stereotype of falsification by direct comparison with nature."¹ Kuhn's fundamental project is to formulate a model which will explain how scientific development actually occurred, especially during periods of transition from one theory to its successor(s).

First, however, he must explain where the Positivists went wrong. His attack focuses on three assumptions which he took to be absolutely fundamental to the Positivist project. These were a) all statements in science are either reports of observations, which are immediate, direct and theory-neutral, or theoretical statements which seek to explain these observations; b) definitions of theoretical statements provide necessary and/or sufficient conditions for their employment; and c) the superiority of a theory to its predecessor can be explained in terms of such "objective" and unproblematic methodological desiderata as simplicity, fruitfulness, scope, etc., and that this superiority provides the explanation for why and how such revolutionary replacements occur.

If (a) is correct, one would expect that, in the major controversies in the history of science, the disputants pretty much agreed as to the description of the phenomena they were attempting to explain, and differed only in the particular explanations offered. On the positivist model,
such agreement is crucial to determining which theory will prevail in a dispute, if claim (c) above is correct. Without a substantial body of such theory-neutral observation statements, no direct comparison between theories can be unproblematically accomplished.

It is Kuhn's contention that the agreement which the positivist model dictates is seldom forthcoming in the actual history of scientific revolutions. Consider his example of the Copernican Revolution in our viewing of the motions of the planets. Both the Ptolemaic astronomer and Copernicus could agree that they saw the sun rise in the east and set in the west. But this agreement was insufficient to settle their dispute: the Ptolemaic astronomer "saw" the sun going around the earth, while Copernicus "saw" the results of the earth turning on its axis while revolving around the sun. The correct way to "see" the motions of the planets could not, at this point in history of science be determined by a direct comparison with theory-neutral observation statements.²

Kuhn outlines a litany of such examples in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. It is somewhat hard to evaluate Kuhn's interpretations of some of these examples (e.g. the case of Uranus). His critical remarks do seem to be vindicated by present attitudes in the philosophy of science. It is certainly relevant to recognize that almost no one embraces such a black-and-white distinction between theoretical statements and observation statements. Those disposed to embrace such a distinction tend to talk about observationality coming "in degrees", or being "framework relative."
If (b) above is right, then a survey of actual practice should reveal that good theories specify necessary and/or sufficient conditions for the application of the concepts which they mobilize. If a certain phenomenon lacked any of the necessary, or all of the sufficient, conditions for the application of some concept, that concept could not be successfully utilized to explain that phenomenon. Such rules of application should be seen to provide a quite determinate decision procedure; disputes among subscribers to the same theory should be seen to concern whether a certain condition was or was not fulfilled in a certain instance, and not what rules were correct (let alone questioning whether any such set of rules was possible).

Wittgenstein attacked this view of concept use and formation in Philosophical Investigations. Kuhn argues that a survey of the actual history of science will lead one to reject the positivist's model and accept Wittgenstein's "family resemblance" approach. Kuhn's utilization of this approach will be discussed in a subsequent section. Let me here outline a key example which Kuhn cites from the history of science to show that concepts are not defined in terms of necessary and/or sufficient conditions.

Consider the famous definition of force in Newton's Second Law of Motion, \( f=ma \). This equation was applied directly to solve the problem of the motion of colliding bodies. Yet it was not utilized in its original, skeletal form when applied to various other cases of motion. In the case of free fall, it is one equation (different from, and more complex than, the original equation); for the simple pendulum it is
another, still more complex equation, while the complications only multiply when the problems of harmonic oscillation or gyroscopic motion are addressed. It is Kuhn's contention that the original concept of force has been fruitfully applied to all of these types of motion, but that there is no set of necessary and/or sufficient conditions which can explain why this is the case. What all of these successful applications of some permutation of $f=ma$ have in common "is not that they satisfy some explicit or even fully discoverable set of rules or assumptions. Instead they may relate by resemblance or modeling."^4

One may, of course, try to distill the concept into some specific set of criteria. This is, in fact, what most theorists do. But, if Kuhn is right, these criteria are at best _prima facie_ conditions for the successful application of the concept. The absence of any one or a number of the similarity characteristics proffered as criteria is only a _prima facie_ reason for not including the phenomenon in the extension of the concept. This is only to say that this reason could be overridden by other known similarity characteristics which are present in the phenomenon which would allow for a fruitful application of the concept in question. There is much more on this in the following section.

Finally, if (c) above were the case, one would expect to find wide agreement as to what such methodological desiderata are, precisely what they _mean_, and how they are to be arranged in a _hierarchy_. Such a hierarchy is required for two or more of these criteria will sometimes conflict; e.g., if theory A is simpler and theory B has
greater scope then, ceteris parebus, which of the two theories is to be preferred? Also, one would expect that a new theory will always be clearly superior to the predecessor which it replaced in terms of these criteria.

As even the casual reader should by now anticipate, Kuhn argues that the actual history of science does not bear out these expectations either. Consider again the Copernican Revolution. Copernicus' theory was not significantly more accurate in its predictions than the Ptolemaic system until its subsequent revision by Kepler. Yet the switch to the Copernican world-view was in full swing prior to this revision. Furthermore, Ptolemaic theory was more consistent with related theories in other fields. Finally, Copernicus' theory was only simpler "if evaluated in a special way", and actually required more epicycles in its original form than the Ptolemaic.5

Up to this point, I have merely summarized the negative conclusions which Kuhn arrives at via his survey of the actual history of science. He also uses this survey as an argument for his positive views, and it is to a discussion of these that I will now turn.

2. One must begin to understand Kuhn's positive view by getting clear on what he means by a paradigm. This is no easy task, for Kuhn is notorious for having used the notion of a paradigm in number of different and possibly incompatible ways.6 In a postscript to The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, added nine years after its original publication, Kuhn contends that the term is used in primarily two different senses:
On the one hand, it (the term 'paradigm') stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in this constellation, the concrete puzzle solutions which, enjoyed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.7

Allow me to explain these two senses further, beginning with the latter.

Let us return to Newton’s Second Law. In its original form, \( f=ma \), it provided a concrete solution to the problem of calculating the force of colliding bodies. This was soon recognized as such a solution by increasing numbers of physicists, who then sought to model solutions to other problems of motion on this original case. As noted above, no set of rules can explain all of the cases of motion to which some permutation of \( f=ma \) can be fruitfully applied. The community for which a certain problem solution becomes a paradigm will attempt to widen the range of its application until it covers all, or most, of the cases which the community thinks are relevantly similar to the case(s) with which it began. Kuhn calls this process of applying accepted paradigms to further puzzle solutions the process of "normal" science.

So, in "normal" science, a community of scientists pursue the solution of concrete puzzles, using the original paradigm to help determine what will be accepted as an explanation and as a puzzle solution. Following Kuhn, let me use the term "exemplar" to refer to this sense of paradigm. What, then, does this community of specialists share besides these common exemplars? Scientists themselves would say that they share a theory or a set of theories. But Kuhn is trying to get at something broader in nature and scope in the other sense of the
term "paradigm."

This sense of the term stands for "the entire constellation of shared beliefs, values, techniques, etc.". In the postscript referred to above, Kuhn suggests that what is shared could be called a "disciplinary matrix." In the body of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn speaks in such a manner as to suggest that, at bottom, what the adherents to a given paradigm share is a "psychological set" or "gestalt." The central idea which he utilizes in his explanation of revolutions in science is the notion of a gestalt-shift, and I think an extended discussion of an example of such a shift will illustrate what he has in mind.

Since remote antiquity people have observed the movements of bodies suspended by a string or chain. Often called pendulums, the movement of such swinging stones has been the subject of much controversy in the history of science. Aristotle viewed the pendulum as an instance of constrained fall; i.e., he "saw" it as tending towards its "natural place" which is at rest. This was the essence of his view of the pendulum, and it was only an annoying fact to be explained away that the stone took so long to attain a quiescent state. Galileo, on the other hand, "saw" the pendulum in quite a different light. Due to his acceptance of impetus theory, he thought of the motion of swinging stones as being symmetrical and enduring, a potential perpetual motion machine. The fact that the stone eventually swings less and less until finally coming to rest became, for Galileo, the annoying fact to be explained away. As Kuhn notes, neither way of viewing the pendulum is
more accurate, in any purely observational sense.

Kuhn contends that something like the duck-rabbit gestalt shift is relevant to understanding these two different ways of viewing the pendulum. Looked at from Aristotle's perspective, the pendulum is an instance of constrained fall, just as a certain configuration of lines on paper looks like a duck when viewed a certain way. But when one assumes the Galilean perspective, the pendulum is viewed as an instance of symmetrical and enduring motion, just as the same lines on paper look like a rabbit when viewed from a slightly different point of view. The switch in perspective which occurred when the Galilean paradigm supplanted its Aristotelian predecessor is functionally equivalent to such a gestalt-shift.

A paradigm, as a psychological set, highlights certain features of the phenomena which the scientist is seeking to explain, and plays down the significance of other elements.

Seeing constrained fall, the Aristotelian would measure the weight of the stone, the vertical height to which it was raised, and the time required for it to achieve rest. Together with the resistance of the medium, these were the conceptual categories deployed by Aristotelian science when dealing with a falling body...Galileo saw the swinging stone must differently...He therefore measured only weight, radius, angular displacement and time per swing, which were precisely the data that could be interpreted to yield Galileo's laws for the pendulum. ... Given Galileo's paradigms, pendulum-like regularities were very nearly accessible to inspection.

Adherents to the Galilean paradigm take on a common "gestalt" which highlights the elements of radius, displacement and time per swing while discounting the resistance of the medium.
The occurrence of such gestalt shifts provides part of the explanation for why any substantial body of theory-neutral observation statements is seldom forthcoming. Furthermore, Kuhn notes that there are problems of translating the terminology of one theory into the terminology of another, a process which is quite often required before rival theories can be compared. Even where theories use the same terms, they often do not have the same meaning in the different theories. According to Kuhn, this is because the meaning of any term used within a theory is a function of its interrelationships it has with the other concepts mobilized by that theory (to borrow a phrase from Quine, the meaning of such concepts are "interanimated"). Consider the following case, one which Kuhn does not discuss, but which provides an apt example of what he has in mind here.

It would seem, on the face of it, that, given any line and any point not on that line, the statements 'one and only one line can be drawn parallel to the given line through the point in question' (Euclid's parallel postulate) and 'more than one line (in fact, an infinite number of lines) can be drawn parallel to the given line through the point in question' contradict one another, and hence only one of them could be true. Yet it has been persuasively argued in a recent article that this need not be the case, since the meanings of 'point', 'line' and 'parallel' are different in the theories which embrace the two different postulates. It is Kuhn's sensitivity to such issues that leads him to agree with Quine that direct comparison of two theories requires that they be treated as two different languages, with
at least the degree of indeterminacy of translation which Quine contends holds between natural languages.\textsuperscript{12}  

Scientists can share a paradigm, and continue the "normal" scientific task of extending the paradigm to further puzzle solutions without agreeing on necessary and/or sufficient condition characterizations of the concepts which they utilize:

Scientists can agree that a Newton, Lavoisier, Maxwell or Einstein has produced an apparently permanent solution to a group of outstanding problems and still disagree, sometimes without even knowing it, about the particular abstract characteristics that make those solutions permanent. They can, that is, agree on their identification of a paradigm (in the sense of 'exemplar' explained above) without agreeing on, or even attempting to produce, a full interpretation or rationalization of it. Lack of a standard interpretation or of an agreed upon reduction to rules will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research. Normal science can be determined in part by the direct inspection of paradigms, a process that is often aided by, but does not depend upon, the formulation of rules and assumptions. Indeed, the existence of a paradigm need not even imply that any full set of rules exists.\textsuperscript{13}

How can Kuhn speak of a paradigm guiding research in the absence of such rules? He does so by mobilizing Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance, mentioned in passing above. According to Wittgenstein, the concept 'game', as an example of the workings of concepts in general, is applied to the wide variety of things properly called games on the basis of a crisscrossing network of similarities and relationships, none of which qualify for the status of necessary and/or sufficient conditions. It is Kuhn's contention that:
Something of the same sort may very well hold for the various research problems and techniques which arise within a single normal-scientific tradition. What these have in common is not that they satisfy some explicit or even fully discoverable set of rules or assumptions that give the tradition its character and its hold upon the scientific mind. Instead, they may relate by resemblance and by modeling to one or another part of the scientific corpus which the community already recognizes as among its established achievements.\textsuperscript{14}

The original exemplar provides a concrete image, after which further accounts are modeled. The features of the original problem which the exemplar highlighted provide general guidelines as to where to look when inspecting new phenomena, and it is this sense that adherents to the same paradigm have a similar psychological set. Recognition by these "normal" scientists that certain concepts can be fruitfully extended by analogy to new cases proceeds in a manner which cannot be adequately explained by distilling the paradigm into any set of determinate rules.

Admittedly, on Kuhn's model, the limits of 'objectivity' in scientific theorizing are narrower than they had been considered by the Positivists. But this does not make the choice between two rival paradigms "a matter for mob psychology"\textsuperscript{15} nor does it entail that "the decision of a scientific group to adopt a new paradigm cannot be based on good reasons of any kind, factual or otherwise."\textsuperscript{16} These are two charges which Kuhn believes he can answer while remaining within the limits of his paradigm model. Kuhn recognizes that the traditional criteria for theory preference, i.e., accuracy, consistency, scope, fruitfulness and simplicity, do provide rational
standards for theory preference. Kuhn questions how determinate and universal is the decision procedure which is generated from these standards.

The Positivists thought that, subject to the standard problems of underdetermination, these criteria provided rules which churned out definite judgments as to which theory was preferable. An old theory was thought only to be rejected when a new theory could be demonstrated to be superior to it, in light of these criteria. In a comparatively recent article, Kuhn levels two criticisms at such a view:

Individually, the criteria are imprecise; individuals may legitimately differ about their application to concrete cases. In addition, when employed together, they repeatedly prove to conflict with one another; accuracy may, for example, dictate the choice of one theory, scope the choice of its competitor.17

This point is illustrated in the attempt to explain an actual paradigm shift that was outlined on page 19 above. The Copernican system was not significantly more accurate in its predictions, nor was it more consistent with other related theories, and it was only simpler if "evaluated in a special way." Yet the Copernican paradigm was widely accepted in a relatively short period of time. There were good reasons for this acceptance. The promise that the paradigm held for future applications to a great body of problems, which the previous paradigm could not be successfully used in solving, was certainly one of the fundamental reasons. Yet phenomena which were anomalous under the Ptolemaic paradigm existed well before Copernicus, and remained unexplained for some time after the revolution
which he initiated was in full swing. According to Kuhn, these facts argue for the plausibility of the claim that it is quite often pressing societal concerns (in this instance, the need to develop a more accurate calendar in an age of rapidly expanding maritime trade) that are catalysts which influence the timing of such revolutionary paradigm shifts.\(^{18}\)

Now Kuhn is ready to answer the critics who charge that he has reduced theory choice in science to the level of "anything goes" mob manipulation. The traditional methodological desiderata are virtually universally accepted, and this acceptance guarantees a certain degree of rationality. But this does not mean that all scientists share the same individual algorithm of choice when they consider two or more rival theories:

"...the criteria for choice with which I began function not as rules, which determine choice, but as values, which influence it. Two men deeply committed to the same values may nevertheless, in particular situations, make different choice, as in fact they do. Such values may prove ambiguous in application, both individually and collectively; they may, that is, be an insufficient basis for a shared algorithm of choice. But they do specify a great deal; what each scientist may consider before reaching a decision, what he may or may not consider relevant, and what he can legitimately be required to report as the basis for the choice he has made.\(^{19}\) (emphasis added)"

A bit more needs to be said about this distinction between shared values and shared rules (or shared algorithm of choice).

Kuhn is pointing out that there is much controversy concerning how these criteria are to be interpreted, and how they are to be
ranked in a hierarchy when two or more criteria are in conflict. If there were universally accepted definitions of these criteria, and a universally recognized hierarchy of their comparative worth, then all scientists could be said to share the same algorithm of choice in such matters. In the absence of such a consensus, we must recognize that these criteria are shared values, the individual and collective interpretation of which differs greatly from scientist to scientist. Yet these differences do not render theory choice a purely irrational matter.

Having outlined the essentials of Kuhn's positive view, I have arrived at the critical section in the chapter. It is now my task to show that Kuhn's paradigm model can be fruitfully and justifiably extended to provide a metatheory for aesthetics. I will do this in light of a brief historical survey of a branch of aesthetics, namely, theory of tragedy.

3. I am proposing that Kuhn's paradigm model provides an adequate metatheory for all types of aesthetic theorizing. This is not to discount the differences between the types of categories relevant to art. Genre terms like comedy and tragedy seem categorizable in terms of some common subject matter; this is not the case for such notions as "painting" or "sculpture." Furthermore, style concepts cut across such genre notions. Space permits only an extensive discussion of one such category, namely, tragedy. Yet similar accounts can be given for other types of aesthetic theorizing as well.
One thing that strikes the sensitive reader almost immediately about different theoreticians of tragedy is the various descriptions that such theorists give of the same work. Hamlet is said to vacillate by one theorist; another sees him as acting as the instrument of perfect revenge. Othello is described as being in a blindly jealous rage, or as acting primarily from a sense of honor. Antigone is insolent, or merely rightfully assertive. This panoply of descriptions for the most widely recognized instances of tragedy lead to a number of totally coherent interpretations of the works. Slowly it begins to appear that, in the words of R. S. Crane "the kind of construction placed on the details has already been determined by the hypothesis which the details are said to support...". This absence of a clear consensus concerning a substantial body of theory-neutral observation statements is strikingly analogous to the situation in scientific theory, as Kuhn has explained it.

The second analogy with Kuhn concerns the actual application of definitions of tragedy to the broad scope of the tragic genre. One cannot expect, e.g., the Aristotelian definition to apply in precisely the same way to Hamlet as Aristotle himself applied the theory to Oedipus or the Oresteia trilogy. Paralleling the process of "normal" science is a process which might be called "normal" criticism. There is a community of Aristotelians, who take the paradigm offered in the Poetics for granted, and proceed to apply it to an ever-widening range of works of literature. Examining this community of Aristotelian critics, one finds a great diversity of weightings of the various
elements of Aristotle's theory, as well as a great variety of interpretations of the central elements (the importance of the "unities", the nature and causes of catharsis, etc.). If their individual algorithms of choice differ, and yet it makes sense to call them Aristotelians, it is not shared rules which qualify them all for this appellation.

Both senses of the term "paradigm" discussed above are relevant to understanding theory of tragedy. Such theories do utilize exemplars: each can be seen to provide a particularly good account of the works which are the theoretician's favorites. For example, *Oedipus Rex* is the subject of the most extended discussion in Aristotle, and the fact that he takes peripety and discovery to be essential to good tragedy reveals the seriousness with which he takes this exemplar. In a similar manner, Hegel took *Antigone* to be his exemplar, while Nietzsche was particularly taken with the *Bacchae* of Euripides and *Tristan and Iseult* by Wagner. Application of these theories to further works is then modeled on the original accounts given of the exemplars.

The second sense of "paradigm" is also operative in the realm of tragic theory. Each major theorist discussed below has a community of contemporary critics who take their theories to be fundamentally sound. Each community shares a common psychological set, which tends to highlight certain features of works, and to downplay others. Even though univocity of interpretation of, e.g., Aristotle's theory by all members of the Aristotelian community is not to be expected, such
members do share a substantial body of beliefs, attitudes and presuppositions. These members also point to the same exemplar, Aristotle's account of *Oedipus Rex* as the concrete problem solution after which they model their further interpretations of other works.

Something like a gestalt shift occurs when a single work is viewed from two internally coherent but contradictory perspectives. Consider *Othello*, as viewed from the perspectives of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. According to Schopenhauer, tragedies teach us a Buddhistic resignation from the individual will and its desires. When we see the destruction of such larger-than-life individuals as *Othello*, he thinks that we should be convinced that we all-too-human mortals have no chance of satisfying our individual desires, and thereby attaining a fulfilled life. For Schopenhauer, then, the horrendous and pitiable suffering and death in *Othello* is the essence of the work, and it is an annoying fact to be explained away that there is an element of exhilaration in our experience of his destruction.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, sees tragedy as providing what he calls "metaphysical solace." This is to say that the experience of tragedy assures us that, contrary to some appearances, life is indeed powerful and worthwhile. When one assumes Nietzsche's perspective, the exhilaration we feel in viewing tragedies is the central aspect of the tragic phenomenon, and the seeming contradiction that such horrible and terrifying events can produce a life-affirming experience must be explained away. Neither interpretation can be said to be more accurate, from a descriptive point of view. The parallel with the gestalt shift
between the Aristotelian and the Galilean perspectives on the pendulum is, I hope, obvious.

The analogies I have sketched above find their parallels vis-a-vis the attempts to define 'art' and its various subconcepts. One glaring disanalogy between aesthetic theorizing and scientific theorizing, as Kuhn interprets the latter, must now be addressed. Kuhn says that a single scientific discipline tends to be univocal in its loyalty to a single paradigm; this is one of his criteria for explaining what makes a science a science. In the arts, on the contrary, one finds a proliferation of paradigms at work within single disciplines.

In painting, for example, the paradigm of accurate representation held sway for hundreds of years, yet, in the 100 years or so since its rejection, no single rival has taken its place. Similarly, the Aristotelian paradigm for tragedy was the unquestioned model for centuries, and in the past two centuries during which it has been challenged no other paradigm has arisen to univocally replace it. Does this lack of a univocal paradigm in the arts render Kuhn's model useless in these realms?

There are two suggestions I can make to take the sting out of this difference. For one thing, in both painting and tragedy, a single, univocal model has been replaced with a multiplicity of competing models. One can, however, think of these "classical" paradigms as being replaced by a "romantic" meta-paradigm, which explicitly countenances such a multiplicity of approaches. The emphasis on individuality and perspectivism that is at the heart of the Romantic movement would
naturally lend itself to condoning such a multiplicity.

Secondly, Kuhn argues that scientific disciplines tend to unite around a single paradigm because that is what makes for the greatest amount of progress (or appearance of progress) in such disciplines. This is, however, a moot point. P. K. Feyerabend, in his article "Problems of Empirocism", argues that new theories should be proliferated even before the present most widely accepted theory faces crisis. This is in the interest of maximizing progress in the sciences, which Feyerabend, following Popper, believes can only be insured by maximizing criticism of existing theories. It is his contention (and Kuhn here is in agreement with him) that some experimental anomalies (i.e., cases for which the present theory cannot provide an adequate account) do not even admit of being recognized in the absence of some rival theory. Since the paradigm within which you are working tends to limit what you are capable of 'seeing', it is only natural to expect that some potential anomalies are easily overlooked. It is, of course, partially in terms of such anomalies that criticism of present theories is seen to proceed.

It may just be a matter of historical accident that the sciences have developed thus far along basically univocal lines. Perhaps in the future, following Feyerabend's suggestion, the sciences might be able to accommodate a proliferation of competing paradigms, and carry out their tasks more effectively as a result.

Finally, I believe that a set of values similar to the methodological desiderata in science are relevant in arguing for the
superiority of an aesthetic theory to its rivals. Although predictive power is obviously less important in the arts, such notions as simplicity, fruitfulness, scope, and consistency are clearly relevant to such critical discussions. As is the case in the sciences, these desiderata do not generate a totally determinate and univocal decision procedure (if anything, it is harder to gain consensus among critics than among scientists concerning such matters). But they do function as universally recognized values, indicating what kinds of reasons are relevant in attempting to establish the superiority of a theory to its rivals.

Having addressed the above analogies and disanalogy, I shall conclude with a brief comparison and contrast between the position I have been defending and the work of Morris Weitz.

4. In his influential article, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", Weitz also argues that aesthetic concepts should be construed as family resemblance concepts, following Wittgenstein. Yet Weitz's method of establishing this conclusion is quite different from the approach outlined above. For one thing, Weitz seems to conflate his notion of an open concept with Wittgenstein's family resemblance notion. To say that a concept is "open" is to say that it is emendable. Weitz then suggests that if a concept is open, it must also be a family resemblance concept. This need not be the case. A concept could be amenable to necessary and/or sufficient condition characterization at a certain time, and still be emendable at some time in the future.
Another line of argument that Weitz pursues is the notion that aesthetic concepts have an evaluative as well as a descriptive use. This is to say that concepts like 'art' are also intended as praise when applied to a particular work. This is the other prong of his attack on the claim that aesthetic concepts can be given definitions in terms of necessary and/or sufficient conditions. Yet is is unclear how shifting to a family resemblance treatment of such concepts will help to clarify these two functions. Nowhere does Weitz attempt an analysis of the history of aesthetic theorizing that would establish the superiority of the family resemblance approach in explicating such concepts.

Perhaps the most striking contrast between my approach and Weitz's can be found by examining his work on tragedy, Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism. There Weitz divides the critical process into three stages, which he calls "description", "explanation" and "evaluation." Statements of the first type are "true or false", and "verifiable, in principle, by textual data." Statements of the last two types are not verifiable in this sense. It is particularly revealing to consider some of the questions Weitz takes to be answerable by descriptive, verifiable statements: Is Hamlet mad? Melancholic? Does he vacillate?, etc. These seem to be highly theoretical questions to me. The controversy which surrounds these questions in the critical literature should indicate this. These kinds of issues are crucial in determining whether Hamlet is a tragic figure. For example, if some theorists took Hamlet to be mad, that would immediately rule him out
as a tragic figure. The question of whether Hamlet vacillates has been pivotal to the various interpretations offered of this play, as it will be to the interpretation I shall offer below. These points are clearly arguable, and their very arguability undercuts Weitz's claim that such substantive matters can be resolved by statements which are factual, verifiable, and true or false.

The reader might respond on Weitz's behalf that he (Weitz) has merely misidentified which statements are descriptive. But I suspect that the problem goes deeper. The black-and-white nature of the distinctions he suggests indicates positivist leanings on his part. Like the foundationalists in the sciences, he seems to think that theories can be compared in terms of some substantial body of theory-neutral observation statements. Although Weitz himself recognizes that no one theory can be proven to be correct by this method, his approach glosses over the subtleties which the Kuhnian model underscores with its notion of a paradigm.

Finally, the analogy which I have drawn allots a more significant role to theory in aesthetic appreciation than Weitz had allotted. The value of such theories is not, as Weitz contends, primarily to highlight some critically relevant aspect of their subject matter that has fallen into disfavor. A theory (or, more properly, a paradigm) does much more than return our attention to some now-neglected feature of works. If I am right that an aesthetic theory should be thought of as providing a paradigm, in the sense of a psychological set designed to distinguish relevant from irrelevant aspects of works, the role of
such theories is all-pervasive at the level of observation as well as explanation and evaluation. In fact, these notions are best understood as forming a continuum, rather than a set of three determinate distinctions.

The theoretician's task, in science and in aesthetics, is twofold. He must successfully communicate the gestalt which his paradigm creates, and he must convince us that his standpoint is the most fruitful from which to approach the phenomena in question. The Kuhnian metatheory offered herein provides an interpretation of how we can best understand this task, and the limits of rationality in settling disputes of a critical nature which are the perennial subject matter of much of the work done in aesthetics in this century.
II
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A theory of tragedy should not be composed by merely reading plays. Great opportunities are missed if one fails to consider what previous theorists have had to say about the genre. In the section that follows, I intend to consider at length the theories of tragedy proposed by Aristotle, Hegel and Nietzsche. My reasons for considering these three thinkers, and omitting a number of others, are simple. To begin with, their theories have been the most influential in the history of criticism of tragedies. Furthermore, these thinkers have addressed the tragic genre at length, and with a scope of vision unsurpassed by other inquirers into this field. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my own theory will be seen to incorporate elements from each of these paradigms of tragedy, in the hope of salvaging what is illuminating about each of their accounts.

My criticisms of their theories will proceed according to the guidelines laid down in the previous chapter. This is to say that I cannot merely offer outstanding counter-examples to these theories and thereby pretend to have refuted them. Hence, my remarks will revolve
around the methodological desiderata rehearsed above. In each case, I will argue that the scope of these theories is severely limited by the requirements for tragedy that they specify. Furthermore, I will criticize them in terms of the fruitfulness and simplicity of the theories which they have proposed. It will then be my task to demonstrate the superiority of my own proposal in terms of these very criteria.
A. THE POETICS: IS HAMARTIA THE CAUSE OF THE TRAGIC FALL?

To consider the genre of tragedy without referring to the Poetics is inconscionable. Aristotle's was the undisputed paradigm of the criticism of tragedies for two thousand years.¹ Such reverential acclaim naturally led to some abuses. His canons were taken as if they were spoken ex cathedra. Violation of the famed 'unities' would bring scorn upon a playwright. Not until the eighteenth century did any serious contender threaten the dominance of the paradigm embodied in the Poetics.

This adulation was not, of course, without some foundation. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, I will incorporate many of Aristotle's insights into my own account of tragedy. For the moment, I intend to discuss a number of elements which Aristotle believed were essential to tragedy, while recognizing that I cannot attempt a definitive exegesis of the entire Poetics in this context. Such an attempt has already been ably made by Gerald Else, in Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument² (a work which I will refer to in the course of my discussions). My goals in this chapter are twofold: 1) To formulate a modest and coherent interpretation of the basic concepts of Aristotle's theory; and 2) To argue that certain of the strictures embodied in his theory are not fulfilled by what are generally recognized as some of the best tragedies existent in his time. Specifically, I will argue that many of the most outstanding
protagonists in the tragedies of ancient Greece are not brought low as a result of some tragic flaw or error in judgment (what Aristotle calls \textit{hamartia}). In addition, there are many questions which I take to be relevant to explaining the significance of tragedies that Aristotle's theory simple fails to address. I will conclude by suggesting some of these questions.

Let me begin with Aristotle's familiar definition:

\begin{quote}
A tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language, with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of such emotions.\footnote{3}
\end{quote}

Virtually all of the essential elements of his theory are contained in that single sentence. A careful analysis of it is hence appropriate.

By "imitation of an action", Aristotle does \textit{not} mean that all tragedies must be copies of actual incidents that occurred in history:

\begin{quote}
...it will be seen that the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probably or necessary. Hence poetry is more philosophic than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, while those of history are of singulars. (1451b)
\end{quote}

Notice that, in the course of this comment, an aspect of his theory not made explicit in the definition is introduced. The incidents in a tragedy should follow from one another in a probable or necessary fashion.

Next, the action must be "serious" and must have "magnitude."

A "serious" action should be understood as distinguished from a
"comic" or inconsequential one. If a man is killed crossing a street, one reason why one wouldn't call his fate tragic is that such an action is not "serious" in the required sense. The magnitude of an action (in the Greek, megethos) has to do with its duration in time. As Aristotle subsequently remarks: "Beauty is a matter of size and order..." (1451a) Hence, the plot must not be either too short or too long. He even goes so far as to set its upper limit: "Tragedy endeavors, if possible, to keep within a single circuit of the sun..." (1449b)

To say that the action must be "complete in itself" is to prescribe a certain kind of wholeness. The section must have a beginning, a middle and an end. These may seem like trivial requirements. But Aristotle had a somewhat technical sense of these terms in mind:

A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; and a middle, that which is by nature after one thing, and has also another after it. (1450b)

This passage elaborates on the earlier claim that the events should follow from one another in "a necessary or probably manner." The beginning must contain within it the seeds of what follows, or it is not a beginning in this technical sense. The end must complete a necessary or probably flow of events, in such a manner that no further event is required to complete the sequence.
The next salient requirement is that a tragedy by "in a dramatic, not a narrative form. According to this stricture, then, a novel could not properly be called a tragedy. Since I will subsequently argue that novels can be tragedies, I would like to point out that one of Aristotle's own remarks serves to undercut this requirement. While he admits that pity and fear can be aroused by the spectacle of a play, he thinks that the superior method is via an understanding of the very structure and incidents therein depicted. He then states:

The Plot, in fact, should be so framed that, even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears an account of them shall be filled with horror and pity at the incidents; which is just the effect that the mere recital of the story of Oedipus would have on one. (1453b)

Perhaps the calling up of horror and pity is not a sufficient condition for tragedy, at least as Aristotle understands the genre. Yet, his admission of the power that the mere relating of a plot can have on one suggests that a well-written novel (a form which did not exist in Aristotle's time) might well attain to the status of tragedy.

Aristotle then provides a lengthy analysis of what kinds of incidents can arouse pity and fear, and what the nature of the character(s) involved must be. It is his claim that the following kind of plot must be avoided: "A good man must not be seen as passing from happiness to misery."(1453a) His reason for this stricture is the mere assertion, without explanation, that seeing a preeminently virtuous and just man pass from happiness to misery is "not fear-inspiring or piteous, but simply odious to us."(1453a) I presume
this is a psychological claim, and as such it seems extremely questionable. He proceeds to assert that "pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves."(Ibid) Certainly the sufferings of a good man are undeserved; why then are they not appropriate to arousing tragic pity and fear?

I take it that the rationale for his contention is that, if the character is too good, we will not respond to him or to her as if they are "like ourselves." Aristotle argues that identification with the tragic protagonist is essential to the achievement of the cathartic effect. Perhaps he thought that a character who was too good might forfeit that identification.

So, tragic protagonists cannot be too good. Neither can they be truly evil, or else any misfortune they undergo will seem deserved. Hence, the protagonist must be "the intermediate kind of personage."(1453a) I find myself in basic agreement with his remarks thus far. Yet he wishes to go further, by requiring that the misfortune which the protagonist undergoes must be "brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgment (hamartia)."(Ibid) Aristotle here speaks as if there are only two alternatives: either the misfortune results from vice and depravity or it results from an error in judgment (or flaw in character, which is an alternative translation of hamartia).

There are two questions relevant to this issue: 1) Is the protagonist depicted as flawed, or as committing errors in judgment? and 2) If there is such a flaw, does the tragic reversal result from it,
or from some other cause? I agree with Aristotle that tragic protagonists are often depicted as fallible, or even flawed, human beings. But mightn't such imperfections serve another purpose besides being the cause of the hero's downfall? The mere existence of a flaw in most tragic protagonists does not prove Aristotle's case. Perhaps such imperfections do allow us to better identify with such characters. But if that is all that the flaw accomplishes, and if it does not prove to be the cause of the tragic downfall, then Aristotle's canon can be seen to be violated.

My fundamental reason for taking issue with Aristotle on this point is that a number of the major tragedies of his time seem to violate this requirement. Consider, to begin with, Oedipus Rex. Are we comfortable with saying that Oedipus committed some error by not heeding the warnings of Tiresias and giving up his inquiry? As ruler of Thebes, it was his duty to seek out the cause of the famine. As the man he was, he passionately desired the truth. These were the motivations which drove him to press his investigations to such lengths. Oedipus does border on hybris, as his treatment of Tiresias reveals. Perhaps that hybris was the cause of his killing his father, although that is a controversial point. Yet, within the play itself, the cause of his being brought low is his uncompromising and praiseworthy search for the truth in the murder of Laius, and not his hybris.

A less controversial case can be found in Antigone. Surely her loyalty to her brother's memory cannot be called an error, unless one is willing to say that leaving Polyneices' body out in the sun to rot
would have been the correct thing for a person in her society to do. Aristotle didn't consider Antigone to be a problem for his theory, but that was because he apparently took it to be Creon's tragedy, not Antigone's. Finally, think of Orestes in Aeschylus' trilogy the Oresteia. In avenging his father's murder, he was following the command of an ascendent god, under the threat of extreme torture should he fail. Was this an error? His subsequent vindication in the Eumenides would suggest not.

In short, then, what I have been arguing is that the cause of the reversals of many of the best tragedies which were extent in Aristotle's time was not a character flaw or error on the part of the protagonists. Rather, these protagonists were brought low as the result of their choices to stand by values in situations where such loyalty costs them great suffering. While Aristotle seems, at some points, to be merely describing what takes place in tragedies, it is clear in many places (e.g. 1453b 3-5) that he is prescribing how works ought to be composed in order to be good tragedies. I am questioning his prescriptions by demonstrating how they are not followed in a number of works which are widely recognized to be the best tragedies of his time.

Finally, Aristotle notes that plots can be either simple or complex. A simple plot depicts a change in the protagonist's fortunes which occurs without peripety or discovery. A peripety is an abrupt change in the fortunes of the protagonist, from happiness to misery, which is usually accomplished in a highly ironical manner. A discovery
is "a change from ignorance to knowledge" (1452a), whereby the protagonist discovers some information relevant to the tragic situation. The more abrupt the change in fortunes is, the better:

...for incidents arousing pity and fear...have the very greatest effect upon the mind when they occur unexpectedly, and at the same time in consequence of one another. (Ibid)

The very best case occurs when the peripety is as abrupt as possible, and occurs as the result of a discovery (Aristotle's example is the messenger speech in Oedipus). When these elements are present, the plot is called complex.

These, then, are Aristotle's salient comments about how best to arouse tragic pity and fear. There remains but one element in the definition left undisputed, the thorny notion of catharsis. It is surprising that this term occurs only once in the entire Poetics. This has not deterred commentators from spilling an incredible amount of ink about it. Before entering into the debate concerning this notion, I believe it would be fruitful to consider the historical backdrop against which Aristotle was writing. For Aristotle was not the first philosopher to consider the nature and worth of tragedies and tragedians. As was the case with many issues, Plato had already addressed this problem in no less a context than the Republic.

Plato was a severe critic of the tragic poets. He would have had them thrown out of his ideal state. I wish to argue that Aristotle was at least implicitly attempting to answer Plato's two basic criticisms. First, as part of his general attack on all of the imitative arts, Plato denigrated tragedies for being too far removed
from reality. In his famous "third bed" argument, he invokes his theory of Forms to show that all of the imitative arts produce mere copies of copies. All particulars in the world were thought by him to be imperfect replicas of the Forms. Imitative artists, when they represent particulars, are hence making imperfect copies of imperfect copies. Plato concludes that:

   Thus far then we are pretty well agreed that the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates. Imitation is only a kind of play or sport, and the tragic poets...are imitators in the highest degree.6

Of course, if the imitator has no knowledge of his subject, we can learn nothing by attending to his works.

   We have seen Aristotle's response to this criticism earlier in another context. Due no doubt in part to the difference between Plato's theory of Forms and Aristotle's notion of universals, it is his contention that tragedies do not merely imitate particulars (that is the business of history). For Aristotle, tragedies are not twice-removed from reality, but rather attempt to represent it as fully as any human production possibly can. Since universals are not transcendent, they can be the direct object of the imitative art of the tragedian.

   Plato's second objection is, I believe, relevant to the catharsis issue. In Plato's view, it is a desirable human virtue to be able to control and moderate one's sorrow. He thought that experiencing tragedies was counterproductive to the acquisition of this virtue. To quote again from the Republic:
But we have not yet brought forward the heaviest count in our accusation—the power which poetry has of harming even the good...is surely an awful thing.

The best of us, as I conceive, when we listen to a passage of Homer, or one of the tragedians, in which he represents someone who is drawling out his sorrows in a long oration, of weeping and smiting his breast—the best of us, you know, delight in giving way to sympathy, and are in raptures at the excellence of the poet who stirs our feelings most.

But when any sorrow of our own happens to us, then you may observe that we pride ourselves on the opposite quality—we would fain be quiet and patient; this is the manly part, and the other which delighted us in the recitation is now deemed to be the part of the woman.

Now can we be right in praising and admiring another who is doing what any one of us would abominate and be ashamed of in his own person? (Ibid)

Plato clearly thinks that the tragedian seduces us into praising demonstrativeness, the danger being that we might be moved to be more demonstrative in our everyday life.

On a certain interpretation of catharsis, Aristotle can be seen to respond to this criticism also. Now, a full survey of the literature on the subject of catharsis would require a volume as long as the present endeavor (at least!). Yet there is a veritable consensus that this term should be interpreted along the lines of its original, medical connotation. In a note to his discussion of this definition, Gerald Else characterized this approach thusly:

The prevailing 'medical' interpretation is of course that of Jakob Bernays...according to which 'catharsis' is a purgation, accompanied by a pleasurable sense of relief, from accumulating emotional tendencies, especially tendencies to pity and fear, which would otherwise poison our mental health.7

According to this view, Aristotle could be seen as responding to Plato by claiming that the emotional effect of experiencing tragedies is
beneficial, not harmful. This, in essence, is the view which I am adopting. It also has the virtue, as Else later remarks, of being the interpretation which "has dominated most thinking on catharsis since its publication, and still remains...what one might call the vulgate." 8

While I see no good reason to abandon the traditional interpretation outlined above, it might be instructive to examine the line which Else takes. He wishes to suggest that catharsis is "a process operated by the poet through his structure of events." 9 Else calls catharsis a 'purification', and believes that what is purified are the acts on stage, not the emotions of the audience. I assume he means, e.g., it is Oedipus' acts of parricide and incest which are purified through his sufferings.

This purification is not accomplished by means of pity and/or fear. Rather, it is Else's claim that, through a course of pathetic or fearful incidents, the tragic hero is purified of the unmitigated guilt of the immoral action which results from his hamartia. Else specifically centers on those tragedies which include the spilling of kindred blood.

Attempting to place the Poetics in the context of the Greek culture of the time, Else notes the "preoccupation, not to say obsession, of ancient Greece with means of purification, especially for the spilling of kindred blood." He contends that tragedy is one of the expressions of this preoccupation. Those acts which Aristotle notes as being particularly suited to tragedy are, according to Else,
precisely those which violated the oldest and most sacred taboos of ancient Greece. In committing such acts, individuals were thought of as introducing a kind of pollution into their very blood. It is on this immemorial horror of blood pollution that the tragedian depended, or so Else would have it, for he formulates his interpretation of Aristotle's concept of the "purification of tragic acts" against the backdrop of this presupposition.

The key passage in Else's argument is the following:

...the spectator or reader of the play is the judge in whose sight the tragic act must be purified, so that he may pity instead of execrating the doer...the purification is presented to him (the spectator), and his conscience accepts and certifies it to his emotions, issues a license, so to speak, which says 'you may pity this man...'.

The purification is hence not of the emotions of the audience. Rather, it is the tragic figure whose acts are purified of a degree of guilt which would preclude the audience extending pity to the protagonist. Else is here referring to the earlier-quoted passage of the Poetics, in which Aristotle says that we feel no pity for the fate of an evil character.

The result of Else's interpretation is to relegate the notion of catharsis to a transitional function within the tragic structure itself. The purification provides the appreciator with the impression that the hero did not deserve his misfortunes. This is precedent to the release of pity, and requisite if the audience is to be allowed to feel such pity. The telos of tragedy is not catharsis of the acts on stage, but rather catharsis is a necessary condition before one can
identify with and hence pity the tragic protagonist. This emotional experience is thought of as pleasurable, but not because it involves the release of emotions that would otherwise build up and cause tension. Two separate processes are hence involved.

It is not surprising that this opposition between the traditional view and Else's turns on a controversy about how best to translate Aristotle's definition. The reader may have noticed that I have used Ingram Bywater's translation of the Poetics as the source of my quotations. Though well over a half century old, this translation has remained one of the most widely recognized treatments of this work. In Bywater's translation of the passage in question, it is clear that it is the emotions of pity and fear which undergo the cathartic effect: "...with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of such emotions."\(^{11}\) Else, on the other hand, translates the passage as follows:..."through a course of events arousing pity and fear, the purification of those painful or fatal acts which have that quality."\(^{12}\) Our knowledge of Greek usage at this time has aspects which would countenance either of these translations. Appeals to 'faithfulness to the original Greek text' will not settle this dispute.

I disagree with Else for a number of reasons. To begin with, by Else's own admission, almost all writers on this subject agree that it is the pity and fear aroused in the spectator which are purged or purified.\(^{13}\) Moreover, the medical model explains what Aristotle means in chapter fourteen when he speaks of the "proper Pleasure" of
tragedy. There he asserts that suffering inflicted on enemies by enemies is ill-suited to call up the pity and fear appropriate to tragedy. He remarks that "not every kind of pleasure should be required of a tragedy, but only its proper pleasure and that this tragic pleasure is "that of pity and fear."(1453b) Now, pity and fear are not, prima facie, pleasurable in and of themselves. The medical model suggests that what is pleasurable about feeling such emotions is that the experience provides an outlet for the pity and fear that is created by our everyday experiences, and that "tragic pleasure" is the pleasure felt when excesses of such emotions find such outlet. Else suggests later that it is the mimetic nature of the work that is found to be pleasurable.14 While I agree that such mimetic aspects can be pleasurable, such pleasure would not be unique to tragedies, since, for Aristotle, all of the arts are mimetic. The pleasure which uniquely characterizes tragedies must have something specific to do with the emotions of pity and fear. This, indeed, is what the medical model attempts to take into account.

Finally, adopting the medical model has the further virtue of making Aristotle's account of tragedy stand as a defense against Plato's criticism in the Republic. Rather than heightening the likelihood that we will be overdemonstrative in "real life", the experience of tragedy stabilizes us by providing an innocuous outlet for such emotions. As I see it, these virtues outweigh the persuasiveness of Else's linking of catharsis with the ancient Greek preoccupation with ritual blood purification rites.
These two alternatives do not, of course, exhaust the myriad of possible interpretations of catharsis that have been suggested. But since the textual evidence for any interpretation is so slim, I believe that, in the absence of any compelling reasons to the contrary, the conservative approach which I have adopted is appropriate.

In my view, then, what emerges from Aristotle's account are the claims that catharsis is the proper end or purpose of tragedy, that this purpose is a worthwhile one, and that certain kinds of plots are best suited for achieving this end. It seems natural at this point to ask: "Why is it that these particular kinds of plots are best suited for achieving catharsis?" Aristotle himself provides no clear answer to this question. His requirement that tragic protagonists must be "personages better than the ordinary man" (but not too good) suggests that Aristotle would give a moral answer to this question. It has been suggested to me that Aristotle intended the tragic flaw to be incontinence, in his own, technical sense of that term. In viewing tragedies, then, we would be learning not to be incontinent. But why does learning this moral lesson achieve such emotional effects in the case of tragedy, and not in the case of traditional forms of moral education? Besides, I think it a mistake to reduce tragedy to a didactic vehicle, like a morality play.

Questions also remain about some of Aristotle's other requirements. Why must a tragedy be an imitation of an action? Why can't a dramatization of an individual suffering a horrible death from cancer be tragic? Furthermore, why is it that only certain
actions, and not others, are appropriate to achieving the cathartic effect? Perhaps most importantly, what does our reaction to tragedies tell us about the human condition?

It would be folly to fault Aristotle for not explicitly addressing these issues. This does not, however, alter the fact that such questions remain unanswered after one has read the Poetics. A philosopher who does explicitly tackle at least some of these issues is Hegel. Before considering his theory, I shall summarize the salient points of my treatment of Aristotle.

I have attempted a charitable reading of the Poetics. I have taken issue with a few of Aristotle's prerequisites, chief among them being his assertion that the fall of the tragic protagonist must result from a hamartia, i.e., a character flaw or error on his part. I have discussed the controversy surrounding the catharsis issue, and have sided with the tradition that it should be viewed on a medical model. I have claimed that such an interpretation is rightfully modest, provides a good explanation of the pleasure appropriate to tragedy, and that Aristotle's remarks can thereby be viewed as a defense of the tragic poets against Plato's criticisms. In conclusion, I have raised some questions which go unanswered by Aristotle's account, suggesting that they are quite relevant to the richest understanding of the tragic genre.
B. TRAGIC FLAW AS ONE-SIDEDNESS: HEGEL'S THEORY OF TRAGEDY

Comments on tragedy from other than an Aristotelian perspective began to be made in the eighteenth century by such writers as David Hume and Dr. Johnson. However, the first theory of tragedy which is sufficiently broad and insightful to require my attention after the Poetics is the one offered by G.W.F. Hegel. Unfortunately, his remarks on tragedy are scattered among a number of works, chief among them being the Phenomenology and The Philosophy of Fine Arts. While I cannot hope to do justice to his theory in its entirety, embedded as it is in his metaphysical world view, what I propose to do is query it concerning some of the traditional issues associated with tragedy. I intend to represent Hegel's theory as requiring a "tragic flaw" in the protagonist, which must, as Aristotle would have it, be the cause of the fall of these figures. Hegel is quite specific as to what that flaw must be, and it is primarily to this point that I will direct my critical remarks.

The interpreter of Hegel's theory of tragedy cannot avoid some preparatory remarks on the place of it in the Hegelian Weltanschauung. This can best be done by examining tragedy's role as exemplifying a certain stage in what he describes as Spirit's odyssey to self-consciousness. Avoiding morasses of textual controversy, one can begin by observing that, at each stage in the evolution of Spirit (Geist), prior to the realization in action of
Hegel's ideal of Absolute Knowledge, inherent and unavoidable contradictions force the process on to ever more sophisticated levels. It seems to be Hegel's contention that the conflicts which animate tragedies are isomorphic mirrors of the conflicts which arise at a certain stage of the evolution of Spirit. The historical period which best embodied these conflicts is the Golden Age of Athens. The first part of the Phenomenology considered attempts by Spirit (an overarching metaphysical entity of which individuals are mere aspects or moments) to come to self-consciousness by relating to things in the world (i.e. objects) by explaining them, creating them, destroying them, etc. The bankruptcy of such an endeavor is made eminently clear. Subjects cannot understand themselves in terms of objects, but must rather turn to other subjects as more adequate mirrors of their self-consciousnesses.

Hegel then traces various modes of seeking recognition from other individuals. The master-slave dialectic is but an early mode of the search for such recognition, which is subsequently shown to be as self-defeating as many of the earlier stages. One can only come to satisfactory self-consciousness by affiliation and connections with one's fellow humans. The most primitive and basic of these affiliations is biological, i.e. the blood ties of the family. Along with such blood ties go a number of duties and responsibilities to one's fellow family members. All of the individuals outside the nuclear family become a kind of "them" pitted against "us."
In the Athens of Pericles, an opposing affiliation had arisen that appeared to stand in contradiction to the "divine" rights associated with family ties. The city-state, a tribe-like community of individuals, prescribed duties to its members, which were attendant upon any individual that continued to remain within the community. While it might not be immediately apparent that that community's duties will conflict with the dictates of filial piety, Hegel claims that such a diremption must arise (is likely to arise?) if members of the community do single-minded homage to either "divine" law or "human" (tribal) law. It is in tragedies that such diremptions are most clearly seen to arise, and it is the business of the tragedian, according to Hegel, to effect a reconciliation of these conflicting forces.

In his commentary on Hegel's theory, A. C. Bradley characterized this conflict as follows:

The essentially tragic fact is the self-division and intestinal warfare of the ethical substance, not so much the war of good and evil as the war of good with good. Two of these isolated powers face each other, making incompatible demands. The family claims what the state refuses, love requires what honor forbids.1

In the epitomal tragic struggles of the classical age, just such a collision between opposing loyalties is often seen to take place. Prometheus' service of man which justifies (to him) sacrilege against the gods; Oedipus' pursuit of the truth even though its attainment might destroy his family; Orestes' murder of his mother out of filial piety for his father; Antigone's loyalty to her brother in the face of Creon's edict; all seem to instantiate the
kind of struggle of which Hegel is speaking.

What is it about the struggle, or about the nature of the characters locked in it, which makes such conflicts tragic? The clearest answer to this in the *Phenomenology* is as follows: "The truth of the opposing powers is the final result, that both are equally right, and, hence, in their opposition (which comes about through action) are equally wrong." His account of *Antigone* elucidates his point: what is tragic about Antigone is that she served divine law to the exclusion of human law. Creon, too, is a tragic figure, for, with the exception of his untimely recantation after it is too late, he pays as single-minded homage to human or state law as Antigone does to the divine.

A fuzzy outline of a theory is starting to emerge. At this stage, Hegel is not contending that all tragedies, classical and romantic (i.e. modern, including Shakespeare), instance the conflict of these two particular powers. Rather, he uses tragedy in the *Phenomenology* as exemplifying a certain stage of alienation which arises at the level of social organization where men are first beginning to shape civil society. One could speculate even at this point, however, that in Hegel's view the proper subject of all tragedies is some such conflict of profoundly felt loyalties.

A far more lucid treatment of the same subject can be found in *The Philosophy of Fine Art*. An excellent bridge between this series of lectures and the *Phenomenology* can be provided by this passage from the *Philosophy of Right*:
The tragic destruction of figures whose ethical life is on the highest plane can interest us and elevate and reconcile us to its occurrence only in so far as they come on the scene in opposition to one another together with equally justified but different ethical powers, which have come into collision through misfortune, because the result is that these figures acquire guilt through their opposition to the ethical law. Out of this situation there arises the right and wrong of both parties and therefore the true ethical idea, which, purified and in triumph over this one-sidedness, is thereby reconciled in us.

Tragedies are "elevating", they "reconcile" the audience by dramatizing triumph over one-sidedness, which is embodied in at least two characters which come in conflict. The sense in which such an experience is "elevating" and "reconciling" is explained in Hegel's lectures.

Can Hegel be said to have defined tragedy, in the sense of suggesting necessary and/or sufficient condition for any work being tragic? To begin with, one-sidedness seems to be a necessary condition for having a "really tragic character":

It is a soundness and thoroughness consonant with these opposing forces that the really tragic characters consist. They are throughout that which the essential notion of their character enables and compels them to be. They are not merely a varied totality...they are, while remaining essentially vital and individual, still only the one power of the particular character in question, the force in which such a character, in virtue of his essential personality, has made himself inseparably coalesce with some particular aspect of the substantive life-content...and deliberately commits himself to that.
"Substantive life-content" here refers to the body of loyalties to which any individual is subject once he enters into community with his fellows. Examples of such loyalties are: love of family, duty to the state, homage to God, honour to the Church, etc. The above passage contends that, to be a "really tragic character", a figure must embody "only one power", to a degree that the essence of his character is identified with and exhausted by his commitment to that one loyalty.

When Spirit comes to Absolute Knowledge, there will be a reconciliation of particular individuals, in which their definite ends can unite in harmonious action without mutual violation and contradiction. At this stage in the process, tragedy and all of the arts will have become superfluous. Prior to such a utopian reconciliation, however, these definite ends come into violent opposition with one another. Again, this opposition cannot be the merely straightforward confrontation of good and evil:

In these tragic conflicts we should place to one side the false notions of guilt and innocence. The heroes of tragedy are as much under one category as the other.5

This, presumably, is the result of the fact that the colliding individuals represent different but equally justified ethical powers. Whether the justification must be exactly equal, or whether a clash between powers with some degree of justification, but to different degrees, is a moot point in Hegel. Would we, for example, be comfortable in saying that Creon was equally as justified as Antigone in their collision?
What is the end or purpose of tragedy, according to Hegel? The reconciliation evoked in us which was already alluded to sounds like a strange version of Aristotle's catharsis notion. Hegel's remarks in this regard are instructive:

We are reminded of the famous dictum of Aristotle that the true effect of tragedy is to excite and purify fear and pity. By this statement Aristotle did not mean merely the concordant or discordant feeling with anybody's private experience, a feeling simply of pleasure or the reverse...For in a work of art the matter of exclusive importance should be the display of that which is conformable with the reason and truth of Spirit...And consequently we are not justified in restricting the application of the dictum merely to the emotion of fear and pity, but should relate it to the principle of the content, the appropriate artistic display of which ought to purify such feelings.6

What is the content exhibited by tragedies, by virtue of which the "purification" of pity and fear (or, to use Hegel's term, the "reconciliation") is effected? Hegel would have us view tragedy as both a denial and an affirmation. What is denied is that single-mindedness is justifiable in any absolute sense: "That which is abrogated in the tragic issue is merely the one-sided particularity which was unable to accommodate itself to this harmony (of definite ends and individuals)."7 The clear implication of tragedy is hence that one-sidedness quite often leads to one's own destruction, and that said destruction indicates that such one-sidedness should be avoided.
If the tragic issue negates the rightfulness of a character's single-minded homage, what does it affirm?

...the feeling of reconciliation, which tragedy affords in virtue of its vision of eternal justice, a justice which exercises a paramount force of absolute constringency on account of the relative claim of all merely contracted aims and passions; and it can do this for the reason that it is unable to tolerate the victorious issue and continuance in the truth of the objective world of such conflict with and opposition to those ethical powers which are fundamentally and essentially concordant.

First of all, we are told that tragedies "reconcile" us in virtue of their "vision of eternal justice." This "vision" is presumably created by the spectacle of having characters with "merely contracted" (i.e. single-minded) aims come into conflict and be crushed thereby. From the point of view of eternal justice, then, it should strike us as right that Antigone died for her attempts to bury her brother. This in spite of the fact that tragic figures are both guilty and innocent, from a strictly moral perspective.

Hegel has some distinction in mind between the "moral" justice that is meted out to such figures as Richard III or Dorian Gray and the "eternal" justice meted out in tragedy. The principle which the tragic figure does homage to is a moral principle, and, if considered in isolation from the demands of other moral principles, the tragic action can be viewed as morally justified. But the "tragic flaw" which brings down such protagonists is that they (wrongfully) take a single moral principle and elevate it to the status of having absolute sway over their actions, to the exclusion of other, equally
well justified moral principles. The "proper" perspective, which Hegel apparently contends that we are taught to assume by tragedy, would be to view the various moral principles as only apparently contradictory, but "really" consistent.

So, tragedies are a kind of morality play, with the "moral" of the story not to limit your loyalty to one principle, or to think of the relations between the various moral principles as being irredeemably contradictory. From the point of view of ethical substance, which reveals the essence of Spirit (that which alone is ultimately real), all the various definite ends prescribed by moral principles to agents can be seen to be harmoniously reconciled. To return to the passage quoted above (footnote 6) it is this harmonious ethical substance that is "the content, the appropriate artistic display of which ought to purify such feelings" of pity and fear.

Hegel was shrewd enough to contend that tragic figures are as innocent as they are guilty, thereby avoiding the simple-minded moralistic view (propounded by Dr. Johnson and others) that tragedy is satisfying because it depicts the destruction of evil figures. Hegel clearly rules out the destruction of evil figures as being tragic, in his remarks on Richard III, Iago and Macbeth. Yet the destruction of the protagonists in tragedy is justified, and in fact necessary if such single-mindedness is not to be countenanced and affirmed.
Having laid down this general characterization of tragedy, let me proceed to its application to particular works. Hegel shows a definite affinity for ancient tragedy (as opposed to what he calls "romantic"). The reason for this can be seen in the clarity with which his general characterization can be seen to apply to Antigone, the Oresteia trilogy, and the sequence of Oedipus Rex and Oedipus at Colonus. In Antigone, both single-minded protagonists are destroyed, with the "moral" stated implicitly by their destruction. In the Oresteia trilogy, the harmonious nature of ethical substance is explicitly embodied in the synthesis of divine and human law that is represented by the institution of the court at the Areopagus, which is the vehicle of Orestes' acquittal. Finally, the odyssey of Oedipus, which begins with his single-mindedness and ends with his virtual apotheosis represents his movement from ignorance to knowledge concerning the ultimate harmony of ethical substance. Ancient tragedy is well-suited for attaining this end, particularly because ancient tragic protagonists, according to Hegel, "do not choose, but are entirely and absolutely just that which they will and achieve."10

In ancient tragedy, then, the tragic collision occurs between two or more such resolute characters, each embodying some moral principle to its fullest extent. While these characters are not mere abstractions, they are also not fully individualized subjects like the ones depicted in modern drama. Rather, they represent forces of the ethical substance, e.g., Orestes has almost an avenging fury in
Furthermore, the existence of the chorus in ancient tragedy interjects a kind of universality which is absent in modern drama. According to Hegel, the chorus is there "as a substantive and more enlightened intelligence, which warns us from irrelevant oppositions, and reflects upon the genuine issue." This element of substantive understanding was so essential to ancient tragedy that Hegel remarks that "the decline of tragedy is intimately connected with the degeneration of choruses, which no longer remain an integral member of the whole, but are degraded to a mere embellishment." It is this degradation of the chorus, along with his introduction of vacillating and highly individualized characters, that leads Hegel to characterize Euripides as a "romantic."

"Romantic" or "modern" tragedy has a number of features which distinguish it from its ancient counterpart. Primary among them is the following: "Modern tragedy accepts in its province from the first the principle of subjectivity. It makes, therefore, the personal intimacy of the character...its peculiar object and content." As a result, some of the universality of the appeal of tragedy is apparently lost, since:

...in modern tragedy it is not the substantive content of their object in the interest of which men act... rather it is the inner experience of their heart and individual emotion, or the particular qualities of their personality, which insist on satisfaction.
I take Hegel to mean here that it is not out of homage to some absolute and independent moral principle that modern protagonists are moved to act, but rather out of a sense of the inviolability of their own subjectivity. That Hegel thought the ancient method to be superior is evidenced by his remark in this context concerning Schiller, who began by writing such highly individualized tragedies:

> And if it came about that Schiller in later years endeavored to enforce a more mature type of pathos, this was simply due to the fact that it was his main idea to restore once again in modern dramatic art the principle of ancient tragedy.\(^{15}\)

Furthermore, the main source of conflict is different in ancient and modern tragedy. While a conflict between two or more individuals is the center of attention in the former, in modern tragedy "the conflict essentially abides within the character itself."\(^{16}\) This conflict can (and often does) lead to a vacillation on the part of the protagonist, the archetypal example of which, in Hegel's view, is Hamlet. He does note, however, that not all modern tragic protagonists vacillate. He thinks that Shakespeare's most interesting tragedies are those which "supply us with the finest examples of essentially stable and consequential characters, who go to their doom precisely in virtue of this tenacious hold on themselves and their ends."\(^{17}\) He speaks of Othello and Julius Caesar in this regard.

It is Hegel's contention that the "reconciliation" afforded by modern tragedy is incomplete, due to the very particularized content
of the motivations and purposes of its protagonists. The audience must still seek after an acceptance of "real value", based on "the recognition that the lot which the individual receives is the one, however bitter it may be, which his action merits."\(^{18}\) But this recognition has a reconciling force of less magnitude than in ancient tragedy, precisely because of the highly personalized and subjective nature of the ends which modern protagonists pursue.

This, then, is the substance (if you will excuse the pun) of Hegel's account of tragedy. Let me begin my critical remarks with a quite particularized level, and then gradually ascend to more general comments. I am puzzled by Hegel's account of Hamlet and similar modern characters who, according to Hegel, vacillate. Presumably such vacillation is caused by a struggle within the individual concerning two or more moral principles which are in conflict in a particular situation. What is the moral of the destruction of such figures? They are not single-minded, they do not blindly serve a single principle to the exclusion of others, so what are we to learn from their being brought low? If Hamlet does vacillate (and I will subsequently contend that he does not), what is the cause of his indecision? Hegel characterizes it as follows:

...Hamlet's noble soul is not steeled to this kind of energetic activity, but, while full of contempt for the world and life, what between making up his mind and attempting to carry into effect and preparing to carry into effect his resolves, is bandied from pillar to post, and finally through his own procrastination and the external course of events meets his doom.\(^{19}\)
Such an account seems to have little to do with his initial characterization of tragedy, and its reconciling effects. Yet Hegel clearly takes Hamlet to be a tragedy, and a good one at that. One can, of course, make too much out of a single example, and a Hegelian could respond that Hegel has merely misapplied his theory at this point. Hence let me address an issue of somewhat more general concern.

In claiming that tragedy must exhibit the content of ethical substance, Hegel has made a number of assumptions. To begin with, his claim that all of the loyalties which the various moral principles demand are essentially harmonious and only apparently in contradiction is, at best, questionable. Furthermore, Hegel asserts that certain stages in the evolution of Spirit through history naturally give rise to certain types of disputes (e.g. the conflict of state and family). On such a view, both sides are equally well justified. Yet is this the case in his paradigm example of tragedy, Antigone?

Antigone was clearly in an either/or situation. She could either violate the divine right of her brother to burial, and save her own life, or violate Creon's edict and be put to death. There was no third way for her to go. In fact, I would contend that this is why Antigone and Creon do not strike us as equally well justified in their courses of action. Creon alone had the power to mediate the dispute, for he alone could lift his sanction, an act which he unfortunately takes too late to save Antigone's life. This is not just a problem for his account of Antigone, for many ancient tragic
protagonists find themselves in such either/or dilemmas. It is certainly a controversial and metaphysical assumption that such dilemmas are merely apparent, and that a middle ground always exists.

Without such a metaphysical assumption, Hegel would be hard pressed to justify his claim that single-mindedness is a flaw. What I have found most illuminating about Hegel's account is his emphasis on the focused resoluteness of tragic protagonists. Yet I will subsequently argue that this is not a flaw, but rather is the source of what is most elevating and exhilarating about tragedy. Hegel only faults such figures on the grounds of his assumption that principles of action are essentially harmonious. On grounds of simplicity, any theory that can render an adequate account of tragedy without having to make such a controversial assumption is to be preferred.

His account of what is reconciling (or cathartic) in tragedy also turns upon this assumption. We acquiesce in the death of tragic protagonists, and it is Hegel's contention that we must view such destruction as, in an important if not strictly moral sense, deserved by their actions. We are reassured by the destruction of such figures that their perspectives are limited, and that their sufferings are the result of these limitations. Ultimately, it is the vision of a harmonious reality that could not condone the success of such limited perspectives that provides the essential tragic solace.
In criticising this aspect of Hegel's theory, let me quote from A. C. Bradley:

...Hegel's treatment of the aspect of reconciliation in modern tragedy is in several respects insufficient. I will mention only one. He does not notice that in the conclusion of not a few tragedies pain is mingled not merely with acquiescence, but with something like exultation. Is there not such a feeling at the close of Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear...? This exultation appears to be connected with our sense that the hero has never shown himself to be so great or noble as in the death which seals his failure.20

On Hegel's account, this admiration for the nobility of the character goes virtually unacknowledged. If we are to come away from tragedy having learned how limited a perspective tragic protagonists have, and hence having learned to avoid such limitations in our own lives, why do we admire such figures, and why does their demise only confirm our sense of their nobility?

To summarize, I have formulated what I take to be Hegel's theory of tragedy by drawing on various sources. I then criticized his view on a number of different levels. First, I didn't understand how, on his own account, a vacillating character could be seen as tragic. Secondly, I questioned the validity of basing a theory of tragedy on such controversial metaphysical assumptions, noting that simplicity considerations would favor a theory that gave adequate accounts of tragedies without making such substantive metaphysical claims. Finally, I took issue with Hegel's claim that the single-mindedness which he asserts is a trait of tragic protagonists is a flaw, and that such single-mindedness makes these figures deserving of their
fates. I believe such an account fails to do justice to the admiration we feel for the nobility in such characters. I must hence seek elsewhere for a theory that explains this aspect of our response.
C. CHORUS AS MIRROR OF REALITY: NIETZSCHE'S THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

Nietzsche's theory of tragedy has been the most influential philosophical treatment of the genre since Hegel's. The Birth of Tragedy was his doctoral dissertation, written while he was still heavily under the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer. While Nietzsche subsequently recanted much of what he said there, he never expressly formulated another theory to supplant it. I therefore intend to address my remarks to only this one work, while acknowledging that it does not contain his last word on the subject.

There is also a purely autobiographical reason why I wish to discuss Nietzsche. I was convinced for a number of years that Nietzsche's perspective was the best one from which to view tragedy. In the course of my further explorations into the genre, I found a number of works that would be anomalous according to Nietzsche's theory, but which I took to be tragic. Just as Kuhn has described vis-a-vis theories in science, I underwent a gestalt switch when I ceased to view tragedies from Nietzsche's perspective and adopted my own. I wish to make explicit the nature of and reasons for this shift in the course of this chapter and the next. The central work which I will discuss to illustrate the concrete ramifications of such a shift will be Moby Dick.
Perhaps the most suggestive aspect of Nietzsche's theory is his introduction of a distinction between what he calls the Apollonian and the Dionysian principles which are embodied to various degrees by various art forms. He thought that these two principles roughly corresponded to the current version of the distinction between appearance and reality. In utilizing these principles to explain Greek tragedy, Nietzsche claims that the Dionysiac finds its most adequate embodiment in the chorus, while the Apollonian is represented primarily in the tragic protagonist. Since he believes that the Dionysian reflects the true nature of reality, while the Apollonian is the principle of dream-like illusion, his account gives great significance to the chorus.

Before entering into his explanation in detail, Nietzsche thought it important to motivate the problem. He did so in the most dramatic of terms by claiming that it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified. He places this claim in its clearest relief in section three, when he announces that it is only by virtue of the artifices of aesthetic creation that one can refute the "wisdom of Silenus." Silenus was a follower of Dionysus, a visionary in his own right, whom King Midas seized and forced to prophecy what was the best that could happen to Midas. Silenus' reply: "What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is--to die soon."
To refute the wisdom of Silenus, one must provide some notion of what makes life worth living.

Nietzsche notes that the ancient Greeks turned this wisdom on its ear by virtue of their creation of a pantheon of Olympian gods. In Greek society, the gods functioned as principles of intelligibility: if one wanted to understand excellence at a particular endeavor, one need only look to the god which perfectly embodies the virtue of that endeavor (e.g. hunting and Diana). Nietzsche singles out two gods from this pantheon, Apollo and Dionysus, and uses them as symbols for principles which he will utilize as explanatory tools. His initial characterization has it that Apollo represents individualism, in the coolly detached, rationally structured, contemplative state of dreaming, while Dionysus signifies the loss of individual consciousness and the abandonment to chaos which someone who was highly intoxicated might undergo.

In an art form that is classified as primarily Apollonian, man is depicted as being at harmony with nature. The artistic expression par excellence of this harmony can be found in Doric sculpture. Apollo as the god of dreams is an appropriate symbol here because Nietzsche thought that the belief in such a harmony imposes an illusion on the struggle and the chaos he thought essential to the universe.

On the other hand, in an art form which he classifies as primarily Dionysian (no art work can be totally Dionysian, for the form which alone allows the communication which is essential to the
appreciation of any work in an Appollonian element) man, in his excesses, is seen to be essentially opposed to nature. This chaotic state of disharmony is, according to Nietzsche, best embodied in Attic tragedies. In these works "Excess revealed itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out from the very heart of nature." This may seem like an excessive view, but it is easier to understand if we trace its intellectual heritage to Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer inherited the distinction between appearances and the thing-in-itself from Immanuel Kant. Kant had argued that the activity of the mind in organizing our experiences makes it impossible for us to know things as they are in themselves. We can, at best, know things as they appear to us. Schopenhauer ventured to characterize reality as it was in itself, in spite of Kant's claims that this was sheer speculation that could never be knowledge. Schopenhauer took all appearances to be objectifications of what he called the Will. All particulars are manifestations of this Will, which Schopenhauer thought of as a single, unified metaphysical entity, that alone was "real." All individuation is hence illusory and merely apparent. He calls the principle of individuation "the veil of Maya", and claims that this illusion is the source of all suffering. His pessimism led him to believe that all individual desires must eventually be thwarted, and that the only alternative to a miserable life is to resign yourself to this "fact." The goal of living is hence the attainment of a kind of Buddhistic
detachment from the particular desires of our individual wills.

Schopenhauer took tragedy to be the best object lesson in the truth of the above view. In the following passage, quoted by Nietzsche in his "Critical Backward Glance" at The Birth of Tragedy, Schopenhauer characterizes this object lesson:

The power of transport peculiar to tragedy may be seen to arise from our sudden recognition that life fails to provide any true satisfactions and hence does not deserve our loyalty. Tragedy guides us to our final goal, which is resignation.6

Nietzsche does not wish to accept this conclusion. He comments on the above passage as follows: "Dionysus had told me a very different story; his lesson, as I understood it, was anything but defeatist."7 His attempt to tell this "very different story" hinges importantly on his introduction of the Apollonian and the Dionysian as principles in terms of which to explain the dynamics of tragedy. He identifies the Apollonian as the "veil of Maya" of which Schopenhauer spoke, remarking that: "Apollo himself may be regarded as the marvelous divine image of the principium individuationis (principle of individuation), whose looks and gestures radiate the delight, wisdom and beauty of 'illusion'."8

As the antithesis of Apollo, the image of appearances, Dionysus represents the thing-in-itself, the reality which stands behind these appearances. In the rapture of the Dionysiac rite "each individual becomes not only reconciled with his fellow, but actually at one with him--as though the veil of Maya had been torn apart and there remained
only shreds floating before the vision of mystical oneness."\(^9\)

Dionysiac power symbolizes the ability to thrust through the mask of individuation. The "vision of mystical oneness" which tragedy affords provides us with what Nietzsche calls "metaphysical solace." This solace is the true end or purpose of tragedy, and accounts for why the experience of tragedy is "anything but defeatist." Nietzsche characterizes tragedy as creating "the metaphysical solace (with which, I wish to say, all true tragedy sends us away) that, despite every phenomenal change, life is, at bottom, indestructibly joyful and powerful..."\(^{10}\)

The effect is intimately linked to what Nietzsche suggests is the "mystery doctrine of tragedy." Instead of guiding us to a defeatist final goal of resignation, tragedy awakens in us "a recognition that whatever exists is of a piece, and that individuation is the root of all evil; a conception of art as a sanguine hope that the spell of individuation may yet be broken, as an augury of eventual reintegration."\(^{11}\) The experience of tragedy is hopeful in its "augury" of eventual reintegration.

Notice that Nietzsche is in agreement with Schopenhauer in his disparagement of individuation. Why is it that they agree on this fundamental issue, and yet disagree as to the cumulative effect of works of the tragic genre? A first step in answering this question can be made by examining the entire title of Nietzsche's work: The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music.
Nietzsche was a philologist as well as a philosopher, and part of the task he set for himself in this work was to trace the historical roots of tragedy in ancient Greece. He claims that tragedy finds its origins in satyr choruses of bacchants singing praises to the god Dionysus. He cites that tradition to attack the suggestion of Schlegel that the chorus be thought of as an ideal spectator. If initially there was only a chorus, and no stage on which action occurred, the chorus could not be thought of as primordially spectators. Some deeper view of the chorus is hence required to capture its true significance.

Nietzsche begins by noting that, in primitive proto-tragedy:

...the audience discovered itself in the chorus. Audience and chorus were never fundamentally set over against each other; all was one grand chorus of singing, dancing satyrs, and of those who let themselves be represented by them.12

In Nietzsche's view, this experience of identification with the chorus is of primary dramatic phenomenon: projecting oneself outside of oneself and acting as though one had really entered another body, another character." This dramatic phenomena is a step towards breaking down the barriers of individuation. By identifying with another, and acting as if one were that other, the boundaries between self and other become less defined. Not only do we experience this as pleasurable, but it also brings one closer to what Nietzsche takes to be the correct view of ultimate reality, which is essentially one and undivided.
Schopenhauer had an interesting general theory of the arts, which ranked particular art forms in terms of how adequately they embody the Will. Music occupied the top of this hierarchy, with tragedy running a very close second. As regards the other art forms (and, to a certain extent, regarding tragedies) Schopenhauer takes a very Platonic view, in that they are all at the second remove from reality. All particulars are, for him, inadequate objectifications or copies of the Will, and, since most art forms are imitations of particulars, they are hence copies of copies. Music alone has the ability to directly represent the Will, without the need of any other intermediate objectification.

Nietzsche takes the chorus to be the embodiment of a musical element in ancient tragedy. As such, that chorus is as unvarnished an expression of reality as one can hope to experience: "the chorus... depicts reality more truthfully and more completely than does the civilized man, who ordinarily considers himself the only reality." The "civilized man" who considers himself the sole reality is, of course, laboring under the veil of Maya. The effect of tragedy tends towards a shattering of this illusion, and the replacement of it with the Dionysiac wisdom that reality is originally and fundamentally a mystical Oneness.

"Thus", Nietzsche concludes, "we have come to interpret Greek tragedy as a Dionysiac chorus which continually discharges itself in Apollonian images." The Apollonian images are the events which take
place on stage, and are communicated as if they are the vision of the attending chorus. The tragic figure is the Apollonian individual taken to the limit and shown to be essentially self-destructive. The destruction of such protagonists is the ultimate aesthetic validation of the thesis that individuation is the root of all evil. The overall effect would be a kind of pessimistic feeling of resignation if it were not for the chorus. In overlooking the importance of this chorus, Schopenhauer was led to a mistaken apprehension of the effect of the whole spectacle which was Attic tragedy.

The importance of the chorus is again underlined by Nietzsche in his remarks on the "death" of tragedy at the hands of Euripides. Already with Sophocles, the chorus no longer had the major role in tragedy, but was treated as on the same footing as the actors. Euripides furthered this tendency by virtually banishing the chorus from any significant role. Nietzsche accuses Euripides of bringing the spectator onto the stage in place of the chorus. By this he meant that Euripides depicted the everyday mediocrity of the bourgeois, in an increasingly naturalistic fashion.

Euripides also replaced Dionysiac wisdom with 'poetic justice.' Through the device of the deus ex machina, Euripides' protagonists often avoid their impending doom at the very last second. According to Nietzsche, such a technique serves only to reinforce the optimistic illusion that the individual can be redeemed as individual. Such artificial salvation creates the impression that is is enough to be
noble, that merit alone will allow the protagonist to avoid destruction. Perhaps the clearest example of that impression can be found in the deus ex machina at the end of Goethe's Faust. Just as Faust is to be taken to Hell, the angels come and save him, for it is enough that he had struggled as mightily as he did.

It is Nietzsche's contention (and understandably so) that such endings take much of the impact out of tragedy, for 'poetic justice' does not hold sway over the cosmos, and any sunny optimist that tries to convince us that it does is merely luring us into the contented illusion of a dream.

Nietzsche's tragic vision is an attempt to characterize a third alternative to Euripidean optimism on the one hand and to Buddhistic resignation on the other. Such a "profound pessimism" requires one to recognize the terrifying truth about existence, yet offers one the promise of eventual reintegration through the strains of Dionysiac music. The chorus is the source of this music, and when Sophocles demoted the chorus to a secondary role, he

necessarily destroyed its meaning...This shift in attitude...was the first step toward the total disintegration of the chorus. Optimistic dialectics took up the whip of its syllogisms and drove music out of tragedy. It entirely destroyed the meaning of tragedy--which can be interpreted only as a concrete manifestation of Dionysiac conditions, music made visible...

It is clear that, for Nietzsche, a chorus, or chorus-like element, must assume the major role in a work for it to be tragic. His remarks
concerning the rebirth of the tragic spirit in Wagnerian opera suggest that the chorus might be supplanted by instrumental music, and thereby a similar effect can be achieved. Not only was tragedy born from out of the spirit of music, music remains of the highest significance in effecting the "metaphysical solace" which Nietzsche assures us that all true tragedies leave us with. Although "solace" is a feeling, Nietzsche claims that this feeling is the result of our being made to believe, through viewing the tragedy, that reality is one, indestructible and joyful, in spite of appearances. To do so, reality must be represented, and it finds its most adequate representation in the satyr chorus.

It may seem from the foregoing that the tragic protagonist is of secondary importance for Nietzsche. Rather, chorus and tragic hero produce the tragic vision in their interplay. The truth which it expresses is only arrived at through sharing the suffering of such heroes. One even attains a kind of positive vision of such protagonists, a feeling that "...though every law, every natural order, even the moral world, may perish by his actions, they also produce a magical circle of effects which found a new world on the ruins of the old one which has been overthrown." Yet the destruction of such figures can only be affirmed by abstracting from the cruel fate of the particular individuals. If this fate is artificially avoided, as in Euripides, the tragic vision gives way to shallow optimism, which clings to individualism.
This, then is Nietzsche's basic approach to tragedy. It was certainly motivated in part by his reverence for Richard Wagner, and his desire to view Wagner's great operas as representing a rebirth of the tragic spirit. This was surely one of the motivations for his emphasis on the importance of the chorus. Yet this emphasis threatens to make Nietzsche's definition of tragedy too specific, in the sense that it would rule out too many works that have been widely recognized as tragic. Shakespeare's greatest plays have no central chorus-like element. Does this mean that they are not tragedies? This criticism may seem telling, for it might look as if nothing can be a tragedy except the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and the operas of Wagner and Bizet.

This is not necessarily the case, however. One can find many works which have choruses and/or chorus-like figures. This is obviously true of such Neo-Classicists as Racine, as well as of a number of modern French existentialists, such as Sartre, Giradoux and Ahnouil. Furthermore, chorus-like figures can be found in such disparate works as Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*. Elsewhere I have argued that *The Idiot* might best be thought of as a tragedy, and pointed out a chorus-like figure (Hippolyte) who seems to function in very much the way Nietzsche describes. As an illustration of how convincing Nietzschean interpretations of modern works can be, let me share a perspective on *Moby Dick* with you,
a view which I formulated while under the sway of the Nietzschean paradigm.

Though Moby Dick is the story of Ahab's quest for the white whale, it is a story told through the eyes of one of his crew members, Ishmael. In fact, Ahab does not appear in the novel until the 29th chapter. Before this, it is Ishmael's life that the reader experiences. Melville describes why Ishmael decided to go whaling in a manner which is deftly bleak:

> Whenever I find myself growing grim around the mouth; whenver it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet...then it is high time to get to the sea as quickly as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball.17

In short, Ishmael goes to sea to avoid suicide; one might say he is trying to avoid the wisdom of Silenus. By the end of the first chapter, Ishmael has created a clear symbolic link between man's quest for self-knowledge and his sallies onto the seas.

The two most significant incidents which occur before Ishmael boards the Pequod are his attendance at Father Mapple's sermon and his striking a friendship with Queequeg. It is no mere coincidence that these events happen one after the other, in chapters 9 and 10. Mapple's sermon on the fate of Jonah stands as an indictment of anyone who disobeys God: "Woe to him whom this world charms from Gospel duty!"18 Then, in the following chapter, Ishmael makes "a bosom friend" out of a head-shrinking savage. It is clear that
Ishmael is quite moved by both events, but especially that his intimacy with Queequeg has restored his faith in humanity to a certain extent.

They then sign on to the Pequod, in the face of many ill omens concerning the captain of that vessel. One of the most lyrical passages in the book relates Ishmael's reflections when he is standing lookout at the masthead. There Ishmael's Pantheistic leanings are expressed, in a manner reminiscent of Nietzsche's description of Dionysiac intoxication:

...lulled into such opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reverie in this absentminded youth by the blending cadence of waves and thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul pervading mankind and nature;...

This loss of identity is immediately followed by the scene on the quarterdeck, where Ahab enlists his crew in his "monomaniacal" quest.

In declaring that "all visible objects are as pasteboard masks", Ahab asserts his unreasonable demand to be able to thrust through these masks to "the little lower layer. He sees himself as a prisoner within the walls of appearance, and takes Moby Dick to be "that wall thrust close" to him. It is the inscrutability of the whale (and of life itself) which he chiefly hates. He claims that his right to vent that hatred can be rescinded by no man, nor force, nor abstract value: "Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me...Who's over me? Truth hath no confines."
The power of his conjurings is immediately borne out in their effect on Ishmael. The same man who mystically communed with nature scant paragraphs earlier now reveals that "Ahab's quenchless feud now seemed my own." Ahab is an ultimate challenge to the security of Ishmael's world view, and Ishmael the narrator must account for Ahab's place in that world or relinquish his view of pantheistic harmony.

This confrontation with Ahab's quest for the whale calls forth from Ishmael his poetical best. He reads significance into the whiteness of the whale that penetrates to the heart of the world, in a manner which again recalls Nietzsche's contention that the universe is essentially in chaos. Each potent image which Ishmael uses to attempt to capture the significance of this whiteness is pregnant with contradictions. White is both the visible absence of color and the concrete of all colors; both a dumb blankness and a rich language full of meaning; the principle of light, which in itself is no color, but which allows all color to be seen. In pondering these insights, Ishmael remarks that "the palsied universe lies before us as a leper." This power of whiteness draws our gaze to it, "so that the wretched infidel gazes himself blind" in pondering its contradictions.

So, Ishmael joins in the quest, both because of Ahab's almost inhuman power as an individual and because of Ishmael's own fascination with the inscrutability of the white whale. Ahab is a catalyst which has prodded the narrator Ishmael to an understanding
of significances far beyond the capabilities of the naive pantheist that we see in the early chapters. Only by virtue of his encounter with Ahab has Ishmael developed this depth of insight.

That the whale represents a force which man has struggled with from time immemorial is made abundantly clear by Ishmael's associations. It is as inscrutable as the Sphinx; its brow is wrinkled like Egyptian hieroglyphics; it was the first earthly incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. One also notes that Ahab becomes a timeless symbol of man's struggle with injustice and inscrutability in Ishmael's hands. He is Adam, struggling under the weight of all man's sins since the expulsion from the garden; he is Prometheus, being torn apart by vultures of his own creation; he is proud Lucifer (by Ahab's own admission), asserting his individuality in the face of all assaults, elevating his ability to rule himself above all other values.

The toll which such rampant individualism exacts is monumental. His body is burnt like a match, as if it were "cut away from the stake just before its limbs were consumed;" it stands "like a wounded oak", struck by lightening and marked from top to roots. His eyes flash "like powder pans", and his passion burns so inexorably that he cannot remain in his sleeping berth, for the heat of his brow bakes his pillow into a brick. The narrator allows the reader no doubt that such is always the bitter fruits of such individualism. Yet Ahab is never simple-mindedly condemned by
Ishmael as being immoral. This attack is left to Starbuck, and it carries little or no weight.

Ahab's quest is not young Ishmael's for long. There is a peace and joy which pervades some aspect of Ishmael's being that will not be vanquished by any maelstrom:

But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I forever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve around me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in the eternal mildness of joy.21

What is it that distinguishes Ishmael from Ahab in this regard? I believe it is his unshakable bond with humanity. His friendship with Queequeg brings him great joy. Yet he is also linked with humanity as a whole. The chapter entitled "A Squeeze of the Hand" perhaps illustrates this best. The sperm from killed whales congeals into thick lumps, which must be squeezed into liquid by hand. Ishmael describes the experience thusly:

I forgot all about our terrible oath; in that inexpressible sperm I washed my hands and my heart of it;...I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatsoever...Come, let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of human kindness.22

His oath was not to rest until Moby Dick was killed. In place of that oath, Ishmael pledges to follow the course that he has been taught by "many prolonged, repeated experiences" most recently by the squeezing of the sperm:
Man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy, but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the fire-side, the country.  

It is to the indestructable heart of man that Ishmael has turned, for, according to him, man's intellect is puny and ineffectual when faced with a universe which will not be determinately understood. In short, one should be satisfied with the conventional values of home, family and country.

Two chapters after coming to this clear realization, Ishmael issues his most burning indictments of Ahab's actions. He notes that "the rushing Pequod, freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse, and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander's soul." In that chapter, Ishmael is at the tiller, and loses his bearings while staring into the flames of the tryworks. He draws a lesson from this, one which is clearly intended for Ahab, who has distinctly been pictured as a Prometheus:

Look not too long in the face of fire, O man!... The truest of all men was the man of sorrows, and the truest of all books is Solomon's, and Ecclesiastes is the fine hammered steel of woe. All is vanity. This willful world has not got hold of unchristian Solomon's wisdom yet...But even Solomon, he says "the man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain" (i.e. even while living) "in the congregation of the dead." Give not thyself up to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for a time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness.
Ishmael has made it clear by now that he thinks Ahab is mad, and that Ahab has failed to recognize the limitations of the intellect. Ahab will not lower his "conceit of attainable felicity."

From this point on in the novel, Ishmael drops out as an individual, until his reemergence in the epilogue. In fact, he reports events he could not have witnessed, such as Starbuck's aborted attempt to murder Ahab. Ishmael has reconciled his own struggle, and it only remains for Ahab to carry out his inevitable fate. Ishmael, for the most part, merely reports his denouement, which appears to be the inevitable result of Ahab's conceits.

Finally, when Ahab and the Pequod are destroyed by Moby Dick, it is Ishmael alone who survives. Is it mere chance that he survives, while all who remain part of the quest perish? The Nietzschean would say that Ahab's destruction stands as an indictment to his commitment to individualism at all costs, and that Ishmael's survival confirms the rightness of the recognition of the oneness of humanity. Our primary identification is with Ishmael, according to the Nietzschean, and we learn with him to forsake individuality and rationality to place our faith in the unity of all humanity. Ahab's hybris, and its consequences, show us that we, too, must lower our conceit of attainable felicity.

Such, then, was the way I interpreted Moby Dick a number of years ago. This interpretation makes a great deal of sense out of a number of passages from the work, as I have attempted to show.
It claims that Ishmael functions primarily like an ancient chorus, which reassures the audience by imparting to them the belief that reality is indestructible, joyful and essentially a unity. This is the "metaphysical solace" which Moby Dick, as a true tragedy, leaves us with. In the process, through the destruction of Ahab, individuality is shown to be illusory, and the source of much of the suffering which humanity must undergo.

Of course, the mere fact that Nietzsche's theory can provide a reasonable interpretation of Moby Dick, and certain other modern tragedies, is not, in itself, sufficient to establish it as the best theory available. I still find that this theory has a number of drawbacks. To begin with, Nietzsche claims that the solace which tragedies afford arises from their ability to communicate the impression that life is "one, joyful and indestructible." My problem with this is that a great number of people (including me) appreciate the effect of tragedies without acquiring the belief mentioned above. This is not to say that there are no beliefs prerequisite for experiencing this effect. But surely treating the acquisition of an exotic belief as the one above as a necessary condition for appreciating the tragic effect is too stringent a limitation. On this account, it would turn out that most people who think they appreciate tragedy really don't, for they haven't acquired the requisite belief.

Secondly, the requirement that a chorus, or chorus-like figure, play the central role in any true tragedy does place a severe
limitation on the scope of the theory. As noted earlier, Nietzsche even questions whether Sophocles hadn't driven the Dionysiac element out of his works by "destroying the meaning" of the chorus. Nietzsche also rejects all of the plays of Euripides, save perhaps for the Bacchae, on similar grounds. Finally, the tragedies of Shakespeare could not be said to provide "metaphysical solace", due to the absence of some chorus-like figure.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer both draw the same moral from the destruction of the tragic protagonist. To see such archetypes of individuality so entirely and inevitably decimated leads both men to conclude that individuality is the source of all evil. Beyond this negative result, however, Nietzsche believes that a positive vision emerges from true tragedies, but that such a vision is created by the chorus. Hence, Nietzsche's theory suffers from the same drawback as Hegel's. To use Bradley's words, Nietzsche's theory fails to explain "our sense that the hero has never shown himself to be so great or noble as in the death which seals his failure."

It is perhaps for this reason that my view of Moby Dick has changed radically in the four years since I framed the above Nietzschean interpretation of it. I am no longer comfortable with the claim that Ishmael is the primary vehicle of the solace that this tragedy affords the reader. I can no longer assent to the claim that Ishmael's pantheism is the true world view, as
Nietzsche's theory would have one believe. I can no longer be satisfied with theories which take the destruction of tragic protagonists to be a condemnation of their world views. It is for these reasons that I have been moved to frame my own theory, which takes the tragic protagonists themselves to be the primary vehicles for achieving the tragic effect.
In my search for a theory of tragedy which does not, in some sense, fault the tragic protagonist for his actions, I have considered a number of my philosophical predecessors. Since I failed to find such a theory, I here intend to frame one. This I will do in the form of the following honorific definition:

In the best of tragedies, characters with whom we are led to identify are depicted in the process of resolutely defining themselves through action. These actions, taken in the situations in which they find themselves, lead in a probable or necessary manner to either their destruction or to massive suffering on their part. This suffering can neither be deserved nor sought after for its own sake; it must rather be the likely result of their being true to the values which they hold. What is cathartic about such works is that they allay our fear of nihilism, by replacing the pity we initially feel for such characters by a sense of esteem for the strength of their convictions.

My indebtedness to my predecessors is obvious. From Aristotle, I have adopted the notions that we must identify with tragic protagonists, that action must be at the center of tragic conflicts, that the suffering of such protagonists cannot be deserved (in the moral sense), and that the events in tragedy must flow in a probable or necessary manner. I have taken Hegel's notion of one-sidedness...
and freed it of its negative connotations, pointing out instead that tragic protagonists are resolutely defining themselves through action. Finally, I have borrowed from Nietzsche in that I have chosen to set tragedy in the context of nihilism. Much more needs to be said about my proposal, however, before I can proceed to apply it to Moby Dick.

Let me begin with the phrase "defining themselves through action." There is nothing tragic about a noble individual carelessly walking out in front of a car and being killed, although it would be a great waste. What I mean by a defining action is an action consciously taken by a character to reflect a value which he or she holds. Furthermore, tragic protagonists are quite often required to choose between two or more values which they hold, hence acting on that value which they hold in the highest esteem. In such a manner, Othello chose to define himself by valuing his honor higher than the compassion which he might have extended to Desdemona. Similarly, Antigone valued her filial ties higher than her duty to the state, and so defined herself by burying Polyneices. The action taken evidences the value, or the hierarchy of values, which the character holds, and in so doing defines that character as the holder of these values. In every case, such protagonists are seen to be willing to suffer greatly, or even die, as the result of such defining actions.

The manner in which these protagonists choose to define themselves leads them into conflict with their world, as it is depicted. These
conflicts, in turn, lead to their having to undergo either massive suffering or destruction. This destruction must follow in a probable or necessary manner from the action taken in the particular situation. The result need not be, strictly speaking, inevitable, although many theorists have made much of this requirement. In many tragedies, it is at least physically possible that a negative outcome for the protagonist be avoided. Such an outcome need only be highly likely for a work to achieve the tragic effect.

It is not sufficient that such suffering occurs in a probable or necessary manner, however. Tragic protagonists cannot seek out massive suffering for its own sake. Neither the suicide nor the martyr makes the best of tragic heroes. Oedipus did not seek to destroy himself and his family in attempting to ferret out the cause of the pestilence which gripped Thebes. Antigone did not want to die for burying her brother. It was just that the situations in which they found themselves demanded such sacrifices. Tragic figures are the supreme examples of what Heidegger calls authenticity, in that they act resolutely on the values they hold, though it cost them their lives, if not more.

I concur with Aristotle's contention that tragedies, when they are done well, effect a catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear. We differ, however, on the nature of this effect, and why it is achieved. I have chosen to frame my account of catharsis against
the problem of nihilism. It is not merely out of an admiration for
Nietzsche that I have done so. Rather, I agree with him that the
threat of nihilism is the deepest challenge to resolute action in
the contemporary age. In a world devoid of all meaning, action
becomes impossible. A kind of paralyzing nausea results from a
belief in nihilism, as Nietzsche, Sartre and others have so potently
observed.

Action requires conviction, and when an individual can no longer
sustain conviction in any values, all action ceases. There can be no
answer to the wisdom of Silenus in the absence of such convictions.
I wish to suggest that seeing tragedies tends to restore a sense that
such convictions are possible and worthwhile.

I think it reasonable to presume that we feel pity for tragic
protagonists because we empathize with their sufferings. The fear
that viewing such tragedies calls up in us is, in part, also based on
this identification, for we get the feeling that we, too, could find
ourselves in such situations and making such choices. Furthermore,
we question whether any values could be worth the suffering these
protagonists go through. Why, then, do we not come away from good
tragedies with these feelings intact? Why aren't tragedies the most
pessimistic and depressing works in all of the Arts?

As I see it, these feelings are supplanted by a sense of
exhilaration and increased power. This doesn't happen at any one
demonstrable point in each work, but rather is the cumulative effect of such works when viewed as a whole. The tragic protagonist is the example, par excellence, of indomitable conviction. As such, he or she stands as a kind of proof that such conviction is indeed possible, no matter what the cost. While we may fear coming to an end such as Antigone's or Othello's, we fear more an existence in which we cannot sustain the conviction which action requires. Nausea is a far worse fate than dying for the sake of a value dearly held. The fact that such conviction results in the protagonist's destruction only serves to underscore the potential for indomitability which the human will possesses.

It is not as if nihilism, or the problem of conviction, is a uniquely modern concern. Even the ancient Greeks were aware of its threat. Prior to the 19th and 20th centuries, however, far and away the vast majority of humanity found that belief in a deity or deities provided a secure buckler against this threat. In the last hundred years or so, more and more of humanity have found this traditional answer to be insufficient. When God was in his heaven (so to speak) all was right with the world, in the sense that the meaning of human individuals was thought to have a wellspring in the divine. Cut loose from this source, it has become harder and harder to sustain a conviction which many now realize can only be grounded in the autonomous individual. Being the source of one's own values
is incomparably more difficult than going about seeking to discover values which one thinks are already inherent in the universe. It has been dizzying for mankind to witness and experience the falling away of these illusionary "inherent" values, and much nausea has been the result.

Tragic figures reassure us that such autonomous individuality can be sustained. Such figures challenge each one of us to

...declare himself a sovereign nature (in himself) amid the powers of heaven, hell and earth. He may perish; but so long as he exists, he insists upon treating with Powers on an equal basis. If any of these powers choose to withhold certain secrets, let them; that does not impair my sovereignty in myself; that does not make me tributary.1

This quotation is taken from a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne written by Herman Melville during the time he was writing Moby Dick. He used these words to describe what he called "a certain tragic phase of humanity." I believe that this tragic phase of humanity found its clearest embodiment (at least in Melville's writings) in the character of Ahab. I will hence argue that Moby Dick is a tragedy, but my argument will proceed on different lines from the interpretation of this work offered above. This difference in perspective will reflect the gestalt shift that occurs when one switches from viewing this work in a Nietzschean manner to viewing it in the light of my proposed honorific definition. Before discussing Ahab, I will first outline the role of Ishmael in this work.
I explicitly deny that Ishmael is the primary vehicle for attaining the effect of this tragedy. I furthermore deny that his world view must be taken as the "true" one, and that Ahab's individualism must be seen to be an illusion. I contend that Ishmael understands Ahab but little, and only by glimpses and snatches at the very most. Ishmael embodies a world view which is anathema to Ahab's, thereby providing Ahab with the perfect foil to his quest. As did the ancient Greek choruses, Ishmael exalts precisely those traditional pieties and values which Ahab seeks to flaunt. Ahab explicitly rejects being limited to those "attainable felicities" which Ishmael sanctions in the chapter "A Squeeze of the Hand." This rejection is rendered all the more striking because it is set up against the clear embodiment of the antithetical perspective of Ishmael's pantheism.

Also like ancient choruses, Ishmael is distanced from the scene of action. Though he is initially drawn into the quest, he very quickly loses his ardor, and explicitly disavows it in "A Squeeze of the Hand." Furthermore, by virtue of the strict hierarchical relationships between officers and crew aboard a whaling ship, Ishmael is distanced from the "stage" on which most of the dramatic action occurs, i.e., the quarterdeck. Ishmael, as a common seaman, could not presume to approach Ahab and dissuade him from his quest. He can merely report the goings on, from a perspective that increasingly comes to resemble an omniscient author.
Finally, again in the manner of a tragic chorus, Ishmael's account creates an ever-increasing sense that Ahab's doom is imminent. He blatantly announces that he is going to tell a tragic tale. He creates an impression of Moby Dick as a whale that cannot be killed. Perhaps most tellingly, he often predicts that extreme woe must be the result of not being satisfied with the "attainable felicities" and aspiring to "nobler conceits."

My remarks indicate that I do view Ishmael as a kind of tragic chorus figure. But my interpretation of the role of such a chorus-like figure is quite different from Nietzsche's. In terms of achieving the tragic effect, I believe Ishmael, and virtually all choruses or chorus-like figures, play a subsidiary role to the tragic protagonists. This role is one of placing the protagonist's struggle in the clearest relief possible. It is unwise to base one's theory of tragedy on the claim that either the chorus' world view or the protagonist's is "true", in any substantive, absolute sense. Such claims are too difficult, if not impossible, to adjudicate. One can only ask which of the two plays the major role in attaining the tragic effect, and it is my contention that it is the protagonists.

Let me then turn to Ahab. I see him as a kind of Prometheus. He is obsessed with the arbitrary nature of the evil which can befall us. In his speech on the quarterdeck, he reveals his belief that this randomness is only apparent:
All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks.
But in each event...some unknown but still reasoning
thing puts forth the moulding of its features behind the
unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through
the mask. How can the prisoner reach outside except by
thrusting through the wall?2

To Ahab, the idea that such evils are really random is unintelligible.
He is in the grip of a Manichean view of the universe, which requires
him to delegate the responsibility for such evil to a creator-god.
While we, as readers, may not accept this belief, we can still
appreciate why he is moved to act in the ways he does. Such evil
may indeed be merely random, yet it was not unreasonable for a man
of his time to believe that it isn't, especially given the religious
history of New England.

Ahab's attempt to slay the white whale is not the vengeful act
of a man deranged by suffering, and it is not merely directed upon
the "dumb brute" which he attacks. Starbuck does not understand this,
or perhaps does not want to. Ahab's act is a calculated gesture of
defiance against what he believes to be the malignant deity which is
the "reasoning thing" behind the "pasteboard mask." Ahab declares
himself to be equal with all the powers of the universe; "Talk not
to me of blasphemy, man, I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. Who's
over me? Truth hath no confines."3 For Ahab, God is indeed alive,
but is cruel and capricious, and deserving of rebellion, not worship.

Like Prometheus, Ahab perceives God's treatment of man as unjust.
He believes in the inviolability of the individual, and it is for this
reason that he will not accept such injustice from any quarter. The burden of his rebellion against God is fearful, as Ahab himself relates: "I feel deadly faint, bowed and humped, as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise." In Moby Dick, Ahab finds what he takes to be the most adequate embodiment of that which he rejects:

The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating at them...That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning...Ahab did not fall down and worship it, but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred White Whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it.5

In championing the inviolability of the individual, Ahab is a pilot prophet to all humanity, although he steers a quite different course from that which Father Mapple charted in his sermon. Yet Father Mapple's closing remarks might well be applied to Ahab:

Delight is to him...who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong arms still support him, when the ship of this base, treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him who give no quarter in the truth, and kills, burns and destroys all sin, though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators or Judges.6

Ahab takes this tendency a step further than Mapple intended, however, by "standing forth his inexorable self" against the God of heaven.

Ishmael himself speaks of Ahab as a Prometheus, although his own pieties lead him to conceive of Ahab's rebellion in negative
terms only: "God help thee, old man, thy thoughts have created a creature in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus, a vulture feeds upon that heart forever; that vulture is the very creature which he creates." Like the chorus in Prometheus Bound, Ishmael can only prophecy unending woe for anyone who dares flaunt the superiority of God. Yet the grandeur of such a rejection, the significance which renders such suffering worthwhile to some, is not even hinted at in the above remarks.

Like Ivan Karamazov, Ahab rejects the notion that any divine plan could justify the injustices visited upon particular human beings. It is the inscrutability of the malice which he sees embodied in Moby Dick that most enrages him. He consistently asserts his rejection of all suffering that cannot be rendered humanly intelligible. Again, like Ivan, such inscrutable malice does not lead Ahab to reject the existence of an almighty power: "I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional, unintegral master of me."  

In rebelling against God, Ahab realizes he aligns himself with those forces which have been called diabolic. Not for nothing is Ahab cloaked in flaming images (here his diabolism and his Promethean nature work hand in hand symbolically). Rather than temper his specially forged harpoon in water, Ahab asks for blood from his harpooneers, and while dousing its barbs in this blood, he incants:
"Ego non baptize in nomine Patris, sed in nomine diaboli."\(^9\) (I baptize thee, not in the name of the Father, but in the name of the devil.) Furthermore, his worship of these forces did not begin with his final voyage. He is marked with a white scar which slashes from his forehead through his trunk. He acknowledges that he received this scar in the course of performing "as Persian...the sacramental act" to what he calls the "clear spirit of clear fire."

The ultimate expression of his passion for fire is found in a passage immediately following the acknowledgment noted above:

I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I know that thy right worship is defiance...Oh thou foundling fire, thou hermit immemorial, thou too hast thy uncommunicable riddle, thy unparticipated grief. Here again, with haughty agony, I read my sire. Leap! Leap up and lick the sky! I leap with thee; I burn with thee; would fain be welded with thee; defyingly I worship thee.\(^10\) Like Prometheus, Ahab would give mankind a gift: his fiery and unbending will; his demand for autonomy. As such, Ahab is not without his own heart-rending eagles. But just as Prometheus, chained and tormented on his rock, did not desist in condemning the "vile despotism" of Zeus, so, too, does Ahab persist in his attempt to strike through the mask, despite his mutilations.

Were this the only aspect of Ahab's character that we were allowed to see, however, we might be in danger of thinking of him as merely a maniac, or at best a one-dimensional allegorical vehicle. But it is crucial that one be led to identify with a
character, if we are to consider him tragic. Without such identification, we cannot experience his death as cathartic, in the sense which I have outlined. Crudely speaking, if we cannot gain a sense that this character is "like us" in important ways, we can neither empathize with his sufferings nor share in the exhilaration of his resolute will. Though we get many glimpses of Ahab's humanity, I am most drawn to him through his interactions with Pip, the black cabin boy, and with Starbuck, his first mate.

Pip was a mere lad when called upon to fill in for an injured oarsman in Stubb's boat. In the heat of the chases, Pip jumped from this boat not once but twice, and the second time he was abandoned in the ocean for hours. This caused a kind of madness to grip him for he could not cope with both his great isolation and his unbearable shame. In this madness, he was ridiculed by many of the crew, but Ahab took the boy under his protection, and throughout the rest of the voyage Pip plays a kind of fool to Ahab's Lear.

Ahab is quite moved by the lad's devotion to him. When Pip asks Ahab to use him as Ahab's leg, in place of the whalebone, Ahab replies: "If thou speakest much more, Ahab's purpose keels up in him." No mere psychotic could be so touched by the simple devotion of a lowly cabin boy.

Ahab's exchange with Starbuck just prior to the final chase develops his capacity for fellow-feeling even farther. Starbuck
alone put up any resistance to the quest, and at various times Ahab threatened Starbuck with a musket, and Starbuck contemplated using that same musket to slay his captain. I believe that no scene could better insure our identification with Ahab than his reconciliation with Starbuck on the very eve of the climactic hunt.

On a day so incredibly beautiful that it had to touch even the grim Ahab, Starbuck and his captain speak of home, wives and children. Ahab, surprisingly perhaps, has a wife and children back in New Bedford, and Starbuck comes to represent them to him. This is why Ahab is moved to implore: "Close! Stand close to me Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God." At that point he cautions Starbuck to remain on board during the ultimate confrontation, to insure Starbuck's survival. Then the first mate gives voice to his final plea for Ahab to forsake the quest and return home.

Here we are finally allowed to see a degree of hesitation on Ahab's part. From a man who has thus far seemed supremely self-possessed, we hear the astonishing query: "Is Ahab Ahab? Is it I, God or who that lifts this arm?" The reflections which this question causes in Ahab reveal a man trying to understand the resolve which has driven him so relentlessly up to this point. Perhaps the saddest moment in the entire work is when Ahab looks up in the middle of these reflections to find that Starbuck had terrifiedly stolen
away. When next we are made privy to Ahab's self reflections, his resolve has returned: "Ahab is forever Ahab, man."14

Let me pause here for a moment and remark on whether Ahab's fate was inevitable. If Starbuck had stood by Ahab in his moment of doubt, one might think that he could have been dissuaded from continuing his quest, hence averting his final destruction. It was but a chance occurrence, one might say, that Starbuck chose to slink away, and hence Ahab's fate was not immutable but circumstantial, and might well have been avoided.

It was certainly possible that such a scenario might have occurred. As such, Ahab's fate is not, strictly speaking, inevitable. Yet we have been prepared to expect that Starbuck would fail, due to how his character had been delineated up to this point. In Ishmael's initial extended description of Starbuck, the first mate's inability to resist Ahab is clearly foreshadowed:

And brave as he (Starbuck) might be, it was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which, while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or whales, or any of the ordinary, irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual, terrors which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man.15

Starbuck fails because of what Ishmael later describes as the "incompetence of mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness."

Furthermore, Ishmael adds, it seems as if the rest of the deck was stacked against Ahab: "Such a crew, so officered, seemed especially
picked and packed by some infernal fatality to help him to his monomaniac revenge."16

It still seems possible that Starbuck could have stood by Ahab, though. Ahab's brow is not "enraged" when Starbuck slinks away. Rather, Ahab is caught in the throes of self-doubt. He was especially vulnerable then, to an extent which is only matched by the degree to which Pip's devotion moves him. Had Starbuck showed similar devotion, Ahab might have avoided his demise. Yet it is undoubtedly the case that the turn of events which does, in fact, occur is the most probable, given what had gone before.

I have now elucidated the various elements of my proposed honorific definition by showing how it yields an interpretation of *Moby Dick*. What makes it a particularly good tragedy is the expertise with which Melville realizes these elements to such a high degree in this work. Since one of the most fruitful ways of getting at a concept is via negativa, I will conclude by contrasting Ahab with another of Melville's characters, Bartleby the scrivener.

At first glance, the story of Bartleby can be viewed as containing a number of the elements which my definition has highlighted. If inaction can be thought of as a kind of action, Bartleby can clearly be seen to resolutely pursue a course which must lead to his own destruction. This destruction is foreshadowed by the narrator early on in the work:
And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to eventual succor, common sense bids the soul to be rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder.

Finally, with his "I prefer not to", Bartleby does appear to be defining himself.

But is he? Has not Bartleby despaired of finding a definition of himself? Is it not precisely this inability which leads him to acquiesce in his own destruction? Remember my specification of what I mean by a "defining action": "a defining action is an action consciously taken by a character to reflect a value which he or she holds." It is precisely because Bartleby no longer holds any values that he ceases to act, and hence ceases to live.

This allows me to bring out another aspect of my definition. Suffering or destruction which are tragic must result from the dialectical interplay of the resolve which the tragic protagonist holds and the situation in which he finds himself. In Ahab's case, for example, his commitment to human autonomy, truth and justice would not have cost him his life in many situations. If his nemesis were not the virtually supernatural White Whale, or if his crew were different, he might well have escaped destruction. But Bartleby's indifference to everything would be the death of him no matter where he was situated. The fact that he remains alive for so long is only due to the pity which the narrator feels for him. Bartleby is
obviously willing and ready to die, but not for the sake of any value; rather, it is out of a sense of despair and desolation that he just gives up.

The contrast between Ahab and Bartleby is a contrast also between a man of great conviction and a man who no longer has conviction in anything. Never does Bartleby prefer to do something; he always prefers not to. He is perhaps the best example in American literature of the effects of a nihilistic world view on the individual. As I have argued previously, that effect is the inability to act.

How, then does our response to reading Moby Dick differ from our response to reading Bartleby? My response to the latter was depression, coupled with a vague uneasiness. At first, I didn't know how to respond. I was led to identify with Bartleby, as was the narrator. The effect of this identification was eventually quite as the narrator describes:

> For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering, stinging melancholy seized me. The bond of common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. 18

I, too, felt irresistibly drawn to gloom by the tale of this pathetic creature. This is the basic reason why I believe that Bartleby's tale is not tragic.

The definition here proposed provides an explanation for why there is no cathartic effect to Bartleby, while there is in reading Moby Dick. One finds no solace from the threat of nihilism in reading
Bartleby. On the contrary, this story embodies the threat of nihilism as starkly as perhaps any work in literature ever has. We never stop pitying Bartleby, and we come away from this story with the unsettling fear that we might face a similar fate. In effect, Bartleby commits a kind of suicide, but a suicide of inaction. There is nothing quite so fearful as his zombie-like paralysis, and it is with a most vivid impression of the terrible nature of such paralysis that the story leaves us.

Moby Dick, on the other hand, leaves us with a sense of the potency of man, as exemplified in the "catskill eagle" which is Ahab. Though we might reject his world view as inadequate, we are left with an unavoidable sense of awe at the indomitable will of this individual. In identifying with him, we are challenged to declare our own "sovereign nature", and reassured that such sovereignty is indeed possible for humankind.
IV

A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE APPLICATION OF THE PARADIGM

The following chapter demonstrates the fruitfulness and scope of the proposed paradigm, through examples of its application to a wide variety of works in the history of literature. In the main, I have decided to concentrate on a comparatively few playwrights and novelists, rather than attempt a complete historical survey of most of the works which have been called tragic at some time or another. Regrettably, this means that a number of very good tragedians, such as Corneille, Racine, Schiller, and Goethe, go unaddressed. It is hoped that the approach outlined herein can be recognized to have the potential of being analogically extended to cover their works.

I have attempted to address a large number of archetypal examples of tragedy, that is, those works about which there is the clearest consensus among experts that they are tragic. Furthermore, a number of borderline cases are considered, to demonstrate the facility of the proposed definition in providing a useful decision procedure in the vast majority of such cases. Finally, I will argue that a number of works which have been called tragic ought not to be accorded that honorific appellation.

A paradigm must hold promise as a program which can be applied to ever expanding realms of problems, or else it is unlikely to gain wide influence within the critical community. I indicate what I take to be
the promise of this program in the following chapter. My arguments in favor of the superiority of the proposed paradigm to its predecessors will proceed along the lines suggested in chapter one. It is only in terms of the traditional methodological desiderata for scientific theories that these arguments will be offered.
A. TRAGEDY IN ANCIENT GREECE

As noted earlier, tragedy found its birthplace in ancient Greece, which spawned some of the finest examples of the genre. Four of the most discussed works from this age are *Prometheus Bound*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and the *Bacchae*. I will show here that the honorific definition which I have proposed above (p.95) provides a better account of what makes these works tragic (if, indeed, they all are) than any definition previously proposed. To do so, I will contrast my account with remarks made under the aegis of rival paradigms.

Before making this case, allow me to issue a number of caveats. For one thing, the proposed definition does not apply with ease to Aeschylean trilogies when taken as wholes. *Prometheus Bound* was but the first work in a trilogy, the last part of which is no longer extant. The account offered herein cannot pretend to do justice to its role in this larger whole. Similarly, the *Oresteia* trilogy does not end tragically, although the individual stories of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Orestes are, to greater or lesser degrees, tragic. The somewhat broader scope of these trilogies is not the business of a definition of tragedy to explain.

This leads to a somewhat more general point. The fascination of the Greeks with fate, wedded as it is in their literature to peripety and discovery, is clearly expressed in their tragedies (and epics). These provincial concerns may have their place in a narrow definition
of "ancient Greek tragedy", but they cannot be included in an
honorific definition designed to explain the entire genre. Now, let
me begin with Prometheus Bound. This drama opens after Prometheus has
offended Zeus. His offense was to act as no less than the saviour of
the human race, as he himself describes:

As for long suffering men, Zeus took no care at all; indeed, his plan was to make the whole of their race
extinct and then to form another race instead. Except for me, no one opposed his purpose here. I dared to
stand against him, and I saved mankind from being broken to pieces and sent down to hell. For this, I tell you, I
am bowed in sufferings painful to feel and pitiful to look at.¹

Prometheus saved mankind, of course, by giving them "the gleam of
civilizing fire." For his trouble, he is staked and chained to a rock.

His punishment is made to appear even more severe given his
background. There had recently been a struggle between the gods for
supremacy, and it was in large measure because of Prometheus' aid that
Zeus was able to prevail. But after coming to power, one of Zeus'
first acts was to plan the genocide of the human race, and Prometheus
could not go along with this intention. The severity of his punishment
is attested to in various ways. A representative remark is made by the
chorus:

No god is so hard hearted as to be pleased with this.
All are indignant at your wrongs, all except Zeus...(159-62)

As if this wasn't enough, the arbitrary nature of Zeus' punishments is
underscored by the character of Io, who suffers a transformation into
a heifer as a result of Zeus' interest in her.
Although the major action occurs outside the play, violating Aristotelian canons, this is not to say that the play itself is dramatically static. A lesser individual would have been broken by the torments Prometheus has to undergo. Yet Prometheus remains unswayed. He still has a model for a generation of romantic revolutionaries, notable among them being Goethe, Shelley, and Nietzsche. There is no compromise possible for Prometheus, if he is to uphold the values of justice and humanity for which he is suffering.

While my definition has provided the standpoint from which many of the above remarks are made, a bit of pedantry might not be ill-placed in order to clarify the function of my definition in this first case. Prometheus, with whom we are led to identify, is depicted in the process of resolutely defining himself as defender of both mankind and justice, through his previous action of giving men fire and his present action of denying Zeus the secret of who threatens Zeus' overthrow. He does not deserve such treatment, nor does he seek it out like some Christian martyr. Rather, his sufferings are the inevitable result of his defense of the values he holds dear in the situation in which he finds himself. Though we initially feel pity for him as he is chained to the rock, and fear that some (metaphorically) similar fate might befall us, by the end of the play these feelings are supplanted by the great esteem we feel for such a character. This esteem infuses us with a sense that some values are worth such sufferings.
Now that the pattern of interpretation has been set, I will proceed with an analysis of the other three plays, foregoing such pedantic final summaries as the one above. Although Antigone preceded it in time of composition, I will continue by considering Oedipus Rex. Now, it is well known that Aristotle considered Oedipus as the archetype of tragedy, and that his theory is designed to give a good account of it. As noted in an earlier section, the key to Aristotle's account occurs in the following passage:

The only possibility left, then, is for tragedy to be about the man who is in the intermediate position. Such a man is not outstanding for virtue or justice, and he arrives at ill fortune not because of any wickedness or vice, but because of some error in judgment.

Does this accurately describe Oedipus? I, for one, am uncomfortable with saying that he is "a man not outstanding for virtue or justice." Is it an error in judgment for him to pursue his inquiry even in the face of the warnings of Tiresias, Jocasta and the chorus? Or is his error to have killed his father and married his mother in the first place?

Let me begin with the last of these questions. Aristotle himself seemed to think that the error was in his original actions of killing his father and marrying his mother:

...it is possible to make the characters act in ignorance of the terrible things that they are doing, and then later to recognize the ties of affection that are involved, as happens with Sophocles' Oedipus. Admittedly, in this case the action is outside the play...
His sufferings, however, are only indirectly the result of these actions. They are directly the result of his pressing his inquiry into the cause of the famine that is wracking Thebes at the time. This inquiry is the central action of Oedipus Rex. If he heeded the warnings of all who surrounded him, his sufferings would have been averted. Let me then consider this inquiry in detail.

Much has been made of Oedipus' intelligence, and thirst for knowledge. Some have even suggested that this is his fatal flaw. Such comments ignore the fact that there is another strong motivation for him to continue his investigations. He does not seek this knowledge merely for its own sake; it is his duty as ruler of Thebes to save his people by uncovering the murderer of Laius. Indeed, much of the first 200 or so lines of the play are taken up with supplications from his priests and his people, of which the following is but a sample:

Unnumbered of the city die. Unpitied babies bearing death lie unmoaned on the ground. Grey-haired mothers and young wives from all sides of the altar's edge lift up a wail, beseeching for their mournful woes.4 It is made clear that the only way to save Thebes is to uncover the murderer. The people look to Oedipus, not just as their ruler, but as the man who solved the riddle of the sphinx to save them from their last crisis.

It is my contention that Oedipus shows himself to be outstandingly virtuous and just in his resolute search for the truth. A lesser man would have heeded the pleas of Tiresias, Jocasta and others, and turned away. Yet Oedipus pressed on, even when he had intimations
of the terrible truth. The value of his duty as a ruler, and his resolution to "hear of nothing but finding the truth" (1065) overruled any other considerations.

This is not to say that Oedipus was a perfect man. His suspicion of both Tiresias and Creon show him to be a man quick to anger. But it is not his quick temper that leads to his demise. Some have suggested that it was this temper which caused him to kill his father in the first place. This is at best ambiguous in Oedipus Rex, and this interpretation is thoroughly discounted in the subsequent play Oedipus at Colonus. If he was acting in self-defense, it would be hard to fault him for it.

One might suggest that Oedipus' blinding was a suffering he inflicted on himself, thus violating a clause in the definition. Yet it is made clear in his first extended speech after the incident that he has done so to avoid what, to him, are even greater sufferings:

If I had sight, I know not with what eyes I could ever face my father among the dead, or my wretched mother. Do you think the sight of my children would be a joy for me to see, born as they were to me?...When I uncovered such a stain on me, could I look with steady eyes upon the people? No! No! And if there were a way to block the spring of hearing, I would not forbear to lock up wholly this my wretched body. I should be blind and deaf--for it is sweet when thought can dwell outside our evils. (1371-76 & 1385-91)

He has not, then, inflicted this pain on himself for its own sake, but for the sake of avoiding pain which, to him, would have been worse.
My essential claim, then, is that Oedipus' fall does not result from some error or flaw on his part, although he does have some imperfections. These imperfections only serve to make him easier to identify with, as one who is "like us" in that he has limitations. Oedipus' destruction results from his resolute pursuit of the truth, for its own sake and for the sake of his duty as a ruler. I contend that, rather than viewing him as neither virtuous nor vicious, one feels great esteem for the virtues he has evidenced in the course of the play, even though (and in part because) these virtues have led to his demise. For it is easy to espouse certain virtues, and quite hard to uphold them when the price is great.

I will admit that the above interpretation of Oedipus Rex is rendered controversial because of the ambiguous nature of the actions which occur before the play begins. Such is not the case, however, with the action and motives of Antigone in Sophocles' play of that name. There has been some controversy as to whose tragedy it is. Aristotle thought it was Creon's. Indeed, Creon fits his formula of an intermediate man brought low by an error in judgment. I believe Creon is a focus of the tragedy, but not the main one. We identify far more with Antigone's struggle than with Creon's. This is in part because "the whole city" is characterized as sympathizing with Antigone. Haemon reports their opinions thusly:

"No woman ever" they say, "so little merited a cruel fate. None was ever doomed to a shameful death for deeds so noble as here...Does not so pious an act deserve golden praise?"
Furthermore, the reader garners the distinct impression that Creon is being somewhat arbitrary in his adherence to his command. It must be remembered that Creon only came to power as a result of the deaths of the two sons of Oedipus. He is somewhat insecure in his position, and evidently believes that he would undermine it if he relented. The problem is only worsened by the fact that Antigone is a woman. Witness Creon's bitter rejoinder to Antigone's self-defense: "Your place, then, is with the dead. If you must love, love them. While I live, no woman shall overbear me." (525-27) The shrillness of this exclamation stands in marked contrast to the subdued tone of Antigone throughout.

Antigone merely seeks to accord her brother a decent burial; such rites were thought necessary by her culture if the soul of the departed was to have rest. Creon presumes upon his role as ruler, he seeks not just earthly vengeance, but enters a realm of judgment properly assumed only by the gods.9 Another aspect of Creon's actions is relevant here: if Creon did believe himself to be justified, why did he relent, albeit when it was too late? In the final scene, before the Exodus, Creon heeds the warnings of Tiresias and agrees to free Antigone. If he (Creon) thought his actions were justified, would not quailing before Tiresias' predictions reveal an irresolute character? Tragic figures are nothing if not resolute.

If the above picture of Creon is accurate, Hegel's claim that we have a clash of equally justified but limited perspectives is questionable, as noted above.10 Furthermore, while Aristotle's
paradigm gives a good account of Creon's tragedy, it cannot adequately account for Antigone's. This latter point is sufficiently important to require at least a paragraph of explanation.

The Aristotelian definition requires that the tragic protagonist be an "intermediate personage", neither too good nor evil, and that the tragic fall must be caused by a hamartia. But what is Antigone's flaw? Are we comfortable with saying that it was an error in judgment on her part to bury her brother? Remember, she was only following long established customs for what was to count as proper behavior towards gods and men. If one believed, as she did, that her brother's soul could not find rest if left unburied, how could one say that it was incorrect for her to do so, even if burying him meant her death? Some have pointed to her treatment of Ismene as evidence of her fatal pride; yet whether she would have allowed her sister to share in her fate or not, it would not have altered her end one whit. I am arguing that, unless one is prepared to say that burying her brother was wrong, or presumptive on her part, one cannot fault her for her pride, nor call it her "tragic flaw." For she had chosen to act in deference to the value of filial piety, and it is in the service of that value that she brings about her own demise. Resoluteness in the face of adversity is not a flaw. Again, given the situation in which she found herself, she could not serve this value and yet avoid her destruction. In her resistance to the tyrannical Creon, she stands out as a paragon of virtue and remains one of the most highly esteemed figures in the
history of western literature.

The Bacchae was the last, the greatest, play of Euripides. Commentators from Nietzsche to Kitto have remarked on how, in his last play, Euripides returned to the traditional tragic form to which he had thus far done so much violence. There are no long sophistical debates, nor is the protagonist saved at the last minute with the artificial deus ex machina. The dramatic impact of many scenes, especially the crushing recognition when Agave realizes she has decapitated her own son, are incomparable. But how good of a tragedy is it, in light of the definition I have proposed?

It does initially trace out a tragic solution. Pentheus, king of Thebes, has resolved to deny the worship of Dionysus in his city. He is issued the traditional warnings for his resolve, this time by his grandfather Cadmus and, once again, by Tiresias. They are on their way to join in the Dionysiac rites, held in a place outside the city that has already attracted all of the women of Thebes, including Pentheus' own mother. Yet Pentheus remains resolved to capture Dionysus and end his worship.

And capture him he does. But Dionysus escapes, with a show of force that could cower a lesser man. Pentheus, however, is all the more enraged, and decides to lead his army against the women. Dionysus tricks him at this point into dressing up like a woman, so that he might, covertly, witness the secret Dionysian rites. It is a trick because Dionysus is luring him out there only to kill him. The trap works, and Pentheus is decapitated by his mother while she is in a frenzy. The
rest of the play concerns Agave, who at first revels in her kill (because, in her frenzy, she is under the impression that she has killed a mountain lion cub) and then, as she regains her wits, must face the terrible truth of who her victim was. As if her suffering were not enough, Dionysus banishes her for the murder. The play ends with Dionysus being totally triumphant.

Although Agave does draw our sympathy, she does not strike one as a particularly tragic figure. She is depicted as being totally under the power of Dionysus, so her choices are not her own. This leaves us with Pentheus. His development seems to follow rather closely the tragic dynamic of the earlier plays, but on closer examination there are some important differences. For one thing, his motivations for being against the worship of Dionysus are unclear. He labors under the misapprehension that such worship amounts to sexual licentiousness and debauchery, based on third-hand reports:

I happened to be away, out of the city, but reports reached me of some strange mischief here, stories of our women leaving home to frisk in mock ecstasies among the thickets on the mountain dancing in honor of the latest divinity, a certain Dionysus, whoever he may be. In their midst stand bowls brimming with wine and then, one by one, the women wander off to hidden nooks where they serve the lusts of men. Priestesses of Bacchus they claim they are, but it's really Aphrodite they adore.12

That he happens to be mistaken in this impression would be pointed to by the Aristotelian as his "error of Judgment." His "tragic flaw", as characterized by William Arrowsmith, could be said to be a lack of a sense of proportion:
...the man of amathia acts out of a kind of unteachable, ungovernable ignorance of himself and his necessities; he is prone to violence, harshness and brutality. Thus, in the eyes of the chorus, Pentheus forfeits any claim to sophia (moral wisdom) because he wantonly, violently, refuses to accept the necessity that Dionysus incarnates; he is, in other words, amathes. 13

From this point of view, Pentheus is much more like Creon than he is like Antigone.

I contend that one's response to The Bacchae is quite different from one's response to any of the other plays so far discussed, insofar as its tragic nature is concerned. This I cannot, of course, prove, and it must be left up to the reader whether he agrees or disagrees. But if he agrees, I think I can provide a good account for why this is so. The esteem that I feel for Prometheus, Oedipus and Antigone is just absent in my response to Pentheus. This demonstrates that esteem is not merely won by an individual who has an unbending will. It is also the product of our understanding of, if not agreement with, the value or values for the sake of which the protagonist suffers. One need not, for example, agree that burying your immediate family is worth dying for to understand why Antigone was willing to do so. Different times have different customs, and weigh the value of those customs differently. Yet the struggle between Antigone and Creon is sufficiently motivated for the reader to understand and accept the importance that burying her brother held for her at that time. This is sufficient for her to earn our esteem. The values which Prometheus and Oedipus suffer for are even easier to identify with; some of us might be quite willing to endure such suffering
to save the whole of mankind, or the population of an entire city.

What I have been arguing, then, is that The Bacchae is inferior as a tragedy to the other works herein discussed. The reason is that the struggle between Pentheus and Dionysus is ill-motivated, and, at best, is based on a misapprehension on Pentheus' part, a misapprehension that he takes no trouble to correct. Because the value that he serves is not made understandable to us, his willingness to risk death in the service of it does not automatically earn him our esteem.
Already in Euripides there were signs that characterization might become equally important to plot in the tragic genre. With the tragedies of William Shakespeare, these two elements became at last coequal in significance. The difference between the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles and those of Shakespeare is great enough that it is difficult to formulate a theory that can do justice to both. Walter Kaufmann, in *Tragedy and Philosophy*, remarks that it is ironic Hegel's theory is more applicable to ancient Greek tragedy than to Shakespearean, whereas Aristotle's theory fares rather better when applied to Shakespeare's plays than when applied to Sophocles.¹

I think it is an uncontroversial statement that any adequate theory of tragedy must do justice both to the ancient Greeks and to Shakespeare. In order to do so, it must avoid building into its definition any elements that are idiosyncratic to one and not the other. The definition which I am urging does just that, by refusing to be too specific as to what kinds of situations can be appropriate for tragedy, and as to what kinds of characters can be thought of as tragic.

In order to clarify the pattern of explanation I will be pursuing throughout this chapter, allow me to be a trifle pedantic once again and briefly describe how my theory might apply to *Julius Caesar*. To begin with, I view this play as the tragedy of Brutus, for Caesar himself has but a few lines, and is primarily used to symbolize a power against which Brutus rebels. So, Brutus, with whom we are led to identify, is
depicted in the process of resolutely defining himself as a defender of
the Republic by acting as one of the assassins of Caesar, and as a
usurper of state power. As a result of the situation he found himself
in (a primary element of which was his adversary, Marc Antony) his
rebellion costs him his life. Brutus did not want to die (for he was
neither a martyr nor a suicide), but death was the unavoidable result
of his acting on behalf of the individual freedoms for which the
Republic stood. The esteem that we feel for the resolute action of
this character replaces our sense of pity for his fate, and fear of
experiencing a similar one.

Such a summary statement does not pretend to do justice to all of
the subtleties of this play. It does, however, set the pattern which
further, more elaborate accounts will implicitly be following.
Tragedies of Shakespeare can have two (or more) tragic protagonists.
The most obvious examples of this are the love tragedies, Romeo and
Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra. The value that each of these
protagonists resolutely pursues is, I hope, obvious in these cases.

The going gets rougher when one approaches what have been called
the four "major" tragedies, namely, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth and
King Lear. Serious controversies have long surrounded the interpretation
of each of these works. They have also been taken to be touchstones
for the adequacy of a theory of tragedy. My discussion of these works
will hence be extended, and the interpretations offered will no doubt
be controversial. Yet they will follow essentially the same model used
to explain Greek tragedy.
If *Othello* were merely a story of blind sexual jealousy, the definition which I have proposed (see p. 95) could not be said to apply. Jealousy is not generally considered a value, but rather a vice that entails shame and humiliation. Certainly jealousy does not move one to esteem its exhibitor. If my definition can be seen to apply, I must show that 1) Othello's suspicion of Desdemona is humanly understandable, when one considers both his nature and the unique set of circumstances in which he finds himself; and 2) that some other motive besides jealousy is relevant to his killing Desdemona.

First, it is important to note the particulars of Othello's situation. When he goes to Cyprus, he is just newly married to Desdemona (in fact, their marriage went unconsummated until their very first night on the island\(^2\)). He knows very little of Desdemona, for their only previous meetings consisted mainly of the Moor relating his adventures to her and her father. There was not, therefore, a bond of trust built between them over time.

Othello also has some pre-existing grounds for doubting Desdemona. He was an alien, and a military man, and hence was totally ignorant of the thoughts and customary morality of Venetian women.\(^3\) In fact, some of the most maddening suggestions by Iago recommend that Othello accept his wife's infidelities like an Italian gentleman, hinting that such infidelity is a matter of course among Venetians (in IV, i, for example). Finally, Desdemona deceived her father about her feelings for Othello, only revealing them before the Venetian council when she agreed to their
betrothal. Surely her father's last words were to ring in Othello's ears later: "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see; she has deceived her father, and may thee." (I, iii)

On the other hand, Othello has no grounds on which to suspect Iago. Their relationship was a longstanding one, during which Iago gave the impression of being a most faithful lieutenant. Othello's opinion that Iago is "honest" is shared by everyone. Furthermore, there is no motive of which Othello is aware that would explain Iago's deception of him. The reluctance with which Iago speaks of his false "suspicions" only serves to heighten the impression that he reveals what he does only from a sense of duty to his general.

Iago's deception is simply a masterpiece of malignity. Granted, Othello was duped; but he was duped by an expert. Iago begins by innuendo and suggestion, requiring Othello to force him to utter his "suspicions" of Cassio (III, iii). Indeed, before suggesting any wrongdoing, Iago warns Othello of that green-eyed monster, jealousy! (Ibid) The effect of this warning, as Iago undoubtedly foresaw, was only to heighten Othello's fears, for his response to Iago's admonition is "O misery!" Iago's plan to have Desdemona tirelessly push for Cassio's reinstatement is similarly inspired, for when Othello isn't listening to Iago's deceptions, he is forced to hear Desdemona's indefatigable pleas on Cassio's behalf.

That Desdemona's handkerchief should fall into Iago's hands at such a crucial moment was indeed a cruel accident. Just at the point where Othello requires "ocular proof", Iago can plant the handkerchief on
Cassio and provide such a proof. It was, of course, a particularly significant handkerchief, given to Othello by his mother, with the intention that he should give it to his wife. Ironically, it came from an Egyptian charmer, who assured Othello's mother: "...while she kept it, 'twould make her amiable, and subdue my father entirely to her love, but if she lost it, or made a gift of it, my father's eye should hold her loathed."(III, iv) This does not mean, as someone has suggested, that Othello valued this handkerchief more than he did his wife. Yet, given the significance that he attached to this bit of cloth, one can better understand why he found this particular "ocular proof" so compelling.

I contend that the above considerations make it understandable to the reader why Othello would trust Iago and suspect Desdemona. However, one still balks at the thought that death is the proper punishment for such indiscretion, even if true. This is, in part, accounted for by the difference in attitude which exists between our present age and the Renaissance concerning the subject of adultery. At the time in which this play is set, adultery was considered a capital offense. Moreover, Othello's military and civil authority was being undermined by his apparent cuckoldry. Remember, he was sent to Cyprus to put down rebellion in the most troublesome province of the Venetian Empire. It is clear that he has been chosen because of the respect he can command from his subordinates.(I, iii) He is decisive, and quick to carry out his decisions in actions. These
are virtues in a military commander, and are precisely the elements in his character which work against him in this case. Once Othello resolves that Desdemona is guilty, he executes her almost immediately.

I too do not wish to suggest that Othello does not feel jealousy, or that his action is not, in part, motivated by his extreme feeling of disillusionment. Certainly the Othello of act four is a changed man, a man to whom "chaos has come." In the first scene, where he strikes Desdemona before the Duke and senators from Venice, he is in the blind rage which characterizes severely jealous men. Yet jealousy is not the only motive. After over three-quarters of a century, A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* has become the *locus classicus* on the four major tragedies. His comments on these plays are always illuminating, even given the limitations of his essentially Hegelian approach. I heartily concur with his interpretation of Othello, and would here like to quote from it at length, apropos the question of whether Othello had other motives:

No doubt the thought of another man possessing the woman he loves is intolerable to him; no doubt the sense of insult and the desire for revenge are at times most violent; and these are the feelings of jealousy proper. But these are not the chief or deepest source of Othello's suffering. It is the wreck of his faith and his love. It is the feeling "If she be false, oh then Heaven mocks itself;" the feeling "O Iago, the pity of it Iago!"; the feeling "But there, where I have garnered up my heart, where either I must live, or bear no life; the fountain from which my current runs, or else dries up--to be discarded thence..."

Desdemona's apparent betrayal is an assault on all that Othello holds dear. It is a sacrilege which threatens the heavens themselves, at
least in Othello's view. It threatens his deepest ideals. This is not mere jealousy.

The Othello of act five is a changed man: he is not merely in the grip of passion. As governor of the island, it was his right alone to judge in capital offenses. He also acts as dutiful executioner. To quote Bradley again:

The Othello who enters the bedchamber with the words "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul..." is not the man of the fourth act. The deed he is bound to do is no murder, but a sacrifice. He is to save Desdemona from herself, not in hate but in honor: in honor and in love.6

I heartily endorse Bradley's interpretation. In the end, it is Othello's sense of honor that compels him to do the deed, in spite of his reluctance:

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men...
O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade justice to break her sword. ...I must weep, but they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly, it strikes where it doth love.(V, ii)

He was but the too-honorable minion of justice. I cannot help but think that this was what he meant in his final soliloquy, when he claims to have loved "...not wisely, but too well."(Ibid) Too well I take to mean too honorably, and this indeed would be an accurate description of how he evidenced his love.

The case of Hamlet is somewhat different. His destruction does not result from an action taken on the basis of deceptive information. Rather, his demise, as well as that of Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes and
Hamlet's mother, result from Hamlet's failure to exact revenge in time to avoid catastrophe. Most critics castigate Hamlet for this failure, describing him as "will-less" or "vacillating." Their case is substantiated by Hamlet's own berating of himself. There are a number of versions of this approach, of which I will consider three.

I have already briefly discussed Hegel's view of Hamlet in the section where I outlined that philosopher's theory (chapter II, section B). Hegel describes Hamlet as overreflective, and hence as ill-prepared to meet his crisis:

But we must remember that Hamlet is not a strongly practical figure, rather a finely strung one, with emotions held in persistent reserve; a nature which finds it difficult to tear itself from its internal harmony; melancholy, too, prone to subtleties, hypochondriacal, with emotions deeply rooted. For this reason, it is obvious that he is prima facie indisposed to prompt action.7

On this view, the cause of the hero's delay is irresolution; and the cause of this irresolution is excessive reflectiveness. Hence the passage quoted above (on p. 68) where Hegel contends that Hamlet's "noble soul is not steeled to this kind of energetic activity", and it is primarily for this reason that he is "bandied from pillar to post, (until) finally through his own procrastination and the external course of events, (he) meets his own doom." It appears that both Schlegel and Coleridge agreed with Hegel in this regard.8

A second, somewhat more charitable, approach to Hamlet's plight is offered by A. C. Bradley. He argues that Hamlet was "a man who at any other time and in any other circumstances than those presented
Bradley contends that "the cause (of Hamlet's irresolution) was not directly or mainly an habitual excess of reflectiveness. The direct cause was a state of mind quite abnormal and induced by special circumstances—a state of profound melancholy." These are easily the two most popular approaches to explaining Hamlet's failure.

A third, purely psychological approach to this problem was offered by Ernest Jones, and has attained a great deal of currency. As a disciple of Sigmund Freud, Jones viewed Hamlet's hesitation as being caused by his Oedipus complex, which led him to subconsciously identify with his uncle. Jones' interpretation contends that the reasons Hamlet gives for delaying are "mere rationalizations", which are merely a smoke screen to cover the real explanation. I will return to this claim shortly.

My major difficulty with the first two approaches outlined above is that neither seems to ring true of the Hamlet which Shakespeare portrays. Both seem to point to a kind of paralysis, an inability to act which results either from a perennial inclination to reflectiveness or a temporary condition of melancholy. But he is constantly taking decisive action. He concocts the player's scene to test the ghost's veracity. He dispatches a spying Polonius, taking him for the King, and expresses little remorse at the mistake. He changes the royal commission so that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern would go to their deaths. Indeed, he only returns to Denmark
because he had impetuously boarded the pirate ship which attacked his vessel. His does seem to be a soul "steeled to energetic activity."

Secondly, it is difficult to understand how we could be led to esteem so highly a character whose "overreflectiveness" or "melancholy" led to the deaths of so many people; and Hamlet is one of the most highly esteemed of Shakespeare's characters. One does not wholeheartedly agree with Hamlet's self-deprecations; when he announces: "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" (II, ii), or "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all, and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought." (III, i) I, for one, cannot go along with him.

The Freudian interpretation requires me to take a somewhat different tack. If Hamlet's action was arrested by the described Oedipal misgivings, we would not be moved to esteem him in that regard. But there is a deeper point that can be made, a methodological one. Freudian interpretations of literature always try to read into the text the possible subconscious forces and implications of the incidents described. It is hard to place a viable limit on what meanings can be "read into" a work in this manner. I contend that, while certain Freudian insights can be helpful in the interpretation of a text, it is best to attempt a coherent reading of it that takes the utterances at face value. If this is impossible, it is then appropriate to attempt a "depth" reading which draws on the
subconscious.

How, then, do I explain his fatal delay? Well, for him to wait until he confirmed the ghost's allegations by the Player's scene was only reasonable. The spirit providing these revelations could be evil rather than good. Even Hegel admits as much. So, Hamlet calling himself a "rogue and peasant slave" for not acting before the Player's scene is clearly an instance of his being too self-critical.

Once he has this confirmation, though, it is reasonable to expect him to act with dispatch. This is why his failure to kill the King in the chapel scene strikes many critics as odd. The King himself, while praying, acknowledges that he cannot hope for forgiveness, while he is still in possession of the fruits of his sin, the crown and his queen. After this soliloquy, Hamlet arrives on the scene and it is unclear whether he has heard the King's prayer. Though he has a clear opportunity to kill the King there in the chapel, he refrains, saying:

A villain kills my father, and for that I, his sole son, do this same villain send to heaven. Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge...And how his audit stands who knows save heaven...And am I then revenged, to take him in the purging of his soul, when he is fit and seasoned for his passage? No!(III, iii)

For some reason, this justification has been treated as obviously false by some critics. Jones thought it so transparent as to be an obvious case of rationalization for Hamlet's unconscious
identification with the King. Others remark that Shakespeare usually steers clear of Christian dogma, so that any such justification should be taken ironically, and not literally. I believe that this theological consideration was indeed Hamlet's reason for hesitating, and that, given the values he sought to uphold in the situation, it was, to him, a very good reason.

To begin with, one must recall the terrifying allusions the ghost makes to its sufferings:

I am thy father's spirit, doomed for a certain time to walk the night, and for the day confined to fast in fires, til the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison house, I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make stars start from their spheres, thy knotted and combed locks to part, and each particular hair to stand on end, like the quills upon the fearful porpentine. (I, v)

One must also remember that the main reason old Hamlet himself gave for having to undergo such tortures was that he was killed unsuspectingly, without ever having the opportunity of making a reconciliation with God: "Thus was I ... cut off even in the blossom of my sin, unhoused, disappointed, unaned, no reckoning made, but sent to my account with all my imperfections upon my head." (Ibid) To "set the times right", Hamlet felt it attendant upon him to exact an Old Testament-style 'eye for an eye' type of revenge, believing that this alone could restore the justice which his dead father demanded. We might think it presumptuous on Hamlet's
part to attempt to exact both divine and human justice, but it is
understandable, especially considering his character and background.

Hamlet was a thirty year old student of theology. Of all of
Shakespeare's major protagonists, he takes theological matters the
most seriously. He clearly believes in the existence of an immortal
soul, the main reason why he refrains from killing himself, in the
famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, is his dread of what the
afterlife might hold:

> Who would bear the whips and scorns of time...when he
> himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?...
> But that the dread of something after death...makes us
> rather bear those ills we have than fly to others we
> know not of? (III, i)

It is this belief in the afterlife, coupled with the terrifying
thoughts of his father's sufferings, that allows us to identify with
Hamlet in his attempt to send Claudius to Hell.

His delay was, of course, fatal to him and many others. He has
missed his opportunity. When, in the very next scene, Hamlet thinks
the King is spying on him and his mother, he mistakenly kills
Polonius behind the Arras. In doing so, Hamlet thinks he is
fulfilling the pledge he made in the chapel, to wait until Claudius
is "about some act that has no relish of salvation in it. Then trip
him, that his heels may kick at heaven, and that his soul may be as
damn'd and black as hell, whereto it goes." (III, iii) An alarmed
Claudius immediately ships Hamlet off to England. He never again has
a clear opportunity. He has lost his chance, and the stage is set for
the carnage that will result. By act four, we agree with Hamlet when he says:

How all occasions do inform against me, and spur my dull revenge! Now whether it be beastly oblivion, or some craven scruple of thinking too precisely on th' event...I do not know why yet I live to say "This thing's to do." (IV, iv)

Hamlet is hardly in a bestial oblivion, and his scruple was not craven, but he did think too precisely about exacting his revenge. All he had to do to restore the state was to kill Claudius' body. He could have left his soul to God.

But then his story would not have been tragic. Since it is, we see Hamlet, with whom we are clearly led to identify, resolutely defining himself as a minister of justice. As such, he refrains from killing the King in the chapel because he desired a complete revenge, in this life and the next. As a result of his delay, he is inevitably destroyed, along with virtually every other major figure in this play. Yet we avert feeling a sense of total waste in our esteem for the "noble soul" of Hamlet, who was willing to risk death to exact justice, as he understood it.

Macbeth's motives were somewhat baser than Hamlet's. The ambition which led him to murder the King is thought by some Aristotelians to clearly be a vice, and they have hence argued that Macbeth does not qualify as a tragic figure. I contend that this is too fine a distinction to build into one's definition of tragedy. Ambition is taken to be a strength, when pursued to a certain degree. Furthermore,
the immorality of Macbeth's usurpation is at least controversial. If one, e.g., adopts a Machiavellian attitude towards such matters, Macbeth is perfectly justified in exercising his might to gain the throne. A much simpler theory would be one that refrained from basing its decisions on whether a work is tragic upon such finely grained, and perhaps parochial, moral judgments.

However, I do contend that *Macbeth* is not a tragedy, or at least not a very good one. Macbeth fails to attain tragic status, not because his actions were too immoral, but because he himself was not authentic and resolute in pursuing them. Initially, it appears that Macbeth's greatest fear is of earthly retribution:

> If th' assassination could trammel up the consequence, and catch with his surcease, success; that but this blow might be the be-all and end-all--here, but here, upon this bank and shoal of time, we'd jump the life to come. But in these cases we still have judgment here, that we but teach bloody instructions, which, being taught, return to plague the inventor.13

Yet eventually it is Macbeth's own conscience, tormenting him with lack of sleep and apparitions, that reveals his guilt and exposes him to earthly justice.

> It is clear from Macbeth's startled reaction to the witches' prophecies that he had previously considered killing Duncan.14 Yet he comes away from that incident hoping that he will not have to act to realize his future: "If chance will have me King, why, chance may crown me, without my stir." (I, iii) But when Duncan announces that the succession will fall upon his young son Malcolm, Macbeth
knows that this is highly improbable. Yet he still quails before the deed. Lady Macbeth reveals that this is not surprising, given her understanding of his character. Upon receiving the letter in which Macbeth tells her of the prophecies, she remarks: "Thou wouldst be great; art not without ambition, but without the illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly, that wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false, and yet wouldst wrongly win." (I, v) Here Macbeth's contradictory desires begin to emerge more clearly.

There is no doubt that Lady MacBeth's urgings were the ultimate efficient cause of her husband's act. She herself would have killed the King, had he not looked like her father. Her discussion with Macbeth at the crucial time when he is wavering seals Duncan's fate. He comes to her ready to call off the plan, declaring that "I dare do all that becomes a man; who dares to more is none." (I, vii) She chides him for his cowardice, in one of the most unforgettable and frightening soliloquies in Shakespeare:

> What beast was it then that made you break this enterprise to me?...I have given suck, and know how tender it is to love the baby that milks me; I would, while it was smiling in my face, have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums and dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you have done to this. (Ibid)

Her response contributed to his resolve. Yet this does not absolve him of responsibility for the deed.

Lady Macbeth is a focus of this play, but a minor one when compared to Macbeth himself. As a comparison, consider Electra in
the *Cresteia* of Aeschylus. Orestes shrinks from the act of matricide, and it is only the constant urgings of Electra (and, secondarily, of the chorus) that prick him on to exact revenge. When the deed is avenged by the Furies, however, it is Orestes alone who bears the brunt. It is also he alone who must stand trial in the *Eumenides*, with Electra relegated to a secondary role.

The role of the witches' prophecies can also be overrated. To foretell the future is not to force an individual to do anything. As medieval thinkers tried to show with regards to God's perfect foreknowledge, the individual is still free. God merely knows what choice will be freely made. Furthermore, Macbeth himself did not treat the initial prophecies as inevitable. The witches also claimed that Macbeth would found no dynasty, and that it would be Banquo who would found a line of Kings. Macbeth tries to thwart that prophecy by killing Banquo and attempting to kill Banquo's son. He is moved to this further crime by his belief that his sacrifice would not be worthwhile if his family does not inherit the throne.

When the witches appear later on, Macbeth has sought them out. Through conjuring apparitions, they give him the illusion of invulnerability. He is told to fear "none of woman born", and that his safety is secure until "Great Birnan wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come against him." (IV, i) With his fear of earthly retribution allayed, it was no doubt easier for him to proceed with perhaps his most heinous crime, the murder of Lady Macduff and her
The central interest in the play, however, is not Macbeth's struggle with hostile forces from without, but rather with his own conscience within. He is stricken immediately after killing Duncan with the most heartfelt remorse. He is so dazed that he forgets to plant the daggers on the grooms, but brings them back bloody to his own chambers. Lady MacBeth must return and plant them; he is too obsessed with the enormity of his crime, at least in his eyes. He is horrified that he could not say "Amen" to a blessing. He is convinced that he heard a voice crying "Sleep no more! to all the house; Glamis hath murdered sleep and therefore...Macbeth shall sleep no more!" (II, ii)

This incident, coupled with his hallucination of the famous dagger right before Duncan's murder, and his vision of Banquo's ghost, create a send of his profound guilt. These hallucinations are reminiscent of Richard III's visions on the night before the battle which would end in his demise. For one thing, unlike the ghost in Hamlet, Macbeth's visions are seen only by him. I contend that these are the products of Macbeth's inner torments, which resulted from his belief that what he did was wrong.

He exhibits a schizophrenic attitude towards his actions throughout. Part of his immediate reaction to the first set of prophecies is the following: "My thought, whose murder is yet but fantastical, shakes so my single state of man that function is
smother'd in surmise, and nothing is but what is not." (I, iii)
The theme of "nothing is but what is not" runs throughout the course of the play. It evidences the intense warfare raging within Macbeth's breast. I've already cited his hesitation at murder, and how Lady MacBeth turns it on him to taunt his masculinity. Similar reversals occur again and again. It is not primarily by fear of earthly retribution that he is tortured, but by his own attitude towards what he had done.

The middle acts evidence the war going on within himself. Here are but two examples of his self-rebuke:

How is it with me, when every noise appals me? What hands are here? Hah! They pluck out my eyes. Will all great Neptune's blood wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red. (II, ii)

To know my deed, 'twere best not to know myself. (Ibid)

As Macbeth goes deeper into his violent course, this war within him relents. He sees no more visions and hears no more voices after he orders the murder of Macduff's family. He has been rendered virtually insensitive by the enormity of his crimes.

The extent of his corruption can perhaps best be evidenced by his reaction to the news that his wife is dead. Lady Macbeth is a victim of similar feelings of guilt, to such an extent that they drive her mad. Her bloodcurdling "Out, out damned spot!" shows how far she has come from her initial attitude towards the murder, when she says to Macbeth: "Retire we to our chamber. A little water
clears us of this deed. How easy it is then!" (II, ii) It was hardly that easy, and when Seyton informs Macbeth of his wife's demise, Macbeth utters the most nihilistic soliloquy in all of Shakespeare:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow creeps in the petty pace from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time; and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (V, v)

Schopenhauer suggested that this passage is a clear statement of Shakespeare's real views, which also capture the essence of tragedy. I beg to differ. The above is Macbeth's final soliloquy. It does evidence the total disintegration of his personality, but this is not the characteristic condition of Shakespearean tragic protagonists. It is true that Macbeth is ultimately killed by Macduff, and that he goes to his end courageously. But the above speech reveals that he has already been devastated by the war within himself. The man who began the play as the most trustworthy and brave Thane in Scotland is virtually unrecognizable. The significance of such self-division cannot be missed by the sensitive appreciator.

Yet Macbeth himself never arrives at such a self-conscious awareness. There is no scene where he shows that he has learned fundamental things through his suffering. There is little solace in this play. Macbeth fails to be a tragic figure because he is not
authentically resolute, but is rather fundamentally at war within himself. While I do pity him, and sense that great potential has been wasted, that pity is not supplanted by a sense of esteem for his character. As such, though there are many similarities between Macbeth and other works I have called tragic, it does not qualify for that appellation, in light of my proposed definition.

One might get the mistaken impression from the foregoing account of Macbeth that Richard III would qualify as a tragic protagonist in my view. For Richard did not experience the war within himself that Macbeth did, since Richard virtually revelled in his evil deeds. Richard does seem to be a character with whom one can identify, even though his fate is the most clearly deserved of any of Shakespeare's major protagonists. This is a violation of one of the prolonged conditions of my definition, but I think even deeper reasons can be given for Richard's failure to attain tragic status.

Richard III does not affirm any positive value. In making evil his good, he is consistently shown to act in such a way as to violate the people around him to the highest degree possible. From seducing Anne at the bier of her dead husband (whom Richard himself had murdered) to humiliating Buckingham before the throne, Richard derives his most delicious pleasures from violating the values which his victims hold the dearest. Even ambition does not seem to be his motive, for when he comes to power, he has no idea what to do with it, nor does he act in such a way that he will be secure on the throne.
(e.g., he alienates his closest associates, Buckingham, Rivers and Grey).

Richard is destroyed by the nature of his project. He needn't have been situated in the way he was; to self-consciously set out to violate the people around you as greatly as you can will lead to your destruction no matter what the situation. As I have contended that tragic destruction must be the result of a project which proves fatal because of the situation as much as the goal, Richard III's destruction is not tragic. I will discuss another example of a similarly self-destructive project in the account of Camus' *Caligula* offered in a subsequent chapter.

*King Lear* provides an interesting test case for the present theory. There is a fundamental disanalogy between King Lear and the other protagonists that I have thus far argued are tragic. The action which leads to Lear's destruction is taken in the very first scene. From that point on, Lear is essentially passive, as his fortunes continue on the downward path to his ultimate death. Furthermore, the action is not an instance of resolutely pursuing a value, but rather results from the petulant whim of a man seeking flattery, a man lost in the ideals of an earlier, feudal age.

If the conditions offered in the proposed honorific definition were treated as necessary, then Lear would automatically not be a tragic protagonist, in light of the above disanalogy. Yet I wish to argue that Lear is sufficiently like less controversial examples
of tragic protagonists to qualify for this appellation. The absence of any one of the conditions offered in the proposed theory is at best only a prima facie reason for not including a work in the denotation of the concept "tragedy", and here is an example where one such prima facie reason is overruled.

Lear's initial action was, of course, his division of his kingdom on the basis of which one of his daughters could render him the highest praise. Lear's disinheritance of Cordelia clearly comes off as a callous act. The various reactions to it demonstrate its foolishness, with Kent's perhaps being the most striking: "...be Kent unmannerly, when Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man? Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak when power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound, when majesty falls to folly." Even Goneril remarks that "'Tis the infirmity of his age, yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself."

For whatever reason, Lear had made a foolish choice. It is a mistake, pure and simple, but this mistake need not have had such disastrous results. Here is where the similarities with other tragedies begin to emerge. It is because of the particular situation that Lear was in that his mistake proved so costly. Were it not for the extreme malignity of his other two daughters, Lear's suffering would not have been so immense. This dialectical interaction of project and situation is one of the conditions proposed by the present theory.
There is no element of what is usually called nobility in Lear's action; at best it is petulant, and at worst it is downright inhuman and unfeeling. Yet one is never tempted to conclude that Lear deserved the degree of suffering which resulted. One would hesitate to wish such suffering on Richard III. Witnessing the abuse, madness, attempted murder of himself and murder of his dearest daughter, only the most self-righteous of us could disagree that Lear is "a man more sinned against than sinning." (Lear's own words, III, ii) Aristotle's canons are particularly appropriate to this play, for Lear's suffering is undeserved (at least in its degree), and results not from vice and depravity on his part, but from a flaw in his character and/or a mistaken judgment.

In many ways, King Lear is Shakespeare's darkest play. The protagonist suffers as much as any character in literature. The subplot of Glouster and his sons precludes our writing off Goneril and Regan as horrible exceptions to the general order. This play is peopled with an unrivaled cast of dastardly villains, who commit the most despicable of acts. From the blinding of Glouster to the murder of innocent Cordelia, the depiction of the injustice in this world is unrelenting. We gain a sense that evil is quite pervasive, and share to an extent in Lear's chagrin at contemplating such a fact. One who takes tragedy to be essentially pessimistic could well point to these facets of the play in defense of his claim.

Certainly the goodness of some of the characters depicted serve to somewhat balance this bleak picture. The unswerving devotion of
Kent, the durable love of Cordelia; the biting wit of the fool, designed as it was to instruct Lear, not hurt him; Edgar's efforts to save his father; all these elements serve to ameliorate the pessimistic portrait I have sketched above. On balance, however, these secondary characters would alone prove insufficient to alleviate a profoundly pessimistic impression.

Lear does remain the center of the drama, even though he takes little action after the first scene. Much of the greatness of the work turns importantly on the effects that Lear's betrayal by Goneril and Regan have on him. These effects go beyond the bounds of the tragic nature of the work, and are somewhat akin to the effects of Oedipus' sufferings, which are represented in Oedipus at Colonus. Specifically, the reconciliation provided in these works is, in part, created by the character development that results from the sufferings of the protagonist. This theme of learning through suffering, what the Greeks call pathe mathos, gives one the sense that Lear's suffering is not pointless.

I contend that the affirmation of life in spite of everything which emerges from King Lear is, in part, the result of the changes that occur in Lear from the beginning of the play to its end. Specifically, it is encouraging to see the vain, boisterous, insecure but terrifying Lear of the first two acts learn the importance of love, as evidenced by his falling on his knees when united with Cordelia, and his uttering the words:
No, no, no, no! Come let's away to prison: we two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage. When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down and ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live, and pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh...(V, iii)

Here we see a man who has learned how to apologize, who values true love higher than any appearance (remember how important his hundred knight retinue was to him in act two?), and who is willing to suffer great indignities for it. Even in the face of the degree to which he has suffered, Lear was prepared at the very end to issue this pleading pledge: "This feather stirs; she lives! If it be so, it is a chance which redeems all sorrows that ever I have felt."(V, iii)

Hence, though Lear's original action was a mistake, which served no value, the audience does end up esteeming Lear instead of pitying him. This esteem is closely bound up with the development which Lear's character undergoes as a result of his suffering. I contend that this additional element of reconciliation, when coupled with the striking similarities between Lear and previously discussed tragic protagonists, qualifies King Lear as a tragedy, in spite of the noted disanalogy.

To conclude this section, let me make some general comments that are generated by the above discussion of King Lear. The approach which I have taken to tragedy suggests that the term admits of degrees, i.e., that some works are more tragic than others. Generally speaking, a work which has all of the features that the present definition claims are standard of tragedies will, ceteris paribus, be more tragic
than a work which lacks one of these features. It is important to note, also, that "tragedy" is but one explanatory concept that can be applied to such works. A work can fall under more than one concept, although being included in one category seems to rule out being included in certain others.

It follows from this that a theory of tragedy need not claim to provide an explanation for all of the elements present in a work which is included in its definition. I have previously remarked that the significance of ancient Greek trilogies spills over the explanatory bounds of any genre theory. For example, one might contend that there is another concept relevant to such works, e.g., "Artistic Greatness." This concept, and the concept "tragedy" will presumably have some overlap. But I don't mean to identify the two. Work x could be "greater" than work y, from an artistic point of view, and still be less tragic. I think this might be said of King Lear and Othello: King Lear is less tragic than Othello, but is (undoubtedly?) a greater play. I have not argued (as some of my philosophical predecessors have) that tragedy is the greatest art form. Neither have I claimed that tragedy is the only art form which provides one with help in avoiding a nihilistic world-view. Not all life affirming works of art are tragic. But perhaps I am committed to the claim that tragedies can be the most life affirming works of art, for they convey the impression that life is worthwhile in spite of the awful fates which their protagonists must face. No writer surpassed Shakespeare in his ability to convey this impression, as I hope my accounts of the above works have underscored.
Fyodor Dostoevsky is almost universally recognized as one of the most significant writers of the modern age. Furthermore, the term "tragic" has quite often been applied to his novels and their protagonists. Finally, two of his major protagonists, Nikolai Stavrogin and Prince Myshkin provide a clear contrast between the schizophrenia that nihilism brings and the resoluteness that can have truly tragic consequences. It is for these reasons that Dostoevsky is the first author after Shakespeare that I will discuss at length.

The major novels of Dostoevsky are as voluminous and diverse as the Russia which was his passionate love. Controversy has raged for some time concerning how to best approach the explication of their content. This is why I was a bit surprised at the unquestionable certainty with which the symbolist poet and critic, Vyacheslav Ivanov, characterized Dostoevsky's vision:

What strikes us at first glance in Dostoevsky's work is the very close approximation of the novel form to the prototype of tragedy. The inner structure of his creative genius was tragic.¹

In what follows, I will outline what Ivanov takes to be the "tragic" aspect of Dostoevsky's vision. I will then take issue with his account, arguing that only one of Dostoevsky's major novels, The Idiot, is primarily a tragedy. This claim will be substantiated by contrasting the protagonist of The Idiot with the protagonist of The

 annotations
Possessed, explaining why the former is tragic while the latter is not when judged by my proposed definition of the genre.

Ivanov's theory of tragedy is, unfortunately, never systematically expressed. He speaks of "the laws of tragedy", yet is only explicit with regards to one law, "the law of epic rhythm, which exactly accords with the essential nature of tragedy, the law of the progressively gathering momentum of events."² Here he is referring to the alleged inevitability of tragic destruction, and he seems to be claiming that this is the essence of tragedy. He goes along with Aristotle on the notion of catharsis, describing it as "a liberation of the soul from the emotions stirred up by tragedy"³, and that "Fear and tormenting pity--exactly according to the Aristotelian formula--are just what Dostoevsky's muse evokes."⁴

So, it is the inevitability of the destruction of characters that calls up the "fear and tormenting pity" which is essential to tragedy. But in describing the cause of this inevitability, in his account of Crime and Punishment, Ivanov uses Hegelian-sounding language:

As soon as the Absolute has passed through the phase of being a metaphysical abstraction, and has become a mere conceptualistic phantom, the human understanding is irresistibly impelled to proclaim, as its final conclusion, that all accepted values are universally relative.

In these circumstances, it is no wonder if the personality, imprisoned in a subjectivist solitude, either yields itself to despair or falls victim to the vain-glorious notion that it is dependent upon nothing.⁵
Ivanov makes the above claim in an attempt to explain Raskolnikov's actions. This is indeed an exotic claim.

Ivanov's analysis of Dostoevsky then returns to the more concrete claim that "Dostoevsky primarily concerns himself with that transcendent sphere where God and Devil do battle over the fate of the creature--and their battlefield is in the hearts of men--here *incipit tragoedia*." He has thereby specified the primary arena in which the tragic conflict will be joined. Ivanov goes so far as to argue that the outcome of these conflicts bespeaks Dostoevsky's philosophy of life: "This train of thought leads to the conclusion that faith in God resembles a golden treasure, whose ready availability guarantees the value of the personality. If the treasure is exhausted, the personality is valueless."

Raskolnikov then on Ivanov's view was a man who was inherently good, but who had gone darkly astray by giving in to his "mad dream of asserting himself as a superman within the state." This is the "fatal flaw" which his suffering results from. His will is diseased, for, according to Ivanov's interpretation of Dostoevsky, "Faith is a sign of the good health of the will." We are rightly consoled by the ending, in which, purified by suffering, Raskolnikov returns to the good health of faith. Ivanov goes so far as to liken this ending to the great apotheosis plays of the ancient Greeks (*Eumenides*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, etc.).
Ivanov's account reminds me of the following remarks by Andre Gide:

Dostoevsky's work is dominated by these profound truths: 'God resistent the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." On the one hand, denial and surrender of the self; on the other, affirmation of the personality, the will to power. And take due note of this fact: in Dostoevsky's novels, the will to power leads inevitably to ruin.9

The overall view, then, amounts to this: the will to power is the fatal flaw of all tragic protagonists in Dostoevsky's works, for such self-affirmation is a disease of the soul. Granted, a number of Dostoevsky's protagonists do exhibit this trait, and the destruction which results is great in each case. Raskolnikov, Rogozhin, Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov are the most outstanding examples of the type of character Ivanov describes. Yet tragedies are not morality plays, and I believe that distinction is quite effectively blurred in Ivanov's approach. The supposedly "tragic" destruction of such figures is apparently designed to teach us Dostoevsky's philosophy of life, which portrays humility, faith and compassion as the major virtues, and atheism, with its resultant will to power, as a fatal flaw which must inevitably lead to immense suffering. To reduce tragedy to a mere didactic vehicle for inculcating the proper dispositions in its readers is to fail to do justice to the difference between tragedies and morality plays.

My second difficulty with Ivanov's theory is that it cannot account for the destruction of Prince Myshkin in The Idiot. The
Prince embodied precisely those virtues which Ivanov claims Dostoevsky admired, yet Myshkin suffers as inevitable and devastating a fate as any of Dostoevsky's other protagonists. Ivanov claims that Myshkin's fate is not tragic, merely quixotic: "In Myshkin is repeated the story of Don Quixote; his light falls on unyielding, sluggish, resistant matter, but proves powerless to reshape it, so that he becomes no more than a figure of comedy." I, on the contrary, consider The Idiot to be a tragedy, while I do not take the "will to power" protagonists of the other novels to be tragic. As an argument for this claim, I will now sketch an extensive contrast between the most representative of the "will to power" figures, Stavrogin, and Prince Myshkin.

Upon entering the realm of The Possessed, one finds the concepts which Gide and Ivanov proposed are clearly operative. The major protagonist, Nikolai Stavrogin, is one of the "superman" types, struggling with his inability to extol any virtues in the absence of a belief in God. His belief that (in Ivan's Karamazov's words) "everything is permitted" leads him into a kind of numbness where any action, whether tenderly human or brutally inhuman, leaves him equally indifferent. His own suffering, and the massive destruction which he either directly or indirectly effects, does stand as an indictment of his character.

Stavrogin is a study in contradiction. He is the epitomal example of the duality of character that Dostoevsky represents as
the inevitable result of the revolt against God. All of his atheist protagonists have such a dual nature: Raskolnikov, Ippolit, Kirilov and Ivan Karamazov are other clear examples. The fall of Stavrogin is the most crushing, and it occupies the central position in the dramatic movement of _The Possessed._

What is perhaps most disturbing about this duality is that it coexists at the conscious level, as Gide notes:

> What we find in Dostoevsky, the examples of dual existence submitted to us, how far different they are! They have no connection with the frequently observed pathological states, where a second personality is grafted upon the original, the one alternating with the other, so that ere long we have two distinct personalities sharing the one fleshly tenement. (Gide cites Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as an example.)

> But in Dostoevsky the most disconcerting feature is the simultaneity of such phenomena, and the fact that each character never relinquishes consciousness of his dual personality with its inconsistencies.11

What results from this duality is a war of self against self, which appears to be the inevitable outcome of declaring war against God.

We have seen an earlier instance of a character at war with himself, in the above account of _Macbeth._ Macbeth warred on himself by doing actions which he believed were wrong, thinking he could overcome his conscience. Stavrogin's dilemma is more extreme: he questions whether anything is evil. He recognizes that this is a great danger to himself, as he reveals to the monk Tikhon:

> I formulated to myself in so many words that I neither know nor feel what evil is. It wasn't simply that I had lost the feeling of good and evil, but that I felt that there was no such thing as good and evil (I liked that); that it was all a convention; that I could be free of all convention; but that if I ever attained that freedom, I'd be lost.12
The war within himself which this conviction caused is clearly evidenced in Stavrogin's actions. His first appearances in the society of his home town make a quite favorable impression, contrary to the rumors which had preceded his return. Yet he insists on alienating this affection by ludicrously biting the ear of a local official. He refuses to shoot at an inferior opponent in a duel, but then uses the opportunity to totally disgrace the man. He seeks to confess his destruction of an innocent twelve-year-old girl, yet he produces a document which Tikhon the holy man characterized as follows:

You want hatred from them (the readers of the document) so you can answer them with even greater hatred. Certain passages of your narrative are emphasized by the way you present them; you seem to admire your attitude and use every detail to impress the reader with how insensitive and shameless you are...13

Even his confession is a kind of self-justification and aggrandizement.

Stavrogin is a man desperately in search of a purpose. He even tries to find one by marrying the most pitiable wretch he knew, the crippled Maria Lebyatkin. He very gallantly makes his marriage public, only to undergo another change of heart and pay Fedka the convict to kill his wife and father-in-law. He apparently does this to be free to marry Liza Drozdov, but he eventually spurns her, inadvertently sending her to her death in a riot outside of the Lebyatkin house. He finally entertains the thought of running off with Dasha, the ward of his mother, and the former fiancée of his teacher, Stephan Verkhovensky.
Stavrogin's description of himself in his final letter to Dasha reveals the depth of his hopelessness:

I've tried my strength in everything. You advised me to do that "to get to know myself." Testing it for myself, it seemed limitless to me, just as it had earlier in my life. ...But what was I to apply my strength to? That I could never see, and I still don't see it to this day...Today, as before, I'm still capable of wishing to do something decent and I derive some pleasure from this; but the next moment I want to do evil things and that also gives me pleasure. But neither of these wishes is strong enough to direct me: it is possible to cross a river on a log, but not on a splinter. I tell you all this so you won't think I'm leaving for Uri with any hope.14

Stavrogin's dilemma reminds me of the biblical injunction that it is impossible to serve two masters. He is so split that he cannot follow either path with conviction.

I agree with Ivanov that the plight of atheistic characters in Dostoevsky's novels does argue persuasively for the importance of faith. In Gide's words:

Each of his novels is in its way a demonstration, I might even say a speech for the defense, or better still, a sermon. And if I dared find in this wonderful artist any grounds for reproach, I might suggest that he sought to prove only too well.15

I have contended that it is not the proper function of tragedy to argue for any set of moral claims. The catharsis that one experiences from a tragedy is not the satisfaction at being taught a moral lesson. If our attitude toward a protagonist is one of unequivocal moral condemnation, that protagonist thereby forfeits any claim to being tragic. Essential to achieving catharsis is the development of esteem for a protagonist. Stavrogin never earns this esteem, for he is
depicted as a kind of monster, as evidenced by the effects he has on all with whom he comes in contact.

Stavrogin seems to adopt attitudes just for the sake of trying them out, without having any conviction in any of them. He influences Shatov with a spirited defense of nationalism, but also infects Shatov with his dualistic nature. Shatov wants to believe in God, but cannot. He is assassinated for refusing to cooperate with a revolutionary group, in part because of his belief in nationalism. Though Stavrogin makes a feeble attempt to warn Shatov, Stavrogin has no real feeling for the man, and cold-bloodedly leaves him to his fate.

Stavrogin also advocated revolution at some point, and inspired Peter Verkhovensky and others to form a revolutionary cell. Yet Stavrogin will not take an active part in their anarchistic activities, until finally Peter is reduced to being a puppet without a master. Kirilov is particularly sympathetic to Stavrogin's attack on God, and concocts the pathetic idea that he could be a kind of messiah, who leads men to independence from God by killing himself. In this, he was following a weird kind of logic, which held that belief in God was invented as a protection against suicide, and that, in the absence of this fiction, suicide was inevitable. Add to these casualties the unfortunate women who dared to love him and one witnesses a swath of destruction caused by Stavrogin that is unparalleled in any of the major novels. The cumulative effect is a massive indictment of Stavrogin's way of life.
Was any major tragic figure ever so destructive? Do we have analogous responses to Oedipus, Antigone, Othello, Hamlet or King Lear? The answer is an unequivocal no. When Stavrogin finally hangs himself one does feel that his end is the inevitable result of what went before. But inevitability alone is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for tragedy. Dostoevsky represents Stavrogin's destruction as the unavoidable result of the war within himself. Stavrogin's rejection of God, and subsequent will to power, is the cause of this war, and one of the consistent truths which emerge from the major novels is that such will to power does inevitably lead to ruin. Here again, however, I must agree with Gide. The Possessed has the ring of a sermon, a demonstration in concrete that the wages of sin (in this case, the sin of pride in rejecting God) is death. As such, I contend that this work is more like a medieval morality play than like a tragedy.

If Stavrogin is the epitomal example of an individual who rejects the Christian virtues of faith, humility and compassion, Prince Myshkin is the epitomal example of one who embraces them. Dostoevsky's own remarks suggest that he sought to portray an idealized Christian. He suggested that there were three types of love in the novel: Rogozhin's love was based on passion, Ganya's was derived from his vanity, and the Prince exemplified Christian love. What is truly unique about The Idiot is that it depicts the swath of destruction that a character acting from Christian love can leave in his wake.
Unlike the "will to power" protagonists discussed above, Myshkin never questions the fundamental rightness of the Christian virtues of faith, humility and compassion. As Dostoevsky notes, the idiot's chief social conviction is his naïvely optimistic belief in the effectiveness of the individual act of charity, and that all social ills can be overcome by individual endeavor. Ivanov characterizes the prince's sufferings as quixotic, suggesting that Myshkin's innocent good will was impotent:

In Myshkin is repeated the story of Don Quixote; his light falls on unyielding, sluggish matter, but proves powerless to reshape it, so that he becomes no more than a figure of comedy.

I, on the contrary, contend that The Idiot is Dostoevsky's one true novel-tragedy.

The model for the tragic protagonist that I have been urging requires that such a character resolutely pursue some project involving a value (or values) which that figure authentically embraces. The hallmark of such authenticity is a consistency of action, which always reflects the hierarchy of values of the individual in question. Myshkin's actions exhibit this kind of consistency, for he is pictured throughout as ruled by his humble and compassionate nature.

Gide's description of Myshkin's nature is incisive. He likens Myshkin's state, at the beginning of The Idiot, to the regenerated Raskolnikov in the epilogue of Crime and Punishment:
"He was simply feeling. Life had stepped into the place of feeling." This is the frame of mind in which we find Prince Myshkin at the beginning of The Idiot, a frame of mind which could be, and in Dostoevsky's eyes doubtless was, the Christian state par excellence. There is a region deeper still, where passion exists not. This is the region that resurrection, rebirth in Christ's word enables us to reach, as Raskolnikov reached it. In this region Myshkin lives and moves.

Yet, the consequences of Myshkin's actions are devastating, both to himself and to the people closest to him. Though not so destructive as Stavrogin, Myshkin's career demonstrated that humility and compassion are not guarantees of happiness in this life.

An illustration of the effect of Myshkin's compassion can be found in his relationship with Ippolit, a consumptive nihilist. Ippolit is prepared for death when Myshkin meets him, but Myshkin succeeds in rekindling some hope in the life of the nihilist. He has Ippolit come and live with him, and for most of the rest of the novel the nihilist provides insightful commentary on, and foreshadowing of, the course of events. Yet Ippolit's own sufferings are merely heightened and extended. Ippolit concocts a grandiose scheme of going out in style, by reading his manifesto and then blowing his brains out. His attempt fails, however, and the episode merely leaves him feeling more degraded. He dies of consumption anyway, having been rendered more bitter and cynical by the extension of his life.

The Idiot is primarily the story of a four-cornered love entanglement between Prince Myshkin, Aglaya Epanchin, Nastasia
Fillipovna and Parfyon Rogozhin. The Prince develops a passion, of sorts, for Aglaya, for she is strong, outspoken, judgmental and yet wildly naive. Throughout, the reader is mostly sympathetic to Aglaya, and hopes that the Prince will opt for her love.

Nastasia Fillopovna seems to haunt the idiot's life. In the very first scene he overhears Rogozhin discussing how Nastasia had destroyed his life. When he arrives at the Epanchin's, he sees Nastasia's picture, for Ganya, Aglaya's brother, is her fiancé. When he finally meets this woman it is in the most outrageous of circumstances. Rogozhin has bid 100,000 rubles for Nastasia's hand in marriage. Nastasia takes this money and throws it into the fire; she is testing Ganya, whom she believes is marrying her for her dowry (put up by a rich guardian who had forced her to be his mistress). She tells Ganya that the money is his if he will stoop to take it from the fire. He does not, for his pride is too great, though he faints from the extent of his effort.

The Prince can take no more of this; he breaks in, declaring that Nastasia is innocent and that he loves her. At first she heralds him as the man of her dreams, but then, already convinced that she would destroy him, she leaves with Rogozhin. A terrifying aspect of this work is that both Nastasia and Myshkin knew they would be fatal to one another. Myshkin followed Nastasia, and even lived with her for awhile. Yet he returned to Aglaya, for he fairly quickly realized the nature of his love for Nastasia. He confided in Aglaya: "O,
I loved her (Nastasia), I loved her very much—but later—later—later she guessed everything." "What did she guess? (Aglaya inquired) That I only pitied her, but that I—I didn't love her any more." In the exchange that follows this revelation, the tragic blueprint for the rest of the novel is traced:

God knows, Aglaya, I'd gladly give my life to restore her peace of mind and make her happy. But I cannot love her anymore—and she knows it.
Then sacrifice yourself! (Aglaya replied) It's the sort of thing that becomes you so well!...You must, it is your duty to restore her life!
I cannot sacrifice myself, although I wanted to once and perhaps I want to still. But I know for a fact that with me she will be ruined, and that's why I am leaving her.

In the final crisis, however, Myshkin seems to have forgotten his prophetic "fact."

Nastasia vacillates between Rogozhin and the Prince. She is convinced that Rogozhin, a brutal and eerie fellow, is all that she deserves. Like Grushenka in The Brothers Karamazov, Nastasia considers herself a fallen woman for having to barter her favors for a roof over her head. Yet she fears Rogozhin to the depths of her being. Rogozhin is not a typical will-to-power protagonist, even though he does question God's existence. He is portrayed as a force of darkness, so black that the Prince recognizes his house without having seen it before due to the gloom of its appearance. Rogozhin is a total slave to his passions, and his one, ruling, and obsessive passion is his love for Nastasia.
Myshkin, on the other hand, is a 'pure spirit' who embraces the truth of Christianity with joy. He characterizes that truth as follows: "...the whole essence of Christianity is expressed in the whole conception of God as our Father, and of God's rejoicing in man, like a father rejoicing in his own child." He lived by this truth, treating all he met with understanding, concern and compassion. But he was inexperienced in the world, a chaste individual whose only previous experience with "love" was his compassionate interest in a crippled peasant girl who lived near the sanitarium where he spent much of his life. He was hence ill-prepared to handle the searing passions of two intense and independent women.

Gide takes Myshkin's entanglement with these two women as an example of the dualities which rip most of Dostoevsky's protagonist's asunder. But he fails to note that Myshkin's dilemma is different in kind from any of Dostoevsky's protagonists. Furthermore, there seems to be no contest between the two forces: compassion is the essence of Myshkin's character, and his passionate side is ill-developed and impotent. This is evidenced in the major climax of the novel.

Aglaya, who had been receiving the strangest letters from Nastasia that entreated the former to marry the Prince, finally arranges an interview with her rival. The Prince, hoping to avoid an explosion between the two, accompanies Aglaya to the interview. Changing her spots again, Nastasia demands that the Prince choose between her and Aglaya. Myshkin's moment of truth had come:
Both she and Aglaya stood still, as though in expectation of the Prince's decision, and both of them looked at him as though they had gone out of their minds. But he did not perhaps even realize the whole force of that challenge; indeed, he certainly did not. He only saw before him the distracted, frenzied face which, as he had once said to Aglaya, 'pierced his heart forever.' He could bear it no longer, and he turned imploringly and reproachfully to Aglaya, pointing to Nastasia Filippovna: 'How could you? She's so unhappy!' But that was all he had time to say, struck dumb by Aglaya's terrible look.

At this key moment, as he had throughout the rest of the work, Myshkin acted out of the compassion which was his trademark. Aglaya rushed out at this point, and although the Prince moved to follow her, Nastasia's fainting in his arms stopped him. He then accedes to Nastasia's need for him, and they plan to get married. But Nastasia still cannot deceive herself about the Prince's lack of passionate love for her. Unsatisfied with his pity, she leaves him waiting at the altar, and runs back to Rogozhin.

With this her fate is sealed. Mad with jealousy, Rogozhin recognizes that she really loves the Prince, and he cannot stand the thought of her leaving him again. So he murders her, and then invites Myshkin to commiserate over her body. One of the most enigmatic relationships in all of Dostoevsky's work is the one between Rogozhin and the Prince. Rogozhin both loves the Prince and hates him. He exchanges crosses with Myshkin, a symbol of brotherhood, and then would have murdered the Prince the same day were it not for a well-timed epileptic fit on the victim's part. The most sublime passage in this work is hence the scene where the Prince comforts Rogozhin.
in the room where the latter had preserved Nastasia's body.

The shock of these events proved too much for the Prince, as we hear in the final report on him by his therapist: "He (the therapist) hints at a complete breakdown of his patients mental facilities; he does not say definitely that his patient's illness is incurable, but he does go so far as to suggest the most unhappy possibilities."^24

Myshkin's tragedy resulted from his authentic commitment to the Christian virtues of humility and compassion. His compassion is evident in his treatment of all of the characters in the work, the minor ones included. Unlike the protagonists of the other major novels, he never commits the mistake of pride. Yet his destruction seems just as unavoidable as theirs. So strong was his compassion that, even though he had earlier stated that he knew for a fact that he would be the ruin of Nastasia, he could not help himself when she pleaded for his aid. He lacks an understanding of the power of passion, and mistakenly hopes that his pity can salve Nastasia's pain.

In conclusion, let me contrast the interpretation suggested above with one proposed by Konstantin Mochulsky. In Dostoevsky: His Life and Work, Mochulsky argues that Myshkin's is the story of the inevitable destruction of a good man by an essentially hostile universe: "The 'world of darkness' rises up against the individual who does not live according to its law. The novel-tragedy depicts the story of this struggle, ending with the destruction of the 'beautiful man'."^25 This interpretation places too little of the
responsibility for the outcome on Myshkin. He would not have been less good (in a moral sense) if he had ignored Nastasia's entreaties and gone after Aglaya. By choosing to stick by Nastasia, he was evidencing the hierarchy of values that he held throughout the work which had compassion at the top. This was why Nastasia eventually was destroyed, for she was too passionate an individual to be satisfied with compassion. Myshkin's subsequent mental destruction was hence a result of the particular combination of his having acted compassionately and of the situation in which he chose to do so.
Of all the playwrights of the last hundred years, Ibsen is the most universally recognized author of tragedies. Yet he himself did not consider his work to be so, at least in the classical sense. Joseph Wood Krutch presumes *Ghosts* to be the most uncontroversial example of Modern tragedy, and proceeds to make his case for the death of tragedy in the Modern era by comparing it to *Hamlet*. It apparently does not occur to Krutch that he might have chosen a poor example.

Are any of Ibsen's plays tragedies? Yes, I believe so. In *The Playwright as Thinker*, Eric Bentley sets the following parameters on the tragic genre:

> Tragedy cannot entail extreme optimism, for that would be to underestimate the problem; it cannot entail extreme pessimism, for that would be to lose faith in man.  

I believe that *Ghosts* falls into the latter difficulty, as does *Hedda Gabler* and *The Wild Duck*. Yet two of his plays, *The Master Builder* and *John Gabriel Borkmann* are tragedies, along the precise lines of the theory I have been suggesting. The reason that the former plays "entail extreme pessimism" is that their central figures are victims rather than agents. Ibsen's development of naturalism in the theater caused him to be concerned with relevant social issues, and moved him to picture individuals crushed by outdated social mores. Merely being crushed by such mores is not a tragic fate, however, and
an examination of each of these five plays in some detail will serve to underscore this point.

Francis Fergusson is perhaps the most distinguished defender of the thesis that *Ghosts* is a tragedy. In his *The Idea of a Theater*, he argues that, underneath the surface of a thesis play concerning social mores, Ibsen has sculpted "a partially realized tragic form of really poetic scope." Fergusson introduces a distinction between plot and action in order to explain the two levels at which the play operates. The action, he says, is Mrs. Alving's, and characterizes her aim as "to take control of the Alving heritage"; the plot, however, being the "soul of the tragedy", is a "rhythm of will, feeling and insight."

Fergusson makes his case by pointing out certain similarities between *Ghosts* and the tragedies of ancient Greece, notably with *Oedipus Rex*. The fact of Oswald's illegitimacy is "the hidden reality of the whole situation, like Oedipus' actual status as son-husband." He points to the peripeties, the recognition scenes and the agons, which, I presume delineate the tragic rhythm he is groping for. There is no doubting that these techniques were characteristic of ancient tragedy, nor that they are present in *Ghosts*. But I contend that they are effective dramatic devices, whose use does not, of itself, render a work tragic.

Fergusson aptly sums up his case as follows:
Ibsen...rediscovered the perennial basis of tragedy. The poetry of Ghosts is under the words, in the detail of action, where Ibsen accurately sensed the tragic rhythm of human life in a thousand small figures. And these little "movements of the psyche" are composed in a complex rhythm like music, a formal development sustained (beneath the sensational story and the angry thesis) until the very end.7

In fairness, Fergusson goes on to fault Ibsen for his way of ending Ghosts. There is no "acceptance of the catastrophe, leading to the final vision or epiphany."8 This indicates the tragic rhythm, but does not rule out Ghosts as being tragic.

Fergusson's case has a distinctly formalistic ring to it, as the analogy with music underscores. I believe that it pays too little attention to the substance of the play, which is perhaps what he calls the action. In particular, he does not discuss the connection between that action and the fate of the main characters. Joseph Wood Krutch asks the right question in response to Ghosts: "How are we to be reconciled or purged when we see it acted? Not only is the failure utter, but it is trivial, and meaningless as well."9 The reasons why there is no catharsis are not, however, as Krutch would have them. Tragedy is not impossible in the modern age. Ghosts is not a tragedy, but primarily because Mrs. Alving and her son were victims, whose sufferings did not result from the major action of the play which is her quest to "take control of the Alving heritage."

Consider the two major sources of suffering in Mrs. Alving's life. At the end of the first year of her marriage, she knew she hated her husband and loved Pastor Manders. She did as much as
anyone could do in such a situation and in such a time. She went to the pastor and offered herself to him. He rejected her and sent her back to her husband, thus insuring her continued repression. The facts that her son was illegitimate, inherited syphilis, and fell in love with his sister (without knowing it) were neither her fault nor her son's. Even if Mrs. Alving's quest hadn't uncovered the truth about Oswald and Regina, Oswald would still have been overcome by the syphilis. Regina would have given it to him instead of his mother, that's all. Perhaps Mrs. Alving suffers more by having it happen in the way it did. The poignancy of the lost dream is bitingly clear. While this makes Mrs. Alving a greater object for our pity, it does not thereby render her a tragic figure.

As a thesis play, Ghosts is strikingly effective. One cannot read or view it without thinking "If only the Pastor had acknowledged his feeling for Mrs. Alving and gotten her out of that trap!" Her fate cannot help but bring to mind Nora in A Doll's House. I imagine Ibsen addressing Ghosts to critics who sided with Nora's husband. "Here", he'd say, "here's what happens to some women if they stay." The more Mrs. Alving is shown to suffer helplessly under the yoke of a bourgeois marriage, the more effectively is the point made concerning its outmodedness. But thesis plays are not tragedies; they are more like morality plays except that they argue for new conventions instead of bolstering the established ones.
On the conception of catharsis that I have been urging, the pity we feel for suffering protagonists must be transformed into an esteem for their authenticity. That esteem is importantly linked to the nature of the action that the protagonist perpetrates, and the connection that action has to the catastrophe which concludes most tragedies. While Mrs. Alving is struggling towards a new self-definition, this quest does not cause the catastrophe and only serves to heighten the pathetic nature of her destruction. One senses the waste of a potentially great individual, but a tale of sheer waste only entails the kind of pessimism that both Eric Bentley and I believe is antithetical to the tragic spirit.

Another variation on the these that Nora was right can be found in *Hedda Gabler*. Hedda is a far more willing victim of conventional morality. A free-spirited and inquisitive soul, Hedda has settled for the ultimate in bourgeois respectability. Having rejected the wild genius that she loved, when he sought to turn their friendship into something more, Hedda marries a dry and boring anthropology enthusiast. He takes her on the compulsory honeymoon across Europe and buys her the compulsory fine villa in their home town. The play opens as they have returned from their honeymoon, showing Hedda as already deeply in the grip of ennui.

Enter her old love, Eilert Lovborg. He has written a marvelous book on world culture which leads to his lionization by his local society. He could take Tesman's (Hedda's husband) position at the
Academy away from him but decides not to, contenting himself with the moral victory of knowing that he could do so if he wished. He still loves Hedda, but she again rejects him giving him a gun (one of her favorite pistols) to kill himself. He is killed, but in a sordid manner, in a brothel. A judge that Hedda knows recognizes her pistol and threatens to blackmail her if she will not yield to him. Her situation is utterly repulsive. Her husband has taken up with her love's secretary to reconstruct the *magnum opus* that Lovborg was working on at his death. Tesman even pushes her into the judge's company. Hedda quietly retires to her study and shoots herself through the head.

Unlike Mrs. Alving, Hedda doesn't even make an attempt to break out of her cage. That it is a cage is made clear from the start. But her panther-like energy is also apparent. In fact, it is hard for me to understand why she never does break out. Again, this is very effective as an argument for a thesis. If so energetic and curious an individual as Hedda Gabler cannot break free of societal morality, how powerful and dangerous must it be! Caught in a web, she passively awaits the spider; and what is perhaps most terrifying is her growing realization that she is doomed. The fact that she does not act in the face of that doom makes her pitiable, indeed, but one does not esteem a person merely for being a victim.

The most pitiable of Ibsen's characters is the young girl Hedvig, in *The Wild Duck*. There the catastrophe is precipitated by
a blind idealist, one Gregers Werle. This individual has the attitude that pure honesty will solve all problems. His idealism becomes an incredibly destructive force due to his inability to recognize the illusions on which much of our lives depend. *The Wild Duck* is an indictment of such idealism by showing the terribly inhuman results that the indiscriminate application of it can have in real life.

Hedvig is the illegitimate daughter of Gina Ekdal and a prominent industrialist, Werle. Gina is married to Hjalmar, who believes Hedvig to be his own daughter. Werle has virtually supported the Ekdals since his affair with Gina began. But Hjalmar lives in the bliss of ignorance, attributing Werle's largesse to his former close friendship with Hjalmar's father. The father lives with the Ekdals, keeping an attic full of fowl and rabbits!

Werle has a son named Gregers who has hated him for years. Gregers knows of his father's indiscretion and resolves to take on the mission of enlightening Hjalmar as to his state. The news of his real dependence on his wife's lover crushes Hjalmar and turns him against who he thought was his daughter. Hedvig always idolized him, so now a young girl who is already in the process of going blind must suffer the rejection of her father.

Gregers' idealism is far from finished, however. Hedvig's favorite thing in all the world is a wild duck which they keep in the attic. The duck cannot fly, having been wounded by Werle on one
of his hunting expeditions. A number of scenes throughout the play underscore the identification that Hedvig has for the duck. Well, Gregers comes up with the marvelous idea that Hedvig should kill the wild duck to prove her love for Hjalmar. Hjalmar had remarked in passing that she loved the duck more than him. She becomes convinced that the only way to win her father's love back was to kill the duck. She goes up into the attic and shoots herself instead. She is discovered, dead. Curtain.

I have seldom been so shocked and saddened by the end of a play. Hedvig is made even more pathetic by her childlike innocence (being only fourteen at the time). She was forced, by Gregers idealism, to believe that she had to choose between the two things that were dearest to her, her father and the wild duck. She was ill-equipped to make such a choice. Here it is not merely bourgeois conventionalism, but also romantic idealism, that precipitates the catastrophe. Hedvig is caught on these pincers, sacrificed by Hjalmar's egotism and Gregers' idealism. Her destruction seems to "entail pessimism" to an even greater extent than in either of the other plays thus far considered.

Unrelieved pity, engendered by great intensities of helpless suffering, is effective in making negative comments on moral conventions. As an audience, one cannot, as it were, relieve the pity without being morally outraged at the conventions which are its cause. Plays that rely heavily on attacking such conventions tend to lose their bite over time. I cannot rid myself of the feeling that constant
use of such heavy handed techniques as illegitimate children, marriages of convenience and incest as titillators of our emotions is rather sordid and melodramatic. Of course, those conventions are in the process of change at present and the last vestiges of Victorian morality are far from having worn off. When they do, however, this melodramatic content will no doubt appear even more sordid. I would argue that drama was an important influence in changing societal attitudes, but that a play should not be judged a tragedy on the basis of its success or failure as a piece of social engineering.

On the theory which I have been urging, our pity for tragic protagonists is relieved by our esteem for their authentic resoluteness in the face of death. Such esteem only results from watching a character suffer as a result of his or her own actions. To borrow a set of terms from Heidegger, the tragic protagonist hears the call of conscience to be authentic, in a situation where such authenticity results in great suffering or death for the agent. Of the three characters we have discussed thus far, only Mrs. Alving could be called authentic. But the destruction of her son does not result from her authentic quest; our sense of waste is too great, for she remains a victim.

_Hedda Gabler_ was written in 1890. It was the perfect example of the willing victim, who through her own inaction acquiesces in the destruction of her true love and herself. It is perhaps Ibsen's
best play, and certainly the last word on the willing-victim-of-bourgeois-conventions theme. In the last decade of his life, Ibsen wrote two works that have active agents as their central figures. Each had a future project that they sacrificed their lives in pursuing. Each was destroyed as the direct result of their own actions. The Master Builder and John Gabriel Borkman are the most tragic of Ibsen's plays.

First performed in 1892, The Master Builder was taken by many to be autobiographical. The protagonist, Solness, is an aging architect whose powers are fading. Extremely threatened by the younger generation of builders, Solness is convinced he only remains at the top at the expense of others, and not because he is especially talented. He was once a designer of churches, but ceased doing that when his children were killed in a fire. Ironically, that fire gave Solness the opportunity to succeed as a house builder, for on the land of the original estate he built a new home, which became the talk of the area. His wife never recovered from the death of her children, and Solness had developed such a bad conscience that he convinced himself that he had caused the fire by wishing it would happen.

We find Solness, then, in a state of ennui and angst. He flirts with his secretary in order to keep her boyfriend in his employ. The boyfriend is an excellent architect, and Solness keeps him repressed by insulting his work, underpaying him, and keeping his
girlfriend around and interested. Solness's marriage is joyless, with his wife only talking of duty and not love. He is easily caught in as painful a web as any of the protagonists we have so far considered.

Into his claustrophobic world enters a Miss Hilda Wangel. Ten years ago, when she was eleven, she witnessed the one and only time that Solness executed the tradition of builders of the day to place a wreath on the steeple of the edifice he designed. She was impressed with this spectacle, and Solness even humored her by promising to build her a castle, calling her a princess. She remembered this for years and had shown up at Solness's door to collect her "kingdom." What she don't know is that Solness has developed acrophobia, and no longer climbs to the heights he once did.

He has just built a fine new house for himself and his wife. It has an imposing steeple, nearly as high as the churches he used to build. He built it for his wife, who takes no joy in it. In short, Solness is ripe for an escape from his situation. Hilda affords him just such an opportunity. But to prove himself, Hilda demands that he place the traditional wreath on the steeple of his new house. He finally accedes to her demands, and, not surprisingly, falls to his death.

Yet, before he died, Solness had begun to live again. Before, he was obsessed with the past, and about the threat of the younger generation of builders. With the entrance of Hilda, he once again
dared to dream and to anticipate the future with something other than dread. Finally, he dared to act in a way which might break him out of his web. The fact that this act leads to his death does not make him purely pitiful; we would prefer his death to his continued torture in his previous situation. We find his fate to be far preferable to, say Hedda Gabler's. He dies in pursuing his dream, and in that pursuit attains a kind of tragic stature.

This is not to call him one of the most tragic of figures, however. His dream has very little scope in that he only sought to make himself a new life with Hilda. Dying for love is not very good grist for the tragic mill. Furthermore, there is much talk about compulsions from without forcing one to take certain actions. Solness speaks of "...a troll in you and in me. For it's the troll in one, you see--it is that that calls to the powers outside us. And then you must give in--whether you will or no." This, coupled with strong indications that Solness's sanity is in doubt, suggests that he might well not be responsible for his choices. Finally, he is not called on to be resolute in his choice for long. His destruction follows hard upon his choice, for the first action he takes as an expression of that choice is to climb the tower.

Still, Solness was more than just a victim, and hence his destruction has a kind of grandiosity absent in "victim plays." The most tragic of Ibsen's protagonists is, however, John Gabriel Borkman. In him we find an individual who systematically, and for a long period
of time, made great sacrifices in pursuit of his future project, and
would not settle for less than its realization. The play is somewhat
problematic, however, because it takes place well after Borkman has
made his choices and suffered his fall. In this sense, John Gabriel
Borkman is perhaps closer to Oedipus at Colonus than to Oedipus Rex.

The play opens with a struggle between Mrs. Borkman and her
sister over the future of her son. Her sister cared for the child for
several years, and now, since she is facing a terminal illness, wishes
him to return to her house and nurse her through her last months. She
has supported the Borkmans for years, since they had become financially
ruined.

Some thirteen years before the play began, John Gabriel was
prosecuted for misappropriating bank funds. Having been the son of a
coal miner, he sought to build a financial empire that would enable
him to improve conditions in the mines. He reinvested the money he
was entrusted with, helping to build his own vision of the future
with the money the townspeople had saved. He married Gunhild,
instead of her sister Ella (whom he really loved) in order to further
his plans. He was brought down by a cruel twist of fate. He had
forsaken Ella to a Mr. Hinkel who was his accomplice in the financial
scheme. But Ella would not marry Hinkel for she deeply loved John
Gabriel. Thinking that John Gabriel was behind her refusal, he
spread rumors concerning the funds in the bank. A run on the bank
ensued, breaking it, and wiping out the life savings of many of the
townspeople. Borkman was imprisoned for five years and his name became synonymous with dishonesty.

At the beginning of the play, John Gabriel has been out of prison for eight years yet he still remains a recluse. He stays upstairs alone in the house, visited only by his lone remaining friend and a young girl who occasionally plays piano for him. He does not speak with his wife and has never had much to do with his son. He remains aloof in the futile conviction that eventually the bank will miss his talents so much as to come and request that he return.

Ella succeeds in bringing him out of his dungeon. Gunhild wants her son to build a financial empire of his own and redeem the name of Borkman. Ella wishes to make him her son legally and then will her substantial fortune to him. She goes up to see if John Gabriel will go alone with her plan. He does, but one gets the feeling that it is not because he cares what happens to his son.

Well, as young people quite often seem to do in Ibsen's plays, the son will have nothing to do with either woman's plans for him. He goes off with a gay divorcée for a trip around Europe. Leaving Mrs. Borkman in the ruins of her dreams, John Gabriel and Ella go off on a long walk. One might perhaps imagine that now the true lovers will finally be given a chance for happiness. Such was not Ibsen's intent, however.
They walk to a promontory overlooking the mines and factories that he once sought to control and improve. Even now the chance for love between Ella and him exists. But he can talk of nothing else but his dream to free the "prisoned millions." Ella's reaction is hard and bitter:

...you have murdered the love life in the woman who loved you. And whom you loved in return, so far as you could love anyone. And therefore I prophesy to you, John Gabriel Borkman--you will never touch the price you demanded for the murder.10

Her prophecy comes true almost immediately. Ill-equipped to handle the cold air of the fjord, and facing a future devoid of hope, John Gabriel dies of what appears to be a heart attack.

Borkman's death was a mere formality. He had already succeeded in destroying himself long before his actual death. He had forsaken everything for his dream. Being unable to realize it, life had no further interest for him. He essentially defined himself in terms of his future project to free the "prisoned millions." When that goal was denied him, he refused to redefine himself. He would not settle for anything less.

John Gabriel has a line which perhaps best sums up his tragic nature, when viewed from the perspective I am urging:

(the world) does not know why I did it; why I had to do it. People do not understand that I had to because I was myself--because I was John Gabriel Borkman--myself and not another. And that is what I will try to explain to you.11
Throughout the play, John Gabriel is shown to be authentic in his actions and resolute in the pursuit of his dream. In his mind, he could not remain who he was and do anything less. He defined himself in terms of his project and destroyed himself in its pursuit. In so doing, he was following the model I have suggested for tragic protagonists. In this light, Borkman is the most tragic of all of Ibsen's creations.

Ibsen's "victim" plays did have this hopeful feature: they had the impact of arousing indignation in their audiences against the social conventions that shattered their protagonists. They were effective precisely because one never ceases to pity their protagonists; the more the audience was moved to pity the protagonists, the more likely they would be to have negative feelings towards those social conventions that Ibsen sought to criticize. Tragedy is hopeful in a different, "positive" sense. We affirm our humanity in our esteem for tragic protagonists, identifying with their grandeur in the face of suffering. Tragedy provides us with role models to emulate, while victim plays point to barriers to be overcome.
The literary scene in the twentieth century is at once so diverse and so close to us historically that it requires a different approach to tracing the development of tragedy. There are few, if any, uncontroversial examples of the tragic genre, if one is to judge by the critical literature. On the one hand, a wide range of contemporary works has been called tragic by their authors or reviewers; on the other, the possibility and/or relevance of tragedy to life in the twentieth century has repeatedly been brought into question.

Despite appearances, I will argue in this chapter that most "serious" literature of this century can be grouped into three easily distinguishable types: A) The "victim" play (or novel), in the sense explained in the preceding chapter; B) The "true" tragedy, explained along the lines of the honorific definition I have been urging; and C) The "absurdist" work, a type which will be subsequently explained. These types are not designed to explain all of contemporary literature; rather, all those contemporary works that have been called tragic can be seen to fall in one of these three groups.

My purpose in generating this typology is twofold: 1) Noting the predominance of works of types A or C, I will discuss similarities between works of these types and "true" tragedies. The purpose here will be to argue that the former types are too nihilistic or
pessimistic in overall effect to qualify for the possibility and relevance of tragedy in this "Age of Anxiety", as W. H. Auden deemed it, by discussing certain contemporary works that I believe are best thought of as tragic.

The importance of this chapter to the overall project of the present volume cannot be overemphasized. One of my justifications for placing discussions of tragedy against a background of nihilism was that such a context was particularly appropriate to the concerns of the modern age. More specifically, I have linked nihilism with the inability to take action resolutely and hence have argued that tragedies are not nihilistic and are in fact anathema to such notions. If I fail to adequately ground the distinction between tragic and nihilistic literature, these previous contentions will seem questionable, indeed.

What I will be attempting to show, then, is that tragedies provide a vision of the world, and of human possibilities in it, that is diametrically opposed to nihilism. Furthermore, I will suggest that tragedies, when viewed from the perspective I have thus far sketched, can provide a kind of amelioration for the schizophrenic irresoluteness which is so characteristic of contemporary humanity. I agree with Nietzsche that we "shall perish and lose the last respect for ourselves" unless we recognize that:

What is essential "in heaven and on earth" seems to be that there should be obedience over a long period of time and in a single direction; given that, something always develops, and has developed, for whose sake it is worth while to live on earth: for example, virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality---something transfiguring, divine, subtle and mad.
Nietzsche is speaking here of an obedience to self-given directives. Such resoluteness is the necessary condition of the creation of any value "for whose sake it is worthwhile to live on earth."

The "victims" to whom I have referred are often lacking in such resoluteness. Hedda Gabler is precisely such a character, as are many heroines in the twentieth century. I would here like to discuss two such examples at length, for they possess a degree of subtlety, and a quantity of suffering that have led many critics to refer to them as tragic.

Isabel Archer, in Henry James' Portrait of a Lady, is one of the most individual and finely detailed creations in modern literature. Her initial quest, a typically Jamesian search for the maximum breadth of "felt experience", is exciting and admirable if a trifle vague and naive. Her discovery in America by her aunt, her odyssey to England and subsequent lionization by her relatives, her windfall inheritance arranged by her cousin Ralph, all combine to afford her apparently limitless possibilities for self realization. Her rejection of two quite attractive suitors, the elegant Lord Warburton and the Horatio Alger-esque Caspar Goodwood, is portrayed sympathetically and assures our alliance with Isabel in her quest for consciousness.

Isabel strikes out into the Continent in the company of her aunt to attain that experience that she is seeking. Yet, less than a year later, she is married to a fortune hunter by the name of Gilbert Osmond, a marriage that results in catastrophe. Ironically, her attempt
to maximize her possibilities results in a claustrophobic narrowing of them. Her choice of Osmond is passably well motivated; he is a genteel aristocrat (with a charming daughter) who seemingly could benefit by nothing more than a loving (and rich) wife. Isabel deeply felt the need to serve mankind in some way, and she believed that in Osmond she had found a worthy cause to serve.

One could easily fault Isabel for her choice, especially since Osmond turns out to be such a vicious and selfish cad. But this would be to forget that Madame Merle, Osmond's mistress and the mother of his young daughter, played a central role in assuring the match. Furthermore, Osmond's attitude towards Isabel changed greatly after they were married; only then did he reveal his contempt for her 'pretensions' of having ideas of her own.

Then she discovers the link between Osmond and Madame Merle: "She found herself confronted in this manner with the conviction that the man in the world whom she supposed to be the least sordid had married her, like a vulgar adventurer, for her money." Immediately after this revelation, Osmond forbids her to go to her dying cousin Ralph's bedside. She at least goes so far as to violate his orders and rush to her cousin's deathbed.

Her mental state on the journey there was as unlike her initial condition as it could be:

She had gone forth in her strength; she would come back in her weakness...She envied Ralph his dying, for if one were thinking of rest that was the most perfect of all. To cease utterly, to give it all up and not know anything more---this idea was as sweet as the vision of a cool bath in a marble tank, in a darkened chamber, in a hot land.
The extent of her disillusionment is apparent. It was due, in part, to her sheltered existence; she claimed "to the best of her belief she had had no personal acquaintance with wickedness" up to this point in her life.

She finally breaks down and admits her wretchedness to Ralph and to her friend Henrietta. At this stage in the novel, Isabel has merely made a mistake which cost her great suffering; she becomes a victim when she bows to the conventions of decency concerning marriage. When Henrietta urges her to leave her husband, Isabel responds:

I don't know whether I'm too proud, but I can't publish my mistake. I don't think that's decent. I'd much rather die. I married him before the world; I was perfectly free; it was impossible to do anything more deliberate. One can't change that way.5

Her description of her choice is puzzling. She was deceived by a fortune hunter and his mistress; most notions of freedom include having accurate knowledge of the situation in which one makes the choice. It is clear that she did not deliberately marry a man who didn't love her. These claims have the ring of rationalizations for her choice to acquiesce to convention. Isabel has come a long way since the beginning of the novel, when Ralph described her as follows:

Most women did with themselves nothing at all; they waited, in attitudes more or less gracefully passive, for a man to come their way and furnish them with a destiny. Isabel's originality was that she gave one the impression of having intentions of her own.6
By the time she responds to Henrietta's urgings, Isabel has decided to sacrifice those intentions for the sake of decency.

Compare, for a moment, the plight of Isabel with the situation in Hedda Gabler. Hedda does choose to marry a safe man whom she does not love over an unconventional one whom she loved. She was not deceived by her husband and he clearly loved her in his own limited way. Her conventional choices slowly constrict around her until she believes her only out is suicide.

Isabel makes a similar choice when she rejects Caspar Goodwood to return home to Osmond. Her choice is made somewhat nobler by her concern for Osmond's daughter, yet she is clearly returning to a situation that will destroy her spirit. Divorce would be the only way to save herself, but she contends that "One cannot change that way." The language here is revelatory. Heidegger notes how the inauthentic individual often uses "one" (in German, "das Man") to frame their value judgments, rather than the personal pronoun "I." She has chosen to cave into conventional notions of decency and duty. Even though she could have done otherwise, she is still a victim.

Isabel's initial idealism is ill-defined and vague; her ultimate fate might be taken as an ironic comment by James on such a naive attitude. Perhaps if her aspirations were not so utterly vague and out of touch, she could have resisted the conventional pressures that ultimately undo her. Yet her inability to forge a resolute self-definition, due in part to her naivete, only causes us to pity her
the more. Her fate is not tragic; we do not esteem her for caving into convention while resistance was still possible. The vague idealism of her initial project only serves to heighten this pity. It is her inauthenticity that leads to her spiritual destruction, and the overall impression is one of unalleviated waste.

A similar fate awaits Sue Bridehead, the heroine of Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure. Sue is more explicit in her initial revolt against the conventional. She provides a good deal of the motive force behind the initial alliance with Jude. She is more determined than he that they should leave their spouses. It is her reluctance that ultimately thwarts their many attempts to get married. It would not be inappropriate to say that her will was the dominant one in the relationship.

Jude was not an unwilling dupe, however. In most cases, Sue merely provided the impetus Jude needs to do what he really desires. Jude has little talent for initiating action and hence requires the added nudge of Sue's drive. His sullen acceptance of being denied admission to Christminster is evidence of his passive nature.

The couple have two children of their own, and fatefully decide to adopt the son of Jude's first wife, a misanthrope which has been dubbed Father Time. They are poor, and when Sue is in her third pregnancy she complains sadly to the child about their financial plight. The disturbed boy is moved by this to kill Sue's children, and himself, for the pitiful reason, as he observes in his final note,
that they are "too menny."

This is undoubtedly a horrible incident to have to undergo. Yet it is in such situations that the mettle of the individual is tested. Sue fails her test dramatically, for she takes the triple killing as a sign from God that she and Jude have sinned. They were punished for their marital infidelity, according to her warped sensibilities, and were now obliged to return to their respective spouses. She cannot be dissuaded by a frantic Jude, who stiffly crawls back to his former wife with the indifference of a desolate man. He dies shortly thereafter, not requesting to see Sue in spite of his wife's willingness to send for her.

Sue forsakes her quest for an unconventional life as soon as she is put to an immense test. Had she stood by him, Jude could have weathered the storm of his children's deaths. Sue, just like Isabel Archer, could not maintain her resolve and Ralph Touchett's description of Isabel could easily be applied to Sue:

> You wanted to look at life for yourself...but you were ground in the very mill of the conventional.

But it is very important to note that both capitulated to the conventionality which destroyed them, while resistance was still possible. They chose to be inauthentic and hence they chose to be victimized by conventional beliefs.

Jude, on the other hand, is a different type of victim. He doesn't choose to be victimized; he has it thrust upon him by Sue's choice. His love for her would have been sufficient to see him
through the crisis. His realization that Sue could not find such a bulwark in their relationship is what breaks his spirit. His is the greater burden of suffering and one does not feel as disappointed in Jude as in Sue. While Sue initiates the suffering that bowing to conventions will entail for them both, Jude is passive as regards this final crisis. He was as little responsible for her leaving him as he was for the triple killing.

Hardy described his own purpose in *Jude the Obscure* as follows:

...to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passions known to humanity; to tell, without the mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims.  

But not all unfulfilled aims are tragic. A sense of waste is, at best, a necessary condition for achieving the tragic effect. Throughout the time that *Jude* was conceived and written, Hardy read much of the works of Schopenhauer, and the effect of *Jude* is profoundly pessimistic, and hence, as I have been urging, untragic. Both Sue and Jude are victims, albeit one of her own choice. Sue is profoundly split between an intellectual seriousness that demands actions and a fragile will that cannot allow her to follow her ideas out to their logical ends. She is all feminine charm, but without body, without flesh or smell, without sensuality. The irresoluteness that results from this schizophrenia destroys an essentially passive, weak-willed Jude. Her superior consciousness does not help her and even seems to be a cause of her demise. Both of their fates seem to suggest that "in their
cerebral overdevelopment they run the danger of losing those primary appetites for life which keep the human race going. ... Hardy thought that as men came to realize how paltry was their place in the universe and how unavoidable the paltriness, they would regard consciousness itself as a burden.\textsuperscript{9} This is the light in which consciousness is portrayed in \textit{Jude the Obscure}, and the profound pessimism of such a view is precisely what makes the novel too grim to be tragic.

Resoluteness is seldom easy, at least not for long, and one might say that a necessary condition for resoluteness is courage. Jude shows more courage than Sue, in his ability to endure the loss of his children. Yet his suffering is not (in large measure) the result of his actions, as is Sue's. Hence we end up pitying them both, and perhaps Jude even more than Sue.

It is amazing how many of the serious works of literature written in the last hundred years have had characters that are of one of the two types of victims that I have sketched above. Let me call the first type "Victims of conventions as a result of choice" and the second "Victims of situations (with no choice involved or relevant)." I believe I have offered sufficient examples of this first type. There are a number of varieties of the second type, and it is to an illustration of these that I will now turn. In the first type, authenticity seems possible, but protagonists fail to achieve it. In the second type, authenticity is either impossible or can have no possible effect on the eventual fate of the protagonists.
In the twentieth century, mechanistic determinism, with a Darwinian, Freudian, Marxist or whatever slant, has taken the place of the Olympian or Christian hierarchy as the sealer of our fates. Human will is often frozen, like a bug in amber, reduced to the sum of its heredity and environment. Actions are merely the programmed responses of extremely complicated digital and/or analog computing machines. This image of humanity is anathema to the spirit of tragedy, and has in fact become one of the major wellsprings of nihilism. In a world where authenticity is impossible (for we must be able to choose to be authentic) man cannot hope to create enduring values. I must hence acknowledge that, on my view, freedom of choice must be possible if tragedy is possible.

Determinism frequently seems to lurk behind the works that depict victims of the second type. One always feels about Isabel Archer and Sue Bridehead that they have the capacity of breaking out of their conventional bonds, and simply fail to do so. Perhaps the most depressing of all types of literature is the depiction of victims that seem utterly helpless to affect their own fates. There is no greater object of pity than an individual who suffers immensely without being responsible for that suffering to at least some degree.

Victims of this second type come in many shapes and sizes. The most obvious examples are victims of natural or man-made disasters such as disease, social injustice, or war. One of the most poignant instances of such a victim is Mary Cavan, the morphine addict in
Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Before the devastating addictive effects of the prolonged usage of morphine are widely known, Mary is admitted to a hospital and treated with it at length. She emerges with an addiction which will destroy not only herself but her entire family.

*Long Day's Journey* is a powerful work of art, the more so because of its highly autobiographical nature. Yet its spectacle of a mother addicted to drugs, a son dying of tuberculosis, that son and his father plunging progressively farther into alcoholism, and all of them resenting each other with a fury, is one of the most pessimistic works of the 20th century. Each character is trapped in a murderous web that is, to a greater or lesser extent, not of their own creation. Each is powerless to help either the others or themselves.

These characters remain pathetic, the more so because of their ineffectual attempts to express care and love. Rather than an affirmation of life, it stands as an indictment of the value of life, and as a powerful argument for the wisdom of Silenus. For each of these figures, it does seem that the best they can hope for is a quick death and that it would have been better had they never been born.

O'Neill has often been accused of being not a tragic but a merely depressing dramatist. His reply tells us much about his conception of tragedy, and of art in general:
Happiness? What does it mean? Exaltation; an intensified feeling of the significant worth of man's being and becoming? Well, if it means that—and not a mere smirking contentment with one's lot—I know there is more of it in one tragedy than in all the happy ending plays ever written. It's mere present day judgment to think of tragedy as unhappy. ...Through them they found release from the petty considerations of everyday existence...A work of art is always happy; all else is unhappy.10

I agree with the general tenor of his remarks concerning tragedy. Yet it is at his last line that we part company. A work of art is not always happy. A work of art shows human beings in a certain light or under a certain description. Some of these descriptions do not create an intensified feeling of the significant worth of man's being. To depict human beings as powerless victims of massive suffering that does not result from their own actions does not create such an affirmative experience, though such depictions can be properly called works of art.

Often the forces which victimize the characters are more subtle. Characters apparently take actions that result in their spiritual or physical destruction. Yet, when you look closer, these characters have no more choice involved in the actions they have taken than Mary Cavan had in becoming addicted to morphine. Such forces are quite often psychological in nature, having to do with the heredity or environment of the protagonists. In O'Neill's world, these forces are primarily sexual in nature, stemming from the none too subtle influence of Frueidianism on his view of the human being.

This influence is best illustrated in his revision of the
Oresteia trilogy, Mourning Becomes Electra. Here there is no
sacrificed Iphigenia, no fateful choice by Agamemnon which sets off the cycle. Ezra Mannon goes off to fight the Civil War because that is his conventional role. His wife Christine begs him not to go, telling him that she "cannot bear to be along." In his absence, she takes up with Captain Adam Brant who was wooing her daughter Lavinia. Brant turns out to be the bastard son of Mannon, who sought Christine as a way of revenging himself upon his father. When Mannon comes home from the war, Christine poisons him with Brant's help. Lavinia discovers the crime and enlists her brother Orin's aid in killing Brant. Christine kills herself when she finds this out, and, after torturous self-deprecations, Orin follows suit. Lavinia decides to remain alone in the family mansion, to expiate her sins.

Everywhere there are sexual (and primarily Oedipal) rivalries. Lavinia and Christine compete for the affections of Mannon, Brant and Orin. Orin is fixated on his mother and cannot survive her destruction. Mannon is portrayed not unsympathetically as an essentially dutiful but cold individual, who perhaps shows his greatest vulnerability right before he is killed. Even though Clytemnestra and Orestes act like avenging furies in the original treatment of this theme, they are clearly depicted as having a choice, even though Orestes had the threat of death at the hands of Apollo hanging over his head if he failed to exact revenge. There is never any issue as to whether Lavinia will carry her
vendetta out to the end, or that any of the other salient actions might not have been taken. Where the *Oresteia* ends with a reconciliation of opposing forces, the third part of *Mourning*, entitled *The Haunted*, leaves us with the image of a perpetually suffering Lavinia locking herself into permanent isolation. Nowhere are there ideas or values championed that might have some chance of making life worth living. The final impression is one of desolate hopelessness, and insofar as we identify with Lavinia (and I do, at least to some extent) we are moved to view such a fate as quite possibly our own.

Such is also the impression left by *Desire Under the Elms*. Ephriam Cabot is pictured as someone a good deal more insensitive than Ezra Mannon. His son Eben's hatred of him is well grounded in the way he treated the boy's mother. The oedipal fantasy of overcoming your father as a rival is played out successfully by Eban when Cabot comes home with a new, young, attractive bride named Abbie (Eben's mother had died some years previously, of "overwork", according to him). The love that grows between Abbie and Eben threatens to be a ray of meaning and salvation in an otherwise bleak landscape, but when it results in the murder of their child (who Eben fathered and Cabot thought to be his own), even that possibility is crushed. When the law comes to bring them to justice, our feelings are hardly those of admiration, and this is not simply because of our moral horror at the murder of an innocent child.
Such plots have the aura of lurid case histories, heightened by the realistic treatment for which O'Neill was rightly famous. Not only do they tend to reduce all basic motives to sexual ones, but they tend to suggest that even these are totally outside of our control. Even in _Long Day's Journey_, where sexual motivation is played down considerably, the forces of alcohol, disease and drugs take their place.

O'Neill once wrote that any writer "trying to do big work nowadays" must concern himself with

> the death of an old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with.\textsuperscript{11}

O'Neill does, indeed, concern himself with this plight, but his work seems only to underscore and deepen it. The theory that I have been urging has it that tragedies provide an amelioration for such feelings of hopelessness. O'Neill's works tend to confirm our hopeless state, albeit in a manner sympathetic to human suffering. But sympathy is not enough, nor are pathetic characters.

O'Neill's work set the tone for much of 20th century American drama. His characters struggle with forces which have become _idee fixee_ in this century. William Brashear argues that "the fundamental characteristic of his genius is his (O'Neill's tragic vision).\textsuperscript{12} He finds this vision best embodied in _The Iceman Cometh_,
and analyses it along what he takes to be Nietzschean lines. I believe he misinterprets Nietzsche, and I think it will be instructive to examine his account of Iceman and contrast it with my own.

Brashear argues that Larry Slade is the tragic protagonist of the work because "of his understanding of the perilous balance within himself of the Dionysiac and Apollonian elements, of death-longing and resistance." He is "the kindest man among them" and his pity and compassion represents...an affirmation of life in spite of the apparent nothingness of human value." Hickey, by contrast, is a subordinate character in the tragedy, like Ophelia a "victim."

If my previous interpretation of Nietzsche is sound, Brashear has confused the effect tragedies have on the audience with the kind of character that constitutes the tragic protagonist. We learn sympathy and fellow feeling from the chorus, not from the protagonists demeanor. The protagonist is destroyed, and his destruction affirms the illusion of individuality and the inevitable suffering of egoistic willing. Larry strikes me as a Nietzschean chorus-figure, cut off from effective action.

For Larry Slade clings to his "pipe dreams" just like everyone else in Harry Hope's saloon (including Harry). But they are pipe dreams precisely because none of these figures are capable of resolute action in an attempt to accomplish them. Larry has given up on his political movement, yet he still nurses it as an unrealizable
goal for which he does not work. Harry Hope is always preparing for his "walk through the wards", but when he attempts it he cannot cross the first street. Jimmy is always going to go get his job "tomorrow", but when tomorrow comes, he always has that first drink on top of a hangover that will guarantee that he will be unpresentable.

Even Hickey, who more closely approximates a tragic figure, in my estimation, is incapable of resolute action for the sake of what he holds dear. It is clear that he loves his wife, yet he continues to be an unfaithful drunkard. He thinks of himself as determined to be that way, as if human beings had characteristics like inanimate objects: "And then I saw I'd always known that was the only possible way to give her peace and free her from the misery of loving me." As if it were impossible for him to change, given enough effort.

Hickey's descent on the Hope saloon has the air of a tragic quest about it, however. Hickey acts with concern for his fellows, in an attempt to bring them a "truth" that he believes will carry with it the peace which he, in his disturbed state, believes he has found. He doesn't just try to steal their pipe dreams away; he attempts to force them to act towards realizing them. His is the central action of the play, which resonates through the rest of the dramatis personae.

Yet, in the end, it is not his crusade against illusions that leads to his destruction. He had already sealed his fate when he
murdered his wife. His failure at Harry Hope's does provide Hickey with his final disillusionment. But the murder of his wife was not a resolute action in the service of some value, but the capricious whim of a self-indulgent man.

_İceman_ may be the single most depressing work in the English language. Its bleakness is Strindbergian, and its ponderous length serves only the more effectively to weigh one down with the hopelessness of existence, and the unbridgeable alienation between man and man, and man and his environment. I agree with Brashear that Larry Slade's compassion is the one bright pool in an otherwise dismal, Sargasso-like sea. Yet, it is grossly overbalanced with the insensitivity and misunderstanding, not to speak of outright betrayal and murder, that pervades the work as a whole. The wisdom of Silenus requires a rather more convincing argument against it.

So, I have argued that O'Neill's major protagonists are one and all victims, who are either irresolute in the face of challenges or are ground under by forces outside of their control, chief among them being alcohol, sex and drugs. These characters form a singularly modern vision of man succumbing to his environment. Their spiritual brothers and sisters can be found in many works of 20th century American literature. Tennessee Williams, for example, has generated a good deal of excitement on the dramatic scene. He has a striking theatrical sense, coupled with a talent for lively, realistic dialogue and character portrayal. Yet his most serious
works, such as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Night of the Iguana*, all deal with disorders due to sex, with liberal amounts of alcohol, family and money thrown in. As Herbert J. Muller observes "the implication (of Williams' major works) is Lawrence's idea that the restoration of sexual order is the key to salvation and peace."^17

The American novel has also been dominated by such themes. One need only think of Dick Diver in Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*, or Jake Barnes in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, or Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August* to realize to what extent this trend has gone. The victimization of Willy Loman, in *Death of a Salesman*, has generated perhaps the most controversial dialogue concerning the possibility of modern tragedy. I would like to add a few lines to this controversy. What is untragic about Willy is not the comparative simplicity of his goals, or his lack of stature as some figure in the community (such as a king). Rather, it is his acceptance of what the society expects of him that makes him pathetic. He sometimes threatens to break out of his bonds (like Hedda Gabler), but finally succumbs to the pressure of his expected role. The closing comments of his sensitive son, Biff, perhaps best summarize the pathetic nature of destruction through inauthenticity: "He had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong. ... He never knew who he was."^18
The Absurdism that arose in Europe in this century raises victimization to a higher mathematical power. The suppressing forces which have been discussed in this chapter are understandable, even if quite often they are depicted as being uncontrollable. In an absurd world, the forces themselves become unintelligible, and are all the more frightening because of their totally random nature. "Absurd" originally was used in a musical context, and was taken to mean "out of harmony." To the absurdists, it is humanity which is out of harmony with its environment and with itself. One of the leading proponents of Theater of the Absurd, Eugene Ionesco, defined the term as follows:

Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose...Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendent roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless and useless.19

It is this image of man that Camus hoped to capture in his The Myth of Sisyphus. He attempted a more theoretical formulation of the condition in an essay entitled "An Absurd Reasoning."

In his words:

The absurd man thus catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible and everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness.20

What is out of harmony is the scope of man's desires, when measured against the power he has at his disposal to accomplish them:

If I see a man armed only with a sword attack a group of machine guns, I shall consider his act to be absurd. But it is so solely by virtue of the disproportion between his intention and the reality which he will encounter, of the contradiction I notice between his true strength and the aim he has in view.21
In the widest context, that disproportion is found in the task facing humanity, to create a worthwhile life in the absence of transcendent roots, while using only the limited means at our disposal.

The methods of Camus, when he wrote as a dramatist, were, however, quite different from acknowledged masters of the Theater of the Absurd. As Martin Esslin, author of the *locus classicus* on this movement, has remarked:

Giradoux, Anouilh, Sartre and Camus differ from the dramatists of the Absurd in this important respect: they present their sense of the irrationality of the human condition in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, while the Theater of the Absurd strives to express this sense ...by open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought. While Sartre and Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theater of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which these are expressed.22

The next question I wish to address is how this difference in form affects the degree of similarity that such works have to tragedies, at least as the present theory construes them.

One favorite theme in Camus and Sartre is the irony of the totally unexpected situation. In Sartre's "The Wall", for example, a desperate political prisoner puts off his own death by making up a tale of how his fellow conspirator is hiding in a certain place. When the police go to this place, they find the conspirator merely as a matter of chance. By this cruel twist, the original individual gains his freedom, even though it is clear that his reputation and spirit are ruined by this cruel coincidence.
Similarly, the protagonist in Camus's *The Misunderstanding* is destroyed by sheer chance. He goes to visit his mother and sister as the long lost son who has not seen them in years. He is curious to see how they would react to him if he did not reveal his true identity, so he makes up a story and remains in their presence. Ironically, the mother and daughter have turned to crime in order to support themselves, and they kill and rob him in their ignorance of his identity. Their recognition scene is reminiscent of Greek tragedies such as the *Bacchae*.

If these works are absurd, it is not immediately evident where the disproportion is between the "true strength" of the protagonists and the aims that they have in view. Rather, the cruelty of the coincidence leaves one to view our universe as not just indifferent but downright hostile to our purposes. In these works, relatively simple and unprepossessing intentions are savagely thwarted by bitterly ironic circumstances. While their destruction does result from the actions which they take, these protagonists are hardly responsible for their fates. The burden is primarily placed on a hostile environment. In *The Misunderstanding*, for example, anyone who stayed with the mother and daughter would have been killed. It was merely accidental that their victim should be their son and brother.

In Camus's *Caligula*, on the other hand, we find a good example of a protagonist which must assume full responsibility for his
destruction. Soured on life by the death of his sister/lover Drusilla, he embarks on a project which is essentially self-destructive. Moved by his recognition that "men die, and they are not happy", he initiates a reign of terror that Maurice Friedman characterized as follows:

He wants to be a god, to tamper with the scheme of things, "to drown the sea in the sky, to infuse ugliness with beauty, to wring a laugh from pain." If he cannot reduce the sum of suffering and make an end of death, he will make suffering and death so universal as to make an end of life.23

In setting such a project for himself, he, in effect, is committing a grandiose form of suicide, as he himself recognizes well before his denouement. In a manner reminiscent of Richard III, Caligula goes about violating his friends and senators in as despicable a manner as he can possibly imagine. He murders his best friend's father, sleeps with his senators' wives in their presence, and requires all able-bodied women to serve in the whorehouse he sets up in the palace (with all able-bodied men being required to attend frequently). Such a reign cannot last long.

Indeed, the play ends with his assassination, led by his best friend Scipio. Immediately before this climax, Caligula confronts himself in the mirror, and the reader cannot help but agree with him when he screams:

...all I need is for the impossible to be... I have chosen a wrong path, a path that leads to nothing. My freedom isn't the right one.24
His path is the wrong one because it would inevitably lead to his destruction, no matter what situation he found himself in. Because of his position as emperor, he lasts a good deal longer than most men would if they took on a similar task. But, in the end, even he couldn't escape death. Here, it is the intention that bears the full responsibility for the destruction. Again, since I have been urging that tragic destruction must be the result of a dialectic between situation and action, **Caligula** fails to be tragic because his action would lead to his destruction regardless of his situation.

Caligula is quite unlike the victims that I have thus far discussed. His demise is the result of his own actions, which he resolutely takes right up to the very end. But he is the inescapable victim of what he calls "a total surrender to the dark impulse of one's destiny." Caligula is a suicide, albeit one with a superior imagination, because he cannot deny that there is any meaning to life, and set about trying to establish this meaninglessness by violating life as much as possible, without expecting to be killed.

It must be noted that it is not on moral considerations that I rule out Caligula as being a tragic protagonist. It is because his intention is necessarily self-defeating, regardless of the situation. His destruction is inevitable, but only because of the nature of the goal he was pursuing. Rather than trying to answer the wisdom of Silenus, Caligula has accepted it, and made it the truth that he will preach. But, like Hickey in *Iceman*, such
detachment from the purposes of the world leads to an indifference that longs for death. Caligula is resolute enough, but his story underscores the point that resoluteness alone is not sufficient to make a protagonist tragic.

In these works of Sartre and Camus, there is a kind of "realism" (I use the term with hesitation) about their treatment of plot and character. Although extreme, one would not be too surprised if they were descriptions (albeit poetic ones) of historical events. Martin Esslin is correct in claiming that "they express the new content in the old convention." These conventions do facilitate the identification with the central _dramatis personae_, and I have argued that such identification is important in achieving the cathartic effect. It is very hard, for example, to identify with two old people, aged 94 and 95, who rent a hall and fill it with chairs, engage an orator to address these empty seats, and jump out a window to their deaths in the sea when he arrives and begins to address the empty house. Such is a thumbnail sketch of the plot of _The Chairs_, by Ionesco. Yet this sketch conveys much of the depth of the characters, at least as we are allowed to see them on stage.

Esslin recognizes that Theater of the Absurd "Lacks objectively valid characters. It cannot show the clash of opposing temperaments, or study human passions...". This makes it poor material for tragedy. Yet there are certain similarities between
the concerns of tragedy and of absurdist plays that has led to them being spoken of quite often in the same breath. When Esslin claims that the pattern of poetic incidents in Waiting for Godot "are an image of Beckett's intuition that nothing ever really happens in man's existence" he is taking the work to be, in part, a statement of Beckett's view of human existence. Traditionally, tragedy has been looked on for such statements. It is his suggestion that Theater of the Absurd has replaced tragedy as a vehicle for addressing "the ultimate realities of the human condition, the relatively few fundamental problems of life and death, isolation and communication."26

In a later passage, he delineates what he takes to be the basic difference between the two genres:

The difference is merely that ...in tragedy, the ultimate realities concerned were generally known and universally accepted metaphysical systems, while the Theater of the Absurd expresses the absence of any such generally accepted cosmic systems of value.27

What I have been urging is that the absence of any "cosmic" systems of value need not result in the kind of pusillanimous characters in Waiting for Godot, or the kind of murderous view of our universe that emerges in Endgame.

It might be suggested at this point that, while the above plays are not tragedies (in the traditional sense), they still express a tragic view of existence. Returning to Esslin's comments, such a view would deny the assumptions of traditional theater:
Characters presuppose that human nature, the diversity of personality and individuality, is real and matters; plot can only exist on the assumption that events in time are significant. These are precisely the assumptions these two plays put in question.28

But to deny these assumptions is to acquiesce in a view of the world that is essentially pessimistic. I contend that Beckett's worldview has been called "tragic" only because some commentators labor under a misapprehension of the difference between tragic waste and despairing meaninglessness.

Even when Theater of the Absurd approaches tragedy, it veers off at the last second. Ionesco's Rhinoceros is a fairly straightforward play, albeit based on a somewhat absurd premise. It has a clearly defined protagonist, who watches in dismay as everyone around him slowly transform into full sized rhinoceri. Berenger chooses to resist this transformation. It might be thought, on first reading, that here we have a play that fits my proposed honorific definition. He is resolute in his resistance to the "disease" of "rhinoceritis." He endures great suffering due to the isolation this resoluteness imposes on him. His best friend and his girlfriend both succumb before his eyes.

Yet there is much subtlety to the play that is not noticed at first glance. In reasoning with his friend, Dudard, Berenger cannot adequately explain his preference for being a human, as opposed to being a rhinoceros. He places his faith in human intuition, but then cannot ground the distinction between this intuition and the instinctive nature of the rhinoceros. Furthermore,
although his very last words are a statement of defiant protest, they are preceded by his expression of a bitter regret that now it was "too late" to change. He even lauds some of the characteristics of the rhinos. In Esslin's words "His final profession of faith in humanity is merely the expression of the fox's contempt for the grapes he couldn't have." This renders Berenger's defiance to be farcical, not tragic.

I am not trying to argue that these absurdist plays are bad art. As allegories, and as stimuli for creative thought about our place in the universe, they have undeniable validity. But the essentially pessimistic and despairing picture of ourselves and our world that emerges from these works is, by and large, anathema to the spirit of tragedy, at least as I have characterized it. Their absence of plot and character, their undercutting of the significance of human actions and character, their depiction of our environment and culture as essentially self-defeating and alienating, project an image of the human condition as being caught in a trap drained of all possibility of significance. Any attempt at harmonizing the self with its surroundings seems doomed to failure.

Franz Kafka's vision seems to communicate a similar despair of such a harmonization. Although he can be said to have created well-rounded characters, he places them in situations that are as unintelligible as any to be found in the Theater of the Absurd. In The Trial, for example, the hero (Joseph K.) is being tried for a
crime he did not commit. Moreover, he is never informed as to what the charge could be. Kafka does everything possible to portray the hierarchical Court as arbitrary, capricious and downright absurd. The "justice" of such procedures is clearly called into question.

Yet the trial drones on. Joseph K. does seem to embody a kind of resoluteness in his arrogant rejection of the absurdity of the proceedings. This resoluteness does apparently have something to do with his destruction, since of all the cases that were being tried concurrently, his was the first that was adjudicated completely. He was the first to be sentenced, and the first to have the sentence carried out upon him. As he lies dying, after a knife is plunged into his heart, his last words are, however, "Like a dog!"

Certainly this seems anomalous for a tragic figure to exclaim.

While his disdain for the court, and his insistence on his innocence, might have hastened his end, there is no assurance that he wouldn't have died anyway. He is, then, insufficiently responsible for his demise to attain to the status of tragic hero. Although his resistance is sometimes grant, he is evidently in a no-win situation. Whatever the reader takes the court to represent, it is clear that Joseph K. is victimized by it.

The case is somewhat different in The Castle. There, land surveyor K. has been summoned to a village to do some work for Count Klamm, ruler of the village and inhabitant of the Castle. Yet, when he arrives, he finds that there is no access to the Castle, and
that there are no orders awaiting him. He takes on the task of breaking through these barriers and establishing some communication with the powers that be. But, in a situation which reminds me of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, there is apparently no way to do this.

*The Castle* is an unfinished work, as is *The Trial*. Yet, whereas the latter lacks some developmental passages, the former lacks a conclusion. Yet *The Castle* is even less like a tragedy than is *The Trial*. Not only is the situation K. finds himself in unintelligible and downright hostile, but K.'s own resolve is shown to weaken as he goes along. One is not moved to fault K. very much, however, because it begins to appear inevitable that he will never communicate with the powers that be.

Examples of this kind can be multiplied. What I have been arguing is that such works fail to be tragic because they fail to maintain the delicate balance between resolve and situation on which tragedy depends. In the absence of this balance, if the situation is too hostile or the purpose pursued too self destructive, the end result is a life-denying experience. Tragic destruction can only yield a life affirmation if it is possible that, in a different situation, the purposes pursued might come to fruition. If this were not the case, then Robbe-Grillet would be right in claiming that:

> the tragic sense of life never seeks to suppress the distances; it multiplies them...There can no longer be any question of seeking some remedy to our misfortune, once tragedy convinces us to love it.30
As I see it, it is not the purpose of tragedy to make us "love our misfortune." Rather, it is in the face of such misfortune that we are allowed to see, in its starkest relief, the qualities of resoluteness and authenticity. In tragedy, it is true, such qualities are not sufficient to head off the destruction of the protagonists. Yet, it is precisely the admiration that we feel for such protagonists that underscores the value of such qualities irregardless of the results.

Let me now offer some examples of what I take to be modern tragedies. In Heart of Darkness, for instance, we are presented with the story of Kurtz, who enters Africa with an appreciation of his power ("whites are...supernatural beings...with the might as of a deity") and with the intention of being "an emissary of pity, science and progress." In his isolation from the civilized world, however, he loses all sense of restraint in the pursuit of his goals. When Marlow arrives at his camp, the heads of his foes can be seen impaled on posts. It is clear by the end that the immensity of his inhumanity is the major cause of his death. When he exclaims "The horror! The horror!" as his last words before he dies, he encapsulates the effect his quest has had on him.

Heart of Darkness is a problematic work, when considered as a tragedy, because the reader is not allowed to witness Kurtz in action, and he is actually present in a relatively few pages at the end. In large measure, the work is about Marlow, and how his fascination with
Kurtz affects his perceptions. As a kind of Bildungsroman, however, it is highly suggestive of the effect that witnessing a tragedy can have on an individual. In spite of the immoral extremities to which Kurtz was driven, Marlow finds great value in his struggle:

I would like to think my summing up would not have been a word of careless contempt. Better his cry--much better. It was an affirmation, a victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory!31

Here is the needed dynamic tension between a character's project and the situation in which he pursues it. Conrad makes much of the fact that it was Kurtz's total isolation from civilisation that allowed him to go to such excesses. Without the limitations which society imposes on the individual, Kurtz pursued his project sans restraint. But it was precisely this lack of restraint that drained him of his humanity and led to his spiritual destruction. Finally, he could not escape the horror of his acts, and it is significant that it is to a representative of the civilisation which he had left behind that he utters the final epitaph on his life.

In Lord Jim, the character of Jim is much more at the forefront than was Kurtz. Though the effect that Jim has on Marlow is again one of the foci of the plot, Lord Jim does not take on the flavor of a Bildungsroman for Marlow. It is Jim's dynamic that remains at center stage throughout. This dynamic is an almost perfect embodiment of the "tragic flaw" type of drama of which Aristotle thought so highly.
The first major action we see Jim take is to abandon the foundering Patna, leaving hundreds of innocent people to remain behind. Through a quirk of fate, the Patna survived the gale, and Jim is left with an albatross of guilt around his neck. In his commitment to the people of Patusan, he finds a vehicle for exorcising this demon of guilt. Yet it is the remnants thereof that lead directly to his demise.

When the people of Patusan have Brown and his brigands cornered, Jim argues for their release. In the course of the novel, an image of Jim has emerged that shows him to be a real hero, living up to the promise which he showed before the Patna incident. He is a thoroughgoing humanitarian, with a great deal of respect for human life. It might be said that it was his resolute pursuit of this humanitarianism that led to his demise, and this is true, to a certain extent. But there is also the clear hint that he might not have freed Brown and his party if he hadn't been susceptible to a particular remark which Brown makes.

Jim is somewhat cool to Brown's protestations, and it seems possible that Jim might order the death of the brigands (Brown had come to plead to either be shot or set free, rather than suffer a slow death by starvation). But then Brown strikes at what turns out to be Jim's achilles heel:
'...when it came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went--three, thirty, three hundred people.' 'I made him wince' boasted Brown to me. 'He was soon left off coming the righteous over me. He just stood there with nothing to say, and looking as black as thunder---not at me---on the ground.' He asked Jim whether he had nothing fishy in his life to remember that he was so damnably hard upon a man trying to get out of a deadly hole by the first means that came to hand---and so on, and so on.32

Immediately after this exchange, Jim agrees to let Brown's party leave.

In many other situations, Jim's mercy would not have led to his destruction. But he did not count on the venomous vengefulness of Brown. Once freed, Brown and his party circle back and kill a number of innocent Patusan villagers, including the son of the chief who was Jim's best friend. For his error, Jim offers himself up to be put to death by the chief. He dies, as he lived (for the most part), noble in his authenticity.

The existence of this "flaw" or "mistake" does not significantly undercut Jim's status as a tragic hero. Again we find the necessary balance between a project resolutely pursued in a situation where such pursuit leads to the destruction of the protagonist. Jim might well have freed Brown and his fellows anyway, for such mercy was consistent with the character as he was portrayed up to that point. His project might best be described as an attempt to redeem himself for the guilt he felt at abandoning the Patna, resulting in a renewed search for some way he might significantly serve humanity. Regardless of the results, he does not feel a similar guilt at having freed Brown, and he submits to death having fulfilled the heroic promise he evidenced
Perhaps the premier romantic tragedy of this century is F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. It is a tale of an officer from the lower class who meets a rich heiress by the name of Daisy, falls in love with her, and is rejected because of his lack of social status. This love becomes the obsession of his life, and everything he does thereafter, from building a fortune, to buying a mansion and throwing the wildest possible parties, to befriending his neighbor Nick Carraway, is motivated by his desire to win her back.

It is, indeed, an ironic set of circumstances which dictate that this quest will have tragic results. Gatsby, through his neighbor (and her cousin), finally gets to see her again after many years. He finds her in the throes of a loveless marriage, with a husband who is an insensitive racist who makes little effort at covering up his outside affair. Returning from an outing to the city, Daisy goes with Gatsby and insists on driving. On the breakneck drive back, Daisy strikes and kills her husband's mistress who is under the impression that it is Daisy's husband who is driving Gatsby's car.

Ever the loyal lover, Gatsby decides to cover up for Daisy, a choice that costs him his life. For the mistress has a husband who decides to take revenge on what he thinks to be his wife's killer. Gatsby is gunned down while floating on a raft in his pool. In most other situations, his quest would hardly have cost him such an ultimate price. His tragedy is in no way undercut by the relative shallowness of Daisy's personality. Where romance is concerned, as I
have remarked earlier, one must be charitable in judging the choice
the protagonist makes of who to love.

It is important to note, in this connection, that Daisy is more
than just a libido-object for Jay Gatsby. She also represented the
unattainability (perhaps only apparent) of a member of the upper
classes for a lower class individual. Another major American tragic
novel has this concern for class as its focus, William Faulkner's
Absalom, Absalom.

The central project of the major protagonist of this novel, Thomas
Sutpen, was to establish such a great dynasty that none of his heirs
would ever be turned away from any door (an experience that caused him
much chagrin). As a child, it shocked him beyond belief that there
could exist a caste system that made some people better than others
by virtue of their birth. It is his indomitable resolve to pursue
his quest for social acceptance that leads to his demise, and the
destruction of many whom he holds dear.

Absalom, Absalom is a genuine multiple tragedy, however, with
many resolute individuals pursuing their purposes to the bitter end.
Sutpen is forced to deny any recognition to his first son, Charles Bon,
because he is one-sixteenth negro. Bon marries his half sister,
Judith, in order to revenge himself and continue to seek recognition.
Henry Sutpen, the second, all-white son, cannot accept miscegenation,
although he was previously capable of condoning incest (he had learned
that his half brother was one-sixteenth black some time after he
condoned their marriage). Ben is willing to disinherit his own son in
order to be recognized by his father. Henry murders his brother, in one of the most delicately handled scenes of the novel. It must be remembered that Charles Bon had saved his brother's life in the Civil War, if the immensity of this fratricide is to be appreciated.

Thomas Sutpen, his dynasty in ruins (for it had become public knowledge that Henry killed his half brother) is finally murdered by one of his most ardent disciples, Wash Jones, whose disillusionment leads to the act which finishes the devastation. This saga is so rich and multi-dimensional that any plot summary can only seem to be a mockery. Its most troublesome feature, in terms of the present theory, is that Thomas Sutpen's quest for social acceptability is precisely an inauthentic goal, since seeking after acceptance by "society" is the epitome of what Heidegger calls the "they-self." Yet the doggedness of his determination, a heroic quality that often allows man to succeed in spite of overwhelming odds, does call up a profound admiration in both the reader and in the main narrator, Quentin Compson. For all his moralizing, and his overdone attempt to take Sutpen's failure as an accurate microcosm of the destruction of the South, it is the determination of Thomas Sutpen's will that first attracted Quentin to the story.

Sutpen may have realized his project had it not been for Charles Bon's determination that Sutpen should recognize Bon as his son. Even then, tragedy could have been averted had it not been for the depth of Henry Sutpen's racism. The construction of *Absalom, Absalom* is ingenious for the actions of the main characters intertwine in a
fugue-like intricacy of point and counterpoint. None of the values which the protagonists pursue are particularly admirable, although Charles Bon's desire to be recognized is certainly understandable.

There is a blackness which pervades this novel, one that is reminiscent of some of the images in Macbeth. The atmosphere suggests the Attic Greek tradition of a kind of curse upon the house of Sutpen. The causes of the curse are numerous; the time-honored taboos against incest, fratricide and miscegenation are all violated at one time or another. Where O'Neill grasped for this effect in Mourning Becomes Electra, Faulkner achieved it in Absalom, Absalom.

In spite of our horror at their actions, we still esteem the depth of their passions and the resoluteness with which they pursue their goals. None of the projects of the main characters were, in themselves, self-defeating; it was just that their combination, enacted in the social milieu of the South around the time of the Civil War, proved to be inexorably fatal to all concerned.

The theme of a tragic love that stands for more than just itself is carried on in Thomas Mann's Death in Venice. The fascination that Aschenbach has for the young Tadziu is more than just the pederastic fantasy of an aging artist. Tadziu stands as the embodiment of beauty, which Aschenbach, as an artist, has been dedicated to capturing for most of his life. He also stimulates the artist's nostalgia for his lost youth, as evidenced by the ridiculous lengths Aschenbach is willing to go to appear young for the lad.
This obsession would have been relatively harmless in most situations. But when Aschenbach chooses to stay in Venice in spite of the plague that he well knows is ravaging the townspeople, he demonstrates to what lengths he is willing to go to remain in the presence of his love object. His death from this same plague is described with a kind of lyrical beauty which hearkens back to Greek myth.

In *Doctor Faustus*, this passion for beauty is not embodied in a love for a particular character, but rather is present in Leverkuhn's obsession with his music. This is one of Mann's favorite themes: the jealousy of art, with its pursuit taking on the status of a vocation that virtually requires the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. It is revealing in this connection to consider Leverkuhn's supposed interview with the devil, which takes place in an ambiguous setting that suggests it might all be the dream of a fevered mind. The devil does not come to make a proposal, but to confirm the conditions of a pact that Leverkuhn had already entered into by virtue of his dedication to his art:

> for 'tis the brain which gapes at their visitation, and looks forward expectantly, as you to mine, that it invites them to itself, draws them unto it, as though it could not bear at all to wait for them. Do you still remember? De Anima, of the philosopher: 'the acts of the person acting are performed on him previously disposed to suffer them.' There you have it; on the disposition, the readiness, the invitation, all depends.\(^{34}\)

There is one addition to the traditional pact, however; all love is to be denied Leverkuhn, for, as the devil cajoles "Do you think that
jealousy dwells in the height and not also in the depths?"

It is again left as ambiguous whether the destruction of the
three people whom he most cares for (Inez Institoris, Rudolph
Schwerdtfeger, and, most poignantly, his nephew Nepomuk) is the
result of some real "pact" or merely cruel coincidences. Yet it is
surely their loss that drives Leverkuhn mad. This madness need not
have been the necessary result of his seeking after the ultimate
expression of sadness, which culminated in his "Ode to Sorrow" based
on the Lamentations of Dr. Faustus. It was due, in large measure, to
his ever-increasing alienation from the rest of humanity, epitomized
by his unwillingness to address anyone but his boyhood friend, the
narrator Zeitbloom, with the familiar "Du." Another hypothesis of
the cause of his madness, the suggestion that he contracted venereal
disease in his only sexual encounter, could less satisfyingly but
similarly be seen as resulting from his self-imposed exile as a
composer.

The reader has probably noted that none of the candidates for
tragedy that I have discussed thus far are dramas written for the
stage. I must admit that there is hardly a proliferation of such
works in modern theater. The two that most readily come to mind are
Arthur Miller's The Crucible and Robert Bolt's A Man For All Seasons.
In the former, it is John Proctor's willingness to die rather than
admit to practicing witchcraft that makes him a character we truly
admire. His resolute defense of his innocence is but one of the
foci of the work as a whole, however, so I hesitate to call
The Crucible a tragedy.

I have no such hesitation concerning A Man For All Seasons.
Thomas More's conflict with Henry VIII is clearly the dramatic center
of this play. His willingness to die rather than sanction Henry's
marriage to Anne Boleyn is as stunning a sacrifice as any embodied
in modern literature. The effectiveness of this rather traditional
work suggests that tragedy is hardly as passé as some critics would
like to argue. One need not agree with the values a hero champions
to be moved by the spectacle of their defense.

I have argued in this chapter that the reports of the death of
tragedy have been exaggerated and (at least) premature. In the entire
history of literature there have been only two periods in which great
tragedies were produced with any degree of frequency. These were
ancient Greece and Elizabethan England, and no other historical
period witnessed such a flourishing of the tragic genre. The relative
scarcity of 20th century works that can be called tragic is hence
nothing to be so alarmed about. I hope I have demonstrated that, in
spite of this scarcity, tragedy is still relevant to the contemporary
scene. Tragedies are life-affirming experiences of human suffering,
and as such they stand in stark contrast to the life-denying
ideologies of nihilism and absurdism. I will expand on this point
in the course of my concluding remarks.
It might seem that the metatheory which was suggested in Chapter One is incompatible with my defense of the proposed theory against its philosophical predecessors. If different theories are more or less incommensurably "frameworks" or "languages" that disagree about how certain works are to be described (let alone explained or evaluated), how can one compare theories without glossing over these relevant differences? Finally, how could one ever argue that one theory was unqualifiedly superior to all the others?

Interpretation always involves what Heidegger called a "hermeneutic circle." This is to say that one begins with certain intuitions about particular works, then frames a theory to systematize these intuitions. One then applies that theory to an ever widening range of works, checking the accounts when result against the pre-theoretical intuitions one already has. The good critic or aesthetcian never becomes too self-satisfied to submit his theoretical accounts to such a test.

To begin with, then, the arguments which I have given for the superiority of my theory to its competition are only persuasive if one agrees with the descriptive claims which underlie each of the accounts.
that I have given. If one remains unconvinced by my claim that Hamlet does not vacillate, for example, one will inevitably be dissatisfied with my account of Hamlet's tragedy, which contends that he is resolute in his quest for perfect revenge.

Even a critical pluralist cannot avoid a kind of dogmatism. As R. S. Crane asserts:

There is of course an important sense in which all of us, if we are to accomplish anything in criticism or any other science, must be dogmatists. We must, that is, attach ourselves to some set of first principles in which we have faith, at least for the task at hand, and proceed to use these in the solutions of such problems as they allow us to deal with; and we cannot be required to demonstrate the "truth" of the principles we adopt any more than a physicist is required to prove that matter or atoms exist; it is enough if we are able, by working with them, to achieve positive and verifiable results of the kind we want.¹

I certainly must own up to this kind of dogmatism. Yet I am not willing to go further, and claim that my theory uncovers the "real" nature of tragedy, or that all other theories are patently false and illusory.

The central insight which motivates this pluralistic approach is a pragmatic one. That is to say that it recognizes that different critics approach literature with certain goals or purposes in mind. One can pretty accurately judge whether a particular theory succeeds or fails at attaining these goals or purposes. But no one goal, or set of goals, can be unproblematically said to be privileged. Critical approaches of the most diverse kinds can coexist without contradiction or inconsistency. Crane utilizes this point to explain why consensus among critics is so hard to reach. Quite often
apparently rival critics are not addressing the same questions.

In effect, then, all my arguments succeeded in establishing was the superiority of my theory in solving the set of problems which I had chosen to address. For example, I criticized my philosophical predecessors on the grounds that the scope of their theories was narrower than the theory that I was proposing. But the Aristotelian, for example, could respond by claiming that fruitfulness considerately outweighs the narrower scope of Aristotle's theory. Going along with the suggested interpretation, let's say that Aristotle's main purpose in framing his theory of tragedy was to demonstrate how tragedies taught their viewers not to be incontinent.² Beginning from this presupposition, it is natural that Aristotle would describe the cause of a tragic protagonist's destruction as a flaw. If this specification rules out unflawed characters as being tragic, this limitation can be justified by claiming that such a definition is fruitful in achieving the purpose of influencing the audience's behavior in desirable ways.

The above imaginary dialogue illustrates the contentions of Kuhn cited in Chapter One. Even if we agree on some set of methodological desiderata in terms of which to compare theories, no objective hierarchy of these desiderata can be justified. The respondent in such disputes need only demonstrate that his theory succeeds to a greater extent when measured by some other of the agreed upon desiderata. The absence of any such objective weighting precludes any theory from making the claim that it alone uncovers the "real"
essence of the concepts at issue. To quote again from R. S. Crane:

Any critical book or essay that makes coherent sense is a body of propositions the meaning and validity of which cannot be properly judged until we have uncovered the precise question in the critic's mind to which the proposition is intended to be the answer. This again is obvious; but what is commonly forgotten is that no question or problem, in turn, has any absolute status or insoluble meaning, but is always relative, as both its content and the conditions of its answer, to the total context in which it occurs—a context that exists independently both of "things" and of the critic himself once he has chosen or constructed it, as a particular and finite structure of terms in which the referent of any term is conditioned by the logical relation in which it stands to all the other terms, or conceptual elements, employed in the discussion, and ultimately to the special set of basic assumptions concerning subject-matter and method upon which discourse rests.3

At this juncture, it might seem that the only criterion one can unbiasedly apply to any theory is internal consistency. In a sense this is correct. Yet we cannot avoid judging theories in terms of the importance we attach to the problems which they address. For example, if we are quite concerned, in an orthodox Aristotelian spirit, with framing a definition of poetry that would isolate the poetic function from all of the other functions of language, we will be quite impressed by a theory which does just that, cutting up the pie in such a way as to correspond with our pre-theoretic intuitions. A critic of a different ilk might ask "Granted you have framed such a definition and produced a successful taxonomy. So what? What are the practical benefits of cutting up the pie this way rather than any other?" One cannot avoid having one's own hierarchy of values influence one's preferences among competing theories.
One’s hierarchy of values also naturally influence one’s pre-theoretic intuitions about tragedy. The definition which I proposed did determine a taxonomy which relegated certain groupings of works of literature to the status of pseudo-tragedies. Perhaps the most persuasive argument for the theory that I am urging is the mapping of various types of literature which results from adopting the proposed definition. If one agrees that there is a felt difference between "real" tragedies and absurdist works, or morality plays, or "victim" plays, one will tend to find the proposed theory attractive. This mapping serves a particular set of purposes, much like a relief map is helpful when one needs to know the elevation of a certain area. A highway may would serve an entirely different set of purposes, as would a map that indicated soil composition. With regards to these different kinds of maps, the question "Which is the 'real' (or 'true') map?" is unintelligible. They are just different maps, which succeed or fail at serving certain purposes. Similarly, the moralistic theory of Samuel Johnson, for example, suggests a map which does not distinguish between morality plays and tragedies. Such a theory would prove attractive to someone whose central concern in attending to literature is to glean enlightening substantive moral lessons.

The good aesthetician does not merely attempt to capture the most popular set of pre-theoretic intuitions. He is also a visionary, who (dare I say this in such a cynical age?) prescribes that his readers ought to adopt the gestalt he is framing of the phenomena his theory
addresses. The primary task is to communicate to the reader the
gestalt which the aesthetician has developed. The aesthetician also
seeks approval of this gestalt; it is only natural to seek not just
understanding but acceptance from one's auditors. In the words of
Arnold Isenberg,

...it is a function of criticism to bring about
communication at the level of the senses, that is,
to induce a sameness of vision, of experienced content.
If this is accomplished, it may or may not be followed
by agreement--a community of feeling which expresses
itself in identical value judgments.5

To put it another way, few theorists would be content to claim
merely that theirs is another way that some set of phenomena can be
attended to. It is only natural to prescribe that one's theory ought
to be adopted, because it is the "best" way of approaching those
phenomena. I am no exception, but in urging this prescription, it is
attendant upon me to once again motivate the significance of the
problems which my theory addresses, and the approach that I have
chosen to take.

In part as a response to a number of critics who have pronounced
the death of tragedy in the contemporary age, I sought to frame a
theory of tragedy that would place it in a context particularly
relevant to modern concerns. One need only look around one's
intellectual community to witness the crisis of confidence which grips
so many reflective people at the present time. Schizophrenia has
graduated from being a rare mental disorder to being the symptom of the
age. The dominant forms of serious contemporary literature are mainly
nihilistic, or at least absurdist, in tenor. Utopian literature, which could raise a hopeful banner in such times, is virtually non-existent, having little of the force of such anti-utopian masterpieces as *Brave New World* or *1984*. Perhaps we have grown too cynical to be touched by utopian visions.

Nietzsche diagnosed this trend in contemporary society over a century ago. He claimed that its cause was a fundamental value problem which stares our generation in the face, a dilemma which haunts modern man and threatens our civilization: "The end of the moral interpretation of the world...leads to nihilism. 'Everything lacks meaning'...What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate themselves. The goal is lacking; the answer is lacking to our 'Why?'" As I agree with his diagnosis, it was natural that I follow him in placing tragedy in the context of nihilism, as a kind of response to its threat.

Nietzsche also prescribed a kind of "cure" for this crisis of confidence, in a passage quoted earlier. He makes the empirical claim that "What is essential seems to be that there should be obedience over a long period of time and in a single direction." Given this resoluteness of purpose, it is Nietzsche's contention that "something always develops for whose sake it is worthwhile to live on earth." This element in Nietzsche's thought sent me off in a different direction from the one he pursues in his theory of tragedy.

It struck me that it is precisely in tragic protagonists that one finds the epitomal examples of individuals obeying some command
from themselves for a long time and in a single direction. The fact that such resoluteness ends in disaster for such figures does not destroy our admiration for their efforts. Rather, our ability to admire such figures even though they are destroyed underscores the value of such resoluteness, which shines independently of the results which it achieves. If this destruction is not to have too pessimistic an effect, however, it must be the combined result of the project the protagonist authentically pursues and the situation in which he or she finds themselves. Self-destructive projects, that would doom their agents no matter what the situation, are not the proper subject of tragedies.

What modern men most seem to lack is confidence in their ability to resolutely pursue goals over time. In our identification with tragic protagonists, we are given the distinct impression that such resoluteness is indeed humanly possible. In the absence of such identification, this impression cannot be effectively communicated.

In offering such a laudatory picture of tragic protagonists, it was obvious that I had to avoid approaches which faulted such protagonists for their role in causing their own destruction. Since the crisis of confidence in the present age is importantly grounded in a skepticism concerning particular moral systems, I could not rely on some substantive moral presuppositions which could ground my praise of such protagonists. It was for these reasons that I
placed authenticity and resoluteness, considerations which Heidegger argues are "Pre-moral", at the center of my proposed definition.

A mapping of the terrain of serious literature naturally flowed from these first principles. Tragedies are not morality plays, for the edification which the latter offer are dependent upon the acceptance of some set of substantive moral presuppositions. Martyrs and suicides could not be tragic figures, for their self-destruction did not depend importantly upon their situations. Passive figures, "victims" of various types, are not tragic because they represent examples of the problem to be dealt with, rather than pointing the way towards a solution. Absurdism represented a capitulation to the seeming impotence of the individual which is at the root of nihilism.

Let me pause for a moment on this last point. One might wish to argue that the absurd did not represent this for Camus. In fact, in _The Myth of Sisyphus_, Camus argues that the proper response to the recognition of the absurdity of life is rebellion, which steadfastly resists death and limitation. Yet the most absurd of Camus's literary creations, Merseult in _The Stranger_, adopts an indifferent attitude in which his death means little to him. In a somewhat more mature work, _The Rebel_, Camus reflects on the meaning of his former absurdism, revealing a quite different attitude from the one embodied in the _Myth_: 
The absurd is, in itself, contradiction. It is contradictory in its content because, in wanting to uphold life, it excludes all value judgments, when to live is, in itself, a value judgment. To breathe is to judge. Perhaps it is untrue to say that life is a perpetual choice. But it is true that it is impossible to imagine a life deprived of all choice. From this simplified point of view, the absurdist position, translated into action, is inconceivable. 

I would hence argue that the absurd does not represent an alternative response to the problem of nihilism, but rather a capitulation to the threat that all value judgments are meaningless.

I believe good tragedies have the best chance of any form of literature to act as an effective buttress against the threat of nihilism in the modern age. Unlike utopian literature, tragedies are never too optimistic; the high price that tragic protagonists have to pay for their authenticity precludes such an impression. Some critics, notable among them Joseph Wood Krutch, have argued that tragedy is impossible in the absence of some background system of unquestioned values. I, on the contrary, am arguing that tragedy becomes even more important to attend to in an age where such a system of values is absent.

In order to create meaning, humans must translate their beliefs in values into actions which have effects in the public world. The growing narcissism of the contemporary intellectual represents a trend diametrically opposed to the resolute pursuit of authentic projects. Tragic protagonists provide archetypes of such convicted action, demonstrating their autonomous value by cutting them off from the promise of success. In our success-oriented age, the importance
of resolute action becomes easily obscured. The experience of tragedy explodes the naive attitude that the only worthwhile project is a successful one. This attitude leads contemporary men to be too easily discouraged by failure. Only in overcoming this attitude will we find an acceptance of the difficulty of life that is so essential in adapting to a universe which is indifferent to our purposes.
FOOTNOTES

Introduction


Chapter One


4. *op cit*, Kuhn, *Structure*, p. 44.

5. *op cit*, Kuhn, *Tension*, p. 324. He continues: "Copernicus' system offered no labor saving devices; in that sense it was not simpler than Ptolemy's. If one asked about the mathematical apparatus needed to explain the gross qualitative features of the motions of the planets...in that sense, the Copernican theory was simpler."


9. With the obvious difference that in the case of the duck-rabbit it is also possible merely to see the configuration of lines on paper. There is no such objective referent in the case of two competing scientific theories.


11. Alan Hausman, "Non-Euclidean Geometry and Consistency Proofs" in Machamer and Turnbull, ed., \textit{Motion and Time, Space and Matter}.

12. See footnote 17 in the Postscript to \textit{Structure} discussed above.

13. \textit{Ibid}, p. 44.


18. In this case, Kuhn contends it was the need for an accurate calendar, which arose in part as a result of newly burgeoning maritime trade, that served as a catalyst for the Copernican revolution. \textit{Structure}, p. 69.


Chapter Two

A.

1. Aristotle's was the only univocal paradigm in the history of tragic criticism. In the last three centuries, there has been a proliferation of candidates to replace it, but none of them have attained the acclaim of even a majority of the critics.


3. Aristotle, Poetics, trans. by Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 1449b. Further references to this text will be followed by the Greek pagination from which they are taken.

4. Else insists that this stricture is not meant to apply to the time as depicted in the play, but rather to the duration of the performance of the play. Such plays as the Agamemnon and Eumenides, for example, depict actions which take several days to complete. op cit, Else, pp. 213-16.

5. He mentions only Creon and Haemon, in his discussion of a certain type of plot, at 1454b.

6. The most pointed references to this issue are in Book X, 595a-608b. Quoted selections are taken from the Jowett translation of this section.

7. op cit, Else, p. 227, note 19.

8. Ibid, same pagination.

10. Ibid, p. 236.

11. op cit, Bywater, 1449b. See also Butcher's translation.

12. op cit, Else, p. 221.


14. Ibid, p. 411. He continues: "This could be either or both of two things: the aesthetic or purely dramatic qualities of the plot, its arrangement, length, continuity and unity—in short, its beauty as a work of art—or the fact that it is imitation and not life itself." This account seems insufficient in answering the question of what causes the pleasure which is peculiar to tragedy, and which it does not share with other art forms.

15. I am indebted for this interesting suggestion to Dr. Robert Turnbull.

B.


2. Ibid, p. 296.


4. Ibid, p. 47.

5. Ibid, p. 70.


7. Ibid, p. 49.


10. Ibid, p. 70.
13. Ibid, p. 79.
15. Ibid, p. 83.
16. Ibid, p. 84.

C.

1. Most notably in a later work The Case Against Wagner.

2. Since individuality was illusionary, i.e. mere appearance, Nietzsche considered Apollo, symbol of individuation, to be the deity of appearance. The Dionysian was then taken to stand for the true nature of the cosmos; one, unified, striving Will.


4. Ibid, p. 29.
5. Ibid, p. 35.
7. Ibid, same pagination.
8. Ibid, p. 22.


Chapter Three


Chapter Four

A.


2. cf. Chapter II, section A.

4. Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, Albert Cook, trans., in *op cit*, Lind, lines 180-85. Further references to this work will again be followed by the line numbers from which they are taken.

5. Sophocles, *Oedipus as Colonus*, lines 265-70.

6. See also my discussion of the *Poetics*, Chapter II, section A above.


8. Sophocles, *Antigone*, Shaemas O'Sheel, trans., in *op cit*, Lind, lines 691-99. Again, further references will be followed by the line numbers from which they are taken.

9. Antigone accuses him of this in lines 512-23:
   Antigone: There is nothing shameful in piety to a brother.
   Creon: Was it not a brother also who died in a good cause?
   A: The dead will not look upon it that way.
   C: Yes, if you honor the wicked equally with the virtuous.
   A: It was his brother, and not his slave, that died.
   C: One perished ravaging his fatherland, the other defending it.
   A: Nevertheless, Hades desires these rites.
   C: Surely the good are not pleased to be made equal with the evil!
   A: Who knows how the gods see good and evil?
   C: A foe is never a friend, even in death.

10. cf. My discussion of Hegel, Chapter II, section B.


**B.**


2. G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare, Othello*, Act II, scene iii. Further references to this text will be followed by the act and scene numbers from which they are taken.
3. For an extended discussion of this point, see A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Books, 1956), Lecture V.

4. This was also considered the proper punishment for fornication. See also Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.


10. Ibid, p. 94.


13. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *op cit*, Evans, act one, scene seven. Further references to this work will be followed by the act and scene numbers from which they are taken.


15. William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, in *op cit*, Evans, act one, scene one. Again, further references to this work will be followed by the act and scene numbers from which they are taken.


C.


2. Ibid, p. 11.


8. Ibid, p. 45.
10. op cit, Ivanov, p. 98.
11. op cit, Gide, p. 103.
15. op cit, Gide, p. 98.
18. op cit, Ivanov, p. 98.
19. op cit, Gide, pp. 113-14.
20. op cit, The Idiot, p. 474.
25. op cit, Mochulsky, pp. 352-53.
D.


3. It is an interesting coincidence that these are the plays that Bentley considers Ibsen to have succeeded in "Recreating a sort of tragic hero..." Ibid, p. 32.


5. Ibid, p. 156.


8. Ibid, p. 162.


E.

1. Freidrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Section 188.

2. Many commentators have questioned her choice of Osmond as being artificial, but this is uncharitable, as anyone who has experienced the early stages of courtship can attest.

6. Ibid, p. 64
15. See Section II.c. of this volume.
17. op cit, Muller, p. 273.


30. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, in the essay "Nature, Humanism, Tragedy", p. 61. It is particularly interesting that he goes on to claim that the absurdism of Camus and early Sartre are the most modern examples of the "fatal complicity" which, to him, tragedy embodies. (New York: Grove Press, 1965).


33. In much of this summary I am indebted to C. K. Hillegass, who compiled the Cliff's Notes edition on *Absalom, Absalom* (Lincoln: Cliffs Notes, 1970), especially pp. 29-38.

Chapter Five


2. See pg. 46, footnote 15 above.

3. op cit, Crane, pp. 10-11.

4. Nelson Goodman makes a similar point vis-a-vis ultimate metaphysical world views in Problems and Projects, "The Ways the World is."


7. Freidrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, section 188, in "Natural History of Morals."


Euripides. The Bacchae. Translated by William Arrowsmith in Euripides V. David Greene and Richard Lattimore, eds.


