

EITHER/OR

PART I

by Søren Kierkegaard

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with Introduction and Notes by

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**THE TRAGIC IN ANCIENT DRAMA
REFLECTED IN THE TRAGIC IN MODERN DRAMA**

A VENTURE IN FRAGMENTARY ENDEAVOR

Delivered before the
Συμπαρανεκρόμενοι
[Fellowship of the Dead]¹

If someone were to say: The tragic, after all, is always the tragic, I would not have very much to urge to the contrary, inasmuch as every historical development always lies within the sphere of the concept. On the assumption that his words have meaning and that the twice-repeated word "tragic" is not intended to form meaningless parentheses around an empty nothing, then his meaning might very well be that the content of the concept did not dethrone the concept but enriched it. On the other hand, it can scarcely have escaped the attention of any observer that there is an essential difference between the tragic, ancient and modern—something that the reading and theater-going public already considers its legal possession as its dividend from the enterprises of the experts in the art. But if, in turn, someone were to affirm the distinction absolutely and, on the basis of it, at first slyly and later perhaps forcibly press this distinction between the tragic in ancient and in modern drama, his behavior would be no less unreasonable than the first person's, since he would [forget] that the foothold so indispensable to him was the tragic itself. This in turn would be so far from distinguishing between the tragic ancient and modern that, contrariwise, it would combine them. Indeed, it must be as a warning against every such one-sided effort to separate that estheticians² always return to the definitions of and requirements for the tragic established by Aristotle³ as exhausting the concept. It must be as a warning, and all the more so since everyone must be gripped by a certain sadness because no matter how much the world has changed, the idea of the tragic is still essentially unchanged, just as weeping still continues to be equally natural to humankind.

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As reassuring as this might seem to one who does not want any separation, least of all any break, the same difficulty that has just been dismissed appears in another and almost more dangerous form. That there is still a continual return to Aris-

totelian esthetics, not simply because of dutiful deference or old habit, will surely be admitted by anyone who has any acquaintance with modern esthetics⁴ and by this is convinced of the scrupulous attachment to the salient points that were advanced by Aristotle⁵ and that are still continually in force in modern esthetics. But as soon as one examines them a little more closely, the difficulty appears at once. The definitions are of a very general kind, and one can very well agree with Aristotle in a way and yet in another sense disagree with him.

In order not to enter prematurely into the content of the following exposition by mentioning examples here, I prefer to illustrate my opinion by making a parallel observation with regard to comedy. If an ancient esthetician had said that the presuppositions of comedy are character and situation and that its aim is to arouse laughter, then one could very well return to this again and again, but as soon as one pondered how different the causes of laughter are, one would soon be convinced of what an enormous range this requirement has. Anyone who has ever made the laughter of others and his own the object of observation, who has had in mind, as in this project, not so much the accidental as the universal, who has perceived with psychological interest how different the occasion of laughter is at every age—that person will readily be convinced that the unchangeable requirement for comedy, that it must arouse laughter, in itself implies a high degree of changeableness in relation to the ideas of the laughable in the varying world consciousness, yet without this difference being so diffuse that the corresponding expression in the somatic functions would be that laughter would manifest itself in weeping. It is the same with respect to the tragic.

That which, generally speaking, should be the content of this little exploration will not be so much the relation between the tragic in ancient and in modern drama as it will be an attempt to show how the characteristic feature of the tragic in ancient drama is incorporated in the tragic in modern drama in such a way that what is truly tragic will become apparent. But however much I shall try to make it apparent, I shall abstain from any prophecy that this is what the times demand; there-

fore its becoming apparent will be devoid of consequence, and all the more so since the whole age is working more toward the comic. To a degree, existence [*Tilværelse*] is undermined by the subjects' doubt; 'isolation continually gains the upper hand more and more, something that can best be ascertained by paying attention to the multifarious social endeavors. That they seek to counteract the isolating efforts of the age is just as much a demonstration of the isolation as is the unreasonable way they seek to counteract it. Isolation always consists in asserting oneself as number; when one wants to assert oneself as one, this is isolation; all the friends of associations will surely agree with me on that, without therefore being able or willing to see that it is altogether the same isolation when a hundred assert themselves simply and solely as a hundred. Number is always indifferent to itself, and it makes absolutely no difference whether it is 1 or 1,000, or all the inhabitants of the world defined merely numerically. In principle, then, this association-mentality is just as revolutionary as the mentality it wants to counteract. When David really wanted to feel his power and glory, he had his people counted;⁷ in our age, however, it may be said that the people, in order to feel their significance over against a superior power, count themselves. But all these associations bear the stamp of arbitrariness and most often are formed for some accidental purpose, whose lord and master, of course, is the association.

These numerous associations, therefore, demonstrate the disintegration of the age and themselves contribute to speeding it up; they are the infusoria in the organism of the state that indicate that it has disintegrated. When was it that the hetairias⁸ became common in Greece except at the time when the state was in the process of disintegration? And does not our age have a striking likeness to that age, which not even Aristophanes could make more ludicrous than it actually was? Has not the bond that in the political sense held the states together, invisibly and spiritually, dissolved; has not the power in religion that insisted upon the invisible been weakened and destroyed; do not our statesmen and clergymen have this in

common, that they, like the augurs of old, cannot look at one another without smiling?⁹

A feature in which our age certainly excels that age in Greece is that our age is more depressed and therefore deeper in despair. Thus, our age is sufficiently depressed to know that there is something called responsibility and that this means something. Therefore, although everyone wants to rule, no one wants to have responsibility. It is still fresh in our memory that a French statesman, when offered a portfolio the second time, declared that he would accept it but on the condition that the secretary of state be made responsible.¹⁰ It is well known that the king in France is not responsible, but the prime minister is; the prime minister does not wish to be responsible but wants to be prime minister provided that the secretary of state will be responsible; ultimately it ends, of course, with the watchmen or street commissioners becoming responsible. Would not this inverted story of responsibility be an appropriate subject for Aristophanes! On the other hand, why are the government and the governors so afraid of assuming responsibility, unless it is because they fear an opposition party that in turn continually pushes away responsibility on a similar scale. When one imagines these two powers face to face with each other but unable to catch hold of each other because the one is always disappearing and is replaced by the other, the one merely appearing in the role of the other—such a situation would certainly not be without comic power.

This indeed shows adequately that what really holds the state together has disintegrated, but the isolation resulting from this is naturally comic, and the comic consists in subjectivity's wanting to assert itself as pure form. Every isolated person always becomes comic by wanting to assert his accidentality over against the necessity of the process. No doubt it would be profoundly comic to have an accidental individual hit upon the universal idea of wanting to be the world's liberator. Christ's appearance, however, is in a certain sense the most profound tragedy (in another sense it is infinitely much more), because Christ came in the fullness of time and bore the

sin of the whole world—something that I shall particularly stress in connection with what follows.

It is generally known that Aristotle gives two sources for action in tragedy, *διάνοια καὶ ἦθος* [thought and character],¹¹ but he also notes that the primary factor is the *τέλος* [end, purpose] and the individuals do not act in order to present characters; rather these are included for the sake of action. Here it is easy to perceive a difference from modern tragedy.¹² What specifically characterizes ancient tragedy is that the action does not proceed only from character, that the action is not subjectively reflected enough, but that the action itself has a relative admixture of suffering. Ancient tragedy, therefore, did not develop dialogue to the point of exhaustive reflection with everything merged in it; the distinct components of dialogue are actually present in the monologue and chorus. Whether the chorus comes closer to epic substantiality or to the lyrical *élan*, it nevertheless seems to provide “the more,” so to speak, that will not merge in the individuality; the monologue, in turn, has a more lyrical concentration and has “the more” that will not merge in action and situation. In ancient tragedy, the action itself has an epic element; it is just as much event as action. This, of course, is because the ancient world did not have subjectivity reflected in itself.¹³ Even if the individual moved freely, he nevertheless rested in substantial determinants, in the state, the family, in fate. This substantial determinant is the essential fateful factor in Greek tragedy and is its essential characteristic. The hero’s downfall, therefore, is not a result solely of his action but is also a suffering, whereas in modern tragedy the hero’s downfall is not really suffering but is a deed. Thus, in the modern period situation and character are in fact predominant. The tragic hero is subjectively reflected in himself, and this reflection has not only reflected him out of every immediate relation to state, kindred, and fate but often has even reflected him out of his own past life. What concerns us is a certain specific element of his life as his own deed. For this reason, the tragic can be exhausted in situation and lines because no immediacy is left at all. Therefore, modern tragedy has no

epic foreground, no epic remainder. The hero stands and falls entirely on his own deeds.

What is here briefly but sufficiently developed will have its importance in explaining a difference between ancient and modern tragedy that I regard as very important—the different nature of tragic guilt. It is well known that Aristotle insists that the tragic hero have ἀμαρτία [error].¹⁴ But just as the action in Greek tragedy is something intermediate between action and the suffering, so also is guilt, and therein lies the tragic collision. But the more the subjectivity is reflective, the more Pelagianly¹⁵ one sees the individual thrown solely upon himself, the more ethical guilt becomes. Between these two extremes lies the tragic. If the individual has no guilt whatever, the tragic interest is annulled, for in that case the tragic collision is enervated. On the other hand, if he has absolute guilt, he no longer interests us tragically. It is, therefore, surely a misunderstanding of the tragic when our age endeavors to have everything fateful transubstantiate itself into individuality and subjectivity. We want to know nothing about the hero's past; we load his whole life upon his shoulders as his own deed, make him accountable for everything, but in so doing we also transform his esthetic guilt into ethical guilt. In this way, the tragic hero becomes bad, evil actually becomes the tragic subject, but evil has no esthetic interest, and sin is not an esthetic element.

This misguided enterprise may somehow have its basis in the working of the whole age toward the comic. The comic lies precisely in the isolation; when one wants to affirm the tragic within this isolation, one has evil in its badness, not the authentic tragic guilt in its ambiguous guiltlessness.

It is not difficult to find examples if one looks at modern literature. For example, the work by Grabbe, *Faust und Don Juan*¹⁶ (in many ways a work of genius), is built upon evil. But, rather than to argue on the basis of a single work, I prefer to show it in the common consciousness of the whole contemporary age. If one wanted to depict an individual whose unfortunate childhood had played such havoc with him that these impressions caused his downfall, such a thing would have no

appeal at all to the present age—not, of course, because it was poorly done, for I take the liberty of assuming it was excellently done, but because this age applies another standard. It will have nothing to do with such coddling; it automatically makes the individual responsible for his life. Consequently, if the individual succumbs, this is not tragic, but it is bad. One would think that the generation in which I have the honor of living must be a kingdom of gods. But this is by no means so; the vigor, the courage, that wants to be the creator of its own good fortune in this way, indeed, its own creator, is an illusion, and when the age loses the tragic, it gains despair. In the tragic there is implicit a sadness and a healing that one indeed must not disdain, and when someone wishes to gain himself in the superhuman way our age tries to do it, he loses himself⁷ and becomes comic. Every individual, however original he is, is still a child of God, of his age, of his nation, of his family, of his friends, and only in them does he have his truth. If he wants to be the absolute in all this, his relativity, then he becomes ludicrous. In languages, there is sometimes found a word that because of its context is so frequently used in a specific case that it eventually becomes, if you please, independent as an adverb in this case.¹⁸ For the experts such a word has once and for all an accent and a flaw that it never lives down; if, then, this notwithstanding, it should claim to be a substantive and demand to be declined in all five cases, it would be genuinely comic. So it goes with the individual also when he, perhaps extracted from the womb of time laboriously enough, wants to be absolute in this enormous relativity. But if he surrenders this claim, is willing to be relative, then he *eo ipso* has the tragic, even if he were the happiest individual—indeed, I would say the individual is not happy until he has the tragic.

Intrinsically, the tragic is infinitely gentle; esthetically it is to human life what divine grace and compassion are; it is even more benign, and therefore I say that it is a motherly love that lulls the troubled one. The ethical is rigorous and hard. Therefore, if a criminal before the judge wants to excuse himself by saying that his mother had a propensity for stealing, especially during the time she was pregnant with him, the judge obtains

the health officer's opinion of his mental condition and decides that he is dealing with a thief and not with the thief's mother. Insofar as the issue here is a crime, the sinner certainly cannot flee into the temple of esthetics, but nevertheless it will indeed have a mitigating word for him. But it would be wrong for him to seek refuge there, for his path takes him to the religious, not to the esthetic. The esthetic lies behind him, and it would be a new sin on his part to seize the esthetic now. The religious is the expression for fatherly love, for it embraces the ethical, but it is mitigated, and by what means—by the very same means that give the tragic its gentleness, by means of continuity. But although the esthetic provides this repose before sin's profound discrepancy is asserted, the religious does not provide it until this discrepancy is seen in all its frightfulness. At the very moment the sinner almost swoons under the universal sin that he has taken upon himself because he felt simply that the more guilty he became the greater would be the prospect of being saved, at that same dreadful moment he has the consoling thought that it is universal sinfulness that has asserted itself also in him. But this comfort is a religious comfort, and anyone who thinks he can attain it in any other way, by esthetic volatilization, for example, has taken the comfort in vain, and he actually does not have it. In a certain sense, therefore, it is a very appropriate discretion on the part of the age to want to make the individual responsible for everything; the trouble is that it does not do it profoundly and inwardly enough, and hence its half-measures. It is conceited enough to disdain the tears of tragedy, but it is also conceited enough to want to do without mercy. And what, after all, is human life, the human race, when these two things are taken away? Either the sadness of the tragic or the profound sorrow and profound joy of religion. Or is this not the striking feature of everything that originates in that happy people¹⁹—a depression of spirit, a sadness in their art, in their poetry, in their life, in their joy?

In the foregoing discussion, I have especially sought to stress the difference between ancient and modern tragedy insofar as it is apparent in the difference in the guilt of the tragic hero. This is the real focal point from which everything ema-

nates in its specific difference. If the hero is unequivocally guilty, monologue vanishes, fate vanishes; then thought is transparent in dialogue, and action in situation. The same thing may be stated from another side—namely, from the perspective of the mood that the tragedy evokes. It is well known that Aristotle maintains that tragedy should arouse fear and compassion [*Medlidenhed*] in the spectator.²⁰ I recall that Hegel in his *Aesthetics*²¹ picks up this comment and on each of these points makes a double observation, which, however, is not very exhaustive. When Aristotle distinguishes between fear and compassion, one presumably could rather think of the fear as the mood accompanying the particular and of the compassion as the mood that is the definitive impression. This latter mood is the one I have particularly in mind because it is the one corresponding to tragic guilt and therefore also has the same implicit dialectic as that concept. On this point, Hegel notes that there are two kinds of compassion, the usual kind that turns its attention to the finite side of suffering, and the truly tragic compassion. This observation is altogether correct but to me of less importance, since that universal emotion is a misunderstanding that can befall modern tragedy just as much as ancient tragedy. But what he adds with regard to true compassion is true and powerful: “das wahrhafte Mitleiden ist im Gegenteil die Sympathie mit der zugleich sittlichen Berechtigung des Leidenden [true sympathy, on the contrary, is an accordant feeling with the ethical claim at the same time associated with the sufferer]” (III, p. 531).²²

Whereas Hegel considers compassion more in general and its differentiation in the difference of individualities, I prefer to stress the difference in compassion in relation to the difference in tragic guilt. To indicate this difference at once, I shall separate the *Lidende* [suffering] in the word *Medlidenhed* [compassion] and add in each instance the sympathy implicit in the prefix *med* [with], yet in such a way that I do not come to predicate something about the spectator's mood that could indicate his arbitrariness, but in such a way that in expressing the difference in his mood I also convey the difference in the tragic guilt. In ancient tragedy, the sorrow is more profound, the pain less;

in modern tragedy, the pain is greater, the sorrow less. Sorrow always has in it something more substantial²³ than pain. Pain always indicates a reflection upon the suffering that sorrow does not know. Psychologically, it is very interesting to observe a child when he sees an adult suffer. ²⁴The child is not sufficiently reflective to feel pain, and yet his sorrow is infinitely deep. He is not sufficiently reflective to have an idea of sin and guilt; when he sees an adult suffer, it does not cross his mind to think about that, and yet if the reason for the suffering is hidden from him, there is a dark presentiment of the reason in the child's sorrow. So it is also, but in complete and deep harmony, with the sorrow of the Greeks, and that is why it is simultaneously so gentle and so deep. On the other hand, when an adult sees a young person, a child, suffer, the pain is greater, the sorrow less. The more pronounced the idea of guilt, the greater the pain, the less profound the sorrow.

Applying this now to the relation between ancient and modern tragedy, one may say: In ancient tragedy, the sorrow is more profound, and in the corresponding consciousness the sorrow is more profound. It must continually be kept in mind that this is not in me but in the tragedy and that, in order to understand properly the profound sorrow in Greek tragedy, I must live into the Greek consciousness. Therefore, when so many admire Greek tragedy, it no doubt is often just parroting, for it is obvious that our age at least has no great sympathy for what is the truly Greek sorrow. The sorrow is more profound because the guilt has esthetic ambiguity. In modern times, the pain is greater. One could say of Greek tragedy that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.²⁵ The wrath of the gods is terrible, but still the pain is not as great as in modern tragedy, where the hero suffers his total guilt, is transparent to himself in his suffering of his guilt.

It is appropriate at this point to show, as with tragic guilt, which sorrow is true esthetic sorrow and which is true esthetic pain. The most bitter pain is obviously repentance, but repentance has ethical, not esthetic, reality [*Realitet*].²⁶ It is the most bitter pain because it has the complete transparency of the total guilt, but precisely because of this transparency it

does not interest esthetically. Repentance has a holiness that eclipses the esthetic. It does not want to be seen, least of all by a spectator, and requires an altogether different kind of self-activity. To be sure, modern comedy has at times brought repentance onto the stage, but this only betrays a lack of judgment in the author. One is indeed reminded of the psychological interest there can be in seeing repentance depicted, but again psychological interest is not the esthetic. This is part of the confusion that manifests itself in so many ways in our day: something is sought where one should not seek it; and what is worse, it is found where one should not find it. One wishes to be edified in the theater, to be esthetically stimulated in church; one wishes to be converted by novels, to be entertained by devotional books; one wishes to have philosophy in the pulpit and a preacher on the lecture platform. This pain, then, is not esthetic pain, and yet it is obviously that which the present age is working toward as the supreme tragic interest.

This also turns out to be the case with tragic guilt. Our age has lost all the substantial categories of family, state, kindred;²⁷ it must turn the single individual over to himself completely in such a way that, strictly speaking, he becomes his own creator. Consequently his guilt is sin, his pain repentance, but thereby the tragic is canceled. Furthermore, suffering tragedy in the stricter sense has essentially lost its tragic interest, for the power that is the source of the suffering has lost its meaning, and the spectator shouts: Help yourself, and heaven will help you—in other words, the spectator has lost compassion, but in a subjective and also in an objective sense compassion is the authentic expression of the tragic.

For the sake of clarity, before developing this exposition further, I shall define a little more explicitly true esthetic sorrow. Sorrow and pain move in opposite directions. If one does not want to spoil this by a foolish consistency (something that I shall prevent in also another way), one may say: The greater the guiltlessness, the greater the sorrow. If this is insisted upon, the tragic will be canceled. An element of guilt always remains, but this element is not actually reflected subjectively; this is why the sorrow in Greek tragedy is so profound. To

forestall premature conclusions, I shall just point out that overstatements result only in shifting the issue over into another realm. The unity of absolute guiltlessness and absolute guilt is not an esthetic category but a metaphysical one.

The real reason people have always had scruples about calling the life of Christ a tragedy is that they felt that esthetic categories do not exhaust the matter. That the life of Christ is something more than can be exhausted in esthetic categories is apparent also in another way—namely, that these neutralize themselves in this phenomenon and are rendered inconsequential. Tragic action always contains an element of suffering, and tragic suffering an element of action; the esthetic lies in their relativity. The identity of an absolute action and an absolute suffering is beyond the powers of the esthetic and belongs to the metaphysical. In the life of Christ there is this identity, for his suffering is absolute, since it is absolutely free action, and his action is absolute suffering, since it is absolute obedience.

Thus, the element of guilt that remains is not subjectively reflected, and this makes the sorrow profound. In other words, tragic guilt is more than just subjective guilt—it is hereditary guilt; but hereditary guilt, like hereditary sin, is a substantial category, and it is precisely this substantiality that makes the sorrow more profound.

The ever admired trilogy of Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Antigone*, hinges essentially on this genuine tragic interest. But hereditary guilt involves the contradiction of being guilt and yet not being guilt.²⁸ The bond by which the individual becomes guilty is precisely [filial] piety, but the guilt that it thereby incurs has every possible esthetic amphiboly.²⁹ One might promptly think that the people who must have developed the profoundly tragic was the Jewish nation. For example, when it is said of Jehovah that he is a jealous God, that he visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations,³⁰ or when we hear those terrible curses in the Old Testament, one could easily be tempted to want to seek tragic material here. But Judaism is too ethically mature for that; even though they are terrible, Je-

hovah's curses are also righteous punishment. It was not this way in Greece; the wrath of the gods has no ethical character, only esthetic ambiguity.

In Greek tragedy itself, there is a transition from sorrow to pain, and I would cite *Philoctetes* as an example of this.³¹ In a stricter sense, this is a tragedy of suffering. But here, too, a high degree of objectivity still prevails. The Greek hero rests in his fate; his fate is unalterable; of that there can be no further discussion. This element is really the component of sorrow in the pain. The first doubt with which pain really begins is this: Why is this happening to me; can it not be otherwise? To be sure, *Philoctetes*³² has something that has always been striking to me and that essentially separates it from that immortal trilogy: a high degree of reflection³³—the masterly depicted self-contradiction in his pain, in which there is such profound human truth, but still there is an objectivity that carries the whole. Philoctetes' reflection is not absorbed in itself, and it is genuinely Greek when he laments that no one knows his pain.³⁴ There is an extraordinary truth in this, and yet precisely here there is also a manifestation of the difference from the really reflective pain that always wants to be alone with its pain, that seeks a new pain in the solitude of this pain.

The true tragic sorrow, then, requires an element of guilt, the true tragic pain an element of guiltlessness; the true tragic sorrow requires an element of transparency, the true tragic pain an element of opacity. I believe this is the best way to suggest the dialectic in which the qualifications of sorrow and pain touch each other, and also the dialectic implicit in the concept: tragic guilt.

Since it is at variance with the aims of our association³⁵ to provide coherent works or larger unities, since it is not our intention to labor on a Tower of Babel that God in his righteousness can descend and destroy, since we, in our consciousness that such confusion justly occurred, acknowledge as characteristic of all human endeavor in its truth that it is fragmentary, that it is precisely this which distinguishes it from nature's infinite coherence, that an individual's wealth consists specifically in his capacity for fragmentary prodigality and

what is the producing individual's enjoyment is the receiving individual's also, not the laborious and careful accomplishment or the tedious interpretation of this accomplishment but the production and the pleasure of the glinting transiency, which for the producer holds much more than the consummated accomplishment, since it is a glimpse of the idea and holds a bonus for the recipient, since its fulguration [*Fulguration*]³⁶ stimulates his own productivity—since all this, I say, is at variance with our association's inclination, indeed, since the periodic sentence just read must almost be regarded as a serious attack on the ejaculatory style in which the idea breaks forth without achieving a breakthrough, to which officiality is attached in our society—therefore, after having pointed out that my conduct still cannot be called mutinous, inasmuch as the bond that holds this periodic sentence together is so loose that the parenthetical clauses therein strut about aphoristically and willfully enough, I shall merely call to mind that my style has made an attempt to appear to be what it is not: revolutionary.

Our society requires a renewal and rebirth at every single meeting and to that end requires that its intrinsic activity be rejuvenated by a new description of its productivity. Let us, then, designate our intention as a venture in fragmentary endeavor or the art of writing posthumous [*efterladt*, left behind] papers. A completely finished work is disproportionate to the poetizing personality; because of the disjointed and desultory character of unfinished papers, one feels a need to poetize the personality along with them. Unfinished papers are like a ruin, and what place of resort could be more natural for the buried? The art, then, is to produce skillfully the same effect, the same carelessness and fortuitousness, the same anacoluthic [*anacoluthisk*] thought process; the art is to evoke an enjoyment that is never present tense but always has an element of the past and thus is present in the past. This is already expressed in the expression "left behind." Indeed, in a certain sense everything a poet has produced is something left behind, but it would never occur to anyone to call a completely finished work a work left behind, even if it had the accidental feature of not

having been published in his lifetime. I also assume it to be a feature of all authentic human production in its truth, as we have interpreted it, that it is property left behind, since it is not granted to human beings to live with an eternal view like the gods'. Consequently, I shall call what is being produced among us property left behind [*Efterladenskab*], that is, artistic property left behind; negligence [*Efterladenhed*], indolence, we shall call the genius that we prize; the *vis inertiae* [force of inertia] we shall call the natural law that we worship. With this I have complied with our hallowed customs and conventions.

So, my dear Συμπαρανεκρώμενοι, come closer to me, form a circle around me as I send my tragic heroine out into the world, ³⁷as I give the daughter of sorrow a dowry of pain as her outfit. She is my work, but still her outline is so indistinct, her form so nebulous, that each and every one of you can *for-liebe sig*³⁸ [fall in love] with her and be able to love her in your own way. She is my creation, her thoughts are my thoughts, and yet it is as if in a night of love I had rested with her, as if she in my embrace had confided a deep secret to me, had breathed it out together with her soul, as if she had then instantly changed before me, had disappeared, so that the only trace of her actuality was the mood that remained behind, instead of the reverse situation that she is brought forth by my mood to ever greater actuality. I put words into her mouth, and yet it seems to me as if I abused her confidence; it seems to me as if she were standing reproachfully behind me, and yet it is the reverse—in her secrecy she becomes ever more visible. She belongs to me, she lawfully belongs to me, and yet at times it is as if I had cunningly crept into her confidence, as if I always had to look behind me for her; and yet it is the reverse, she is always in front of me—only as I lead her forward does she come into existence.

Antigone³⁹ is her name. I shall keep this name from the ancient tragedy, to which I shall hold for the most part, although from another angle everything will be modern. But first one comment. I am using a female character⁴⁰ because I believe that a female nature will be best suited to show the difference. As a woman, she will have enough substantiality⁴¹ for the sorrow

to manifest itself, but as one belonging to a reflective world she will have sufficient reflection to experience the pain. In order for the sorrow to be experienced, the tragic guilt must vacillate between guilt and guiltlessness, and the vehicle by which guilt enters her consciousness must always be a qualification of substantiality. But since the tragic guilt must have this indefiniteness in order for the sorrow to be experienced, reflection must not be present in its infinitude, for then it would reflect her out of her guilt, inasmuch as reflection in its infinite subjectivity cannot allow the factor of hereditary sin, which produces the sorrow, to remain. But since reflection has been awakened, it will reflect her not out of the sorrow but into it; at every moment it will transform sorrow into pain for her.

So, then, the family of Labdakos⁴² is the object of the indignation of the gods:⁴³ Oedipus has killed the sphinx, liberated Thebes; Oedipus has murdered his father, married his mother; and Antigone is the fruit of this marriage. So it goes in the Greek tragedy. Here I deviate. With me, everything is the same, and yet everything is different. Everyone knows that he has killed the sphinx and freed Thebes, and Oedipus is hailed and admired and is happy in his marriage with Jocasta. The rest is hidden from the people's eyes, and no suspicion has ever brought this horrible dream into the world of actuality. Only Antigone knows it. How she found out is extraneous to the tragic interest, and in that respect everyone is left to his own explanation. At an early age, before she had reached maturity, dark hints of this horrible secret had momentarily gripped her soul, until certainty hurled her with one blow into the arms of anxiety. Here at once I have a definition of the tragic in modern times, for an anxiety is a reflection and in that respect is essentially different from sorrow. Anxiety is the vehicle by which the subject appropriates sorrow and assimilates it. Anxiety is the motive power by which sorrow penetrates a person's heart. But the movement is not swift like that of an arrow; it is consecutive; it is not once and for all, but it is continually becoming. As a passionately erotic glance craves its object, so anxiety looks cravingly upon sorrow. Just as the quiet, incorruptible eye of love is preoccupied with the be-

loved object, so anxiety's self-preoccupation is with sorrow. But anxiety has an added factor that makes it cling even harder to its object, for it both loves and fears it. Anxiety has a double function; in part it is the exploring movement that continually makes contact and by this groping discovers sorrow as it circles around it. Or anxiety is sudden; all the sorrow is lodged in one instant, yet in such a way that this instant immediately dissolves in a consecutive series. In this sense, anxiety is a genuine tragic category, and the old saying *quem deus vult perdere, primum dementat* [whom a god would destroy he first makes mad]⁴⁴ is really and truly applicable here. ⁴⁵That anxiety is a reflection category is shown by language itself, for I always say that I am anxious about something, and I thereby distinguish between the anxiety and that about which I am anxious, and I can never use "anxiety" objectively; whereas when I say "my sorrow," I can be expressing as much about what I am grieving over as about my sorrow over it. Furthermore, anxiety always contains a reflection on time, for I cannot be anxious about the present but only about the past or the future, but the past and the future, kept in opposition to each other in such a way that the present vanishes, are categories of reflection. Greek sorrow, however, like all Greek life, is in the present, and therefore the sorrow is deeper, but the pain less. Anxiety, therefore, belongs essentially to the tragic. Hamlet is such a tragic figure because he suspects his mother's crime. Robert le diable⁴⁶ asks how it could happen that he does so much evil. Høgne,⁴⁷ whom his mother had conceived with a troll, accidentally comes to see his image in the water and asks his mother whence his body acquired such a form.

The difference is easy to see now. In Greek tragedy, Antigone is not occupied at all with her father's unfortunate fate. This rests like an impregnable sorrow on the whole family. Antigone, like every other young Greek girl, goes on living free from care—indeed, since her death is determined, the chorus is sorry for her because she must depart from this life at such a young age, depart from it without having tasted its most beautiful joy—obviously forgetful of the family's own profound sorrow. This by no means says that it is light-mind-

edness or that the particular individual stands all alone without concern for his relationships to the family. But this is genuinely Greek. To them, life relationships, like the horizon under which they live, are given once and for all. Even though this is dark and full of clouds, it is also unchangeable. This gives a dominant tone to the soul, and this is sorrow, not pain. In Antigone, the tragic guilt is focused upon a specific point, that she has buried her brother in defiance of the king's injunction. If this is viewed as an isolated fact, as a collision between sisterly love and piety and an arbitrary human injunction, *Antigone* would cease to be a Greek tragedy; it would be an altogether modern tragic theme. What provides the tragic interest in the Greek sense is that Oedipus's sad fate resonates in the brother's unfortunate death, in the sister's conflict with a specific human injunction; it is, as it were, the afterpains, Oedipus's tragic fate, spreading out into each branch of his family. This totality makes the spectator's sorrow so very profound. It is not an individual who goes under, but a little world; it is the objective grief, unloosed, that now strides ahead, like a force of nature, in its own terrible consistency, and Antigone's sad fate is like the echo of her father's, an intensified sorrow. Therefore, when Antigone, in defiance of the king's injunction, decides to bury her brother, we see in this not so much a free act as a fateful necessity, which visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. There is indeed enough freedom in it to enable us to love Antigone for her sisterly love, but in the inevitability of fate there is also a higher refrain, as it were, that encompasses not only Oedipus's life but also his family.

Whereas the Greek Antigone goes on living so free from care that, if this new fact had not come up, one could imagine her life as even happy in its gradual unfolding, our Antigone's life, on the other hand, is essentially at an end.⁴⁸ I have not endowed her parsimoniously, and, as is said, a good word in the right place is like golden apples in a silver bowl;⁴⁹ so also I have placed the fruit of grief in the bowl of pain. Her endowment is not vainglorious pomp that moth and rust can consume;⁵⁰ it is an eternal treasure. Thieves cannot break in and steal it; she

herself is too alert for that. Her life does not unfold like the Greek Antigone's; it is turned inward, not outward. The stage is inside, not outside; it is a spiritual stage.

My dear Συμπαρανεκρώμενοι, have I not managed to capture your interest for such a maiden, or shall I resort to a *captatio benevolentiae* [procedure aimed at gaining the favorable disposition of the judge or listener]? She, too, does not belong to the world in which she lives; although healthy and flourishing, her real life is nevertheless hidden. She, too, although alive, is in another sense dead; her life is quiet and concealed. The world does not hear even a sigh, for her sighing is concealed in the secrecy of her soul. I do not need to remind you that she is by no means a weak and morbid woman; on the contrary, she is proud and energetic.

Perhaps nothing ennoble a person so much as keeping a secret. It gives a person's whole life a significance, which it has, of course, only for himself; it saves a person from all futile consideration of the surrounding world. Sufficient unto himself, he rests blissful in his secret; this might be said even though his secret is a most baleful one.

So it is with our Antigone. She is proud of her secret, proud that she has been selected in a singular way to save the honor and glory of the lineage of Oedipus. When the grateful nation acclaim Oedipus with praise and thanksgiving, she feels her own significance, and her secret sinks deeper and deeper into her soul, ever more inaccessible to any living being. She feels how much has been placed into her hands, and this gives her the preternatural magnitude that is necessary in order for her to engage us tragically. She must be able to interest us as a particular character. She is more than a young girl in a general sense, and yet she is a young girl; she is a bride, and yet altogether virginal and pure.⁵¹ As a bride, woman has fulfilled her destiny, and therefore a woman generally can concern us only to the degree that she is brought in relation to this her destiny.

There are analogies to this. We speak, for example, of a bride of God; in faith and spirit she has the content in which she rests. In a perhaps still more beautiful sense, I would call

our Antigone a bride—indeed, she is almost more, she is a mother. Purely esthetically, she is *virgo mater* [virgin mother]; she carries her secret under her heart, concealed and hidden. Precisely because she is secretive, she is silence, but this turning back into oneself implicit in silence gives her a preternatural bearing. She is proud of her grief, she is jealous of it, for her grief is her love. But yet her grief is not a dead, static possession; it is continually in motion; it gives birth to pain and is born in pain. Just as when a girl resolves to sacrifice her life for an idea, when she stands there with the sacrificial wreath on her forehead, she stands as a bride, for the great animating idea transforms her, and the sacrificial wreath is like the bridal wreath. She knows not any man,⁵² and yet she is a bride; she does not even know the idea that animates her, for that would be unfeminine, and yet she is a bride.

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So it is with our Antigone, the bride of sorrow. She dedicates her life to sorrowing over her father's fate, over her own. A calamity such as the one that has befallen her father requires sorrow, and yet there is no one who can sorrow over it, since there is no one who knows it. And just as the Greek Antigone cannot bear to have her brother's body thrown away without the last honors, so she feels how harsh it would have been if no one had come to know this; it troubles her that not a tear would have been shed, and she almost thanks the gods because she has been selected as this instrument. Thus, Antigone is great in her pain. Here, too, I can point out a difference between Greek and modern tragedy. It is genuinely Greek for Philoctetes to lament that no one knows what he is suffering; it is a deeply human need to want others to understand it, but reflective pain does not desire this. It does not occur to Antigone to wish anyone to come to know her pain, but instead she feels the pain in relation to her father, feels the justice implicit in sorrowing, which is just as warranted esthetically as is suffering punishment when one has done wrong. Therefore, while it is first the awareness of being destined to be buried alive that extorts this outburst of grief from Antigone in the Greek tragedy,

(850) ἰὼ δύστανος,
 οὔτ' ἐν βροτοῖς, ἐν νεκροῖσι,
 μέτοιχος, οὐ ζῶσιν, οὐ θανούσι*
 [alive to the place of corpses, an alien still,
 never at home with the living nor with the dead],⁵³

our Antigone can say this of herself all her life. There is a striking difference; there is a factual truth in her utterance that diminishes the pain. If our Antigone were to say the same thing, it would be figurative, but the figurativeness is the factual pain. The Greeks do not express themselves figuratively simply because their lives did not have the reflection required for this. Thus, when Philoctetes laments that he lives abandoned and solitary on a desolate island, his remark also has external truth; when, however, our Antigone feels pain in her solitude, it is only figuratively that she is alone, but for this very reason, only then is her pain truly literal.

As for the tragic guilt, it is related in part to the fact that she buries her brother and in part to the context of her father's sad fate implied by the two previous tragedies. Here I am face to face again with the curious dialectic that places the family's iniquities in relation to the individual. This is what is inherited. Ordinarily, dialectic is thought to be rather abstract—one thinks almost solely of logical operations. But life will quickly teach a person that there are many kinds of dialectic, that almost every passion has its own. For this reason, the dialectic that connects the iniquity of kindred or of family to the individual subject in such a way that this one not only suffers under it (for this is a natural consequence against which one would futilely try to harden oneself) but also bears the guilt, participates in it—this dialectic is alien to us, contains nothing constraining for us. If, however, we were to imagine a rebirth of ancient tragedy, then every individual would have to contemplate his own rebirth, not only in the spiritual sense but in the finite sense of the womb of family and kindred. The di-

* (844) O weh, Unselige!

Nicht unter Menschen, nicht unter Todten,
 Im Leben nicht heimisch noch im Tode!⁵⁴

alectic that connects the individual with family and kindred is no subjective dialectic, for that elevates the connection and the individual out of the context; it is an objective dialectic. It is essentially [familial] piety. To preserve this cannot be regarded as harmful to the individual. In our day something is deemed to hold in the sphere of nature that is not deemed to hold in the sphere of spirit. Yet one does not want to be so isolated, so unnatural, that one does not regard the family as a whole of which it can be said that when one member suffers, then they all suffer.⁵⁵ One does this spontaneously—otherwise for what reason is the particular individual so afraid that another member of the family may bring disgrace upon it except that he feels a share of the suffering from it. Obviously the individual must put up with this suffering, whether he wants to or not. But since the point of departure is the individual, not the family line, this compulsory suffering is *maximum*; one feels that the person cannot quite become master of his inherited characteristics but nevertheless desires this as far as possible. But if the individual sees the inherited characteristics as a component of his truth, then this manifests itself in the world of spirit in such a way that the individual participates in the guilt. Perhaps not many are able to comprehend this conclusion, but then they would not be able to comprehend the tragic, either. If the individual is isolated, then either he is absolutely the creator of his own fate, and then there is nothing tragic anymore, but only evil, for it is not even tragic that the individual was infatuated with or wrapped up in himself—it is his own doing; or the individuals are merely modifications of the eternal substance of life, and so once again the tragic is lost.

With respect to tragic guilt, a difference in modern tragedy is readily apparent after it has assimilated the ancient, for only then can this really be discussed. In her childlike piety, the Greek Antigone participates in her father's guilt, and so also does the modern Antigone. But for the Greek Antigone the father's guilt and suffering are an external fact, an unshakable fact, that her sorrow does not move (*quod non volvit in pectore* [something that she does not turn over in her heart]);⁵⁶ and insofar as she personally suffers, as a natural consequence, under

her father's guilt, this again is in all its external factuality. But for our Antigone it is different. I assume that Oedipus is dead. Even when he was alive, Antigone knew this secret but did not have the courage to confide in her father. By her father's death, she is deprived of the only means of being liberated from her secret. To confide in any other living being now would be to dishonor her father; her life acquires meaning for her in its devotion to showing him the last honors daily, almost hourly, by her unbroken silence. But one thing she does not know, whether or not her father knew it himself. Here is the modern element: it is the restlessness in her sorrow, it is the amphiboly⁵⁷ in her pain. She loves her father with all her soul, and this love draws her out of herself into her father's guilt. As the fruit of such a love, she feels alien to humankind. She feels her guilt the more she loves her father; only with him can she find rest; as equally guilty, they would sorrow with each other. But while the father was living, she could not confide her sorrow to him, for she indeed did not know whether he knew it, and consequently there was the possibility of immersing him in a similar pain. And yet, if he had not known it, the guilt would be less. The movement here is continually relative. If Antigone had not definitely known the factual context, she would have been trivial, she would then have had nothing but a suspicion to struggle with, and that is too little to engage us tragically. But she knows everything; yet within this knowledge there is still an ignorance that can always keep the sorrow in motion, always transform it into pain. In addition, she is continually in conflict with her surrounding world. Oedipus lives in the memory of his people as a fortunate king, honored and extolled; Antigone herself has admired and also loved her father. She takes part in every commemoration and celebration of him; she is more enthusiastic about her father than any other maiden in the kingdom; her thoughts continually go back to him. She is extolled in the land as a model of a loving daughter, and yet this enthusiasm is the only way in which she can give vent to her sorrow. Her father is always in her thoughts, but how—that is her painful secret. And yet she does not dare to abandon herself to sorrow, does not dare to

mourn; she feels how much depends upon her; she fears that a clue would be given if anyone saw her suffering, and so here, too, she finds not sorrow but pain.

Developed and elaborated in this way, Antigone can engage us, I believe, and I believe that you will not reproach me for frivolousness or paternal prejudice when I believe that she might very well venture into the tragic line and appear in a tragedy. Hitherto she has been only an epic character, and the tragic in her has had only epic interest.

A context appropriate to her is not very difficult to find, either; in that respect, one can very well be satisfied with what the Greek tragedy provides. She has a sister living; I shall have her be a little older and married. Her mother could also be alive. That these two always remain subordinate characters is, of course, taken for granted, as is the fact that tragedy generally contains an epic element in the manner of Greek tragedy, although this need not be so conspicuous because of that; nevertheless, monologue will always play a leading role here, even though the situation ought to be of assistance to it. Everything must be thought of as focused on this one main point of interest that makes up the content of Antigone's life, and when the whole thing is designed in this way, then the question is: How is the dramatic interest to be produced?

As described above, our heroine is on the point of wanting to leap over an element in her life; she is beginning to want to live altogether spiritually, something that nature does not tolerate. With her depth of soul, when she ever falls in love, she is bound to love with an extraordinary passion. So here I come to the dramatic interest—Antigone is in love, and I say it with pain—Antigone is head over heels in love.⁵⁸ Here, obviously, is the tragic collision. Generally there ought to be somewhat more discrimination about what is called a tragic collision. The more sympathetic the colliding forces are, the more profound but also the more alike they are, the more momentous the collision. So she has fallen in love, and the object of her love [*Kjærlighed*] is not unaware of it. Now, my Antigone is no ordinary girl, and her dowry likewise is not ordinary—her pain. Without this dowry, she cannot belong to any man—

that, she feels, would be taking too great a risk. To conceal it from such an observant person would be impossible; to wish to have it concealed would be a breach of her love—but with it can she belong to him? Does she dare to confide it to any human being, even to the man she loves? Antigone is strong; the question is not whether for her own sake, to ease her mind, she should confide her pain to someone, for she can very well endure it without support, but can she defend this to the one who is dead? Indeed, by confiding her secret to him, she herself suffers in a way, for her life is also sadly interwoven in that secret. But this does not concern her. The question is only about her father. Consequently, from this angle the conflict is of a sympathetic nature. Her life, which previously was peaceful and quiet, now becomes violent and passionate, at all times self-contained, of course, and here her lines begin to have pathos. She struggles with herself; she has been willing to sacrifice her life for her secret, but now her love is demanded as a sacrifice. She is victorious—that is, the secret is victorious—and she loses.

Now comes the second collision, because in order for the tragic collision to be really profound, the colliding forces must be alike. The collision described above does not have this quality, for the collision is actually between her love for her father and for herself and whether her own love is not too great a sacrifice. The second colliding force is her sympathetic love for her beloved. He knows that he is loved and audaciously ventures upon his offensive. Of course, her reluctance amazes him; he perceives that there must be some very strange difficulties, but not such as to be insurmountable for him. What to him is of supreme importance is to convince her of how deeply he loves her, indeed, that his life is over if he must give up her love. Finally his passion becomes almost unvarnished, but only more inventive because of this opposition. With every protestation of love, he increases her pain; with every sigh, he plunges the arrow of grief deeper and deeper into her heart. He leaves no means untried to move her. Like everyone else, he knows how dearly she loves her father. He meets her at Oedipus's grave, where she has gone to pour out her heart, where

she abandons herself to her longing for her father, even if this longing is itself mixed with pain because she does not know how she is going to meet him again, whether or not he knew of his guilt. He surprises her; he beseeches her in the name of the love she has for her father. He perceives that he is making an extraordinary impression on her; he persists, placing all his hope in this means, not knowing that he has actually worked against himself.

The focus of interest here, then, is to extort her secret from her. To have her become temporarily deranged and in that way to betray it would be of no help. The colliding forces are matched to such a degree that action becomes impossible for the tragic individual. Her pain is now increased by her love, by her sympathetic suffering with the one whom she loves. Only in death can she find peace. Thus her life is devoted to grief, and she has, so to speak, established a boundary, a dike, against the misfortune that perhaps would have fatefully propagated itself in a following generation. Only in the moment of her death can she confess the fervency of her love; only in the moment she does not belong to him can she confess that she belongs to him.⁵⁹ When Epaminondas was wounded in the battle at Mantinea, he let the arrow remain in the wound until he heard that the battle was won, for he knew that it was his death when it was pulled out.⁶⁰ In the same way, our Antigone carries her secret in her heart like an arrow that life has continually plunged deeper and deeper, without depriving her of her life, for as long as it is in her heart she can live, but the instant it is taken out, she must die. To take her secret away—this is what the lover must struggle to do, and yet it is also her certain death. At whose hand does she fall, then? At the hand of the living or the dead?⁶¹ In a certain sense, at the hand of the dead, and what was predicted to Hercules,⁶² that he would be murdered not by a living person but by a dead one, applies to her, inasmuch as the cause of her death is the recollection of her father; in another sense, at the hand of the living, inasmuch as her unhappy love is the occasion for the recollection to slay her.⁶³