
i volti del tragico

forme e metamorfosi della tragedia

a cura di

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Abstracts

MARCELLO GHILARDI

The specificity of tragedy. On certain aspects of the “drama” between Greece and China

The essay examines the concept of “tragic” by comparing the ancient Greek tradition of tragedy with elements of some classical Chinese dramas. It argues that there is an inextricable link between the Western philosophical tradition and the dimension of the tragic, as philosophy has repeatedly grappled with themes raised by the great Greek tragedians such as fate, freedom, identity, and the human relationship to the divine. The core of Greek tragedy seems to lie in an agonistic tension between human and divine law, time and eternity, freedom and necessity. By contrast, classical Chinese thought does not radically separate realms like physics and metaphysics or temporality and eternity. Daoism, in particular, advocates a de-individuation by the human subject into the spontaneous flow of the Dao: death and loss are to be seen not as lacerating traumas but as natural dissolutions to be accepted with equanimity. Moreover, it is suggested that the grammatical structures of Indo-European languages may have facilitated the emergence of certain tragic themes in the Greek and Western perspectives.

Keywords: Tragedy, Drama, Greece, China, Sorrow.

SILVIA GULLINO

*Tragedy and beauty in Aristotle’s Poetics:
the systasis ton pragmaton in Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex*

In *Poetics*, Aristotle defines beauty by linking it to the notions of unity, order and conformity to an end. According to him, *mythos* constitutes the «soul of tragedy» and, in order to have a beautiful tragedy, a perfect plot is necessary. Therefore, in his interpretation of tragic beauty, there is an aesthetic conception of tragedy as a well-structured work of art. This study analyse the theme of aesthetic beauty in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, in order to explore its relevance as a necessary effect of a good *systasis ton pragmaton*, that is a good composition of events. In particular, the study tests Aristotle’s thesis on the coincidence between perfect tragedy and beautiful composition of events, focusing on the structural

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device of recognition (*anagnorisis*). Furthermore, by analysing key-passages from *Poetics* 16 and paying attention to Aristotle's remarks on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the study will assess whether *anagnorisis* can be interpreted as a point of convergence between dramatic structure and aesthetic value.

Keywords: Aristotle, *Poetics*, *Systasis ton pragmaton*, Recognition, Tragedy.

EMMA LAVINIA BON

Archaic Roots of the Tragic. On Sacrifice, Karman, and Violence

This essay traces the archaic roots of Greek tragedy to primordial sacrificial practices and a universal compensatory mechanism of violence and retribution, for which Indian tradition provides a key conceptual model in the doctrine of *karman*. It argues that tragedy emerges from the ritual management of guilt inherent in killing, a logic where every action demands a compensating reaction. While the *polis* relies on this "comedy of innocence" to purify violence, tragedy simultaneously exposes it by staging the hero's refusal to consent to their sacrificial role. Finally, the work contrasts the Greek tragic vision – where the individual is trapped in an unbreakable cycle of action and retribution – with the mystical soteriological path aimed at liberation from that very cycle.

Keywords: Greek Tragedy, Sacrifice, Violence, *Karman*, Archaic Thought.

ALESSANDRO BIDDAU

The Other Form of Logos: Hölderlin Between Madness and Tragedy

This paper aims to investigate the correspondence between Hölderlin's writings on the tragic – understood as the *logos* of infinite laceration – and his madness. In fact, the latter appears to the author as a *mise en pratique* of the poet's speculative achievements on the theme of tragedy, which is so central in that it reveals (better than the more strictly philosophical discourse) the metaphysical principle. Therefore, Hölderlin's thinking is accompanied by an interpretation of direct testimonies of his mental state during the years in the tower, which allows us to identify a coherence between the theoretical and existential planes. In accordance with the *Verstehen* professed by Dilthey, the aim is to convey to the reader the singularity of Hölderlin's experience, in which thought becomes – before Nietzsche – incarnate thought.

Keywords: Tragedy, Destiny, Madness, Parataxis, Laceration.

ALBERTO GIACOMELLI

Rebirths: Nietzsche and Lukács as Interpreters of Tragedy

This essay traces the origins of Attic tragedy as a religious-civic art form rooted in Dionysian ritual and later theorized through modern aesthetics. After outlining its emergence from dithyrambic chorus, satyric elements, and the apollinean-dionysian polarity, the study examines Nietzsche's early writings, where the decline of tragedy is provocatively linked to Socratism and to a rationalistic distortion of the Greek spirit. It then explores

the polemic with Wilamowitz and the critique of antiquarian historicism developed in Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*. Finally, it considers how early Lukács, influenced by Nietzsche and Simmel, reinterprets the tragic as a trans-historical and existential form. Some fundamental differences between ancient tragedy and modern drama are also highlighted. The tragic thus appears as a dynamic site of renewal, shaped by shifting conceptions of history, life, and aesthetic form.

Keywords: Attic Tragedy, Socratism, Destiny, Modern Drama, History.

SIMONE ZACCHINI

The Unexpected Visitor.

Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of the Tragic in Luchino Visconti's Ossessione

This article proposes an interpretation of Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (1943) through the conceptual lens of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. By analysing the film through the categories of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the study argues for its status as a modern refiguration of Attic tragedy. *Ossessione* articulates a philosophy of the tragic, in which the characters emerge as symbolic figures of an archaic myth centered on Dionysus. At the same time, the film serves as a site of aesthetic mediation in which the tragic paradigm is both embodied and rearticulated within modernity. In this respect, *Ossessione* constitutes a decisive moment in Visconti's aesthetic project, exemplifying the cinematic figuration of myth, while simultaneously diverging from James M. Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and from its more canonical cinematic adaptations.

Keywords: Tragedy, Apollonian and Dionysian, Cinema, Aesthetics, Visconti.

GIOVANNI GURISATTI

The Danger That Saves.

Benjamin, Heidegger, and the Aesth/Ethical Paradox of the Tragic/Messianic

There is no need to demonstrate that Benjamin and Heidegger are profoundly different thinkers, in many respects – first and foremost in terms of their political positioning and philosophical method. Nonetheless, they both belong to the same “state of exception” epoch and share its *Zeitgeist*, marked by a tight interweaving of nihilistic and messianic tensions. These overt differences, therefore, do not obscure certain decisive structural affinities between their perspectives. One of the most emblematic loci where such affinities emerge is the phenomenon of the *tragic*, which both authors interpret in complex, polar terms – as a paradoxical relation in which the height of danger corresponds to the emergence of a possible chance for salvation. In Heidegger's case in particular, this leads to a tragic-messianic reading of the question of technics, which bears the greatest peril of nihilism (the oblivion of being) and yet simultaneously harbors the possibility of a *Verwindung* of technics upon itself. In this momentary turning, the Event shines forth a possible overcoming of nihilism toward a New Beginning, in which the human-being relation appears radically transformed in favor of being.

Keywords: Tragic, Danger, Messianism, Technology, Nihilism.

KATSUYA AKITOMI

Heidegger and Greek Tragedy. On the Basis of His Interpretation of King Oedipus

This essay examines Martin Heidegger's interpretation of *Oedipus Tyrannus* through his engagement with Hölderlin's enigmatic verse «Oedipus the King has perhaps one eye too many». Rather than analysing Sophocles' tragedy directly, Heidegger approaches Oedipus via Hölderlin's poetry and commentary, using it to illuminate his own thinking on the essence and danger of language, the nature of truth as unconcealment, and the primordial tension between Being and seeming (*Schein*). In Heidegger's view, Oedipus embodies the Greek passion for disclosure: his excessive «eye» signifies an originary drive toward knowing that ultimately brings him into destructive proximity with the divine. The essay traces how this passion unfolds as a struggle between revealing and concealing, culminating in Oedipus's self-blinding as both fate and existential act. By situating the tragedy within Heidegger's broader reflections on language, truth, and the Greek inception, the study clarifies why *Oedipus Tyrannus* becomes, for Heidegger, the exemplary «tragedy of *Schein*».

Keywords: Heidegger, Oedipus Tyrannus, Hölderlin, *Schein*, *Aletheia*.

REINHOLD BERNHARDT

The Experience of the Tragic as a Challenge for Theology

The essay examines the “tragic” not mainly as an art form (tragedy), but as lived situations marked by deep suffering, contingent necessity, insoluble conflict, and perceived meaninglessness. Unlike philosophical “pantragicism” (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche), which sees all reality as tragic, it treats tragic experience as exceptional and specific. Theologically, Christianity has often neutralized the tragic by subsuming it into God's creation order, Christ's saving work, and eschatological hope. These three core beliefs affirm that all reality has ultimate meaning, risking a dismissal of genuinely senseless suffering. Bernhardt argues theology must take the tragic's abyss seriously without collapsing into nihilism. He interprets Jesus' passion – especially the cry of abandonment – as an authentically tragic, even senseless event, only later given meaning by resurrection faith. Resurrection does not retroactively erase the senselessness but can open space for new life. Christian hope should not prematurely “solve” the tragic but hold it alongside God's promise.

Keywords: Tragic Experience, Tragedy, Philosophical Pantragicism, God's Creation, Jesus' Passion, Eschatological Hope.

ANDREA MECACCI

Mimesis praxeos. Tragic Variations in Julian Beck and Friedrich Hölderlin

The essay aims to analyze the theoretical proposal of Julian Beck, founder of the Living Theatre, showing how his reflections on theater have many similarities with Friedrich Hölderlin's philosophy of the tragic. Taking as its historical reference the Living Theatre's production of Brecht's version of *Antigone*, which was based on Hölderlin's translation, the essay explores a number of theoretical issues: the link, developed by Aristotle and Artaud, between *mimesis praxeos* and *katharsis*; the relationship with Greek tragedy and the

need to explore the unexpressed areas present in the classical tragic text; the fundamental connection between aesthetics and ethics that Beck places at the center of the theatrical experience and which, in Hölderlin, takes on the features of a philosophy of history in the notion of overcoming of classicism.

Keywords: Living Theatre, Hölderlin, *Mimesis*, *Katharsis*, Aesthetics of the Tragic.

ENRICO FONGARO

Obsession with the Tragic. An Attempt at Interpreting Nō Theatre

This essay explores the presence of the “tragic” within *nō* theatre by comparing its narrative structures and ritual origins to those of Greek tragedy. While *nō* shares with tragedy an archaic ritual matrix and a focus on suffering, its tragic dimension emerges most clearly in the *mugen nō*, where ghosts return to reenact unresolved trauma. Drawing on Simone Weil’s notion of the “force” that reduces human beings to objects, the essay argues that *nō*’s warriors and women embody a specifically spectral tragicity: not the anticipation of death, but its endless repetition. Through this lens, the essay highlights the peculiar coexistence in Zeami’s work of irredeemable human suffering and fleeting moments of *yūgen*, where aesthetic experience briefly suspends the tyranny of force.

Keywords: *Nō* Theatre, Tragic, Simone Weil, Ghost, *Yūgen*.