

The theory of tragedy in Germany around 1800: a genealogy of the tragic

Joshua Henry Billings, Merton College

Submitted for the D.Phil. in Classical Languages and Literatures

Trinity Term 2011

The thesis focuses on the theory of tragedy in Germany around 1800, and has two primary aims: to demonstrate the importance of idealist thought for contemporary approaches to tragedy and the tragic; and to revise the intellectual historiography of the classic phase in German letters. It traces reflection on Greek tragedy from the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* in France around 1700 through the aesthetic systems formulated in Germany around 1800. Two intellectual developments are emphasized: the historicist consciousness that develops throughout the eighteenth century and places Greek tragedy more radically in its cultural context than ever before; and the idealist philosophy of art, which seeks to restore a measure of universality to the ancient genre, seeing it as the manifestation of a timeless quality of ‘the tragic.’ These two impulses, historicizing and universalizing, it is argued, are fundamental to modern understanding of Greek tragedy. The genealogical method seeks to establish a greater continuity with earlier eighteenth-century thought than is generally recognized, and to refute the teleologies that dominate accounts of idealist thought. A reconstruction of the central texts of Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin reveals that the theory of tragedy around 1800 is in large part a reflection on history, an effort to understand how ancient literature can be meaningful in modernity. Greek tragedy becomes the ground for an engagement with the pastness of antiquity and its possible presence. Idealist theories, far from dissolving particularity in abstraction, seek a mediation between philological historicism and philosophical universalism in considering Greek tragedy. A genealogy of the tragic suggests that such mediation remains a vital task for scholars of the Classics.

This thesis is the result of four years of thinking about Greek tragedy and German intellectual history at Merton College, Oxford, first as an M.St. student in German and then as a D.Phil. student in Classics. I was supported primarily by funding from the Rhodes Trust, to which I cannot express gratitude enough for the opportunity of coming to Oxford. Generous grants from Merton College, the Craven Committee, the Zaharoff Fund, the Simms Fund, and the Vice-Chancellor's Fund allowed me to travel for research and then to subsist while completing work. A number of institutions have supported the project as well: the staff at the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France in Paris and at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar were welcoming and attentive during my visits. A summer at the Stiftung Maximilianeum in Munich was immensely enjoyable and productive. Over the past four years I have tried the patience of the staff at the Taylorian Institution, and am grateful for their forbearance.

My greatest thanks go to my supervisors, Oliver Taplin and Fiona Macintosh, who have encouraged this project from the first, and been wise guides and inspirations throughout. But for them, I would not be in the Classics. I learned an enormous amount from my supervisor in German, Manfred Engel, who continued to give generously of his time in Oxford and from afar. Gregory Hutchinson, Tim Whitmarsh, and Patrick Finglass examined stages of the dissertation along the way and offered helpful comments. Albert Henrichs and John Hamilton, with whom I began to think about tragedy and the tragic as an undergraduate, have remained thoughtful readers and stimulating interlocutors. Naming all the family, friends, and colleagues to whom I am grateful would extend the already-excessive bulk I present here. Credit for the best parts of this work is due to others; for everything else I take responsibility.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Greek tragedy and the tragic.....	1
1. Quarrelling over tragedy.....	20
I. Tragedies in parallel: Brumoy, Voltaire, Diderot.....	25
II. Ways to the tragic in Germany.....	43
2. Parallel poetics.....	60
I. Tragic pleasure and tragic politics: Rochefort.....	61
II. Sophocles and Shakespeare: Herder.....	74
III. Aesthetic revolution: F. Schlegel.....	88
3. Friedrich Schiller: tragedy, sublimity, history.....	107
I. Tragic education: the 1801 <i>Kleinere prosaische Schriften</i>	109
II. Ancient tragedy and modern freedom.....	127
4. F.W.J. Schelling: tragic reconciliation.....	150
I. Idealism's tragic mythology.....	154
II. The problem of reconciliation: <i>Die Philosophie der Kunst</i>	171
5. G.W.F. Hegel: the fate of tragedy.....	193
I. The play of the absolute.....	197
II. The fate of spirit: <i>Die Phänomenologie des Geistes</i>	213
6. Friedrich Hölderlin: tragedy and paradox.....	241
I. Tragedy and history: from Hyperion to Empedocles.....	245
II. Sophocles, ancient and modern: <i>Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles</i>	273
Exodos: Births of the tragic.....	298
Bibliography.....	309
Modern editions and translations.....	342

Literature is cited by the author-date system, except where modern scholarly editions exist. Ancient texts are cited by line number, book and section, or page number as appropriate, according to the most recent Oxford Classical Text (Teubner in the case of Pindar). Editions of modern authors, listed in the second part of the Bibliography, are chosen more for pragmatic reasons than for absolute consistency of editorial principles: recent editions (usually those of the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag) are cited over more complete, though less up-to-date historical-critical editions. The exception is Hölderlin, where the historical-critical edition is essential for its supporting material. The resulting juxtaposition of modernized and original spellings is far from ideal, but it seems preferable to sending readers to dusty editions printed in Fraktur when fresh ones in Roman type are nearer to hand.

All text is given in the original languages, with my own translations in footnotes. These aim for transparency at the expense of elegance and (where appropriate) clarity. I have often consulted translations for help, which are cited in the second part of the Bibliography.

τῇδ', ὦδε, τῇδε βᾶτε· τῇδε γάρ μ' ἄγει
Ἑρμῆς ὁ πομπὸς ἢ τε νερτέρα θεός.
ὦ φῶς ἀφεγγές, πρόσθε πού ποτ' ἦσθ' ἐμόν,
νῦν δ' ἔσχατόν σου τοῦμόν ἄπτεται δέμας.
(Sophocles, *OC* 1544-7)

Viele versuchten umsonst das Freudigste freudig zu sagen
Hier spricht endlich es mir, hier in der Trauer sich aus.
(Hölderlin, 'Sophokles')

Introduction

Greek tragedy and the tragic

Texts gain as well as lose over the history of their transmission, reading, and interpretation. The losses that ancient texts have undergone over two millennia are obvious to classicists; the gains often less so. Since 1700, Greek tragedy has gained a great deal. It has come to be considered one of the greatest – if not the greatest – body of western artistic achievement, a form that, despite its antiquity, holds deep meaning for readers and audiences in the present. This meaningfulness extends beyond the artistic: to call an event ‘tragic’ or ‘a tragedy’ is to confer a dignity on it, to elevate misfortune above the quotidian. As an artistic genre and as a quasi-philosophical concept, ‘tragedy’ and ‘tragic’ have a moral and often normative force, as markers of profundity and importance.

This was not always the case. For Aristotle, τραγῳδία and τραγικός were resolutely tied to performances at civic festivals, had limited metaphorical usage, and no apparent reference to real events.¹ This seems to have been the rule throughout antiquity: τραγικός rarely crosses over from literature to life, and never from the descriptive to the normative. Modern languages have been somewhat freer in their usage, but the contemporary force of ‘the tragic’ (*das Tragische*, *le tragique*) substantially dates to the period around 1800. It coincides – and this has rarely been noted despite its self-evidence – with an increasing knowledge of Greek tragedy across western Europe.²

For two centuries after the *editiones principes* of the Greek tragedians around 1500, their works remained far from the mainstream of literary and philosophical

¹ Even Plato’s much freer usage of the term (which appears to have been idiosyncratic) does not carry anything like the modern field of reference. See Most (2000); Loock (1998).

² It does not, contra Steiner (1961) and Szondi (1978b), coincide with the end of tragedy as a dramatic genre. Tragedies are written during much of the nineteenth century by authors blithely (or tragically) unaware that the genre has ‘died.’ The ‘death of tragedy,’ the following will show, is in the first instance a philosophical-historical construct, not a literary phenomenon.

discussions. Though the stories of ancient tragedy were widely known through adaptations, the texts themselves were infrequently and selectively translated into modern languages, and discussion of them was rare outside of scholarly circles. Popular ideas of Greek tragedy tended to come more from Aristotle and modern works than from any of the extant Greek plays, and were largely focused on formal qualities and critical questions.³ Over the eighteenth century, though, the *Poetics* ceased to overshadow the tragedies, which were increasingly translated and discussed in popular circles.⁴ This forms the basis for the explosion of interest in Greek tragedy in Germany around 1800, which elevates the tragic to a philosophical concept, and cements the modern force of the genre. The rise of the tragic and the rise of Greek tragedy, I argue, must be considered together.

Tragedy is unique among poetic genres in the intimate relation between theory, practice, and reception that has conditioned its modern history. From the Renaissance, Aristotle's *Poetics* has been (mis)understood as the definitive statement of tragedy's generic characteristics, and has influenced playwrights, audiences, and critics alike, as well as providing a strong impetus to further theoretical consideration. The *Poetics* has made concepts like *catharsis*, *hamartia*, and 'the tragic hero' a part of everyday usage. Aristotle's focus on formal elements and notorious lack of attention to tragedy's place in civic life enabled critics following him to transfer much of the discussion to modern works. From the Renaissance, tragedy has often been considered a unified poetic genre,

³ Particularly important are Lodovico Castelvetro's *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta* (1570), Pierre Corneille's three *Discours* (1660), Thomas Rymer's *The Tragedies of the last Age consider'd...* (1678).

⁴ The first complete translations of the tragedians into English are 1729 (Sophocles, Adams), 1777 (Aeschylus, Potter), 1782 (Euripides, Woodhull; though the first volume of Potter's edition was published in 1781); see Walton (2006), Hall and Macintosh (2005). French translations are 1770 (Aeschylus, Lefranc de Pompignan), 1782 (Euripides, Prévost), 1788 (Sophocles, Rochefort, though Dupuy had supplemented the existing translation of Brumoy in 1761); see Lechevalier (2007), Grell (1995). German translations: 1781 (Sophocles, Tobler), 1803 (Euripides, Bothe), 1808 (Aeschylus, Danz); see Heydemann (2009), Meid (2008). I have only scratched the surface of the work that could be done on these early translations.

despite its disparate historical manifestations. This is in large part because it has seemed to be grounded on a single theory.

Yet for much of the early modern period, Greek tragedy itself plays only a rather shadowy role, more known of than known, and this knowledge usually mediated by modern theatrical adaptations or poetics. Seneca far more than Sophocles was the dominant influence on ideas of ancient tragedy through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. Though Greek texts of the tragedians and, often, Latin translations were accessible to those with a classical education, the place of the tragedies in scholarly discourse is, from a contemporary perspective, surprisingly marginal. Tragedy did not seem to be particularly central to understanding ancient Greek culture or even Athenian democracy; the former role was largely filled by Homer, the latter by Plutarch.⁵ Yet over the course of the eighteenth century, the ‘Greekness’ of tragedy is substantially discovered and considered in relation to contemporary thought and practice. The concept of the tragic, I argue, arises from an engagement with the antiquity of ancient tragedy; its inadequacy as a critical tool, so obvious to our eyes, is due most of all to its attempt to reconcile ancient and modern contexts of the genre – where today, we do our best to reject (or at least recognize) modern lenses.

Over the last forty years, classical scholars have largely come to understand Greek tragedy and the modern theory of the tragic as basically separate: the tragic is a philosophical concept, Greek tragedy is a poetic genre; the tragic is metaphysical, Greek tragedy is about the limits of human action; the tragic is ahistorical, Greek tragedy has a specific place and time. This divergence has justifiably rendered appeals to a ‘tragic spirit’ (Steiner) or ‘tragic sense of life’ (Unamuno) anathema in contemporary classical

⁵ Grell (1995), 297-301 tallies references in the Académie des inscriptions. Translations of Plutarch and Homer into English and French predate translations of the tragedians by substantial margins. Voss's translation of the *Odyssey*, the first into German (the *Iliad* had been translated previously), was published in 1781, the same year as the first complete Sophocles.

scholarship. Yet there is more of interest to classicists in the history of the concept of the tragic than its vulgarized contemporary usages would suggest. Though the tragic has, over the two centuries of its usage, become comprehensively decoupled from the concreteness of tragedies, its origins lie in modernity's most serious effort to understand its own relation to antiquity. The concept of the tragic responds to the same intellectual current of historicization that grounds the study of the Classics, and at the same time crystallizes many of the central issues in modern understanding of Greek tragedy. Philology and philosophy of tragedy, for all their subsequent divergence, both emerge out of the same engagement with history. The tragic, as this genealogy will argue, is originally a figure of historical thought, a way of making sense of the relation between antiquity and modernity, and of grounding the continuing intelligibility and meaning of classical texts.

I attempt to outline a new understanding of the relation between tragedy and the tragic by tracing reflection on Greek tragedy around 1800. I point to two intellectual developments in this period, which have profound consequences for the understanding of tragedy: first, artistic production and reception come to be seen as historically conditioned; and second, artistic content comes to be understood as autonomously significant. These developments not only alter tragedy's meaning, but its very way of meaning. The two strands are in a superficial sense antithetical: if works of art manifest an essential truth, they cannot also be the contingent products of their time and place. My argument, however, is that the two are actually expressions of the same historical problematic, which begins to take shape in France with the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, continues to develop through the French, English, and German Enlightenments, and is most influentially formulated around 1800 in Germany. The two poles of what I call the *Querelle* problematic are aesthetic universalism, the notion that

works of art retain a timeless meaning regardless of the moment of their reception; and historicization, the sense that artistic significance is bound up in the time and place of production. To be sure, a tension between these two ways of thinking is inevitable in any study of works of the past, but the *Querelle* makes the tension newly self-conscious, and in doing so, substantially sets in motion the historical thought of the eighteenth century. Idealist philosophy is one effort to grapple with the historicity of cultural products; classical philology, arising at the same time, is another.⁶

Modern understanding of Greek tragedy, I argue, is defined by a tension between historicizing and universalizing viewpoints. Greek tragedy has been considered, from the period around 1800 (and *only* from this period), the ancient literary genre most relevant to modern existence. This goes along with a broader change in conceptions of art, as the significance of artistic works comes to be seen as a function of their content, where previously it had been understood more in terms of their effect. Over the past two hundred years, the content of Greek tragedy has been appropriated by modernity as being of urgent contemporary importance. Today, tragedy has a vast presence in western academic discourse, artistic works, and popular imagination. Yet this sense of its universality or relevance is a historical occurrence, and was not an assumption of the eighteenth century or before. This is not simply due to a quantitative change in the evaluation of Greek tragedy (though that is a part of it), but a qualitative shift in tragedy's way of meaning. This shift has rendered Greek tragedy unusually resistant to historicization, and even the recent efforts to place the genre within its cultural context have not diminished its appeal for thinking with today.⁷ The breadth and depth of Greek

⁶ Hentschke and Muhlack (1972), 67 point to Hegelian Idealism and *Altertumswissenschaft* as parallel developments of historical thought. On eighteenth century philology, see Most (1997), which notes the relative lack of dialogue between classical scholarship and literary criticism generally.

⁷ Limiting myself to 2010 publications, see Bowlby (2010), Burian (2010), DuBois (2010), and the essays in Wilmer and Žukauskaitė (2010).

tragedy's significance for contemporary thinkers should not blind us to the fact that this a historical anomaly. Today, Greek tragedy is not simply an artistic form among others, but a privileged locus of meaning.

The importance of Greek tragedy as a literary form, I argue, arises together with the philosophical concept of the tragic. The history of the tragic has been the object of a great deal of study within intellectual history and German literary studies, but is relatively unexplored in the Classics, and represents a surprising lacuna amidst the recent outpouring of reception studies.⁸ The lack of attention to the tragic reflects in part an uneasiness with the imposition of this undeniably modern concept onto ancient texts, and the potential for misunderstanding that results.⁹ Most scholars of Greek tragedy understandably do not deal with the tradition of philosophical appropriations since the Romantic period; and those who do tend to be quite critical of such readings.¹⁰ Yet if my argument is correct, to neglect this tradition is not only to forget some of the formative influences on modern understanding of Greek tragedy, but also, very often, to reproduce its assumptions. The present effort at contextualization seeks to make this tradition accessible for thinking with and against. By tracing the formation of the modern concept of the tragic, it suggests the need for a renewed engagement with the intellectual history of Greek tragedy as an inspiration and provocation for new approaches within the Classics.

Genealogy and intellectual history

⁸ The most substantial recent contributions are Judet de la Combe (2010) and Lambropoulos (2006), but there has been little that explicitly deals with the theory of tragedy around 1800 as a reception phenomenon. Silk (1996) is an important collection of essays, which places tragedy and the tragic in dialogue.

⁹ Goldhill (2008), 60 argues that the concept of the tragic 'can distort the historicity of tragedy and the literary history of the genre.'

¹⁰ But see Judet la Combe (2010), which makes a sensitive argument that Idealism does in fact discover something important in Greek tragedies: their concern with 'making sense' (which is largely absent from eighteenth century considerations, and arguably not to be found in Aristotle).

This study is directed also at the intellectual history of the period around 1800 in Germany, as it is typically written by scholars of German literature and philosophy. This esoteric line of argument requires development at somewhat greater length, as it revises some of the accepted notions of German intellectual history, and suggests a new view of continuity between idealist discourse and eighteenth century thought.¹¹ The difference from previous studies is encapsulated in the concept of genealogy, which I take in a programmatic sense, following Foucault's reading of Nietzsche.¹² Foucault finds in Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887) and other works a mode of observation that takes account of the complexity and contradictions of historical change. Rather than seeing the existence of a concept in time as governed by a logical process of development or teleology, genealogy seeks to show the illogic or alogic behind what we take as given, 'repérer la singularité des événements, hors de toute finalité monotone; les guetter là où on les attend le moins et dans ce qui passe pour n'avoir point d'histoire.'¹³ It tells the history of ideas as a history of interpretations and rejects a super-historical viewpoint for one grounded in the questions of its own time and place. Genealogy makes the present strange by showing it as a moment defined by an open and chaotic past.

The tragic is in need of a genealogical perspective because it has largely been assumed to be a unified concept, which emerges essentially from nothing in German Idealism and inaugurates a clearly defined series of (all-German) responses. My viewpoint is intended as a contrast to a pervasive narrative of the concept, laid out by

¹¹ I distinguish between idealist approaches (common to much of post-Kantian aesthetics) and Idealism proper, which is used to refer narrowly to the thought of Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin.

¹² See Foucault (1994), originally published in 1971. I do not mean to suggest that Foucault or Nietzsche would in any way approve of this project – Foucault would hate its 'great thinker' intellectual history (however modified by research into forgotten works of the eighteenth century). Nietzsche for his part consistently disparaged Idealism and denied his debts to it, despite its obvious influence (mostly via Schopenhauer) on his early thought.

¹³ Foucault (1994), 136: 'to reclaim the singularity of events, outside of any monotonous finality; to look out for them where one least expects them and in what passes as having no history.'

Peter Szondi in his 1961 *Versuch über das Tragische*.¹⁴ Szondi comments on texts from Schelling's 1795 *Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* to Scheler's 1915 *Zum Phänomen des Tragischen*, as expressions of a single 'philosophy of the tragic,' representing a decisive break with the Aristotelian 'poetics of tragedy.'¹⁵ For Szondi, 'the tragic,' is defined by the dialectical structure exemplified in Hegel's thought, and is broadly applicable to works across time.¹⁶ Though Szondi is surely right to point out an important change in thought on tragedy from 1790, he overstates its categorical difference from previous thought, and, even more misleadingly, assumes a number of extremely different approaches under a single, Hegelian concept of the tragic.

Consideration of the range of German thought on tragedy around 1800 reveals a number of incompatible theories of tragedy and tragic theories, which define the tragic in different ways, and employ the concept to different ends. Though all share a sense – which has relatively little precedent in the eighteenth century – of Greek tragedy being of vital importance to contemporary thought, this sense, I argue, comes more from responses to the French Revolution and Kantian philosophy than from factors internal to thought on tragedy. Though I follow Szondi in seeing a new conversation concerning tragedy in these years, I see its novelty as relating less to the understanding of tragedy itself, than to the place of Greek tragedy in the modern world. Concepts of the tragic should not be understood as formulations of tragedy's ahistorical meaning (as Szondi would have it), but as responses to the concrete historicity of Greek tragedy.

This genealogy likewise resists Szondi's influential narrative of the development of historical thought in his lectures 'Antike und moderne in der Ästhetik der

¹⁴ The *Versuch* is reprinted as Szondi (1978b). Lambropoulos (2006) follows, with a few modifications, Szondi's narrative and mode of presentation.

¹⁵ Szondi (1978b), 151: 'Seit Aristoteles gibt es eine Poetik der Tragödie, seit Schelling erst eine Philosophie des Tragischen.'

¹⁶ Szondi (1978b), 167.

Goethezeit.’¹⁷ Szondi describes a move from the internal contradictions of normative classicism to a historicizing view of art (represented most of all by Hegel’s *Ästhetik*). Though the breadth and lucidity of the exposition are compelling, it too is troublingly Hegelian – not only in the obvious sense of placing Hegel at the end of the development, but even more profoundly in its narrative of a logical progress in which the contradiction of a state of thought becomes apparent and is *aufgehoben* or *überwunden*. Szondi writes intellectual history as progress, which leads him both to dismiss thinkers earlier in the narrative as ‘still’ indebted to one or another outdated notion (particularly Herder and Schiller), and to distort the thought of later ones to conform to the narrative he wants to present (most of all, Hölderlin).

In contrast, I argue that all the views of antiquity of the period are defined by the same problematic of historical thought, and that none of the viewpoints of the period establishes itself as final (though Hegel’s has undeniably proven the most influential). The concept of the tragic is one answer to the problem of historicization, as it offers a way of thinking tragedy as an ahistorical property and as a figure for historical sense at once. Yet this tension, I argue, links post-1790 theories of tragedy with the eighteenth century and particularly with the questioning of the modern that defines much of Enlightenment thought.¹⁸ Against Szondi’s hypostasis of the ‘philosophy of the tragic’ and teleology of historical thought, my genealogy, in Foucault’s words, ‘s’oppose [...] au déploiement métahistorique des significations idéales et des indéfinies téléologies.’¹⁹

¹⁷ Szondi (1974a) is a posthumous publication from lecture notes, which may not reflect the full complexity of his thoughts, though this has not hindered it from becoming a seminal work.

¹⁸ Galle (2005), 152 also points to the Enlightenment as a ‘catalyst’ for the philosophy of the tragic. Edelstein (2010) is a recent argument for the importance of the historical thought of the *Querelle* to the Enlightenment in general – a viewpoint with substantial (though unmentioned) affinities with that of Jauß (1964).

¹⁹ Foucault (1994), 136: ‘opposes itself to the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and of indefinite teleologies.’

Concretely, the genealogical viewpoint means tracing reflection on Greek tragedy from the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* through the early ‘philosophy of the tragic,’ and arguing for a view of continuity and evolution rather than rupture. It means looking beyond Germany for many of the formative influences, and doing the grey work of investigating eighteenth-century translations, most of which have barely been examined by scholars. Tracing the lines of influence backwards from the 1790s has led to a close investigation of French scholarship (nearly always neglected by German intellectual historians), which was widely circulated throughout Europe in the *Mémoires* of the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres.²⁰ In general, though, it seems to have been translations of the plays themselves into French and German that were of greatest formative influence for German thinkers, much more than the esoteric scholarly discussions. The imagination of Greek tragedy, I argue, was formed to a great extent by these translations, and the theories of the time should be understood against this background as well as the more obvious one of Kantian philosophy.

In turning to the major post-Kantian thinkers, the historical narrative I propose is quite different from that of Szondi and his epigones. I begin with a substantial engagement with Schiller’s thought which, though neglected in the *Versuch*, has increasingly been recognized as an important precursor to Idealism.²¹ I argue that Schiller’s importance exceeds his now-acknowledged transitional character, and that his thought on tragedy represents a significant end in itself, balancing cognitive and affective claims in a more subtle way than the theories of the next generation. Similarly, in treating Schelling, I oppose the developmental narrative that tends to see Schelling’s aesthetics largely as a precursor to Hegel. I argue that Schelling’s ahistorical perspective represents

²⁰ Scholarship on tragedy in England (of which there was a fair amount from the time of Bentley) and Germany (of which there was very little) figures far less prominently. See Pfeiffer (1976) 161-3.

²¹ See particularly Schmitt (1992), Courtine (1993).

a principled position that the role of art is the same in all times and places. This leads him to an argument for the cultural importance of tragedy, which, though taking its model from ancient Greece, suggests that this role can be reconstituted in modernity. Schelling shows an early consideration of the question of the death of tragedy, which all of Idealism's theories will have to confront.

A genealogical consideration of Hegel and Hölderlin entails questioning two historiographical narratives: one of teleology, which treats Hölderlin mainly as an influence on Hegel (which undoubtedly he was); and one of rupture, which places Hölderlin's thought beyond Idealism. In contrast to both, I try to identify the continuities as well as the essential differences between the two, seeing their thought as parallel responses to common questions. Reversing the order dictated by strict chronology, I consider Hegel first, treating his early thought exclusively, without reference to the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, the posthumous collation of lecture notes that has been the main reference for discussions of Hegel and tragedy. Hegel's earlier writings, I try to show, are far richer than the lectures, and even more thoroughly pervaded by Greek tragedy, which provides a model for understanding the historical dialectic at the heart of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Finally, the chapter on Hölderlin traces the transformations in his thought on tragedy without seeking to validate his later theory as the 'overcoming' of classicism or the destruction of the speculative matrix of Idealism.²² I see the changes in his thought as concentrated around the question of the tragic in modernity, and issuing in a historical poetology of the tragic. I take Hölderlin to be concerned quite concretely with finding an artistic mode of representing the tragic in modernity, and to arrive at an equivocal and challenging conclusion. Hölderlin does not, I

²² See Szondi (1978c); Fóti (2006) is an extreme of the developmentalist narrative of Hölderlin's thought on tragedy, which relies heavily on Lacoue-Labarthe (1989), though without the sensitivity that characterizes his appropriately paradoxical account of the 'caesura of the speculative.'

argue, solve or move beyond the aporias of its time, but rather shows the productive nature of paradox in considering Greek tragedy.²³

Models of the tragic

As the way tragedy matters changes, so, too, do which tragedies matter. Until the late eighteenth century, Aeschylus was largely absent from popular discussions of Greek tragedy. He had been thought untranslatable for Brumoy's edition of 1730, and the only major adaptation of the first half of the century was James Thomson's 1738 *Agamemnon*, which relied more on Seneca than Aeschylus.²⁴ Complete translations into French and English only appeared in the 1770s, and Germany had to wait until the 1780s even for translations of individual plays.²⁵ The rediscovery of Aeschylus in Germany is visible in two major ways: it brings a new attention to the chorus, which had been quite marginal in discussions early in the century, but is of vital importance for the Schlegels, Schiller, and Schelling. It also brings a new model of tragedy, which I argue is particularly important to Idealism. The *Eumenides*, so unusual a work in ancient context, comes to represent for German thinkers the possibility of an affirmative tragedy. The depiction of punishment averted and the civic pride that infuses the ending made the *Eumenides*, along with the *Oedipus at Colonus* (*OC*), an appealing alternative model of tragedy.²⁶ Together, the two plays suggested that reconciliation was not absent from tragedy, and that it might be the aim of the greatest dramatists to provide some sense of redemption after suffering. I argue

²³ Griffith (2011) argues that a comfort with paradox is still necessary for critics of Greek tragedy today.

²⁴ Hall and Macintosh (2005), 112.

²⁵ Translations of the *Agamemnon* appear in 1784 (Halem) and 1786 (Jenisch), *Prometheus* in 1784 (Schlosser), *Persians* in 1789 (Danz), *Seven* in 1797 (Süvern). The first collection is Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg's 1802 *Vier Tragödien des Aeschylos*, which translates the *Prometheus*, *Seven*, *Persians*, and *Eumenides*.

²⁶ The *OC* also arrives late on the scene, having missed selection for Brumoy's and Steinbrüchel's important collections.

that this drive for reconciliation, an undeniably Christian strand that found support in a few choice tragedies, is essential to understanding the theories of the period.

Nothing is more alienating from contemporary perspectives than Idealism's tendency to find tragedy affirmative, to see the catastrophes portrayed in tragedy as affording some form of insight or even consolation. As denizens of the twentieth century, A.D. Nuttall writes, we share a 'general taste for discomfort' and a suspicion of attempts to reconcile catastrophe, which can make understanding affirmative theories of tragedy difficult.²⁷ The suspicion is particularly marked in Terry Eagleton's 2003 *Sweet violence: the idea of the tragic*, which explodes idealist reflections on tragedy as a 'theory in ruins,' rejecting its 'anodyne appeals to virtue, rationality, and social harmony.'²⁸ This is an unpromising route for a historicist consideration, as it neglects the way that tragedy has been persistently described from the time of Aristotle, as a genre that produces its own 'proper pleasure' (οἰκεία ἡδονή).²⁹ It may seem surprising that tragedy could seem pleasurable to Aristotle or reconciliatory to Hegel, but this is no reason to reject their thought; rather, it should lead us to think about why it was experienced in that way, and to question our own assumptions of what is and is not tragic.

The concept of reconciliation poses a problem also for many readers sympathetic to Idealism. The dominant strategy of 'saving' Idealism from its tendency to find reconciliation in tragedy, now particularly prevalent in German Hegel scholarship, is to locate its concerns more in the ethical than in the ontological.³⁰ This is, I fear, to assimilate Idealism to the theological suspicions of our age. Dennis J. Schmidt broadens the strand to encompass philosophical reflection on tragedy from Plato to Heidegger in

²⁷ Nuttall, (1996), 2.

²⁸ Eagleton (2003), 19.

²⁹ *Poetics* 1453a36, 53b10, 59a21, 62b13. Bohrer (2009) is a rather more interesting critique of tragic pleasure, which sees it as an epiphanic experience of terror and mourning.

³⁰ Schulte (1992), Menke (1996), and Gethmann-Siefert (2005) suggest that this is now the dominant strand in German criticism.

On Germans and other Greeks: tragedy and ethical life, but the concept of ‘ethical life’ with which he seeks to describe all these is frustratingly diffuse. In seeking to show that Idealism is interested primarily in the ethical import of tragedy, Schmidt downplays the metaphysical and ontological concerns of all the thinkers he treats.³¹ In contrast, I show that in the works of Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin, tragedy unmistakably answers concerns of what Schmidt calls ‘ontotheological tradition.’ Tragedy for Idealism is bound up in religion’s seeking for reason behind historical events.³² At its most extreme, such a perspective can make tragedy a form of theodicy, a representation of catastrophe as somehow justified. I argue that Idealism’s concern with tragedy is a way of preserving the conviction that history has a meaning – however obscure its logic may be. I read Idealism against the historical background from which it emerged, rather than from the concerns of our present moment.

I suggest that a consideration of idealist theories can help us to historicize our own aversion to the concept of reconciliation. It makes obvious the modernity of many of the ways that Greek tragedy has been read as representing a particular view of existence (Steiner and an older generation) or of political or moral action (Eagleton and the current strand). Idealism, I show, leads in both these directions, and both possibilities take shape around 1800. Tragedy’s meaning, as a genealogical account of idealist thought shows, answers to urgent contemporary problems and questions – no less in 2011 than in 1795. This kind of meaningfulness (though not any particular meaning), I believe, constitutes the modernity of Greek tragedy.

³¹ Schmidt, (2001), 78 asserts that ‘the arrival of the topic of the tragic in philosophy must be understood as marking a double event: the reinvention of the question of tragedy and the closure of the possibility of metaphysics.’ This is simply not true. To be sure, Kantian critique has for its readers closed a certain possibility of metaphysics, but it has not closed metaphysics as a possibility.

³² Krell (2005) pursues a different strategy of rescuing Idealism from its metaphysical concerns, arguing that these relate to ‘the languishing of god,’ and so reflect a sense of the absolute in crisis. Though this line of argument may be tenable at moments for Hölderlin (though only at moments), it utterly fails to justice to the urgency with which he and Schelling turn to tragedy as a figure for sense.

Though I try to bring out the larger concerns – nearly all of which are profoundly alien to contemporary thought – in which idealist theories of tragedy are embedded, the aim is not to criticize these theories for their untenable metaphysics or questionable readings of Greek works. This is easy to do and requires only a superficial acquaintance with the theories themselves. I take it as given that Idealism is no longer a tenable philosophical position, and that its readings of tragedy reflect concerns that are largely alien to contemporary classical scholarship (as could be said of most scholarship from the 1950s and before). Yet bringing out the concerns in which the concept of the tragic is embedded not only yields a more accurate intellectual-historical picture of the period, but may also help us to gain some distance on our own moment in criticism of tragedy. Though the discontinuities are obvious, the continuities are in many ways more profound: we still read Greek tragedy as being meaningful for the ways we live our lives; we still understand tragedy as central to ancient Athenian culture; and we still very often consider tragedy as a genre defined by a philosophical or quasi-philosophical content. None of these were assumptions in 1750; that they are all possibilities today is an index of how far we remain idealists concerning tragedy.

From parallels to philosophies

The study is divided into six chapters, which can be understood either as three pairs or as two trios. The first two chapters are basically historical, and trace the rise of Greek tragedy in French and German thought through the eighteenth century. They focus on the discursive form of the parallel, which becomes a major weapon in the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, and is revisited and transformed throughout the eighteenth century. Chapter 1 shows that from Pierre Brumoy's 1730 *Théâtre* [sic] *des Grecs*, the parallel is essential to understanding the particularities of ancient tragedies. It creates a

tension between transhistorical similarity and historical difference, which is exemplified by Voltaire and Diderot in France and Gottsched and Lessing in Germany. Implicit and explicit comparisons, I show, lie behind much of Enlightenment discourse on Greek tragedy, and motivate many of its most important translations and adaptations of Greek works. The engagement with the alienness of Greek tragedy begins to suggest the need for a transhistorical concept that could encompass both ancient and modern works. This is answered by *le tragique* and *das Tragische*.

At the same time as the tragic begins to be abstracted from tragedies, the historical consciousness of the later eighteenth century, traced in Chapter 2, increasingly finds comparisons in parallel difficult or impossible to carry through. The conflict between historicizing and universalizing views of Greek tragedy becomes vociferous in the 1770s. Famously, Herder rejects comparisons of ancient and modern works in his 1773 essay ‘Shakespear.’ Yet just as important (though almost never noted by scholars) is a debate in the Académie des inscriptions of 1772, which contain the seeds of the first complete translation of Greek drama into French, the 1785-9 edition of Brumoy’s *Théâtre*. Guillaume Dubois de Rochefort, a little-known Homerist, argues that Greek tragedy should be understood as the product of an incomparably alien culture. An increasing interest in the historicity of Greek tragedy in Germany throughout the 1770s and 1780s is given new impetus, it is argued, by the sense of crisis brought about by Kantian critique and the French Revolution. Friedrich Schlegel’s early writings show the problematic nature of historical consciousness in the post-Revolutionary period, as thinkers look for a modern form that could offer a reconciliation commensurate to that of Greek tragedy. Schlegel’s unusually deep historical knowledge of Greek tragedy, though, ultimately leads him to reject the search for continuity and seek an analogue, a modern form that would fulfill the same role that tragedy did for the Greeks. His engagement with Greek

tragedy sets out the historical problematic of the 1790s: how to think the role of antiquity in a categorically different modernity.

Chapter 3, on Schiller, is the first dedicated to a single thinker, and introduces the first major strand in idealist thought on tragedy, which describes the actions of the tragic hero as an instantiation of the Kantian sublime. I argue that the complexity and interest of Schiller's thought on tragedy has often been underrated by critics who fail to note a substantial change in his thought on Greek tragedy around 1797. Where the sublimity of tragedy had earlier seemed to be a vindication of human reason over historical necessity, it now appears in the more limited role of an inoculation against historical chaos. Reading the contents of the 1801 *Kleinere prosaische Schriften*, I show that Schiller's theory of the tragic sublime forms a counterpoint to his project of aesthetic education, and similarly responds to the turmoil of the French Revolution. Schiller seeks to put his understanding of Greek tragedy and poetics into practice in his 1803 *Die Braut von Messina*, a bold experiment with ancient forms, and the occasion for his final theoretical publication, a preface 'Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie.' The short essay distills Schiller's later theory of tragedy and relation to antiquity, describing modernity's need for the strengthening effect of tragedy as the basis of a relation to the Greeks. Schiller differentiates the role of tragedy in the ancient and modern worlds in a way that both affirms the alienness of Greek forms, and their vital necessity.

Schelling, the subject of Chapter 4, carries further Schiller's Kantian reading of the tragic sublime, but places it in the ontological context that will be definitive for Idealism's theories of tragedy (hence, on a division into halves, the beginning of the second part, which focuses on Idealism proper). For Schelling, tragedy's importance comes from its reconciliations of the Kantian opposition of theoretical and practical reason, necessity and freedom. Greek tragedy represents for Schelling a 'document' of

the truth of philosophy, and so forms the keystone of his early thought. In considering the changes in tragedy over time, there arises the problem of whether modern tragedy can achieve the same reconciliation that Greek tragedy did, which threatens to undermine the assumption that the role of art is constant across history. Tragedy presses Schelling's historical thought to a crisis, and raises the unsettling possibility that modernity knows no true tragedy. Schelling's struggle to fix tragedy within historical process may be a catalyst for the other major idealist strand, which explicitly addresses tragedy as a genre of historical transition.

The final two chapters focus on Hegel and Hölderlin, and trace their reflections on tragedy from the late 1790s, when the two were in close contact. They present a substantially different view of tragedy from that of Schelling and Schiller, focusing less on the agent within tragedy than on the society in which the agent acts. Both use Greek tragedy to think through transitional moments in history, and find in the concept of fate (*Schicksal*) a way of understanding cultural change as part of a necessary process. For Hegel, this fate is fundamentally affirmative and progressive, and makes tragedy a form of idealized history, which represents contradiction in order to point beyond it. He understands Greek tragedy – most of all the *Antigone* and *Oresteia* – as depicting transitional moments in Greek culture, as the ancient *polis* order is revealed as insufficient to the ethical and religious progress of spirit. Greek tragedy for Hegel ultimately points beyond itself, into the modern, Christian age. Yet in assigning Greek tragedy to a past form of spirit, Hegel poses a problem for his own theory: how to understand the lack of tragic reconciliation in modernity. Unlike Schelling, Hegel sees the absence of aesthetic reconciliation in his time as a necessity of spirit, which now finds its adequate form in religion and philosophy. For Hegel, Greek tragedy's cultural importance and spiritual power cannot be restored, but have been dialectically integrated into

modernity's self-consciousness. Hegel's theory of historical progress emphasizes the uniqueness of Greek tragedy, while at the same time dissolving this uniqueness into a teleological narrative.

Chapter 6 considers the paradoxes in and of Hölderlin's thought on tragedy. Tragedy's form for Hölderlin is defined by the coexistence of opposites: subjective and objective, individual and collective, man and god, becoming and passing-away. Behind all of these, I argue, is the meeting of antiquity and modernity in tragedy, which Hölderlin seeks to instantiate in two major ways: first, by writing a modern tragedy on the story of Empedocles, and then by translating Sophocles into German. Both projects are made urgent by an engagement with the Revolution in France, which seems to represent a crisis of modernity. The sense of living in a time unguided by any form of reason drives Hölderlin to consider fate in Greek tragedy. In *Empedokles*, Hölderlin employs an ancient form and story to depict the social transformation he desires in his own time. As hopes for Napoleon's leadership and a republican constitution in Swabia dim, though, this project is set aside, and Hölderlin takes up translation of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (OT) and *Antigone*. In these extraordinary translations and their famously recondite *Anmerkungen*, Hölderlin uses Greek tragedy to comprehend the apparent errancy of his time. The tragic for Hölderlin is an exercise in the monstrosity of history, a means of representing the inscrutable and infinite in finite form. The alienness of Greek tragedy provides a lens through which Hölderlin seeks to understand his own historical place, to become authentically modern through an engagement with the ancient. The paradoxes of Hölderlin's thought, I argue, make it the most complete distillation of the idealist project of thinking tragedy between antiquity and modernity – an imperative that has in no way lessened over two hundred years. The concept of the tragic reveals itself not as a retreat from history, but as an engagement with history.

Chapter 1

Quarrelling over tragedy

Antiquity or modernity? The question is impossible and inescapable. Every age needs a past to define its presence; comparison is unavoidable. If the question has largely receded from overt expression today, it is because we have come to believe that it is impossible to answer. Antiquity was one thing; modernity is another. There is no general method of evaluating ages or cultures. It is the task of Classicists to understand the ancient world, and of social scientists to understand the modern. If we speak of the two in the same breath, it is most often with a disjunctive ‘and’ that introduces difference and relativism rather than similarity and the struggle for priority. The role of scholarship is most often to illuminate one or the other, not to place them in dialogue – or quarrel.

Yet this way of thinking is a comparatively recent development. Since at least the Renaissance, antiquity has been the ‘closest other’ for modern Europeans, a source of intrigue, inspiration, and competition for thinkers and artists.¹ Around the second half of the eighteenth century, this relationship is reconceived, changing from one of quantitative to qualitative otherness. We know this change as historicization.² After having occupied thinkers for centuries, the question of modernity’s priority practically disappears around 1800. Antiquity can no longer be measured against modernity; there are no firm grounds for comparison. This constitutes a kind of event in intellectual history, no less for not being traceable to a single thinker or moment of insight. No development in thought on antiquity

¹ The concept is taken from Hölscher (1994).

² I adopt Glenn Most’s distinction between historicism (a self-conscious academic method, which emerges in the nineteenth century) and historicization, which is possible in all times and places, but becomes particularly important for thinkers at the end of the eighteenth century. See the ‘Preface’ to Most (2001). The essays collected in the volume attest to the importance of historicization in the method of the Classics.

since has been so decisive, for in this period the study of the Classics as a historicist, positivist discipline was born.

The exemplary discursive form of the priority struggle is the parallel (the French term ‘parallèle’ is often used to designate this subgenre of criticism). In it, the achievements of ancients and moderns are compared point by point. Throughout the eighteenth century, the parallel pervades discussion of tragedy in Europe. The agonistic form could look back to the competitions of the Greater Dionysia that produced most of the extant Greek tragedies, and in comic vein, to Aristophanes’s juxtaposition of Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs*. Comparison of ancient and modern tragedies was often considered the height of erudition and the foundation of critical judgment. Late in the century, a German translator of the *Agamemnon* writes that ‘Parellelen zwischen Dichter und Dichter Einer Gattung sind die Gewichte in der Waagschale der Kritik: Denn durch diese Vergleichung ähnlicher Genies in der Bearbeitung eines ähnlichen Stoffs wird das Urtheil geschärft, and der Geschmack fixirt.’³ For much of the eighteenth century, the role of the critic is to undertake this process of weighing, with the aim of producing a reasoned judgment and educating individual taste. At this point, criticism (as judgment on literary works) and scholarship (as understanding their formation) are not firmly distinguished, and the two aims interpenetrate in most writing about literature. Over the course of the century, the balance between the two changes, and with it, the importance of the parallel. Though essential to the critical goals of the eighteenth century, the parallel is practically abandoned by thinkers of the nineteenth.⁴

³ Jenisch (1786), 136: ‘Parallels between poet and poet of a single genre are the weights in the scale of criticism. For through this comparison of similar genius in the treatment of similar content, judgment is sharpened and taste fixed.’

⁴ Hartog (2005), 251 argues that the last parallel of importance is Benjamin Constant’s 1819 ‘De la liberté des Anciens comparée à celle des Modernes,’ which argues against the parallel form. The last important parallel of

The form of the parallel is at the centre of the greatest priority dispute in European letters, the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Though most explosive in France around the turn of the eighteenth century, the *Querelle* was fought across Western Europe, and with particular vehemence in Italy and England, from the Renaissance.⁵ It staged a confrontation of two historical narratives: the *Anciens* seeing history as a cycle with one of its acmes in antiquity; the *Modernes* as a linear progress culminating in the present.⁶ What united the two camps, though, was a sense that the two ages could be compared, that human nature was in some sense constant.⁷ In this mode of thought, a parallel of the ages was necessary for deciding the question of priority. It was a way of examining difference based on an assumption of similarity, a belief that the merits of the two ages could be quantified and judged in comparison.

The parallel was one of the *Querelle*'s most potent weapons. It could draw on classical roots, most importantly Plutarch's *Lives*, which examined Greek and Roman lives in *synkrisis*, the rhetorical figure of comparison.⁸ Beginning in 1620 with Alessandro Tassoni's *Ingegni antichi e moderni*, parallels were used to explore the (nearly always binary) comparison of Greco-Roman antiquity and Renaissance modernity. Tassoni does not, as later authors do, declare a preference for one side or the other, but uses the form to relativise

tragedy is probably A.W. Schlegel's 1807 *Comparaison entre la Phèdre de Racine et celle d'Euripide*. Its binary comparison is quickly eclipsed by the wide scope of Schlegel's own *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, which presents a more historicizing viewpoint.

⁵ Yilmaz (2004) sets the beginning in Petrarch and argues that the French *Querelle* represents the endpoint of a long development in views of temporality. Hartog (2005) looks even further back, to the experience of novelty in antiquity, and argues that the encounter with the 'savage' other of the Renaissance gave the *Querelle* new force.

⁶ Schlobach (1980), 270-303. The French proper nouns denote parties of the *Querelle*.

⁷ Jauß (1964), 27.

⁸ On Plutarch, ancients, and moderns, see Hartog (2005), 125-88. On *synkrisis* in the *Lives*, see Duff (1999), 243-86. Kappler (1976) gives a broad overview of literary parallels.

gently the achievements of each.⁹ The most important and inflammatory parallel was Charles Perrault's *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences*, published in four volumes between 1688 and 1697, at the height of the French *Querelle*. Staging a dialogue between supporters of the ancients and the moderns, Perrault attempts a systematic comparison of the ages, extending through all arts and sciences. His aim throughout is to prove that 'les Anciens estoient extrêmement inferieurs aux Modernes par cette raison generale, qu'il n'y a rien que le temps ne perfectionne.'¹⁰ Decisive for Perrault's and the *Modernes*'s argument is the refusal to decouple improvement in the sciences (where it is easy to argue for the priority of modernity) from improvement in the arts (where it is harder); progress in one is progress in the other.¹¹ The *Modernes*'s model of development is radically ahistorical, as it leaves no room for a future beyond the perfection of the present.¹² On the contrary, the *Anciens* assume that historical change is a continuous, and non-linear process.¹³ The *Querelle* placed the question of what it means to be modern at the centre of intellectual life in Europe, and established many of the terms for the Enlightenment's investigation and formulation of its historical place.¹⁴

Though there are some rumblings of discontent at the assumption of comparability that grounds the form, parallels continue to be written and discussed throughout the

⁹ Fumaroli (2001), 59-76.

¹⁰ Perrault (1688) [1964] IV, 285: 'the ancients were extremely inferior to the moderns for this general reason, that there is nothing that time does not perfect.'

¹¹ Schlobach (1980), 281-90.

¹² DeJean (1997), 18.

¹³ Magné (1976), 724-39.

¹⁴ Edelstein (2010), 45 argues for the centrality of the *Querelle* as a 'catalyst' for Enlightenment thought. I have not been able to take into account the most recent reference on the *Querelle*, Larry F. Norman's *The Shock of the Ancient*, as it was published shortly before submission.

eighteenth century.¹⁵ They take many forms, from point-by-point comparisons of ancient and modern literature to more general oppositions of national characters. Many works not explicitly entitled ‘parallèle’ are constructed in such a way that they juxtapose antiquity and modernity with the aim of evaluation or reciprocal illumination. Parallels of tragedy are particularly popular, furnished with seemingly inexhaustible material by the many works on ancient themes written in French Classicism and its wake.¹⁶ The *Querelle d’Alceste* of the 1670s, which is often considered a precursor to the main phase of the French *Querelle*, pitted Perrault against Racine over the question of what in Euripides’s original was acceptable to modern tastes, and hardened some of the rivalries that would explode ten years later.¹⁷ Though the literary focal point of the *Querelle* was undoubtedly epic, the question of priority in tragedy never ceases to nag at thinkers.¹⁸ Following the cessation of outright hostilities, parallels of tragedy carried on the *Querelle* in different forms. Parallels of Racine’s and Euripides’s tragedies on the same theme are frequent, quite often delivered by Racine’s son to the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, France’s elite group of classicists.¹⁹ Particularly substantial was Louis Jacquet’s 1760 *Parallèle des Tragiques Grecs et François*, the most systematic discussion since Brumoy, and taking the part of the *Modernes* decisively. The *Querelle* continued in the parallels of the eighteenth century, finding in tragedy a fruitful ground for posing the question of priority. The duelling historical consciousnesses at the

¹⁵ Jauß (1964), 60-4 points out reservations about such comparisons as early as La Bruyère in 1684, and argues convincingly that this strand of thought leads to the historicism of the end of the 18th century.

¹⁶ See Perchellet (2004), 279-87.

¹⁷ Collected in Brooks et al. (1994) along with the ‘Critique des deux tragédies d’Iphigénie,’ of Charles’s brother, Pierre Perrault, a parallel that emerged directly from the *Querelle d’Alceste*.

¹⁸ DeJean (1997), 56 is surely right that epic and its modern counterpart, the novel, is central to the main phase *Querelle*, but this does not mean that tragedy had lost its importance completely. Debates about the modernity of ancient tragedy are evident not only in the *Querelle d’Alceste*, but also in Perrault (1688) [1964] III, 189-203.

¹⁹ On the Académie, see Grell (1995), 110-23. Examples of parallels are Racine (1733) and (1736). Batteux (1786) shows the continuing importance of the form through the century.

heart of the *Querelle* come into conflict throughout the century, and inform approaches to tragedy, and changing conceptions of ancient Greek culture.

I. Tragedies in parallel: Brumoy, Voltaire, Diderot

The parallel form is essential to the most important publication on tragedy of the early eighteenth century, the Jesuit Pierre Brumoy's 1730 *Le Théâtre des Grecs*.²⁰ Translating three works of Sophocles (*Oedipus the King*, *Electra*, *Philoctetes*), four of Euripides (*Hippolytus*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Alceste*), and summarizing the rest of the extant tragedies, comedies, and the *Cyclops*, *Le Théâtre des Grecs* quickly became the primary reference work on Greek drama for France, Germany, and England.²¹ Brumoy's *Théâtre* built on the popularity and influence of André Dacier's translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Sophocles (1692-3, respectively), but sought to extend the acquaintance with Greek drama beyond a few canonical works and the purported rules for creation. In its selection of plays, Brumoy's *Théâtre* established a canon of tragedy that would be powerful throughout the century.²² The work was reprinted in Amsterdam, revised in 1749 and 1763, and completely re-edited in 1785-9.²³ The influence of Brumoy's *Théâtre* touches practically every aspect of the reception of Greek drama through the eighteenth century.

Le Théâtre des Grecs begins with a series of three 'Discours' by Brumoy, 'Sur le Théâtre des Grecs', 'Sur l'origine de la tragédie', and 'Sur le parallèle des Théâtres.' Brumoy's viewpoint throughout is emphatically universalizing, seeing in ancient tragedy

²⁰ The 1730 edition does not print the circumflex in 'théâtre' (the 1785 edition, though, does).

²¹ It was translated into English in 1759; on the competing German translation, Steinbrüchel (1763), see below.

²² Trousson (1976).

²³ On the various editions, see Senarclens (2009).

certain aspects of Greek particularity, but emphasizing those elements that make its depictions aesthetically valid in modernity.²⁴ Brumoy writes in the first discourse,

Toute pensée belle & vraie, tout sentiment qui passe pour sublime dans un pays & dans un temps, sont les memes par-tout & toujours. Tel est le *qu'il mourût* de Corneille; qu'on ne dise pas qu'il en est des pensées, des sentimens, & des tours qui les expriment, comme des modes & des manieres qui changent en changeant de climat, ou par la révolution des années.²⁵

The reference to the sublime and the Corneille citation situate Brumoy's viewpoint within the *Querelle*. Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, the effective leader of the *Anciens*, had singled out the Corneille passage as a modern example of the sublime in the preface to his influential translation of Longinus.²⁶ The concept of the sublime had been a major source of conflict in the *Querelle*, and Brumoy's allusion aligns him decisively with Boileau and the *Anciens*.²⁷ Yet at the same time, the praise for Corneille suggests (as it did for Boileau) a recognition of modernity's value, and the possibility of comparing the two aesthetically.²⁸ Brumoy tries to place himself between the *Anciens* and the *Modernes* so that he may give an unclouded account of the Greek theatre and an impartial judgment of it.²⁹ The postulate of aesthetic universalism, which Brumoy seems to take for granted, ensures that such a judgment is possible.

Though assuming a fundamental similarity of ancient and modern tragedies, Brumoy recognizes the difficulties of comparison. Much of Greek theatre, he recognizes, would

²⁴ Senarclens (2007b).

²⁵ Brumoy (1730) I, viii: 'Every beautiful and true thought, every sentiment that passes for sublime in a country and during a time, is the same everywhere and always. Such is the 'That he had died' of Corneille. So that one cannot say that the thoughts, sentiments, and turns that explain them, are like fashions and manners that change with the climate, or the passing of the years.'

²⁶ The Corneille citation (from *Horace*) does not appear in the first edition, and was added to the 1701 preface, as a reflection of Boileau's partial reconciliation with the *Modernes*: Boileau Despréaux (1701) II, 15.

²⁷ Cronk (2003), 141-71.

²⁸ Voltaire, ironically, will cite the line with a different polemical intent in his Corneille commentary, finding that 'il n'en est aucun de comparable dans toute l'antiquité.' (Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 54, 272: 'there is nothing comparable to it in all antiquity.')

²⁹ Brumoy (1730) I, v. See also Lechevalier (2007), 40-6.

appear ridiculous if judged by the standards of French drama. In order to fully appreciate the beauties of Greek tragedy, one must set oneself ‘dans le point de vue où les Auteurs ont voulu nous placer.’³⁰ Brumoy demonstrates this in relation to the most controversial of Greek tragedies, the *Alcestis*, which had been attacked famously for its unbelievable elements and breaches of decorum.³¹ Brumoy imagines himself as an Athenian at a performance of Euripides's play and finds that

Si je deviens Athénien, comme ceux que le Poëte a eu en vûë de réjouir, je ne puis m’empêcher, malgré quelques défauts que j’apperçois avec le parterre, de joindre mes applaudissemens aux acclamations de la Grèce assemblée, puisqu’étant homme comme les Grecs, je suis nécessairement touché des mêmes verités, & des mêmes beautés qui ont frappé si vivement leurs esprits.³²

For Brumoy, temporal difference can be surmounted by an act of imagination. Because of common humanity, the modern reader can experience the same emotions that the ancients did. In his parallels and in his notes to the tragedies, Brumoy repeatedly returns to the imaginative effort necessary to comprehend and judge Greek literature. Failing to do so, the reader, like Perrault, ‘trouve tout cela risible.’³³ It is from such a failure of imagination that Greek theatre is often condemned unfairly, ‘comme si l’on jugeoit un Étranger sur le Code François.’³⁴ Without thinking oneself into the position of the Greeks, a fair judgment of ancient and modern tragedies is impossible.

Brumoy’s recognition of a limited (because surmountable) relativism in artistic taste reflects the balance codified in Jean-Baptiste Dubos’s *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et*

³⁰ Brumoy (1730) I, xii; Brumoy (1730) I, xii: ‘in the point of view where the authors wished to place us.’

³¹ Fumaroli (2001), 169-75.

³² Brumoy (1730) I, ix: ‘If I become Athenian, like those whom the poet had intended to please, despite some faults that I perceive with the parterre, I cannot restrain myself from joining my applause to the acclamations of assembled Greece, because, being a man like the Greeks, I am necessarily touched by the same truths and the same beauties that struck their spirits so powerfully.’

³³ Brumoy (1730) I, x: ‘finds all of it laughable.’

³⁴ Brumoy (1730) I, xiii: ‘as if one were to judge a foreigner by French law.’

sur la peinture of 1719, which ended the most vicious phase of the *Querelle* with a recognition of the claims of both ages.³⁵ Dubos distinguishes between the effect of an artwork for the ‘homme en general’ and the ‘homme en particulier.’³⁶ Great works, according to Dubos, touch us even when their subject is no longer an object of immediate interest, on account of their timeless beauties. Dubos’s distinction between absolute and relative merits articulates an important pattern of historical thought: the essence of an artwork may outlive its historical moment. The two types of judgment – particular appeal and general value – establish a dialectic of historical criticism with important consequences for thought on tragedy. It suggests that one can distinguish between the unchanging core of the genre and its contingent manifestations; parallels of tragedy will often seek to establish the deeper correspondence lying beneath apparent heterogeneity.

Distinguishing between the two types of beauty was easier said than done. In his third discourse, ‘Sur le parallèle des Théâtres,’ Brumoy introduces a distinction between universal and relative elements of taste.³⁷ In any body of people, each individual has ‘quelque chose de général qui s’étend à tous, & quelque chose de personnel qui les distingue entre eux.’³⁸ Brumoy has no trouble imagining himself and fifth-century Athenians as part of a shared community, distinguished in particulars but fundamentally the same. Thus he insists, as the ‘principe du parallèle’ that ancient and modern tragedies are created by the same means and to the same ends:

³⁵ Edelstein (2010), 37-43.

³⁶ Dubos (1733) I, 72.

³⁷ Lechevalier (2007), 44 argues that this way of distinguishing between principal and accessory qualities stems originally from Spinoza, though it is more directly an inheritance from Dubos.

³⁸ Brumoy (1730) I, cxxxiii: ‘something of the general that extends to all and something of the personal which distinguishes between them.’

Même but, mêmes sujets, même oeconomie, pour le fond: c'est a dire, dessein d'émouvoir une agréable tristesse, sujets grands & nobles de part & d'autre, oeconomie régulière, selon l'idée de régularité que chacun s'est formée.³⁹

Brumoy's interest in the emotional effect of tragedy shows another debt to Dubos, whose aesthetics were unusually focused on the affective experience of the viewer (and, in contrast to Dacier, have little to say about the 'rules' of construction). Brumoy understands the goal of tragedy in rhetorical terms, as the production of a certain effect on its viewer, which establishes a continuity across time. Having posited the essential similarity of ancient and modern tragedies, Brumoy continues to define their differences. Such differences, though, are seen merely as contingent variations, to be transcended through an effort of imagination. At the heart of the parallel is the assumption that two phenomena have a common essence, a general similarity upon which particular differences can be discerned and judged.

Limits of the parallel

Tragedy's political content and context represent a dangerous area of the parallel for Brumoy: Greek tragedy was performed in a democracy, often depicted the downfall of kings, and brought on stage members of the polity in the chorus. Modern French tragedy, on the other hand, takes place under an absolute monarchy, and with rare exceptions, portrays only members of the nobility.⁴⁰ The form of the parallel makes the differing political systems difficult to ignore, and potentially dynamite: under a monarchy, advocating republican tragedy is inherently dangerous. Further, as a Jesuit, Brumoy had to tread a careful line on Greek tragedy, which had been criticized for its depiction of immoral characters and

³⁹ Brumoy (1730) I, cxxxv: 'The same goal, same subjects, same economy, for their basis. That is to say, an attempt to create an agreeable sadness, great and noble subjects throughout, a regular economy, according to the idea of regularity by which each is created.'

⁴⁰ This problem is explored thoroughly by Biet (1994). See also Perchellet (2004), 287-92.

actions.⁴¹ The Jesuits were widely suspected for their use of theatrical texts in instruction, and in the years leading up to their suppression in 1762, were accused of subversion with increasing fervour.⁴² Brumoy himself would briefly be exiled in 1739 for having approved publication of a work that allegedly cast aspersions on the monarchy.⁴³ In his attempt to rehabilitate Greek tragedy, Brumoy must avoid any hint that he is advocating the beliefs that underpin it.

The form of the parallel allows Brumoy to distinguish firmly between those political elements that moderns can accept and those they must resist. He places an unusually strong (if cautious) weight on the politics of Greek tragedy. He emphasizes the importance of republican sentiments in ancient drama, yet seeks to distance them as much as possible from the present, arguing that such passages are no longer comprehensible to modern audiences.⁴⁴ Though both ancient and modern tragedy concern kings, their notions of monarchical have nothing in common:

Le point de vûë & les yeux étant tout différents [...] les premiers [les Grecs] ne veulent de Rois sur la Scene que pour jouir de leur abaissement, par une haine implacable de la dignité suprême; les seconds [les François] ne peuvent les voir humiliés que pour rehausser la majesté ou plutôt la Tyrannie Romaine.⁴⁵

The tragedies of the two nations reflect their opposed views of political authority. The Greek hatred for kings makes them enjoy the *peripeteiai* of plays like *Oedipus* or *Heracles*, while the French respect for monarchy leads to plays concerning more admirable characters who meet with happier ends, obvious in Racine's Euripides adaptations and *Bérénice* (probably

⁴¹ Lechevalier (2007), 49-52.

⁴² Northeast (1991), 23-7.

⁴³ Northeast (1991), 45.

⁴⁴ Brumoy (1730) I, cxxi-iii.

⁴⁵ Brumoy (1730) I, cxi: 'The point of view and the eyes being wholly different, [...] the first did not want their kings on stage except to rejoice at their abasement, out of their implacable hatred of supreme dignity; the second cannot see them humiliated except to emphasize their majesty or rather the Roman tyranny.'

the ‘Tyrannie Romaine’ mentioned). In emphasizing the distance between Greek and French attitudes to royalty, Brumoy suggests that ancient republicanism has no place in the modern world. At the same time, though, he is unusual among translators of his time in broaching the political comparison at all. Part of the reason for this is methodological. Unlike his most important predecessor, André Dacier, Brumoy’s perspective is more historical than aesthetic: he tries to explain the workings of ancient tragedy by reference to its context, rather than taking it as a normative canon of rules for modernity.⁴⁶ Brumoy’s historical viewpoint leads him to recognize the political character of Greek tragedy – indeed, to emphasize it – while at the same time using the parallel to place it outside of the essence of the genre. The form of the parallel, by isolating the historical, and therefore inessential elements of tragedy, makes a consideration of politics in Greek works possible.

In other realms as well, Brumoy emphasizes the difference of ancient and modern tragedy. The ‘Discours sur le parallèle’ begins with a detailed sketch of the Athenian people, deducing the character of tragedy from that of the audience for whom it was created. This leads Brumoy, in the parallel proper, to a systematic opposition of the characteristics of Greek and French tragedy. The Greeks excel in representing single, timeless nature, the French in depicting the world’s multiplicity.⁴⁷ The French theatre introduces a diversity of plots, characters, and themes that would have been impossible for the Greeks, and does so without a strict adherence to the Aristotelian ‘rules.’ Brumoy seems almost baffled by the differences he discovers, writing in his conclusion that the genres are ‘tout différens à

⁴⁶ Biet (1994), 61-3. The difference is made particularly explicit in Brumoy’s ‘Reflexions sur l’Oedipe,’ which rejects Dacier’s technical discussion of the play’s structure in favor of a more reception-focused approach: Brumoy (1730) I, 87.

⁴⁷ Brumoy (1730) I, clix.

certain égard, & par conséquent peu susceptibles d'une comparaison fort exacte.'⁴⁸ This doubt about the viability of Brumoy's project can be understood as indicating a changing intellectual current: though he does not go so far as to rule out the possibility of a parallel (and indeed, proceeds to make many!), he places it strongly in question. When constructing a parallel, there is always a danger that the basis for comparison will not prove strong enough. The distinction between universal and particular aspects of tragedy is a means of saving the parallel from dissolution into relativist incoherence.

The parallel, for all its flaws, is essential for Brumoy's critical aim. Despite his deep historical engagement, Brumoy's perspective is decidedly presentist: to judge the works of the past for their power in the present. Imagining oneself in the position of a Greek spectator is an effort to appreciate and assess more fully ancient works. Without comparison, such an assessment would have no firm basis. Brumoy judges the main elements of the parallel point-by-point in favour of one or the other, though without coming to a final judgment on the priority of one age. His goal, he writes, is not to exalt antiquity above modernity, but to persuade readers who know French theatre of the value of the Greeks, 'fai[re] connoître comment & en quoi on peut les comparer pour juger mieux l'un, qui est moins connu, par le contraste de l'autre qui l'est plus.'⁴⁹ The parallel appears as a means of educating the taste of Brumoy's contemporaries, using the differences between tragedies to increase powers of discernment. The particular characteristics of Greek tragedy only emerge fully in the contrast

⁴⁸ Brumoy (1730) I, clviii: 'entirely differing in certain respects, and as a consequence, hardly susceptible to a very exact comparison.'

⁴⁹ Brumoy (1730) I, clx: 'make known how and in what one may compare the two, in order to judge better the one that is less known by the contrast to the other that is better known.'

with modern works; the ultimate goal of such a comparison, though, is an insight into the quality that animates both.⁵⁰

The assumption of comparability makes possible a series of parallels interspersed throughout the work. After treating each Greek tragedy, Brumoy appends a short essay, if applicable, on parallel treatments of the same subject. Indeed, Brumoy's choice of tragedies to translate, which might seem strange to modern tastes, suggests that he is seeking out parallels with other works, ancient and modern: for *Oedipus* he has Seneca and Corneille; for *Hippolytus* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, tragedies by Racine; and for *Electra*, the two other Greek works on the same subject. Though Brumoy does not mention them, on the principal that living authors should not be considered, Voltaire's 1718 *Oedipe* and Crébillon's 1708 *Électre* would have reinforced those subjects's popularity. This may explain also the inclusion of the Taurian *Iphigenia*, which had been adapted by Lagrange-Chancel as *Oreste et Pylade* in 1697, and became quite popular for its idealized depiction of friendship. Though there are no parallel tragedies for *Philoctetes* and *Alcestis*, both were important sources for modern works: the arms of Heracles at issue in *Philoctetes* had been important in François Fénelon's hugely popular 1699 novel *Télémaque*,⁵¹ and the *Alcestis* was at the centre of the controversy mentioned above, revolving around the opera of Quinault and Lully.⁵² Brumoy's choice of tragedies, then, is guided by implicit and explicit parallels. The obscurity of Greek tragedy at the time made modern parallels particularly important, as a way of legitimizing ancient

⁵⁰ Duff (1999), 249-52 makes a similar argument in relation to Plutarch's *Lives*, a text Brumoy obviously knew well.

⁵¹ Brumoy (1730) I, 239. On the novel's influence on dramatic practice, see Grell (1995), 330-6.

⁵² Brumoy (1730) II, 148.

theatre and a means to understanding its effect.⁵³ Conceiving Greek drama independently of its modern adaptations was practically impossible.

In each parallel, Brumoy notes and evaluates the essential points of departure from the Greek original, ascribing them most often to the different customs of the times, and not to any difference essential to the genre of tragedy. He does not spare any work from criticism, but he is always at pains to point out what is most difficult for moderns to comprehend in ancient tragedies. The comparison of the two, as he writes in remarks preferring Racine's *Phèdre* to Euripides's *Hippolytus*, should reflect well on both, 'puisque l'inventeur a toujours une bonne part à la gloire de celui qui perfectionne après lui.'⁵⁴ Just as a judgment in favour of the modern poet reflects well on the ancient, so too, when preferring Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis* to Racine's *Iphigénie*, Brumoy reflects that 'on ne pouvoit mieux sentir les beautés d'Euripide qu'en les rapprochant de celles de Racine.'⁵⁵ Brumoy, though usually declaring the priority of one or the other tragedy, does not intend the parallel to be destructive or polemical; it is rather a means of education and reconciliation after the polemics of the *Querelle*. Tragedy remains one in antiquity and modernity, even as the quality and character of its products varies. Brumoy's call to historicize Greek tragedy is ultimately subordinated to his effort to prove that its artistic value is universal.

⁵³ Trousson (1976), 2117.

⁵⁴ Brumoy (1730) I, 390: 'since the inventor always has a good part of the glory of the one who perfects it after him.' A similar idea is found in Racine (1733), 299.

⁵⁵ Brumoy (1730) I, ciii: 'one could not better understand the beauties of Euripides than in setting them beside those of Racine.'

The ancients and modern tragedy: Voltaire

The balance between relativizing and universalizing viewpoints changes over the course of the eighteenth century. This is reflected in changing forms of tragedy, as authors strive to define the genre after the great works of the *âge classique*.⁵⁶ The eighteenth century produced a huge number of tragedies, in a wider range of styles and for a wider range of venues than the century previous (when theatrical activity was more concentrated around the court).⁵⁷ Two are particularly important in the history of the parallel: Voltaire's arch-classical *Oedipe* (1718), and Diderot's arch-modern *Le fils naturel* (1757). Though neither is much read or performed today, they were enormously important and influential in their time, both as works of theatre and as the occasion to articulate a doctrine for creation beyond neoclassical poetics. Voltaire and Diderot alike mobilize ancient tragedy for their creative aims, but do so in surprising ways: Voltaire uses comparison to point out what in Sophocles modern drama should correct, while Diderot draws on Greek tragedy to suggest principles for improving modern drama. The difference between universalizing and relativizing viewpoints becomes clear in the opposed practices and theories of the two *philosophes*.

Voltaire's *Oedipe* sets out to correct not only the flaws of his contemporary theatre, but the *Oedipe* of Corneille, the *Oedipus* of Seneca, and most boldly, the *OT* itself. Unlike practically every dramatist of his own and previous generations, Voltaire does not rely on Aristotle as an absolute, or even a relative authority. He assumes that aesthetic judgment is universal across differences of time and space, and rejects any intrinsic value to ancient drama.⁵⁸ The only arbiter he recognizes is his own reason. In his dramaturgy, Voltaire

⁵⁶ Larthomas (1980), 41-9.

⁵⁷ See Trott (2000), 17-22 for an outline of this diversity.

⁵⁸ Force (2009), 477 points out that this assumption in practice means assuming that modern taste is universal.

competes with the exemplary work of Greek drama on its own ground, revising the story of Oedipus to suit his own dramaturgy. The ancient plot is a façade for a comprehensively modern work, which seeks more than anything to return to and rival the glories of French classical tragedy. The attraction of a story line that Corneille had already treated, and that Racine was reputedly too modest to try his hand at, made Oedipus the ideal subject for the young thinker to establish his reputation.⁵⁹

Voltaire's understanding of ancient tragedy is fundamentally shaped by and in opposition to the viewpoint of André Dacier, whose translation of the *Poetics* he studied closely.⁶⁰ The two had corresponded in 1714, when the elder classicist wrote that Sophocles's *Oedipus* represented 'la pièce la plus parfaite qui nous reste de l'antiquité,' and encouraged Voltaire to follow its model in his own work-in-progress.⁶¹ Though elaborating a normative poetics like Dacier, Voltaire comprehensively rejects the praise lavished on Sophocles's *Oedipus* from Aristotle onward. Greek tragedy is not the ideal of drama, but a barbaric, primitive form that has long been surpassed by the great French tragedians. The third *Lettre sur Oedipe* takes up, in meticulous detail, Dacier's normative reading, offering withering criticisms. Though the *OT*, for Voltaire, has many positive qualities, it is by no means the ideal of tragedy; if it was regarded so by Aristotle, that is because 'Les Athéniens, [...] avec tout leur esprit et toute leur politesse, ne pouvaient avoir une juste idée de la perfection d'un art qui était encore dans son enfance.'⁶² Better, he thinks, is Corneille, whom

⁵⁹ Jory (2001), 18-23.

⁶⁰ His marginalia, though of uncertain date, are collected in Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 136, 114-145.

⁶¹ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 85, 30: 'the most perfect play that remains from antiquity.'

⁶² Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 1a, 349: 'the Athenians, with all their spirit and all their *politesse*, could not have a just idea of the perfection of an art which was then still in its infancy.'

he praises generously, while at the same time pointing out numerous flaws in his *Oedipe*.⁶³ Voltaire's model of history is allied to the *Modernes*'s view of progress: literature improves with the passage of time.⁶⁴ The implication, although even Voltaire does not dare to state it explicitly, is that his *Oedipus* will be more perfect than either Sophocles's or Corneille's.

It is in discussing the chorus of tragedy that Voltaire constructs an explicit parallel. Here again, he judges ancient theatre, contrary to Dacier, as a primitive form, too close to its origins to have achieved perfection: 'On demandera peut-être comment les anciens pouvaient conserver si scrupuleusement un usage si sujet au ridicule; c'est qu'ils étaient persuadés que le chœur était la base et le fondement de la tragédie.'⁶⁵ For moderns, however, the role of a singing chorus must be severely restricted, as in Racine's *Esther* and *Athalie*, so as to avoid 'le bizarre assortiment du chant et de la déclamation dans une même scène.'⁶⁶ Far from being the foundation of the morality of tragedy, as Dacier had argued, the chorus appears to Voltaire only as a ridiculous diversion.⁶⁷ In his own practice, Voltaire employs the chorus strictly as individual characters, Thebans whose livelihood is at stake in the attempt to solve the murder of Laius. In this limited use of the chorus, Voltaire seems to be correcting the practices of both Sophocles and Racine. His choral theory and practice suggest a narrative of progress from classical Athens to the *âge classique*, and culminating in his own work.

Despite Voltaire's general lack of enthusiasm for Greek theatre, two elements of it continually draw his praise as antidotes to contemporary practice: its lack of love motifs and

⁶³ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 1a, 363.

⁶⁴ Mat-Hasquin (1981), 146.

⁶⁵ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 1a, 375: 'One might ask how the ancients could conserve so scrupulously a practice so subject to ridicule; it is because they were persuaded that the chorus was the basis and foundation of tragedy.'

⁶⁶ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 1a, 376: 'the bizarre arrangement of song and declamation in the same scene.'

⁶⁷ Dacier (1692), Preface.

the simplicity of its stories.⁶⁸ The 1731 *Discours sur la tragédie*, published as a preface to the play *Brutus*, lauds these aspects of Greek tragedy.⁶⁹ Despite their many faults, the Greeks have done well to discover the ‘règles fondamentales du théâtre’ (the unities) which made their drama aesthetically unified.⁷⁰ Moreover, they have not polluted their stories with love, as moderns do: ‘Ils ont rarement hasardé cette passion [l’amour] sur le théâtre d’Athènes,’ – a contrast to the ‘galanterie’ of French drama.⁷¹ Brumoy’s parallels would draw attention to the same two qualities, and similarly argue for the superiority of Greek theatre in these respects.⁷² Yet Voltaire would never make the imaginative leap that Brumoy demanded to appreciate Greek theatre on its own terms. Indeed, Voltaire does not believe that the standards differ in any way. In his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, he deplores Brumoy’s blindness to the ‘supériorité du théâtre français sur le grec.’⁷³ Brumoy for his part never mentions Voltaire’s *Oedipe*, in accordance with the rule not to criticize the living, but his discussion of Sophocles’s version disparages anyone who ‘n’a pas la force de se transporter au Théâtre d’Athènes, & d’oublier pour un moment celui de Paris,’ a harsh if fair description of Voltaire’s method.⁷⁴ For Voltaire Greek tragedy is valuable only where it conforms to his own, avowedly modern, aesthetic.⁷⁵ Voltaire judges ancient tragedy through the lens of

⁶⁸ Mat-Hasquin (1981), 160-72.

⁶⁹ See also the dedicatory letter to *Oreste* in Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 31a, 397-412.

⁷⁰ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 5, 173: ‘fundamental rules of the theatre.’

⁷¹ Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 5, 179: ‘have rarely hazarded [love] in the theatre of Athens.’ The critique of ‘galanterie’ follows, 181-183.

⁷² Brumoy (1730) I, cxlvi; Trousson (1976), 2124.

⁷³ Voltaire (1754) II, 176: ‘superiority of French theatre to Greek.’ The earlier editions mention Brumoy and disparage slightly his translation, but do not contain this more generalized critique.

⁷⁴ Brumoy (1730) I, 93: ‘do not have the strength to transport themselves to the theatre of Athens, and forget for a moment that of Paris.’

⁷⁵ See the first part of the *Dissertation sur les principales tragédies, anciennes et modernes, qui ont paru sur le sujet d’Électre* in Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 31a, 571-591.

modern works, insisting on the universality of aesthetic standards.⁷⁶ Ancient tragedies are only a prologue to the glories of French classicism and the perfection of his own works. Though he adapts an ancient story, he is no *Ancien*.

'La verité! la nature! les anciens!': Denis Diderot

Against Voltaire's essentially ahistorical understanding of poetics, Diderot reflects a consciousness of drama's cultural context far closer to Brumoy. This has the surprising result that the theatrical culture of Athens becomes for Diderot a rallying cry to create a new, and wholly different, theatrical culture for Paris. With this renewal of drama comes a sense that tragedies on ancient subjects (Voltaire's being the most popular example) can no longer be written, and that theatre must turn from the kings of ancient myth to the bourgeoisie of modern experience.⁷⁷ In the 1740s and 50s, French authors began to adopt the English model of bourgeois drama, serious plays featuring characters drawn from contemporary life. Diderot was one of the earliest to do so, in *Le fils naturel* (1757) and *Le père de famille* (1758).⁷⁸ His *Entretiens sur Le fils naturel*, published with the play, represents the first important attempt to formulate a theory of the young genre.⁷⁹ It imagines a typically Diderotian conversation between 'Moi' and the main character of *Le fils naturel*, Dorval, who attempts to justify the dramaturgy of the piece. Dorval laments that it is impossible to revive the grand tradition of tragedy, because, with the works of Corneille, Racine, and

⁷⁶ Mat-Hasquin (1981), 136-48 nuances this with respect to Voltaire's later writings, which show some influence of Brumoy's historical viewpoint; yet Voltaire's fundamentally aesthetic, ahistorical viewpoint never changes.

⁷⁷ On Diderot's implicit disagreements with Voltaire, see Cronk (2000).

⁷⁸ On Diderot's reform of the theatre, see Cannon (1989), esp. 5-48. Ménil (1995), 49-75.

⁷⁹ Didier (2001), 57.

Voltaire, ‘la tragédie est arrivée parmi nous au plus haut degré de perfection.’⁸⁰ This leaves the contemporary author to search for another route, suggested by the English model, which Diderot/Dorval terms ‘la tragédie domestique et bourgeoise.’⁸¹

For Diderot, the answer lies in a return not to the forms of Greek tragedy, but to its straightforward, natural mode of representation. As the excitable Dorval exclaims, ‘Je ne me lasserai point de crier à nos Français: La Verité la Nature! les Anciens! Sophocle! Philoctète!’⁸² In his sense of the Greek theatre’s connection to nature, Diderot shows himself very much a reader of Brumoy, whose edition seems to have been his guide to ancient drama.⁸³ Greek tragedy for Diderot represents a naturally developed aesthetic code.⁸⁴ He is drawn particularly to the *Philoctetes*, finding in the cries of the hero – which had scandalized Brumoy for their indecorous passion – an immediacy lacking in the strict versification of modern works. Similarly, Diderot is attracted to the *Eumenides* for its raw emotional power, which suggests an antidote to modern *sangfroid*.⁸⁵ The problem, Diderot argues, is that modernity has preserved only the formal elements of ancient tragedy, ‘et nous avons abandonné la simplicité de l’intrigue et du dialogue, et la vérité des tableaux.’⁸⁶ The essence of ancient tragedy for Diderot is the simple and direct quality of its representation. This remains valid in the present, and is necessary as a corrective to modern drama’s excessive emphasis on presentation. Diderot mobilizes ancient tragedy polemically, as an alternative to

⁸⁰ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1154: ‘among us tragedy has arrived at the highest degree of perfection.’

⁸¹ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1155.

⁸² Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1155: ‘I will not tire of crying to our French people: Truth! Nature! The ancients! Sophocles! Philoctetes!’

⁸³ Pérol (1976).

⁸⁴ Trousson (1976), 2128.

⁸⁵ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1152.

⁸⁶ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1156: ‘and we have abandoned the simplicity of the intrigue and dialogue and the truth of tableaux.’

modern practice; his innovation lies in suggesting that the return to antiquity would call for a self-consciously modern drama.⁸⁷

To justify his modernizing practice, Diderot introduces a taxonomy of genre, placing the *genre sérieux* (alternately called the *tragédie bourgeoise*) between the extremes of comedy and tragedy. The *genre sérieux* offers the possibility of depicting bourgeois existence, drawing on elements of tragedy and comedy for its story, and written in prose throughout.⁸⁸ Diderot imagines a poetics of this genre that dictates ‘que le sujet en soit important, et l’intrigue, simple, domestique, et voisine de la vie réelle.’⁸⁹ By allying this form so closely to the quotidian, Diderot suggests a relativism in artistic products: modern drama should take its concerns and presentational style from everyday life. For Diderot, drama’s effect is created by a direct relation to the concerns of the audience. He could hardly be further from the universalist aesthetics of Dacier, and is even more radically historicist than Brumoy. Somewhat surprisingly, then, he justifies the *genre sérieux* by a reinterpretation of Aristotle. Whereas Dacier and generations of critics had been interested primarily in the three unities and Aristotle’s remarks on plot construction, Diderot draws attention to the doctrine of imitation itself, which he interprets normatively: ‘Il me semble bien de l’avantage à rendre les hommes tels qu’ils sont. [...] Qu’est-ce que la beauté d’imitation? La conformité de l’image avec la chose.’⁹⁰ In this understanding of *mimesis*, the closer the imitation, the more powerfully it affects the viewer. Diderot’s rejection of high tragedy is figured as a return to the simplicity of antiquity, necessitated by an Aristotelian poetics of imitation. Greek tragedy

⁸⁷ O’Dea (2000).

⁸⁸ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1166.

⁸⁹ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1167: ‘that its subject should be important, the intrigue, simple, domestic, and close to real life.’

⁹⁰ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1181: ‘It appears to me better to render men as they are. [...] What is the beauty of imitation? The conformity of the image with the thing.’

is not a universal model, but it does provide a universal principle. Though rejecting the forms of Greek tragedy, Diderot preserves a vital role for its content in modern dramaturgy.

Diderot places Athenian drama in a social context diametrically opposed to that of modern theatre. He idealizes not only the natural style of Greek tragedy, but its entire civic context:

Quelle différence entre amuser tel jour, depuis telle jusqu'à telle heure, dans un petit endroit obscur, quelques centaines de personnes; ou fixer l'attention d'une nation entière dans ses jours solennels, occuper ses édifices les plus somptueux, et voir ces édifices environnés et remplis d'une multitude innombrable, dont l'amusement ou l'ennui va dépendre de notre talent?⁹¹

Here the parallel form of Diderot's thought becomes explicit, and leads him to the elegiac sense that the extraordinary cultural centrality of the theatre in ancient Greece is no longer possible: modernity cannot furnish an audience that would be receptive to a revival of ancient tragedy. His reforms, though, nevertheless seek to make the content of modern drama closer to the political art of Athens by bringing stories closer to everyday experience.⁹² Though he has preserved some of Greek tragedy's principles as universally binding, Diderot cannot in any way revive its context. This is the insight that most fundamentally divides later eighteenth-century thought on Greek tragedy from the *Querelle*: the role of the genre in Athenian culture is lost to the modern world. Though Diderot sees the mimetic principle of Greek tragedy as universally binding, nothing of the genre's form can play a role in modern drama. The *tragédie bourgeoise* is based on a radical historicization that sees Greek tragedy as the product of a decisively past culture. Yet by pointing out the organic connection

⁹¹ Diderot, *Oeuvres* 4, 1157: 'What a difference there is between entertaining on some day, from and until some time, in some small, dark place, a few hundred people; and fixing the attention of an entire nation on its solemn days, occupying its most sumptuous structures, and seeing these structures surrounded and filled with an innumerable multitude, whose amusement or boredom will depend on our talent?'

⁹² Ménéil (1995), 20.

between drama and society, Diderot finds a universal principle for comparison and a rule for modern composition.

II. Ways to the tragic in Germany

Greek tragedy arrived in the German Enlightenment via France, mainly through Dacier's *Poétique* and Brumoy's *Théâtre*. Until around 1760, when Johann Jacob Steinbrüchel's translations began to appear, these French texts were the primary references for those without Greek.⁹³ Yet Greek drama was nevertheless a presence in the first half of the century, both in theory and in practice. The most important German work of neoclassical poetics, Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst* (first edition 1730), treats Greek tragedy, following Dacier, as a normative aesthetic ideal. His concern, like that of French neoclassicists, was to extract a series of rules for creation. To that end, he emphasizes the rational quality of Greek tragedy, relying on Aristotle's *Poetics* as a distillation of the dramatic ideal and for legitimization of his own practice.⁹⁴ Aristotle's authority, however, is importantly mediated by French discussions of drama and by Horace's *Ars Poetica*, a translation of which prefaces the *Critische Dichtkunst*.⁹⁵ Gottsched's prescriptive poetics relies on Greek tragedy as a universally valid canon, its aim the thoroughly Voltairean one of illustrating moral principles.⁹⁶

Gottsched's knowledge of Greek, though, was quite limited. At the time it was taught mostly for the study of theology, and editions of classical authors were the rare province of

⁹³ Opitz's 1636 *Antigone* was accessible, but few seem to have availed themselves of the opportunity. On the baroque Sophocles, see Daskarolis (2000).

⁹⁴ Wild (2002).

⁹⁵ Sier (2002), 104.

⁹⁶ Julliard (1998), 315.

the erudite.⁹⁷ A translation, following in Dacier's footsteps, of the *Poetics*, *Electra*, and *Oedipus* was promised for the first volume of the anthology *Die Deutsche Schaubühne, nach den Regeln und Exempeln der Alten* (1741-5), but never carried out.⁹⁸ In place of Aristotle, Gottsched offers excerpts from Fénelon's *Lettre à l'Académie* on tragedy and comedy. Though Fénelon is quite critical of French tragedians in comparison with Greek, Gottsched translates only modern works, including his own 'improved' version of Racine's *Iphigénie*. Though *Die Deutsche Schaubühne*'s title suggests the debt to antiquity, the work's content is decidedly modern. Greek tragedy, for Gottsched, is useful as a rhetorical instrument, but his actual engagement seems quite spare. His knowledge and appreciation of French works was far more vital, as he himself seems to have recognized:

Was bey den Römern die Griechen waren, das sind für uns itzo die Franzosen. Diese haben uns in allen großen Gattungen der Poesie sehr gute Muster gegeben, und sehr viele Discurse, Censuren, Kritiken und andere Anleitungen mehr geschrieben, daraus wir uns manche Regel nehmen können.⁹⁹

Though these sentences would be unthinkable a generation later, they make clear the state of German literary thought at the time, as a field struggling to define its place with respect to the classical tradition. Gottsched, in his own theatrical practice, was struggling to establish a role for serious drama in German society.¹⁰⁰ Gottsched turns first to the French, and through them, to the Greeks, as a source of authority. It is not so much the substance of ancient works as their exemplary status for modern literature that is important.¹⁰¹ Gottsched's achievement

⁹⁷ Flavell (1979), 85.

⁹⁸ Meid (2008), 23.

⁹⁹ Gottsched (1751) [1977], 41: 'What the Greeks were for the Romans, so are the French now for us. They have given us very good models in all the great genres of poetry, and have written moreover many discourses, censures, critiques and other guides out of which we can draw many rules.'

¹⁰⁰ Sosulski (2007), 37.

¹⁰¹ Stockinger (2000), 41.

lies most of all in directing German drama's gaze outward, away from the rustic comedies of the day to the tragedies of the classical tradition (if not the classics themselves).

This new orientation finds practical consequences in a number of works of the 1730s and 40s. Johann Elias Schlegel attempted to answer Gottsched's call for a German Sophocles with a free translation of the *Electra* in rhymed verse, but deemed the work unsuccessful and only published it somewhat later.¹⁰² More importantly, Schlegel's *Die Troianerinnen*, first played at Schulpforta in 1737 under the title *Hecuba*, proved highly successful. Schlegel, unlike Gottsched, had an excellent knowledge of Greek, and his adaptation mixed elements from various ancient texts (Euripides's *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* along with Seneca's *Troades*), all of which he would have read in the original.¹⁰³ The work is at the same time heavily influenced by neoclassical poetics and earlier French adaptations, most obviously in its rejection of the chorus.¹⁰⁴ Schlegel followed the piece with an *Orest und Pylades*, also performed first at school, which relied largely on Lagrange-Chancel's French work of the same title.¹⁰⁵ The orientation of these works towards Euripides underscores the importance of Racine and operatic adaptations, which showed a heavy preference for Euripidean subjects.¹⁰⁶ Schlegel's knowledge of Greek gave him unusual access to ancient works, but he is not at all concerned, as later writers would be, to understand or reproduce the specificity of Athenian tragedy. Rather, Greek tragedy appears as one possibility for adaptation to contemporary expectations.

¹⁰² Wolff (1889), 29-31.

¹⁰³ Meid (2008), 36-42.

¹⁰⁴ Bünemann (1928), 29-33.

¹⁰⁵ Lamport (2004).

¹⁰⁶ Franke (1929), 3-9.

One text of Schlegel's is particularly interesting, though little remarked, in the history of the parallel. An early letter to his brother, later published as 'Kritische Anmerkungen über die Trauerspiele der Alten und Neuern,' shows disillusionment with Gottsched's Francophilia and the tradition of normative poetics. The short text is clearly indebted to French models for its comparison of Racine and Sophocles, as in its criterion of 'Wahrscheinlichkeit.' Yet Schlegel finds the French works utterly lacking, their situations unbelievable and their love stories effeminate. He prefers the distinctiveness and nobility of character found in ancient works over the apparently looser morals of modern figures. All of these categories could have been borrowed from any number of French parallels, and Schlegel's major difference lies in his strong preference for the Greeks. At the end of the piece, though, he turns to the issue of political organization and the historical circumstances of ancient drama: 'Noch einen Vorzug haben die Alten, der aber zu unsern Zeiten nicht nachzuahmen steht. Die Griechen waren ein freies Volk. Sie hatten die hohen Gedanken von Königen nicht, die wir haben.'¹⁰⁷ The point stands out from Schlegel's largely aesthetic (and apolitical) parallel and suggests the influence of Brumoy. Schlegel differs from Brumoy, though, in seeing republicanism as advantageous for the creation of drama – an argument no Frenchman could have made at the time. Schlegel suggests an organic relation between national culture and works of art: 'Eine jede Nation schreibt einem Theater, das ihr gefallen soll, durch ihre verschiedenen Sitten auch verschiedene Regeln vor, und ein Stück, das für die eine Nation gemacht ist, wird selten den andern ganz gefallen.'¹⁰⁸ For Schlegel, the difference in taste between nations makes comparison of ancient and modern drama difficult,

¹⁰⁷ Schlegel (1764) [1971] III, 212: 'The ancients have one more advantage, which however is not possible to imitate in our time. The Greeks were a free people. They did not have the high estimations of kings that we do.'

¹⁰⁸ Schlegel (1764) [1971] III, 262: 'Each nation prescribes different rules for a theatre that should please through different customs, and a play that is made for one nation will seldom wholly please another.'

if not impossible. Thinkers in Germany, as in France, were using the form of the parallel to grapple with the modernity of ancient tragedy – though the state of German theatre made the comparison appear less to advantageous to moderns.

Greek tragedy and German philhellenism

The 1750s mark the beginning of widespread engagement with Greek tragedy in Germany: in 1753, Curtius's translation of the *Poetics* as *Aristoteles Dichtkunst* appeared; in 1755 Winckelmann's 'Nachahmung' essay; and in 1759, Johann Jacob Steinbrüchel's translations of Sophocles began to be published anonymously in Zurich. The two translations would provide the German language with equivalents to Dacier and Brumoy, and Winckelmann's essay would lay the foundation for the imagination of Greece for the rest of the century. Yet the differences between Curtius's and Steinbrüchel's work are also illuminating, pointing to the importance of Winckelmann's programme, and the changing notions of creation at the time.

Curtius comes from the circle of Gottsched, and undertook the translation at Gottsched's urging. Translation of the *Poetics* must have seemed a step towards establishing the *Regelpoetik* that Gottsched had advocated (and which his Greek skills had not been up to). Yet the edition has an esoteric flavour, and seems relatively uninterested in prescribing modern practice. Curtius introduces the translation with a look backwards, listing all the previous editions of the work since the Renaissance, with Dacier particularly important. In copious notes, he critically examines Dacier's interpretations, and tests them against works of Greek and French drama. It is a learned, academic work and, though Curtius is highly critical of his French forebears, they nevertheless establish the terms and questions that guide his

own discussion. Yet Curtius's reliance on earlier scholarship should not obscure the force of the edition: for the first time, German readers could bypass Dacier and Gottsched alike, and go straight to the Greek text.¹⁰⁹

In 1755, this became an imperative: 'Die reinsten Quellen der Kunst sind geöffnet: glücklich ist, wer sie findet und schmeckt. Diese Quellen suchen, heißt nach Athen reisen.'¹¹⁰ In these sentences, Winckelmann made the immediate access to Greek antiquity a programme for German culture. Though, ironically, Winckelmann never made the journey himself, his influence in sending his readers to the Greeks was as powerful in the realm of literature as it was in the visual arts. It was no longer necessary to look, as Gottsched had, to the French for poetic models; indeed, it was practically forbidden by Winckelmann's nationalist programme, famously encapsulated in the words, 'Der einzige Weg für uns, groß, ja, wenn es möglich ist, unnachahmlich zu werden, ist die Nachahmung der Alten.'¹¹¹ Following Winckelmann, the Greeks became a – if not *the* – central preoccupation of German intellectual culture, a mythical origin that served to orient artistic creation for decades to come.¹¹² Behind this 'Graecomania,' which sweeps across Europe in the latter half of the century, lies the old *Querelle* problematic: how to understand the relation of antiquity and modernity.¹¹³ The innovation of Winckelmann's *Nachahmung* was to suggest that the greatness of modern artists would depend on an engagement with the greatness of ancient art.

¹⁰⁹ Lessing gleefully points this out in his review: *WBZB* 2, 532.

¹¹⁰ Winckelmann (1756), 2: 'The purest springs of art are open; happy is he who finds them and tastes. To search for these sources means to journey to Athens.'

¹¹¹ Winckelmann (1756), 3: 'the only way for us to become great, yes, if it is possible, inimitable, is the imitation of the ancients.'

¹¹² See Marchand (1996), 3-35. Grell (1995), 576-80 points out consequences for the French theatre.

¹¹³ Müller (2005), 372-87 shows that Winckelmann's essay was received as a contribution to the *Querelle*.

‘Nachahmung’ is an importantly ambiguous concept, embracing *mimesis* both in the Platonic sense of a hierarchical relation between original and copy and in the Aristotelian, non-hierarchical relation between reality and artistic representation.¹¹⁴ Winckelmann’s discussion preserves the Platonic hierarchy, giving *mimesis* the sense of *imitatio veterum*, but with a neo-Platonic twist:¹¹⁵ one is not to imitate nature, but rather Greek artworks – which themselves represent ‘nicht allein die schönste Natur, sondern noch mehr als Natur, das ist, gewisse idealische Schönheiten derselben, die, wie uns ein Ausleger des Plato lehret, von Bildern bloß im Verstande entworfen, gemacht sind.’¹¹⁶ Though couched in normative form, this is a turn away from the dominant Aristotelianism of the time, and particularly from Gottsched’s poetics.¹¹⁷ Creation is not to be guided by rules, but by a form of intuition created by the perception of beauty. Winckelmann takes part in a general rehabilitation of aesthetic experience, which gains its philosophical basis from the contemporary work of Alexander Baumgarten.¹¹⁸ Winckelmann advocates, as the way to greatness, not the adherence to a canon of rules, nor the observation of nature, but the contemplation of great works of art. An experience of sublimity (like that created by Winckelmann’s famous descriptions), rather than reasoned deduction, became the guiding force for the contemporary artist.¹¹⁹ And this required an immediate knowledge of the Greeks.

Winckelmann’s descriptions of Greek culture created an ideal that resonated particularly with Germans seeking to define a single national culture from a plurality of minor realms. One of Winckelmann’s major achievements was to draw attention to the

¹¹⁴ Décultot (2000), 100-3. Petersen (2000), 50-2 points out the problems of such conceptual confusion.

¹¹⁵ On the history of Winckelmann’s notion of imitation, see Pommier (2003), 175-81.

¹¹⁶ Winckelmann (1756), 4: ‘not only the most beautiful nature, but even more than nature, that is certain ideal beauties of it, which, as a commentator on Plato teaches us, are made from images drawn only in the mind.’

¹¹⁷ See Petersen (2000), 171-9.

¹¹⁸ See Strube (2004).

¹¹⁹ Fridrich (2003), 5 points out the importance of Longinus.

specificity of ancient Greek culture, which revealed that the Greek *polis* was a far more realizable model for Germans than the Roman *imperium*.¹²⁰ In this sense, Winckelmann continued Brumoy's project of situating Greek works in the time and place of their creation. Winckelmann's image of the Greeks is a notably organic one, seeing all realms of culture as integrated towards the achievement of beauty. With respect to the *Querelle*, the *Nachahmung* essay is situated between the poles of universalism and historicization: the Greeks represent a universal ideal, but one that seems impossible to actualize beyond their historical moment.¹²¹ Winckelmann thus sought to reconcile the *Querelle*'s assumption that antiquity and modernity are fundamentally similar with the emerging sense that comparison of the ages has no firm basis.¹²²

Winckelmann's historical model evolved by the time of the 1764 *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, which traced a biological process of rise and decline within Greek art.¹²³ The *Geschichte* went further towards historicizing ancient culture – though without giving up the postulate that Greece achieved a universal ideal of beauty.¹²⁴ Ancient Greece was seen as an unique and unrepeatable historical moment, which modernity could not hope to replicate. The *Nachahmung* essay's idealizing view of Greek culture was formative for Winckelmann's contemporaries throughout Europe, while the *Geschichte*'s model of historical thought would have important and quite different consequences for the next generation. If the accent in the former was on universalization, the latter established a pattern

¹²⁰ Fuhrmann (1979) points out the nationalist and anti-French impulse behind Winckelmann's programme.

¹²¹ Décultot (2000), 91-4.

¹²² Potts (1996), 23.

¹²³ See Schmidt (1993).

¹²⁴ Giuliani (2001) traces a tension between Winckelmann's universalization of beauty and his historicization of art in Greece in the *Geschichte*.

of historicization. Beginning with Winckelmann, both impulses have coexisted in German philhellenism.

'Nach Athen'

With the appearance of Johann Jacob Steinbrüchel's translations, access to Greek tragedy became newly immediate for German speakers. Steinbrüchel came from Zürich, where he was a student of one of Gottsched's most virulent foes, J.J. Breitinger. Though both Breitinger and Gottsched essentially agreed on the need for a normative poetics (and Breitinger published his own *Critische Dichtkunst* in 1740), there was a well-established antagonism between the two camps.¹²⁵ The debate, which centered on Milton's imagery, is often considered a German entry into the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, though assigning roles is difficult: Gottsched might appear to be in the role of *Ancien* for his denigration of Milton, yet his rationalistic aesthetic shows rather more affinity with the *Modernes*. Conversely, Bodmer's advocacy of Milton might place him in the camp of the *Modernes*, except that his sensualistic aesthetic owes a great deal to Boileau's rediscovery of the sublime. Neither questions the authority of the ancients, and the dispute concerned primarily the way to apply that authority. More importantly, though, the Leipzig-Zürich conflict is a first salvo in a debate over which aesthetic predecessors the Germans should take for their models: neoclassical France or Renaissance England. Where the tragedies of Racine and Corneille suggested a sophisticated, rule-based mode of creation, Milton and most of all Shakespeare appeared as representatives of creation guided only by the imagination of the genius. Increasingly in the wake of Winckelmann, this latter model was in the ascendant, and

¹²⁵ Bender (1973), 85-7. Further, see Döring (2009).

could seem to privilege the English and Greeks alike, over the previously dominant French and Romans. Steinbrüchel's translations have a popular, nationalist aim (even though 'nation' is obviously inapplicable to Germany or Switzerland at this point), attempting to reorient readers away from the French, and to claim the Greek texts as the property of Germans.

Steinbrüchel's versions of Sophocles, translated in prose, appeared anonymously in individual volumes beginning in 1759, each prefaced, unusually, with Pindar odes. *Electra* was the first to be released, followed by *Oedipus the King* (the exemplarity of the two works remained strong in the wake of Dacier), *Antigone*, and *Philoctetes*. The serial publication suggests that the translations must have been moderately successful.¹²⁶ The choices replicate Brumoy's, with the addition of *Antigone*, which might have seemed necessary as a replacement for Opitz's version.¹²⁷ The individual plays were collected and, along with a volume of Euripides, published in 1763 as *Das tragische Theater der Griechen*. In choosing works of Euripides, again, Steinbrüchel shows the influence of Brumoy, translating *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Hippolytus* (as Brumoy had), the *Phoenician Women*, and *Hecuba*, the last likely in response to Schlegel's success with the story. One notices, as with Brumoy, the effort to translate those works that have been adapted into modern works, and Steinbrüchel's notes are full of quotations from modern plays on the same subjects (particularly Racine's *Iphigénie*, *Les Frères Ennemis*, and *Phèdre*). It seems from the volume subtitles (*Des Sophocles/Euripides Erster Band*) that a complete translation was intended, but obviously did not come to fruition. Steinbrüchel intended the translation to be a German *Théâtre des Grecs*,

¹²⁶ Heydemann (2009), 121.

¹²⁷ It is worth noting, against the universalism of Steiner (1984), that the Antigone story has almost no presence in the French discussion, yet is at the centre of German interest from the baroque.

which would lay the groundwork for a broader engagement with Greek tragedy. A similar sentiment seems to have been felt in England, where 1759 saw the publication of Lennox's translation of Brumoy. At the same time, Brumoy's original was being revised in France, for publication in 1763. Whether Winckelmann was himself the catalyst or simply an important impetus, Greek tragedy was experiencing a moment of new importance in western Europe.

The programmatic intent of Steinbrüchel's translation has undeniable echoes of Winckelmann, witnessing the transition from rule-based poetics to a more intuitive notion of creation. A preface by the publisher Gessner to the *Electra* volume makes clear the Winckelmannian aim of educating German taste through the study of Greek works:

Noch muß ich sagen, daß nebst den Lehrbüchern, bey einer Nation deren Geschmack man bilden will, nichts so nützlich ist als wenn man sie mit den Meisterstücken der Alten bekannt macht. Woraus anders hat man eben diese Regeln vom Schönen abgezogen, als aus ihnen, und wo findet man sie besser angewandt?¹²⁸

The influence of Breitingers *Regelpoetik* remains strong, but it is mixed with the new imperative of a direct confrontation with ancient works. The inclusion of a Pindar ode in addition to the tragedy (for reasons nowhere explained) suggests that Steinbrüchel aimed to create an experience of sublimity, the quality most often associated with Pindar at the time.¹²⁹ The difficulty and obscurity of the Pindaric odes seemed to give them a sublime power over the reader – not, perhaps, so different from that experienced by Winckelmann's viewers of Greek sculpture or the audience at a performance of a tragedy.

¹²⁸ Steinbrüchel (1759), 'An den Leser:' 'Still I must say that, apart from schoolbooks, nothing is so useful for a nation whose taste one wants to educate, as when one introduces them to the masterpieces of the ancients. Where else but from them has one abstracted these rules on the beautiful, and where does one find them better applied?'

¹²⁹ Breitinger (1740) [1966], I, 359. On Pindar in the eighteenth century, see Vöhler (2005), 117-43. Pindar is also associated with genial creation, which Steinbrüchel hopes to inspire; see Schmidt (2004) 179-92.

The 1763 edition, published in Zürich, first names Steinbrüchel as translator. It includes a lengthy preface, which seems to move even further towards a Winckelmannian notion of creation through intuitive imitation. Steinbrüchel tells the story, ostensibly from Plato, of a young man in ancient Greece who has learned to create by a set of rules, and asks Euripides and Sophocles for advice: ‘Ich kann Mitleiden, ich kann Schrecken erregen; und nunmehr will ich Trauerspiele verfertigen.’ The poets respond derisively to the young man’s ambitions to create through a recipe:

Nicht so geschwind, verzeihen ihm lächelnd die beyden Dichter. Die Tragödie ist nicht, was du dir einbildest. Sie ist ein aus mannigfaltigen und geschickt in einander passenden Theilen bestehendes Ganze. Werden sie unschicklich zusammengebracht, so wird ein Ungeheuer daraus. Du weissest, was man wissen muß, ehe man die Kunst des Trauerspiels studieren will; die Kunst selbst aber verstehest du noch nicht.¹³⁰

Through translation of tragedy, Steinbrüchel hopes to educate his readers, schooled in the normative and Francophile poetics of Gottsched, in ‘die Kunst selbst.’ The concept of wholeness, which will be central to romantic aesthetics, links the analytical creation of neoclassical theory with the Winckelmannian concept of imitation. The rules of art must be learned, but they are not enough for Steinbrüchel: one must have an intuition, gained from the study of great works, that would fit together the various elements into a harmonious whole. Greek tragedy’s aesthetic achievement remains a universal ideal, which translation aims to make immediately accessible.

¹³⁰ Steinbrüchel (1763), ix: ‘I can arouse pity, I can arouse fear, and now I want to produce tragedies. – Not so fast! reply both poets laughing. Tragedy is not what you imagine. It is a whole consisting of varied parts carefully fitted together. If they are brought together incorrectly, the result is a monstrosity. You know what one must know before one wishes to study the art of tragedy; art itself, though, you do not yet understand.’

Steinbrüchel is particularly attracted to the political elements of Greek tragedy, which his teachers had also pointed out.¹³¹ Switzerland at the time was a loose confederacy of mostly democratic cantons, which could easily have suggested Greek *poleis*. Steinbrüchel's preface closes with the hope that, through the acquaintance with ancient tragedy, a modern author will be inspired to create patriotic dramas:

Sollte dieses Unternehmen, wie man hoffet, etwas beytragen, den Lauf dieser dem guten Geschmacke so nachtheiliger Vorurtheile zu hemmen; so würde der Uebersetzer für seine Arbeit sich reichlich belohnt halten: noch mehr aber, wenn sie Anlass geben könnte, daß, vom wahren Geiste der Freyheit beseelt, ein Genie [...] auf den Fußstapfen der Griechen, durch die glorreichen Beyspiele der Stifter und Wolthäter unsers Staates, uns zur Liebe des Vaterlands und der Geseze, zur Aufopferung, zum Muthe, zum Haß des Parthey-Geistes und der Unterdrückung, entflammte.¹³²

Steinbrüchel envisions a tragedy that will be based on national history, and that will use Greek forms to resolutely contemporary, and political, ends. Tragedy should create the conditions for an increase of patriotic feeling, through which the Swiss *Vaterland* might attain the political coherence of ancient Athens. Political and aesthetic goals are inseparable for Steinbrüchel, and lead him to celebrate Greek tragedy as a patriotic art form. His translation, in Winckelmannian spirit, is an effort to inspire his countrymen through the example of the Greeks. By imitating Greek tragedy's political engagement, Steinbrüchel has no doubt that moderns can achieve a parallel greatness.

¹³¹ Weilenmann (1961), 110.

¹³² Steinbrüchel (1763), xi: 'Should this project, as one hopes, go some way to check the course of these prejudices that are so detrimental to good taste, then the translator would consider himself richly rewarded for his work. But even more so if it could give occasion for a genius, animated by the true spirit of freedom, following the footsteps of the Greeks, through the glorious examples of the supporters and benefactors of our state, could inflame us with a love of the fatherland and the law, to sacrifice, courage, and hatred of partisan spirit and oppression.'

The road to Athens often leads through Renaissance England. Shakespeare increasingly came to be seen as the model for such similar achievement in different historical circumstances. 1759, the year of Steinbrüchel's first translations, is often considered a milestone in German poetics for another reason: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing launched an influential attack on Gottsched and French neoclassicism in the 17th of his *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend*. He does so in the names of Shakespeare and Aristotle, decrying the 'französierende' theatre introduced by Gottsched. German taste, according to Lessing, runs to 'das Große, das Schreckliche, das Melancholische,' which is to be found in English theatre, and particularly in Shakespeare.¹³³ These characteristics seem also to define Greek tragedy for Lessing, and he argues that beneath the apparent dissimilarity of Shakespeare and the Greeks, they are 'in dem Wesentlichen näher. Der Engländer erreicht den Zweck der Tragödie fast immer, so sonderbare und ihm eigene Wege er auch wählet; und der Franzose [Corneille] erreicht ihn fast niemals, ob er gleich die gebahnten Wege der Alten betritt.'¹³⁴ Lessing mobilizes the authority of Greek theatre to attack the French and defend Shakespeare against the typical reproaches of his dramaturgy. Shakespeare is like the Greeks in his dramatic ends, even if not in his means. Lessing, like Diderot, understands the essence of Greek theatre to lie in an affective power that French theatre cannot match. Shakespeare appears the modern poet who best demonstrates the possibility that modern tragedy can live up to the Greeks, even in radically different historical circumstances.

¹³³ Lessing, *WBZB* 4, 500: 'the great, the terrible, the melancholic.'

¹³⁴ Lessing, *WBZB* 4, 501: 'closer in the essential. The Englishman almost always reaches the aim of tragedy, whatever unusual and idiosyncratic paths he chooses; the Frenchman almost never reaches it, even though he treads the cleared paths of the ancients'

Lessing's definition of the aim of tragedy is an affective one, based on the viewer's emotional response to a work rather than its construction. The single criterion for success in a tragedy is its effect on the audience.¹³⁵ In a private exchange of letters with Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich Nicolai in 1755-7, Lessing had discussed and elaborated his understanding of tragedy. The *Briefwechsel über das Trauerspiel* (as it has come to be known) seeks to harmonize the practices of bourgeois tragedy, which Lessing had learned primarily from Lillo and introduced into German with *Miss Sara Sampson*, with the Aristotelian *Poetics*. The letters elaborate Lessing's poetics of *Mitleid*, which he understands as an improving, humanizing emotion. Tragedy should improve its audience by broadening the capacity to feel sympathy, for 'der mitleidigste Mensch ist der beste Mensch.'¹³⁶ The conception of *Mitleid* as an improving emotion owes far more to Enlightenment thought, particularly that of Lessing's correspondent Mendelssohn, than it does to Aristotle.¹³⁷ Yet it provides a way of harmonizing moral aims with the *Poetics*'s vague description of κάθαρσις through φόβος and ἔλεος. Lessing understands φόβος as *Furcht* rather than Curtius's *Schrecken*, created by a sympathetic identification with the danger of another. *Furcht* is an emotion created by pity at the events on stage, but transferred to the spectator's own person.¹³⁸ Fear is thus for Lessing the self-interested double of selfless pity, 'eine reflektierte Idee.'¹³⁹ By subsuming Aristotle's φόβος and ἔλεος under the single emotion of *Mitleid*, he is able to argue that tragedy, as an education in feeling pity, makes its viewers more humane

¹³⁵ Korzeniewski (2003), 440.

¹³⁶ Lessing, *WBZB* 3, 671: 'The most sympathetic person is the best person.'

¹³⁷ Martinec (2003), 92.

¹³⁸ Kommerell (1957), 73-7.

¹³⁹ Lessing, *WBZB* 3, 716.

people. This wilful interpretation of the *Poetics* authorizes a wide scope of works to attain the end of ancient tragedy, however modern their means.

Lessing's definition of tragedy as affective education, unlike the formalism of neoclassical poetics, affords no age priority. The *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, written in the late 1760s, sought to carve out a space for German theatre in relation to the great works of other nations, ancient and modern. Ancient Athens provided a model for conceiving of a drama that would inspire its audience with moral feeling. Though a considerable philological talent, Lessing consistently aims to grasp the universality, not the cultural specificity, of Greek art works.¹⁴⁰ The influence of Diderot's *Entretiens sur Le fils naturel*, which Lessing translated along with the play in 1760, is clear in the call for drama to represent the passions of recognizable men. Like Diderot, Lessing argues that *Mitleid* is felt even more strongly when its object is close to ourselves:

Das Unglück derjenigen, deren Umstände den unsrigen am nächsten kommen, muß natürlicherweise am tiefsten in unsere Seele dringen; und wenn wir mit Königen Mitleid haben, so haben wir es mit ihnen als mit Menschen, und nicht als mit Königen.¹⁴¹

Sympathy, for Lessing, levels the playing field between ancient and modern drama, and allows for a common end to emerge.¹⁴² Greek tragedy's affective power serves Lessing as a counter to French theatre, which he repeatedly denigrates as cold and formal. In the *Laokoon*, Lessing follows Diderot in seeing the cries of the wounded Philoctetes as exemplary of such an effect, and contrasts Sophocles's work sharply with a French adaptation's amorous

¹⁴⁰ Riedel (1996), 108-117.

¹⁴¹ Lessing, *WBZB* 6, 251: 'The misfortune of one whose conditions come closest to our own must naturally penetrate most deeply into our soul. And if we have sympathy for kings, we have it with them as people, and not as kings.'

¹⁴² See Barner (1997).

intrigue.¹⁴³ The emotional criterion for judgment allows ancient works to transcend their time, but also modern works to affect their viewers just as strongly. Lessing's theory of tragic emotions makes Greek tragedy into a universal model, but for its effect, rather than its form.

Lessing formalizes a division between the essence of tragedy, now seen in its emotional effect, and the genre's formal qualities. There is no single path to creating '*das Tragische*' – a phrase that first comes into usage in the middle of the eighteenth century, according to Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. The phrase may come from French, as the concept has an entry in the *Encyclopédie*: 'Le *tragique* est ce qui forme l'essence de la tragédie.'¹⁴⁴ A focus on tragedy's essence, which has been incipient throughout many of the texts so far discussed, will distinguish German discussions from the 1770s onward.¹⁴⁵ *Le tragique* or *das Tragische*, it is thought, can be understood independent of its manifestation in particular tragedies. Lessing's theory, seen as a kind of three-way parallel of Greek, English, and French tragedies, refers all the works to a single (if idiosyncratically defined) essence. This establishes a new canon for German tragedy: not Euripides and Racine, but Sophocles and Shakespeare. Henceforward, theories of tragedy in Germany will have to grapple with the question of what the two poets have in common, how they manifest the same quality of *das Tragische*. The answer is by no means clear, and even to pose the question suggests a doubt about a universalizing definition of tragedy. German thinkers will transform the *Querelle*'s question of priority into a question of identity: can ancient and modern tragedies be compared? Is the tragic possible in modernity?

¹⁴³ Lessing, *WBZB* 5/2, 42.

¹⁴⁴ Jaucourt (1765), 521: 'The tragic is that which forms the essence of tragedy.'

¹⁴⁵ Martinec (2005) sketches this development, though makes too categorical a distinction between the *Sturm und Drang* and previous eras – partly because he does not examine any French material.

Chapter 2

Parallel poetics

Historicization, in something like its modern form, enters discussions of Greek tragedy around 1770. The conflict between universalist and historicist viewpoints replays many of the differences sketched in the previous chapter – Dacier vs. Brumoy, Voltaire vs. Diderot, Gottsched vs. Lessing – but becomes newly self-conscious in the last third of the eighteenth century. Though the conclusions drawn are not necessarily new, they are articulated more systematically, bringing up new questions and problems that will define thought on tragedy for years to come. Reinhart Koselleck finds this period characterized by a *Verzeitlichung der Zeit*, in which time comes to be seen as creative of human events, rather than merely containing them.¹ Where previously historical time had appeared uniform in quality, it increasingly seems to have its own contours and, perhaps, its own internal logic. In this development, understanding the products of past civilizations in the context of the time in which they were created becomes the supreme mode of understanding.

It is relatively easy to date the historicization of tragedy: 1773 has long been considered a milestone in German thought for Johann Gottfried Herder's essay 'Shakespear,' which rejected Aristotelian poetics as inapplicable to the literature of other places and times. Less well known is that at the same time in Paris, a debate erupted in the Académie des Inscriptions that pitted a universalizing perspective on Greek tragedy against a radically historicizing one. Though little remarked in itself, the minor quarrel contains the germs of the monumental 1785 edition of the *Théâtre des Grecs*, which is notable for its historicizing tendencies. The parallel becomes increasingly suspect as thinkers in France and Germany

¹ Koselleck (2004), 26-42 draws attention to the period around 1770 as decisive for modern conceptions of time and history.

argue that there is no or little common ground for comparing ancient and modern tragedy. Yet the form proves remarkably tenacious, and is reformulated by Friedrich Schlegel in the 1790s in terms of a necessary opposition between antiquity and modernity. The continuity of the parallel makes clear the extraordinary change in conceptions of antiquity: around 1700, the parallel assumed similarity and sought difference; around 1800, it assumed difference and sought similarity.

I. Tragic pleasure and tragic politics: Guillaume Dubois de Rochefort

The 1785 *Théâtre des Grecs* announces its historicizing perspective with an essay by Guillaume Dubois de Rochefort, 'Discours sur l'origine et l'art de la tragédie grecque.' The essay aimed to establish 'une sorte de doctrine, qui aura ensuite ses preuves dans les notes & les examens qui accompagneront les tragédies.'² As a programme for the edition, the essay is extraordinary for its comprehensive rejection of Brumoy's universalism, and insistence on the fundamental difference of antiquity and modernity. Though Rochefort's interest in tragedy as a cultural product derives from Brumoy, he pursues the implications of the historicizing viewpoint further. Where Brumoy had argued that Greek and French tragedy, for all their divergences, have enough common characteristics for comparison, Rochefort finds that the two are far more opposed than alike:

Plus on examine l'art de la tragédie chez les Grecs par sa nature, par les principes d'Aristote, par le caractère du peuple où il prit naissance, plus il est aisé de reconnoître que la tragédie n'étoit point ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui.³

² Brumoy (1785) I, viii: 'a sort of doctrine, which will then have its proofs in the notes and examinations that accompany the tragedies.'

³ Rochefort (1785), 240: 'The more one examines the art of tragedy among the Greeks according to its nature, according to the principles of Aristotle, according to the character of the people where it was born, the more it is easy to recognize that tragedy was not what it is today.'

Knowledge of Greek tragedy in 1785 does not lead to a recognition of similarity, as Brumoy had suggested, but to an impression of difference. Though the edition retains all of Brumoy's original material, it is guided by an opposed spirit. The assumption of similarity that grounded Brumoy's rehabilitation of ancient tragedy no longer holds: Greek works and modern works now appear incomparable. The taste of Paris and the taste of Athens no longer seem to agree. The radical nature of this edition has hardly been remarked, but the influence of its programme extends, directly or indirectly, throughout European letters.

The roots of Rochefort's 'Discours' go back almost fifteen years, to a debate on Greek tragedy that took place over a series of sessions in the Académie des Inscriptions. The protagonists were Rochefort and Charles Batteux, whose edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* (along with works of Horace, Vida, and Boileau) appeared in 1771, the first translation into French since Dacier. The publication of Batteux's translation formed the occasion for a series of 'Mémoires sur la Poétique d'Aristote' which he delivered to the Académie in June 1771. Rochefort answered in a 'Mémoire sur l'objet de la Tragédie chez les Grecs', delivered in January 1772, which was followed by Batteux's response eleven days later, and then Rochefort's final rebuttal in May (all of which were published in the *Mémoires* of 1777). The debate has been almost completely ignored by scholars, but illuminates the changing currents of thought of the period, and may be a turning point in the conflict of universalizing and historicizing viewpoints on tragedy.

Batteux was primarily a scholar of ancient philosophy and had attained huge popularity in France and throughout Europe in 1746 with his *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe*. Batteux's viewpoint is an aesthetic and normative one, and uses formal

criteria and judgments of taste to justify a universalism with regard to tragedy's goal.⁴ He takes Aristotle's *Poetics* as an absolute authority, and advances a reading of *catharsis* as a strictly emotional effect, without relation to cognition or morality. The goal of tragedy is straightforward: the pleasure of having one's emotions moved and ultimately calmed. And nothing could invoke stronger emotions than 'le vrai sujet de la tragédie, le malheur peu mérité.'⁵ Tragedy is pleasurable, Batteux insists, only in so far as it is set off from any real effects: 'c'est un plaisir pur, de l'émotion sans douleur, de la crainte sans danger, de la compassion sans malheureux.'⁶ By emphasizing the distance between imitation and reality, Batteux avoids any sense of Greek tragedy as politically problematic or morally questionable. The best tragedies, ancient or modern (Batteux names, in addition to Sophocles's *Oedipus*, Corneille's *Polyeucte*, Racine's *Phèdre*, and Voltaire's *Zaïre*), are those that 'se terminent au malheur; les héros en sont bons, ou bons plus que mauvais; l'entreprise s'y achève, & la morale n'y entre pour rien.'⁷ The rejection of morality as an element of tragedy pre-empts the widespread argument of the *Modernes* that ancient literature depicts debased characters, and at the same time avoids the difficulties created by Brumoy's republican reading. Against those who would divide ancient and modern tragedy on the basis of their respective worldviews, Batteux argues for the primacy of an aesthetic perspective that unites antiquity and modernity in adhering to the *Poetics*.

⁴ On Batteux's theory of tragedy, see Lurje (2001) 198-217.

⁵ Batteux (1777), 59: 'the true subject of tragedy, little-merited unhappiness.'

⁶ Batteux (1777), 60: 'it is a pure pleasure, of emotion without sadness, of fear without danger, of compassion without unhappy ones.' This is a well-worn *topos* of eighteenth-century discussions of tragedy, which often refer to Lucretius's description of a shipwreck at the beginning of *De Rerum Natura* II: 'suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis / e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.' Marmontel (1787) begins his discussion of tragedy by arguing against the assumption.

⁷ Batteux (1777), 64: 'end in unhappiness, their heroes are good, or good more than bad, the enterprise attains that goal, and morality does not enter at all.'

The primary goal of Batteux's argument is to justify a normative theory of tragedy based on Aristotle. Though there is some room for divergence, the rules set down (or perhaps more accurately, found) there represent for him the ideal construction of a tragedy. Batteux argues that tragedy in antiquity and modernity has the same means and ends, and therefore, the same guiding rules, even if moderns may not follow them in every respect: 'En un mot, nous disons qu'il faut étudier & connoître les règles, qu'il faut y tendre de bonne foi & de toutes ses forces, & que lors même qu'on ne peut pas les suivre, il faut en parler avec respect.'⁸ Aristotle's observations and prescriptions on tragedy have a transhistorical validity; they are binding on both ancient and modern tragedians. It is thus possible to speak of Corneille and Sophocles, Racine and Euripides as all conforming to the same normative canon. Under Batteux's aesthetic viewpoint, the commonality of antiquity and modernity is easily established as the conformity to a set of formal rules. Batteux's universalism brings with it a sense that the canon of tragedy is not closed, and that the experience of ancient works can be actualized in modernity.

Batteux's elision of historical context from the discussion of ancient tragedy was anathema to Rochefort. Throughout his life, Rochefort ceaselessly argued for a holistic view of ancient literature, which saw its links not only to other spheres of life (particularly politics and morality), but to other art forms as well. This led him to a position of thorough historical relativism, a sense that ancient and modern cultures are fundamentally different and incomparable. Rochefort came to the classics relatively late in life, after a career as a civil servant, and seems to have been something of an autodidact.⁹ His primary interest was

⁸ Batteux (1777), 70: 'In a word, we say that one must study and know the rules, offer them good faith and all one's powers, and that even when one cannot follow them, one must speak of them with respect.'

⁹ See Dacier (1809).

Homer, and his translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* appeared in 1766 and 1777 to a notably poor reception. Yet he was a highly active member of the Académie from his election in 1767. His first major presentation to the Académie was a defence of the Homeric heroes against the charges of barbarity leveled against them.¹⁰ In a series of three ‘Mémoires sur les mœurs des siècles heroïques,’ Rochefort argues, following the English ‘primitivists,’ that the age depicted by Homer was a time of simple but noble morality – different from the customs of the present, but noble in its own way.¹¹ Ancient literature, for Rochefort, cannot be separated from moral aims or from the culture in which it appeared; it was the goal of Greek literature to make its audience wiser and happier by depicting righteous conduct in a simple, entertaining form.

Batteux’s discourse moved this relatively unknown scholar to take on one of the most eminent members of the Académie. In his refutation, Rochefort enlists the name of Brumoy to support his argument that tragedy in the ancient world must be understood in a political light. The argument proceeds through an implicit, and sometimes explicit parallel. Though modern tragedy may be aimed at the pleasure of the spectators, ancient tragedy ‘étoit plus parfaitement liée avec le gouvernement & la politique, plus propre à remédier aux défauts dominans du caractère des Athéniens.’¹² This integration of artistic and social aims is complemented by a synthesis of different art forms, all with a single, public goal: tragedy ‘entroit mieux ainsi dans le plan général des institutions de cette Démocratie, où tous les arts, comme ceux de la Musique, de la Danse, de la Gymnastique, avoient été dirigées vers

¹⁰ Rochefort (1774).

¹¹ Grell (1995), 128. On the English primitivists, see Simonsuuri (1979), 133-42.

¹² Rochefort (1777), 126: ‘was more perfectly connected to government and politics, more fitting to remedy the dominant defects of the character of the Athenians.’

l'utilité publique.'¹³ Far from being directed primarily to individual, aesthetic ends, Greek tragedy for Rochefort represents an element of a complex social and political system. Tragedy, Rochefort argues, was important to Athens because of its moral qualities, and should be considered a fundamentally political art form.

Rochefort reiterates this conviction in his preface to the 1785 *Théâtre des Grecs*, which begins with a verbatim quotation from his Académie 'Discours' of thirteen years earlier:

En jettant les yeux sur les Arts qui régnoient en Grèce & sur-tout à Athènes, il est impossible de n'être pas frappé de la liaison intime qu'ils avoient les uns avec les autres, & de celle qu'ils avoient tous ensemble avec quelqu'une des bases du gouvernement, la politique, la morale ou la religion. Tous ces Arts ne sembloient avoir été admis dans la République que pour contribuer à former des citoyens utiles & vertueux, & à leur donner cette éducation qui en faisoit d'excellens athlètes, des bons orateurs, & d'intrépides guerriers.¹⁴

Rochefort views Athenian culture as a unified whole, in which each aspect of civic life contributes to the same communal end. Particularly striking is his emphasis on the role of music, which informs another major Académie presentation.¹⁵ Rochefort understands the arts in ancient Greece as inextricable from one another, a conception that gains particular currency in the second half of the eighteenth century and is important as well to Herder and Schiller. Decisive for Rochefort's and Herder's understanding of Greek art and culture is John Brown's 1763 *Dissertation on the Rise, Union, and Power, the Progressions*,

¹³ Rochefort (1777), 126: 'thus entered better in the general plan of the institutions of this democracy, where all the arts, like those of music, of dance, of gymnastics, were directed towards public utility.'

¹⁴ Rochefort (1785), 215/(1777), 127: 'In passing one's eyes over the arts that reigned in Greece, and especially in Athens, it is impossible not to be struck by the intimate connection they had to one another, and by that which they had together with each of the bases of government, politics, morality, or religion. All these arts appear to have been admitted into the republic only to contribute to the formation of useful and virtuous citizens, and to provide that education which made of them excellent athletes, good orators, and intrepid warriors.'

¹⁵ Rochefort (1780)

*Separations, and Corruptions, of Poetry and Music.*¹⁶ Brown had argued that the union of music, poetry, and dance in the ancient world was a consequence of the simplicity of the Greek people, since the arts naturally arise together. Brown's viewpoint is anthropological, seeing ancient Greek culture as one of many primitive societies in which the arts are integrated. This unity was, for Brown as well as Rochefort, an eminently political and moral one: 'The whole Fabric of their *Religion, Morals, and Polity*, arose naturally from their *Song-Feasts*, in their Progress from *savage to civilized Life*.'¹⁷ Though Brown's argument relates primarily to epic, Rochefort extended the point to tragedy, which he conceived as still bearing many of the traits of primitive existence. From Brown, Rochefort could have drawn his image of ancient Greek society as integrating all aspects of culture toward the common good.

Rochefort's view of ancient Athens as a political unity leads to the most radical feature of his discussion: an absolute refusal of the analogy of ancient and modern tragedies. It is here that he most differs from previous thinking on ancient literature, which so often conceived of it through analogy with modern forms. Ancient Greece's cultural union appears a one-time occurrence, unrepeatable in modernity. Rochefort argues that the parallel of ancient and modern tragedies is impossible:

En rassemblant tout ce que nous venons de dire, tant sur l'histoire que sur l'essence de la Tragédie Grecque, il paroît impossible de la comparer avec la nôtre. Quand nous allons au spectacle, nous n'y cherchons que le plaisir d'une émotion passagère; le Poëte, de son côté, n'a d'autre but que de nous procurer cette émotion. Chacun des spectateurs peut jouir de ce plaisir, indépendamment du reste de l'assemblée; on y peut être seul & s'y amuser comme on s'amuse dans la solitude, du son d'un instrument, d'un beau tableau & d'une lecture intéressante. Mais chez les Grecs, un spectacle étoit une assemblée nationale, occasionnée par quelque solennité; c'étoit la patrie

¹⁶ Rochefort makes clear his knowledge of Brown in Rochefort (1774), 471.

¹⁷ Brown (1763), 77.

qui convoquoit ses enfans, c'étoit un seul & même esprit qui animoit les spectateurs, qui dirigeoit leurs pensées, leur attention.¹⁸

Rochefort's language is politically loaded, emphasizing the republican ideals of Greek tragedy; as for Brumoy, though, this constitutes an essential point of difference from modern tragedy. Rochefort is able to go further than Brumoy was towards exalting the democratic element of ancient drama, but only because he also distances it further from the present.¹⁹ Though idealizing the political art of the Greeks, Rochefort does not seek to replicate it. There is no polemic advocating a return to ancient practice, as there was in the Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan's 1770 translation of Aeschylus.²⁰ Indeed, Rochefort's argument places Greek tragedy and its moral, political aim even more radically in the past than Brumoy's.²¹ Tragedy in modernity not only treats politics differently, as Brumoy argued, but is inherently apolitical. Rochefort's emphasis on the cultural significance of Greek tragedy is double-edged: an affirmation of the importance of politics in ancient works that brings with it a denial of this same significance in modernity. Tragedy in France, Rochefort argues, cannot have the political aim it did in Greece; it exists, as Batteux suggested, purely for pleasure. For Rochefort, the ends of ancient and modern tragedy are radically different, so much so that a parallel of the two is impossible.

¹⁸ Rochefort (1777), 146: 'In summing up all we have just said, as much about the history as about the essence of Greek tragedy, it appears impossible to compare it to our own. When we go to a performance, we do not seek there anything but a passing emotion. The poet, on his side, has no other aim than to give us that emotion. Each of the spectators may enjoy his own pleasure independent of the rest of the assembly. One could be there alone and amuse oneself, just as one does in solitude by the sound of an instrument, a beautiful painting, or an interesting reading. But among the Greeks, a performance was a national assembly, accompanied by some solemnity. It was the fatherland that called together its children, it was a single and common spirit that animated the spectators, directed their thoughts and their attention.' cf. Rochefort (1785), 234.

¹⁹ Biet (1994), 63.

²⁰ Lefranc de Pompignan (1770), xvii. On Lefranc de Pompignan's translation, see Macintosh (2009).

²¹ Compare the note in Brumoy (1785) I, 191, which suggests, against Brumoy's text, that the republican character of Athenian society did not materially contribute to the kinds of art produced – an early rumbling of the 'civic ideology' debate.

Tragedy after the parallel: the 1785 Théâtre des Grecs

The 1785 *Théâtre* both reflected and contributed to the increasing popularity of Greek tragedy in France. When Brumoy published his *Théâtre des Grecs* in 1730, he wrote that tragedy was the least respected genre of Greek literature.²² Yet in 1785 Brumoy's apologetic attitude towards the Greeks no longer appeared necessary to the editors, as modern readers had become used to Greek drama's idiosyncrasies.²³ The scope of the edition was impressive, translating the entire corpus of Greek drama, while expanding Brumoy's original three volumes to thirteen. The project was undertaken by a group of scholars of the Académie des Inscriptions, led by André-Charles Brotier, with major contributions from Rochefort, Gabriel de La Porte Du Theil, and Pierre Prévost. Du Theil translated all the tragedies of Aeschylus, a task Brumoy had thought impossible. Brotier undertook most of the Sophocles translations (leaving the *Ajax* to Rochefort) and all of Aristophanes's comedies; the works of Euripides appeared in the translation of Prévost, whose complete edition had appeared shortly before. The group was politically heterogeneous: Brotier, who is nowhere named in the edition, was a Jesuit and a monarchist, and would be imprisoned and deported to Guiana in 1797 for conspiracy; Du Theil, on the other hand, would be named the head the division of ancient languages at the Bibliothèque Nationale under the revolution.²⁴ All of Brumoy's original material is retained, with new essays on each work added, as well as parallels with more recent drama (including a particularly tart one on Voltaire's *Oedipe*). There is often a dissonance between Brumoy's viewpoint and that of the later editors, which is particularly clear in a number of footnotes disagreeing with aspects of the original text.

²² Brumoy (1730) I, 2.

²³ Brumoy (1785) IV, 309-10 (footnote).

²⁴ Lechevalier (2007), 142-3.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the possibility of a comprehensive parallel between ancient and modern tragedies, such as Brumoy had made in 1730, was in doubt.²⁵ To the editors of the revised *Théâtre des Grecs*, ancient and modern tragedies appear as more different than alike, and any statement comparing the two is suspected of anachrony. Pierre Prévost, whose Euripides translations of 1782 were reprinted in the 1785 edition, writes that ‘Les spectacles, qui de nos jours sont les plaisirs des nations polées, ne peuvent point nous en donner une idée juste.’²⁶ An imaginative effort, such as that advocated by Brumoy, gives only ‘une image imparfaite’ of the ancient theatre.²⁷ This leads to an impasse: the artistic productions of former ages must be understood historically, and yet a thorough historicization seems illusory. It is simply not possible for modernity to arrive at an adequate conception of the Greek theatre.

What, then, is the value of Greek tragedy, if its form is so comprehensively alien that we cannot experience its effect? For Rochefort, as for the German theorists contemporary and following, there remains one aspect that is still valid – indeed, vitally necessary – for moderns: an insight into the human condition, derived from the content of tragedy. Though today, this would seem unexceptionable and even banal in criticism, it was not so for the eighteenth century. As the debate between Batteux and Rochefort shows (and if one thinks back to all of the theories in the previous chapter), it was by and large not assumed that tragedy had any relation to truth. The genre was much more considered in rhetorical terms,

²⁵ Though not for all: Marmontel (1787) makes a comparison between the ancient ‘système de la fatalité’ with the modern ‘système des passions actives,’ which will be influential for German thinkers during the next decade. Unlike the younger Rochefort, though, he is not particularly troubled by the question of comparability. See Lurje (2004), 218-25.

²⁶ Prévost (1782) I, xix: ‘The performances that in our times are the pleasures of civilized nations cannot give us an accurate idea.’

²⁷ Prévost (1782) I, xxi: ‘an imperfect image.’

for the way it produces an effect on its viewer, whether emotional or moral.²⁸ Now, though, it seems to contain a universal message:

Les Tragédies grecques qui subsistent aujourd'hui, parlent encore pour nous; elles semblent annoncer elles-mêmes, & l'intention qui les formoit, & l'objet pour lequel elles étoient faites. Mais en parlant des Tragédies grecques, j'entends principalement celles de Sophocle; & c'est, j'ose le dire, un grand préjugé que de trouver dans les pièces de ce grand Poète, l'objet moral de la Tragédie ancienne, rendue plus sensible que dans celles de son rival. Ce fut en effet Sophocle qui décida la forme de son art & perfectionna la Tragédie. Je ne saurois jeter les yeux sur aucune de ses pièces, que je n'y retrouve l'instabilité des choses humaines & l'inconstance de la fortune mises en maxime parmi les évènements de la scène qui en fournissoient les exemples; & c'étoit par de tels avis répétés & mis continuellement sous les yeux des Athéniens, que s'opéroit la *purgation* de la terreur & de la pitié, suivant l'expression d'Aristote.²⁹

Greek tragedy, for Rochefort, depicts a truth of human existence that remains valid long after the forms of tragedy have become outdated. His theory, with its understanding of *catharsis* as strengthening the audience to withstand turbulent emotion, has rather more in common with Stoicism than with Aristotle. By depicting 'l'instabilité des choses humaines & l'inconstance de la fortune,' tragedy helps its audience to withstand unfortunate events in reality. The aim of Greek tragedy was not to divert its viewers by a pleasurable sorrow, but to strengthen them by a philosophical insight.

This was a largely unprecedented claim in 1772. Batteux's response points out the unorthodox dimension of Rochefort's thought, arguing that, because of the way it incites

²⁸ Compare the characteristic entry in the *Encyclopédie*: 'Tragédie: représentation d'une action héroïque dont l'objet est d'exciter la terreur & la compassion.' (Jaucourt (1765), 513: 'Tragedy: representation of a heroic action the object of which is to excite terror and compassion.')

²⁹ Rochefort (1777), 155: 'The Greek tragedies that exist today still speak for us; they appear to announce themselves, and the intention that formed them, and the object for which they were made. But in speaking of Greek tragedies, I mean principally those of Sophocles. For it is, I dare to say, a great prejudice that finds in the plays of this great poet the moral object of ancient tragedy, rendered more apprehensible than in those of his rival. It was in effect Sophocles who decided the form of his art and perfected tragedy. I would not know how to cast my eyes over any of his plays without recognizing the instability of human affairs and the inconstancy of fortune made into a maxim among the events of the scene which furnish the examples. And it was by these opinions being repeated and placed continually before the eyes of the Athenians, that the purgation of terror and pity, following the expression of Aristotle, operated.'

irrational passions, ‘la Tragédie est donc contraire à la sagesse.’³⁰ For most eighteenth-century thinkers, tragedy’s pleasure or utility was to be explained through the emotions it aroused and then purged, not the events it depicted or the insight it enabled. In Rochefort’s contribution, though, one recognizes a central feature of literary criticism of the last two hundred years: an aesthetic of content, rather than effect. The notion that works of literature are defined by a certain immanent meaning, and not by a certain experience, marks a difference between pre-Romantic (in the broad sense) and modern conceptions. Rochefort’s discussion is thus of interest as an early formulation of a philosophical content of tragedy, almost exactly contemporaneous with the more famous discussion of Herder.

Literature and philosophy for Rochefort appear as two paths to the same goal, not as opposed or hierarchically subordinated discourses. His view of Greek literature as inherently philosophical is ultimately at the root of the disagreement with Batteux, for whom tragedy, ancient and modern, is a source of pleasure, removed from the serious work of philosophy. Rochefort’s account of tragedy’s philosophy leads to the final words of the *OT* (‘call no man lucky until he reaches the end of his life free from pain’):

On sait que cette maxime étoit, pour ainsi dire, l’abrégé de la philosophie de la plus haute antiquité; que ce fut la leçon que Solon donna à Crésus; que tous les Poètes & les Philosophes les plus anciens ne cessoient de la répéter. C’étoit donc une idée dominante dans l’esprit de tous ceux qui vouloient donner aux Grecs des leçons de sagesse; il n’étoit donc pas étonnant qu’elle fût la base des compositions tragiques, & principalement de celles qu’avoit mise en oeuvre le réformateur de la Tragédie.³¹

³⁰ Batteux (1777), 83: ‘tragedy is thus contrary to wisdom.’

³¹ Rochefort (1777), 157: ‘We know that this maxim was, so to speak, the summary of the philosophy of the highest antiquity ; that it was the lesson that Solon gave to Croesus, that all the most ancient poets and philosophers did not cease to repeat. It was thus a dominant idea in the spirit of all those who wanted to give lessons of wisdom to the Greeks. It was not therefore surprising that this was the basis of tragic compositions, and principally, of those that the reformer of tragedy created.’

Tragedy, for Rochefort, is informed by a general philosophical position detachable from its particular manifestations. Its aim was not to move, but to educate its audience. Indeed, this education is all that remains, since Rochefort argues that the sensible effect of ancient tragedy cannot be recovered. The *OT* testifies to a truth that transcends the experience of any one spectator and any one age. Even though the aesthetic effect of ancient tragedy is lost, its essential content can still be understood. Rochefort's historicization of tragedy's forms leads him ultimately to a new variety of universalism, which sees Greek tragedy's content as absolutely valid.

Universalizing Greek tragedy's philosophical content is a way of ensuring the genre's continuing relevance to modernity, even as it sets other elements, particularly political ones, into the distant past.³² Greek tragedy's message for Rochefort is neither republican nor monarchist, neither ancient nor modern. It is a content so general that it can be extracted from Sophocles's time and place and applied to Rochefort's own. In the years just before the French Revolution, Rochefort's account of the importance of tragic philosophy is particularly poignant:

Il falloit donc fortifier les Athéniens contre de si terribles révolutions. [...] Mais quel est l'homme encore assez peu philosophe, pour ne pas voir que l'effet moral dont les anciens faisoient l'objet principal de leur Tragédie, ne feroit pas plus déplacé dans notre siècle que dans le leur?³³

Tragedy's education appears as necessary in 1788 as it was in the fifth century BC. Yet its relevance does not come from its viability in the theatre of the present (which has no other object than to please), but from its manifestation of a timeless truth. This philosophical power

³² Biet (1994), 93.

³³ Rochefort (1788), viii: 'It was necessary to fortify the Athenians against such terrible revolutions. [...] But who is the man so little a philosopher as not to see that the moral effect, which the ancients made the principal object of their tragedy, would not be more out of place in our time than it was in theirs?'

can be experienced from a distance, abstracted from the genre's cultural and political context. It is from Rochefort's philological historicization that his philosophical universalism emerges. By distancing the context of Greek tragedy from the present, he allows its content to survive. Rochefort died before he saw 'de si terribles révolutions,' which arrived a year later, but he was visionary in seeing his own times as in need of the education provided by Greek tragedy. As France descended into terror, chaos, and war, German thinkers would turn urgently to tragedy to fortify themselves against the instability of human affairs.

II. Sophocles and Shakespeare: Johann Gottfried Herder

The year after Rochefort delivered his 'Mémoires' in the Académie, Johann Gottfried Herder published his essay 'Shakespear,' which similarly argued against comparison of ancient and modern tragedy, and found Aristotle's *Poetics* inapplicable to modern works. The catalyst for this development in Germany was partly the increasing knowledge of Shakespeare, a great tragic poet who defied the so-called Aristotelian rules. For Herder, Shakespeare proves the impossibility of comparing ancient and modern tragedies. The assumption of difference might seem to spell doom for the form of the parallel, but this is by no means the case. In fact, the parallel becomes a means of defining the difference and the dialogue of antiquity and modernity through their respective art forms. At the same time, however, it retains the possibility of a universalizing description of tragedy – not as a correspondence of form, but as a philosophical content. This is part of why the parallel proves so tenacious: it reconciles the historical difference of ancient and modern tragedies in a common philosophy. The theory of tragedy, as the testing-ground for understandings of modernity, plays an integral and under-appreciated role in the changing conceptions of history of the period. Indeed, the

importance of tragedy around 1800 might be explained by an elective affinity: tragedy, as the genre of *peripeteia*, is the art form best able to represent the upheavals of the time.

Aristotelian poetics, after the contributions of Winckelmann and Lessing, was at a crisis in Germany. A set of rules had come to seem inadequate for the creation of works of drama. In place of a definition of tragedy based on formal elements, tragedy's effect emerged as a normative goal. The advantage of such an understanding was obvious: it referred judgment of a work not to an ancient philosophical text or the laws of reason supposedly found there, but to experience in the here and now. This was congenial to the *Sturm und Drang*'s celebration of individual emotion, and self-conscious reaction against the rationalistic strain of Enlightenment thought associated most of all with Voltaire.³⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder was the propagandist of the movement, and his friend Johann Wolfgang Goethe the great artistic hope. In many ways, the *Sturm und Drang* continued Lessing's project of making drama a reflection of the present, while at the same time rejecting Lessing's aesthetics as overly rational and moralizing. Shakespeare's name became a battle cry for a poetics based on genius and sensation rather than rules and deductions. Goethe's 1771 'Rede zum Shakespears Tag,' which would influence Herder's more famous essay, mobilizes Shakespeare in the rejection of all creative rules, and sought to justify his own practice in *Götz von Berlichingen*, which would be published two years later. Goethe describes reading Shakespeare as an epiphany, an experience so transformative that 'Ich zweifelte keinen Augenblick dem regelmäßigen Theater zu entsagen.'³⁵ The *Sturm und*

³⁴ Fink (1987). As Norton (1991), 8 points out, the notion of Herder's opposition to the Enlightenment in general is untenable. He is, though, quite definitely opposed to some of its most important thinkers.

³⁵ Goethe, *FA* I.18, 10: 'I did not for a moment question abandoning the rule-governed theatre.'

Drang discovered an affinity between their own ends and what they took to be Shakespeare's means, and made of him a cultural obsession parallel to the Greeks.

The first major *Sturm und Drang* advocate of Shakespeare, and the first to draw consequences for the poetics of the time from his works, was Heinrich Wilhelm Gerstenberg.³⁶ In his 1766-7 *Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Litteratur*, Gerstenberg devoted a series of letters to Shakespeare. He points to a problem that has prejudiced the reception of Shakespeare: 'der übel angewandte Begriff, den wir vom Drama der Griechen haben.'³⁷ Gerstenberg understands the aim of Greek drama as 'die Erregung der Leidenschaften oder des Lachens,' but finds, on this definition, 'daß Shakespears Tragödien keine Tragödien, seine Komödien keine Komödien sind, noch seyn können.'³⁸ The ancient definitions as Gerstenberg understands them appear too limited for Shakespeare's capacious genius, which mobilizes affect to a higher end, to create 'lebendige Bilder der sittlichen Natur.'³⁹ Shakespearean drama, for Gerstenberg, comprehends all possibilities of experience, and thus transcends distinctions of genre. The flexibility of genre in Shakespearean works makes them impossible to compare with the unity of ancient works. Gerstenberg denies the use of parallels of ancient and modern tragedy, and proposes instead to compare *Othello* with another English work, Edward Young's *Revenge*. The comparison shows not only Shakespeare's comparative greatness, but the unsuitability of the category of tragedy: the aim of *Othello* is not simply to produce passion, but to portray 'die Natur der Eifersucht selbst.' One must judge Shakespearean works 'nicht aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Tragödie, sondern

³⁶ See Paulin (2003), 140-3.

³⁷ Gerstenberg (1766) [1971], 219: 'the wrongly applied concept that we have from the drama of the Greeks.'

³⁸ Gerstenberg (1766) [1971], 220: 'the arousal of passions or laughter ... that Shakespeare's tragedies are not tragedies, his comedies not comedies, nor could they be.'

³⁹ Gerstenberg (1766) [1971], 221: 'living images of moral nature.'

als Abbildungen der sittlichen Natur.’⁴⁰ Shakespeare’s works seem to Gerstenberg more philosophical than Greek tragedies; rather than aiming to produce a particular emotional effect, Shakespeare distils reality through dramatic representation.

In Herder’s response of a few years later, Gerstenberg’s rejection of ancient categories for Shakespearean drama acquires a more coherent basis. ‘Shakespear’ was published in 1773 in *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (On German Custom and Art), co-edited with Goethe. Against the still-prevalent taste for French and classical art, Herder and Goethe assert the rights of German styles and folk forms in a democratizing, nationalist gesture.⁴¹ The collection begins with two essays by Herder, both of them seeking to appropriate British works as models of closeness to nature and originality: ‘Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder der alten Völker’ celebrates Ossian as an example of the sublimity of folk songs, while ‘Shakespear’ asserts the superiority of English Renaissance drama over French tragedies. The original essays by Herder and Goethe depict creation as an act of genius, whose power is to unite the disparate elements of his own existence and experiences into a unified artistic whole.⁴² The genius, Goethe writes, ‘ist der erste aus dessen Seele die Theile, in Ein ewiges Ganze zusammen gewachsen, hervortreten. Aber Schule und Principium fesselt alle Kraft der Erkenntniß und Thätigkeit.’⁴³ This rejection of normative poetics in favour of a power inherent in the artist sweeps away Aristotle, French neoclassicism, and Winckelmann simultaneously.

⁴⁰ Gerstenberg (1766) [1971], 239: ‘the nature of jealousy itself...not from the viewpoint of tragedy, but rather as images of moral nature.’

⁴¹ Oergel (2006), 52.

⁴² See Schmidt (2004), 150-8 on the sources of the German genius aesthetic. Particularly important is Edward Young’s 1759 *Conjectures on original composition*, which was translated into German twice in 1760. Young (1759), 20-4 argues that moderns should imitate the natural processes of the ancients (most of all, Homer), rather than their products.

⁴³ Goethe, *FA* I.18, 112: ‘He is the first from whose soul the parts, grown together into one eternal whole, come forth. But school and principle binds all power of learning and action.’

Shakespeare, for the *Sturm und Drang*, is the exemplary poetic genius. Both Goethe's 'Rede' and Herder's 'Shakespear' follow essentially the same pattern of exalting the natural, passionate, and sublime in Shakespeare. The perceived faults that continued to trouble English critics and had served as ammunition for the French (particularly Voltaire) are, for Herder and Goethe, the necessary consequences of Shakespeare's originality. Goethe writes, transferring Diderot's and Lessing's eulogy of Sophocles to Shakespeare, 'Ich rufe Natur! Natur! nichts so Natur als Schakespears Menschen.'⁴⁴ Herder follows Goethe and Gerstenberg in seeking to distance Shakespeare from Aristotelian poetics by an appeal to nature, but takes the critical step of grounding this polemic in historicization. Herder calls for a criticism that would not simply judge works, but explain the historical circumstances of their creation. Aesthetics and anthropology are inextricable for Herder.⁴⁵ Before comparing Shakespeare's works to the dramas of other times and places, the critic should ask 'wie ist der Boden? worauf ist er zubereitet? was ist in ihn gesäet? was sollte er tragen können?'⁴⁶ The organic metaphor is typical of the genius aesthetic, seeing artistic works as living creations emerging from the conditions of a distinct place and time. In an extended parallel of Shakespeare and Sophocles, Herder explains the differences between their respective works by reference to the 'soils' of ancient Greece and Renaissance England:

In Griechenland entstand das Drama, wie es in Norden nicht entstehen konnte. In Griechenland wars, was es in Norden nicht sein kann. In Norden ists also nicht und darf nicht sein, was es in Griechenland gewesen. Also Sophokles

⁴⁴ Goethe, *FA* I. 18.11: 'I cry, nature! Nature! Nothing as much nature as Shakespeare's humans.'

⁴⁵ Zammito (2002), 342-5.

⁴⁶ Herder, *HW* 2, 507: 'How is the soil? For what has it been prepared? What has been sown in it? What should it be able to produce?'

Drama und Shakespears Drama sind zwei Dinge, die in gewissem Betracht kaum den Namen gemein haben.⁴⁷

At the outset, Herder posits an opposition of Shakespearean and Sophoclean tragedy: emerging from different cultures, their works can and should have nothing in common.⁴⁸ He rejects the form of the parallel by finding that there is no common ground on which to compare ancient and modern works. As products of different cultures, there can be no commonality between the tragedies of Shakespeare and Sophocles.

'Sophocles's brother'

Yet this is only a part of the story: though recognizing the historical singularity of both Sophocles and Shakespeare, Herder preserves a principle on which their works can be evaluated. This is, for Herder, the work's organic relation to its historical circumstances.⁴⁹ The excellence of Greek tragedy comes from the way it arose naturally from its culture: '*Jene Simplizität der griechischen Fabel, jene Nüchternheit griechischer Sitten, jenes fort ausgehaltne Kothurnmäßige des Ausdrucks, Musik, Bühne, Einheit des Orts und der Zeit – das Alles lag ohne Kunst und Zauberei so natürlich und wesentlich im Ursprunge griechischer Tragödie.*'⁵⁰ Greek tragedy is not exemplary as an aesthetic product for Herder, but as the endpoint of an organic process. This contextual approach to works of art is in part a legacy of Winckelmann's holistic treatment of Greek culture, as well as reflecting the

⁴⁷ Herder, *HW* 2, 499: 'In Greece, drama developed as it could not develop in the north. In Greece it was what it cannot be in the north. In the north, therefore, it is not and should not be what it was in Greece. Thus Sophocles's drama and Shakespeare's drama are two things, that in a certain respect have hardly the name in common.'

⁴⁸ Proß (1988), 167.

⁴⁹ Norton (1991), 76.

⁵⁰ Herder, *HW* 2, 500: 'That simplicity of Greek plot, that sobriety of Greek manners, that sustained buskin-appropriateness of expression, music, stage, unity of time and place – all these things lay so naturally and essentially, without any art or magic, in the origins of Greek tragedy.'

importance of English discussions such as Brown's.⁵¹ Though Herder's method of deducing an ancient work's features from its cultural origins was by no means unique, the evaluative consequences he draws are unprecedented: naturalness and originality become normative concepts.⁵²

This new normative criterion grounds a polemic against French tragedy. Herder derides neoclassicism for creating a mere 'Puppe des griechischen Theaters,' which artificially places modern content into ancient forms.⁵³ The problem with Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire is not a lack of talent, but an error in process: 'Der Puppe fehlt Geist, Leben, Natur, Wahrheit – mithin alle Elemente der Rührung – mithin Zweck und Erreichung des Zwecks.'⁵⁴ In seeking to follow Aristotelian rules, they have failed to take into account the change in historical circumstances, and so have created an artificial, lifeless theatre, unsuited to antiquity or modernity. Such works may succeed aesthetically, but they have no relevance to their audience. Though Herder rejects normative poetics, he nevertheless preserves a universal principle for judgment, elevating art's cultural relativity to an imperative.

For Herder, Shakespeare's achievement lies in representing the historical circumstance of his age in coherent artistic form. The image of Shakespeare as a poet of lived experience reflects in part Herder's reading in English Homeric scholarship. Characteristic of Shakespeare's time, and in direct contrast to ancient Greece, is multiplicity: 'Er fand keinen so einfachen Geist der Geschichte, der Fabel, der Handlung: er nahm Geschichte, wie er sie fand, und setzte mit Schöpfergeist das verschiedenartigste Zeug zu einem Wunderganzen

⁵¹ Zammito (2002), 335.

⁵² Belhafaoui (1987), 104.

⁵³ Herder, *HW* 2, 503: 'puppet of Greek theatre.'

⁵⁴ Herder, *HW* 2, 505: 'The puppet lacks spirit, life, nature, truth – that is, all the elements of emotion – that is, purpose and the attainment of that purpose.'

zusammen.⁵⁵ Shakespeare's genius allows him to overcome the heterogeneity of modern experience and create a *Wunderganzen*. Herder's description of Shakespeare's art is throughout deeply Spinozistic: by giving insight into the unity of existence, Shakespeare becomes a kind of second creator.⁵⁶ His achievement appears even more impressive than Sophocles's, whose task lay in elaborating the simplicity of Greek manners into dramatic form (and so naturally adhering to the Aristotelian unities). The complexities of existence in Shakespeare's time do not allow for such a unified representation of action, but demand the genius of the poet to transform them into aesthetic form. Shakespeare's works seem more relevant to modern Germans because they address an audience closer in time and place. 'Wenn jener *Griechen* vorstellt und lehrt und rührt und bildet, so lehrt, rührt und bildet Shakespear nordische *Menschen!*'⁵⁷ Shakespeare is central to the programme of *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* because his works exemplify the organic relation to culture that Herder hopes will emerge in Germany.⁵⁸ Works of art should be created *by* and *for* their historical moment.

Herder does not merely historicize the production of a work of art, but its reception as well. It is on this basis that he understands the political role of poetry: it must speak to its audience, not merely as individuals, but as a collective defined by their place and time. His ideal is a correspondence between production and reception. Though his concept of *Volks poesie* is nebulous, it denotes an artwork addressed to a nation in its natural or originary

⁵⁵ Herder, *HW* 2, 508: 'He found no such simple spirit of history, story, and action; he took history as he found it, and brought together with creative spirit the most diverse stuff into a wondrous whole.'

⁵⁶ Schmidt (2004), 172.

⁵⁷ Herder, *HW* 2, 509: 'If that Greek represents and teaches and moves and educates Greeks, then Shakespeare teaches, moves, and educates northern men!'

⁵⁸ Adler (1990), 149.

qualities.⁵⁹ Herder's programme for German poetry is national, but it is too thoroughly historicized to be nationalistic. His aim is to recreate a relationship between art and audience that has existed in other times and places, not (as Winckelmann hopes) to set German art above other nations. In directing his fellow Germans to examples of 'deutsche Art und Kunst,' Herder urges them to access their unique cultural identity. Shakespeare serves, like Homer, Ossian, and Sophocles, as an example of the ideal symbiosis of artist and nation: his poetry articulates the character of his people. By pointing to this national role of drama in other times and places, Herder demonstrates the possibility for his contemporaries. In order to emulate any of these earlier poets, the modern poet must imitate their organic process, but never their product.⁶⁰

Sophocles and Shakespeare fulfil similar roles in their time, creating tragedy that is true to its historical circumstances and cultural origins – authentic *Volks poesie*. Thus, admitting the difference between the two opens the door to a deeper correspondence:

Eben da ist also Shakespear Sophokles Brüder, wo er ihm dem Anschein nach so unähnlich ist, um in Innern, ganz wie Er, zu sein. [...] Sophokles blieb der Natur treu, da er Eine Handlung Eines Orts und Einer Zeit bearbeitete: Shakespear konnt ihr allein treu bleiben, wenn er seine Weltbegebenheit und Menschenschicksal durch alle Örter und Zeiten wälzte.⁶¹

The distinction of outer form and inner essence is essential to Herder's critical project. At the beginning of the essay, the metaphor of a seed's growth illustrates this opposition: 'Der Kern würde ohne Schlaube nicht wachsen, und sie werden auch nie den Kern ohne Schlaube

⁵⁹ Gaier (2007).

⁶⁰ Adler (1990), 146.

⁶¹ Herder, *HW* 2, 515: 'Even here then Shakespeare is Sophocles's brother, where he is so unlike in appearance, only to be inwardly just like him. Sophocles remained true to nature when he fashioned one story of one place and one time; Shakespeare could remain true to nature only if he turned his world-event and human destiny through all places and times.'

bekommen.’⁶² In its immediate context, the metaphor suggests that artistic production is bound to its time, that works are dependent on historical circumstance for their form.⁶³ Yet another meaning emerges in the course of the essay. The division of exterior and interior allows for a correspondence that goes beyond the ‘husk’ of a work, a similarity in ‘kernel’ between Shakespeare and Sophocles. The essence of both forms of tragedy, Herder reveals, is one and the same. Herder’s rejection of the parallel is only a partial one, for he establishes an organic process as the universal criterion for judgment. Such a coincidence of universalizing and historicizing viewpoints characterized Winckelmann’s view of Greece as well, and Herder would wrestle with the challenge of combining the two throughout his career.⁶⁴ The ‘Shakespear’ essay represents an early and relatively extreme statement, which might offer a historicizing counterpoint to the universalizing programme of the *Nachahmung* essay. Shakespeare represents the possibility of modern inimitability precisely *not* through imitation of Greek art works, but through a correspondence of natural processes. Herder’s anthropological viewpoint regards moderns and ancients as equally and differently capable of greatness, but defines greatness as a single, immutable process.

‘A ruin of a colossus’

A doubt remains in Herder’s mind, which will continue to plague historicizing thinkers: if the circumstances of production change so radically, do the possibilities for reception alter as well? Does historical change, which makes ancient forms invalid for modern authors, also make ancient works irrelevant to modern audiences? Herder is well aware of the question his

⁶² Herder, *HW* 2, 499: ‘The kernel would not grow without the husk and they will never get the kernel without the husk.’

⁶³ Paulin (2003), 153.

⁶⁴ See Malsch (1986).

essay raises. He recognizes that he himself is ‘Shakespear näher als dem Griechen.’⁶⁵ And if this is the case, future generations will be still further from both. The final paragraph of the essay thinks through the consequences of the historicization Herder has advocated:

Trauriger und wichtiger wird der Gedanke, daß auch dieser große Schöpfer von Geschichte und Weltseele immer mehr veralte! daß da Worte und Sitten und Gattungen der Zeitalter, wie ein Herbst von Blättern welken und absinken, wir schon jetzt aus diesen großen Trümmern der Rittersnatur so weit heraus sind, daß selbst *Garrik*, der Wiedererwecker und Schutzengel auf seinem Grabe, so viel ändern, auslassen, verstümmeln muß, und bald vielleicht, da sich alles so sehr verwischt und anders wohin neiget, auch sein Drama der lebendigen Vorstellung ganz unfähig werden, und eine Trümmer von Kolossus, von Pyramide sein wird, die jeder anstaunet und keiner begreift.⁶⁶

Herder does not shrink from the implications of his historicist vision, which leads him to argue here that the power of art must diminish over time. Though he does not describe the consequences for Greek tragedy, they would have proved his point, since performance of the original texts was out of the question at the time. A reader can marvel at the works of Sophocles (as Herder evidently does), but they reflect a world too distant to move an audience. A thorough historicization of the products of the past leads to a kind of *aporia*: if time creates works of art, it can also destroy them. Historicization inevitably has to confront the question of the present value of works of the past.⁶⁷ Herder ties a Gordian knot, which all thinkers on ancient tragedy will have to loosen one way or another.

⁶⁵ Herder, *HW* 2, 509: ‘closer to Shakespeare than to the Greek.’

⁶⁶ Herder, *HW* 2, 520: ‘Sadder and more important becomes the thought that even this great creator of history and world-soul constantly grows older! that the words and customs and categories of the ages wither and fall like autumn leaves, that we are now already so far removed from these great ruins of chivalrous nature that even Garrick, the re-awakener and guardian angel above his grave, must change, leave out, and mutilate so much, and soon perhaps, when everything is so much blurred and tends in other directions, even Shakespeare’s drama will become incapable of living performance, and will be a ruin of colossus, of the pyramids, which everyone marvels at and no one understands.’

⁶⁷ Herder will consider this problem directly in the *Adrastea*, where he argues that the comparative primitiveness of earlier tragedy is salutary for its outsize representation of human nature: *HW* 10, 360. On Herder’s later thoughts on tragedy, which show some influence of idealist theories, see Düsing (1987).

Herder is left with the hope for new works that will speak directly to the present day. He recognized in Goethe a talent that could fulfil this possibility, and the essay accordingly ends with an address to the poet, exhorting him ‘sein [Shakespeares] Denkmal *aus unsern Rittzeiten* in unsrer Sprache, unserm so weit abgearteten Vaterlande herzustellen.’⁶⁸ As Sophocles and Shakespeare created tragedies from and for their nation, so Goethe will for his. In this way, the essay circles back to the programme behind the volume as a whole, using historical examples of the ideal correspondence between works of art and cultural circumstance to show the way for German modernity. Historicization, for Herder, is never divorced from contemporary reference. The uniqueness of past cultures makes their study all the more pressing as a means to grasping the specificity of the present. Herder’s historical thought is truly radical in recognizing its own consequences for the appreciation of works of the past: as cultures change, so too do the demands made on art. Yet this thought, which is for him ‘trauriger und wichtiger,’ will be utterly unbearable for the still more philhellenic generation after him. Where Herder argued that art should be homogeneous with its audience, later thinkers will find ways of valuing the difference and even the difficulty of Greek tragedy.

Following Herder, though by no means only as a result of his work, historicization made itself felt powerfully in thought on Greek tragedy in Germany. A spate of translations demonstrated a new attention to the genre, and posed the question of fidelity to the original more insistently than ever before. This reflects a sense that Greek drama’s difference should be more accurately represented than in previous translations. A 1785 translation of *Oedipus the King* describes its task as ‘eine Blume der griechischen Kunst zu pflücken und sie auf

⁶⁸ Herder, *HW* 2, 521: ‘to erect his monument from our own age of chivalry in our language for our so far degenerated fatherland.’

deutsches Land zu verpflanzen.’⁶⁹ Though most of these translations would today be considered quite free, the emphasis on accuracy and apologetic tone for any alterations testifies to a changing mindset. It became important to represent Greek tragedy in all its alterity, if only to sharpen its potential as an alternative to French forms. Thus, an early translator of Sophocles prides himself on being more accurate than previous French versions, ascribing this ‘nicht mir, sondern dem glücklichern Genius meines Vaterlandes und seiner Sprache zuzuschreiben.’⁷⁰ Fidelity seemed to be one way that German translators could improve on the French reference works that had come before, and agonistic discussions are common in prefaces and notes.⁷¹ Greek tragedy held an authority that could be mobilized to demonstrate the superiority of German culture.

Historicization meant that the parallel had to proceed differently from the way it had in the past. It was no longer possible to assume the similarity of ancient and modern works and compare them aesthetically. The parallel in the latter half of the eighteenth century tended to reveal more opposition than commonality, and was often used to formulate a critique of the state of modern (and particularly French) drama. A 1784 *Prometheus* begins with a comprehensive parallel of ancient and modern works, emphasizing Greek tragedy’s social role while deploring modern drama’s lack of cultural relevance (much as Rochefort had done). It concludes, ‘So stand, dünkt mich, das griechische Drama der ädlen Nation vor Augen. Ihnen wars wahres Schauspiel, uns ists blos Spiel!’⁷² For the author, it is essential that ‘wir den Geschmack der Griechen, ihre Deklamation, und ihre männliche Musik wieder

⁶⁹ Manso (1785), iii: ‘to pluck a flower of Greek art and plant it in German ground.’

⁷⁰ Goldhagen (1777), Vorrede: ‘not to myself, but to the happier genius of my fatherland and its language.’

⁷¹ Köhler’s 1778 *Iphigenia in Aulis* is one example: its preface attacks Steinbrüchel and French translators for dividing the works into scenes, and its footnotes wage a withering campaign against Racine’s version of the story.

⁷² Schlosser (1784), 13: ‘Thus stood, I think, Greek drama before the eyes of a noble nation. To them it was a true play, to us merely play!’

annehmen müßten.’⁷³ The parallel after Herder often serves to describe the difference of ancient and modern drama, and to argue for a return to the practice of Greek tragedy.

The most important consequence of historicization in Germany was its emphasis on the cultural role of Greek tragedy.⁷⁴ Steinbrüchel and Herder both pointed to Greek tragedy’s centrality in Athenian life as an ideal for modernity to strive for. Tragedy came to seem the patriotic art form *par excellence*. Christian Graf zu Stolberg’s 1787 *Sofokles*, which became an important reference for readers around 1800, offers a description of the poet that recalls Steinbrüchel’s hopes for his translation, and suggests an analogy between the ancient poet and a hoped-for modern follower:

Sofokles, er der vaterländischste Mann, war auch der vaterländischste der Griechischen Dichter. Unter seinen wenigen uns erhaltenen Trauerspielen ist auch nicht ein einziges, welches nicht (die poetischen Schönheiten izt nicht gerechnet) wegen seines patriotischen Inhalts die ganze Nation zur Theilnehmerin erwecken, und wegen seiner edlen Gesinnungen, die ihr so eigenthümlich waren, jede Saite dieser harmonischen Leier berühren musste.⁷⁵

The notion of a form of poetry that would awake national sentiment was not only a descriptive, but a normative point. Early translators of Greek tragedy into German emphasize its patriotic qualities because they hope for modern works to have the same cultural function. Ancient Greece provided an example of a culture that, though as decentralized as modern Germany, seemed to come together around works of art.⁷⁶ The patriotic impact of Greek tragedy, which Brumoy and Rochefort had pointed to as an element of difference from modern works, becomes for German thinkers a point of fervently desired, though

⁷³ Schlosser (1784), 3: ‘we must take on again the taste of the Greeks, their declamation, and their manly music.’

⁷⁴ Krämer (1998), 354-64.

⁷⁵ Stolberg (1787) I, xxi: ‘Sophocles, he the most patriotic man, was also the most patriotic of Greek poets. Among his few extant tragedies is not a single one which must not (without reference now to its poetic beauties) through its patriotic content awake the whole nation to participation, and through its noble sentiments, which are so unique to it, touch every string of this harmonic lyre.’ Similarly, see Ammon (1789), xxv on Euripides.

⁷⁶ Flaherty (1978), 286.

unaccomplished, similarity. It is here, when difference leads to dialogue, that the modern parallel is formulated. The engagement with Greek tragedy's alterity becomes a method of cultural criticism.

German discourse on Greek tragedy in the 1770s and 80s shows an increasing sense of the difference between ancient and modern tragedies. These years, during which translations of Greek tragedies vastly increased, also saw a relative explosion in the numbers of original German works being published, compared with those being translated from foreign languages.⁷⁷ This brings with it a corresponding reformulation of the parallel. The parallel becomes less a tool to evaluate similar objects than to describe fundamental differences. The description of these differences nearly always has a normative element, intending to inspire contemporary German authors to recreate the cultural centrality of Greek (or Shakespearean) tragedy. The Greeks are exemplary not merely for their aesthetic achievements, but as a cultural ideal. They can thus be used to formulate a critique of German modernity and a programme for its rehabilitation. This critical role for antiquity in modern discourse is Germany's most important contribution to the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Historicization by no means ends the *Querelle*, but rather reformulates it as a dialectic in which the characters of antiquity and modernity emerge through their differences from one another.

III. Aesthetic revolution: Friedrich Schlegel

The word 'revolution' takes on a new sense at the close of the eighteenth century. Where previously it had been understood primarily as a natural concept, relating to cycles of events

⁷⁷ Krebs (1985), 550.

(as in the etymological meaning, *re-volvere*), the experience of the French Revolution broadened its semantic field.⁷⁸ ‘Revolution’ came to be understood not as an event within history, but as a form of historical existence, a sense of being in a period of rapid and categorical change. In France, the consequences of revolution may have been too catastrophic to be grasped conceptually or artistically, and one finds far less serious reflection on Greek tragedy (indeed, on anything but the events of the Revolution) during the 1790s than previously.⁷⁹ Though tragedies were written in great numbers throughout the Consulate, First Empire, and Restoration, innovation was rare and political ideology dominant.⁸⁰ It was in Germany that the consequences of the Revolution would lead to the greatest innovation in the theory and practice of tragedy. There they met with another form of revolution, created by the publication of Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in 1781 and *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* in 1788. The ‘copernican revolution’ of Kant’s critical philosophy rigorously distinguished between the immediate perception of the senses and the conceptual knowledge of reason. It was often understood as a destructive effort for its argument that theoretical and practical reason, the domains of nature and freedom respectively, could not be reconciled by philosophical thought. The third antinomy of Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* had pointed, aporetically, to the question of whether human freedom could be proven, juxtaposing an understanding of action based on individual will with one based on natural causality.⁸¹ Kant refused to resolve the question of whether freedom is a theoretical reality, or only a practical

⁷⁸ Koselleck (2004), 43-57.

⁷⁹ An interesting exception is La Porte du Theil (1795), a revision, with facing Greek texts, of his Aeschylus translations.

⁸⁰ On drama under the revolution, see Friedland (2002), Maslan (2005).

⁸¹ See Wood (2010) for a more in-depth explanation than can be offered here.

postulate of action. With these political and philosophical developments, the intellectual foundations and the aims of the Enlightenment appeared in crisis.

Kant's 1790 *Kritik der Urteilskraft* suggested, though tentatively, that the judgment of beauty might be a means of reconciling theoretical and practical reason. Aesthetic judgment, he argued, gives an insight into the '[das] Übersinnliche [...] in welchem das theoretische Vermögen mit dem praktischen auf gemeinschaftliche und unbekannte Art zur Einheit verbunden wird.'⁸² Aesthetic judgment appeared as the intellectual power connecting individual perception to universal laws. Though not an objective judgment, it nevertheless expects the consent of others and thus achieves a 'subjective universality.' The aesthetic, as an inter-subjective realm, suggests also that judgment of beauty might be similar to the judgment of morality, since both refer to an unknowable but universal concept. 'Das Schöne ist das Symbol des Sittlich-Guten; und auch nur in dieser Rücksicht [...] gefällt es mit einem Anspruche auf jedes andern Beistimmung.'⁸³ Though Kant has little to say about works of art, and indeed prefers natural to artistic beauty, the notion that aesthetic judgment might point to a reconciliation of the rational and empirical in the good formed the basis for an explosion of aesthetic thought in the 1790s. The suggestion that morality and aesthetics might ultimately be one suggested a way beyond political and philosophical impasses, and led thinkers in Germany to turn back to the Greeks, as exemplars of an artistic culture. The sense of disorientation in the wake of the French and Kantian revolutions brought about a reconsideration of the *Querelle's* question of the relation between antiquity and modernity. With modern politics in crisis, ancient art seemed a way forward.

⁸² Kant, *AA* 5, 353: 'the supersensible in which the theoretical power is bound to the practical in a unity through a mutual and unknown way.'

⁸³ Kant, *AA* 5, 353: 'The beautiful is the symbol of the morally good and only in this respect does it please with a claim to the agreement of everyone else.'

Friedrich Schlegel's *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie* and Friedrich Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, written independently around 1795, have long been considered as contributions to and even a 'replication' of the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*.⁸⁴ There are astonishing similarities between the two essays, especially given the largely opposed poetics of their creators. While such a viewpoint on the continuity of the parallel is congenial to the historical argument presented here, it overlooks a fundamental difference between the two essays: where Schlegel's essay is concerned with ancient poetry (and tragedy most of all) as a concrete historical phenomenon, Schiller's essay understands ancient poetry as one example of the 'naive,' a category that transcends history. Schlegel's essay is genuinely concerned with Greek (though not exclusively Greek) literature, while at the heart of Schiller's work is a reckoning with Goethe, whom he saw as 'ein griechischer Geist in diese nordische Schöpfung geworfen.'⁸⁵ Hence the vagueness of his opposition of naive and sentimental, which can be understood historically or typologically.⁸⁶ Where Schlegel seeks to formulate a role for Greek literature in the modern world, Schiller focuses on the ahistorical psychology of creation. Their conflation often serves a narrative of the intellectual history of the period which culminates either in Schiller's (admittedly more coherent) essay or in the historical model of Hegel's aesthetics.⁸⁷ A genealogical viewpoint, which seeks to understand texts historically and without teleology, must distinguish between the two approaches (as is also appropriate to the focus on tragedy,

⁸⁴ Jauß (1970) has proven enormously influential, and is followed by Oergel (2006) and, with reservations, by Müller (2005).

⁸⁵ Schiller, FA 11, 702 (To Goethe, 23.8.1794): 'a Greek spirit thrown into this Nordic creation.' On the relationship between the two, see Barner (1993).

⁸⁶ Zelle (1995), 210.

⁸⁷ The Hegelian narrative is represented by Szondi (1974a), 133-48, the Schillerian one by Jauß (1970) and Grimm (1999). All see Schlegel's essay as a step towards something else, and so miss much of its brilliance and strangeness.

which is surprisingly absent from Schiller's essay). The rest of this chapter will examine the *Studium* essay as a contribution to the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, and an original formulation of the relation of antiquity and modernity and their respective tragedies. Chapter 3 then will argue that Schiller's study of Greek tragedy ultimately leads him to a new understanding of the specificity of Greek culture, and to an important and still-underappreciated theory of the tragic. The juxtaposition should make clear the difference between the two approaches, but also their participation in a larger questioning of modernity through the concept of tragedy.

The interest of the *Studium* essay in the present context lies less in the details of its theory of tragedy than in its understanding of the relation between ancient and modern literary histories. Though there is much in the essay that is original and highly consequential for thought on tragedy, Schlegel's suggestions are developed more thoroughly by Schelling (who is considered in Chapter 4) and A.W. Schlegel (who is treated briefly in the Conclusion). The *Studium* essay, published in 1797, though complete by the end of 1795, argues that modernity can only realize its place in time through a relation to antiquity. It was intended as the beginning of a series of *Historische und kritische Versuche über das klassische Altertum*, through which the young Schlegel (23 at the time of the *Studium* essay's completion!) hoped to establish his name, and was followed by the first volume of a *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer*, which covered pre-classical Greece. Neither series was carried further, and Schlegel's attention quickly turned to editing his famous journals the *Athenäum* and *Lyceum*. These early works have often been overshadowed by Schlegel's 'romantic' phase, yet there is a continuity in the effort to outline a reflexive theory

of creation.⁸⁸ In considering antiquity, Schlegel focused, perhaps more self-consciously than anyone of his time, on the possible role for ancient works in the creation of modern literature. In one of the *Athenäum-Fragmente*, he formulates the need for a universalism that would complement the historicization introduced by Winckelmann:

Der systematische Winckelmann, der alle Alten gleichsam wie einen Autor las, alles im ganzen sah und seine gesamte Kraft auf die Griechen konzentrierte, legte durch die Wahrnehmung der absoluten Verschiedenheit des Antiken und des Modernen den ersten Grund zu einer materialen Altertumslehre. Erst wenn der Standpunkt und die Bedingungen der absoluten Identität des Antiken und Modernen, die war, ist oder sein wird, gefunden ist, darf man sagen, daß wenigstens der Kontur der Wissenschaft fertig sei, und nun an die methodische Ausführung gedacht werden könne.⁸⁹

The perception of ‘absolute difference’ of antiquity and modernity can only be completed through a viewpoint that recognizes the possibility of their ‘absolute identity.’ This is, in effect, an effort to formulate a universalism after the historicizations of Winckelmann and Herder. What exactly such a standpoint might entail remains, like so much in Schlegel’s writing, fascinatingly obscure. But one can understand the *Studium* essay as a first attempt to elaborate such a position, to find a mode of historical thought that would describe the conditions for a universalizing knowledge of antiquity and modernity. For the Schlegel of 1795, this is a practical and artistic question: historical observation serves to guide modern creation through the recognition of commonality with as well difference from antiquity. In a 1794 letter to his brother, he formulated what might be the programme of the *Studium* essay:

⁸⁸ On the links between the *Studium* essay and Schlegel’s later project of ‘romantische Poesie,’ see Belgardt (1967).

⁸⁹ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 2, 188 (AF 149): ‘The systematic Winckelmann, who read all the ancients at once as a single author, saw everything as a whole and concentrated his entire power on the Greeks, laid the first basis of a material understanding of antiquity through his perception of the absolute difference of the ancient and the modern. Only when the standpoint and conditions of the absolute identity of ancient and modern, which was, is or will be, is found, can one say that at least the contour of science of complete, and then the methodical execution can be considered.’

‘Das Problem unsrer Poesie scheint mir die Vereinigung des Wesentlich-Modernen mit dem Wesentlich-Antiken.’⁹⁰

Studium and Bildung

The Schlegels, uniquely among the major thinkers of tragedy of the period, studied classical literature at university. Both were enrolled as law students in Göttingen and there took part in the philological seminars of Christian Gottlob Heyne, whose integrative approach to the study of antiquity would be decisive for the growing discipline of *Altertumswissenschaft*. Friedrich Schlegel took from the seminars a sense of antiquity’s educative value and an understanding of philology as a field of critical synthesis, in which the history and literature of the ancient world were understood as forming an essential unity.⁹¹ He conceived of his early writings as an effort, ‘das Studium der Alten wenigstens in Deutschland neu zu beleben.’⁹² For Schlegel, the engagement with ancient works was a means to improving critical taste and creative ability. The historical model of the *Study* essay is based on a Winckelmannian sense of ancient literature as a coherent order, which provides an intuitive model for modern artists. Yet the title of Schlegel’s essay is carefully chosen, and distinguishes his work sharply from the imitative programme of Winckelmann:⁹³ it is not a call to the imitation of Greek poetry, but to *the study of* Greek poetry. Schlegel writes that the essay attempts to determine ‘das Verhältnis der antiken Poesie zur modernen, und den

⁹⁰ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 23, 185 (To A.W. Schlegel, 27.2.1794): ‘the problem of our poetry appears to me the unification of the essentially-modern with the essentially-antique.’

⁹¹ Bäuerle (2008), 34.

⁹² F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 23, 226 (to A.W. Schlegel, 20.1.1795): ‘to revive the study of the ancient in Germany at least.’

⁹³ Szondi (1974a), 103.

Zweck des Studiums der klassischen Poesie überhaupt und für unser Zeitalter insbesondere.’⁹⁴

Schlegel’s subject is not ancient literature *per se*, but the place of ancient literature in the modern world. From the understanding of Greek history and modes of representation, he hopes, modern artists will gain the intuition necessary to create works of their own historical moment.

Schlegel’s *Studium* essay, as he recognized in the introduction to its 1797 publication, takes its place within the discourse of the *Querelle*. It is, he writes, ‘ein Versuch [...] den langen Streit der einseitigen Freunde der alten und neuen Dichter zu schlichten.’⁹⁵ There is an irony here, as the question of priority had been largely abandoned in Germany. Schlegel’s essay is in fact as much an attempt to revive the *Querelle* as it is to calm it. The impetus for taking up the question of comparison again in 1795 seems to have been given by Herder, who had continued to advocate a radical historicization that insisted on the incomparability of the ages. To Schlegel, this seemed a dead end, as it suggested that aesthetic criticism of past artworks is impossible, and gave no direction to modern artists for their own creation. In a 1796 review of Herder’s *Humanitätsbriefe*, Schlegel points to a lacuna in historical understanding: historicization as practiced by Herder has described the difference between antiquity and modernity, but it has not accounted for it. Schlegel’s goal is to mediate between the two ages by defining how they came to be opposed in the first place.⁹⁶ This can only happen ‘wenn die Begriffe des Antiken und Modernen schon fixiert und aus der

⁹⁴ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 207: ‘the relation of ancient poetry to modern, and the purpose of the study of classical poetry in general and for our age in particular.’

⁹⁵ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 207: ‘an attempt to calm the long conflict of onesided friends of ancient and modern poets.’

⁹⁶ Jauß (1970), 74.

menschlichen Natur selbst hergeleitet wären.’⁹⁷ The stakes of this effort become clear at the end of his review. Herder’s method ‘jede Blume der Kunst, *ohne Würdigung*, nur nach Ort, Zeit, und Art zu betrachten, würde am Ende auf kein andres Resultat führen, als daß alles sein müßte, was es ist und war.’⁹⁸ Without an understanding of the relation between ancient and modern modes, no criticism seems to be possible. Herder’s historicization seems in danger of slipping into critical nihilism, suggesting that all artistic achievement is the product of its time and place, and can only be evaluated in relation to the society in which it was created. By understanding the inner grounds of the opposition of ancient and modern, Schlegel hopes to place them into a productive relation, to restore a measure of universality to the antiquity that Herder had so assiduously historicized.⁹⁹

Schlegel’s parallel of ancient and modern literature takes a new route: it does not historicize artistic products (as Herder did), but artistic process (which Herder did not, by referring all process to nature). Schlegel essentially preserves a single atemporal standard of excellence, but suggests that the paths to it must be different in antiquity and modernity, based on the age’s respective principles of development, *Bildung*. Schlegel sets out two models of *Bildung*: ancient, *natürliche Bildung* and modern, *künstliche Bildung*. In the ancient world, culture followed a spontaneous, organic process of growth and decline. Modern culture, on the other hand, takes its direction from individual reason rather than natural process, and so follows no overarching course. From this contrast of the shapes of ancient and modern history, Schlegel constructs a narrative of the origin of artificial *Bildung*:

⁹⁷ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 2, 48: ‘when the concepts of the ancient and the modern were already fixed and deduced from human nature itself.’

⁹⁸ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 2, 54: ‘to observe every flower of art, without valuation, only according to its place, time, and kind, would in the end lead to no other result, than that everything must be what it is and was.’

⁹⁹ As Malsch (1986) points out, Herder’s thought on antiquity is considerably more complex than Schlegel (or most of its initial recipients, it appears) understood.

Nur auf Natur kann Kunst, nur auf eine natürliche Bildung kann die künstliche folgen. Und zwar auf eine *verunglückte* natürliche Bildung. [...] Daß der Versuch der natürlichen Bildung mißglücken könne, ist aber gar keine unwahrscheinliche Voraussetzung: der Trieb ist zwar ein mächtiger Beweger, aber ein blinder Führer.¹⁰⁰

Schlegel points to a moment of catastrophe in antiquity, an undefined turning point in world history, in which the natural *Bildung* of society degenerated, and opened the path for artificial *Bildung*. In the phase of artificial *Bildung*, which stretches into the present, it is no longer the principle of beauty that guides art, but rather that of ‘the interesting:’ ‘*Interessant* nämlich ist jedes originelle Individuum, welches ein größeres Quantum von intellektuellem Gehalt oder ästhetischer Energie enthält.’¹⁰¹ Schlegel ascribes to modern art the opposite of Kant’s description of ‘uninteressierter Wohlgefallen’ as the basis of the judgement of beauty.¹⁰² ‘Interesting’ art, unlike beautiful art, appeals directly to cognition and the individual who experiences it. It therefore has a far more limited aesthetic claim than the beautiful, which Schlegel defines in approximately Kantian terms as the ‘*angenehme Erscheinung des Guten*.’¹⁰³ Where the ‘objective’ art of antiquity proceeded naturally from culture and was free of the marks of its creator, the ‘characteristic’ art of modernity is always a product of the will, and reflects the personality of the artist.¹⁰⁴ Schlegel describes an opposition between the developments of ancients and moderns, but more importantly, grounds this in a relation, which suggests the possibility of their ultimate similarity.

¹⁰⁰ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 231: ‘Only after nature can art follow, only after a natural development can the artificial follow. And indeed only after a failed natural development. That the attempt of natural development could fail is however no unlikely assumption: the drive is a strong mover, but a blind leader.’

¹⁰¹ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 252: ‘Interesting is any original individual that contains a greater quantity of intellectual content or aesthetic energy.’

¹⁰² Bäuerle (2008), 66.

¹⁰³ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 288: ‘the pleasurable appearance of the good.’ The difference between Kant’s ‘symbol’ of the good and Schlegel’s ‘appearance’ is important as it transfers what for Kant is a property of the judgment of the beautiful to the object itself. The next chapter discusses this fateful slippage in relation to Schiller, who first leads down the path.

¹⁰⁴ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 253.

As so often, tragedy is the ground for comparison of antiquity and modernity. Schlegel's discussion of Greek tragedy in the *Studium* essay is surprisingly thin, given the importance he assigns to it, and is couched in terms of rhapsodic praise that recall Winckelmann. Schlegel describes tragedy as a synthesis of epic and lyric, articulating a point that would later be central to Schelling's and Hegel's *Aesthetics*:¹⁰⁵ 'Alle einzelnen Vollkommenheiten der früheren Arten, Zeitalter und Schulen bestimmt, läutert, erhöht, vereinigt und ordnet sie zu einem neuen Ganzen.'¹⁰⁶ Schlegel describes a biological model of growth, fulfilment, and decline, which he maps onto the three Greek tragedians. He outlines an important and still influential understanding of Greek literary history, and intended, it appears, to publish his assessment of the three tragedians as an independent essay.¹⁰⁷ After the primitive beginnings of Aeschylus and the perfection of Sophocles, the ancient ideal enters into a phase of decadence in Euripides, which corresponds with the beginning of modern *künstliche Bildung*. Sophocles represents the completion of tragedy, and is characterized by an organic completeness, appearing effortlessly to unite the disparate strands of Greek culture into a unified whole. His works create a balanced emotional response in the viewer, as the poet 'weiß Schrecken und Rührung im vollkommensten Gleichgewicht wohlthätig zu mischen.'¹⁰⁸ Schlegel's praise of Sophocles's affective balance is important, for it interprets Aristotelian *catharsis* as the result of a dialectic, whereby the emotions experienced within tragedy lead to a sense of harmony. It will be ridiculed by

¹⁰⁵ Most (1993), 164-6.

¹⁰⁶ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 296: 'it determines, purifies, raises, unifies, and orders all the individual perfections of earlier forms, ages, and schools to a new whole.'

¹⁰⁷ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 23, 212 (to A.W. Schlegel, 18.11.1794) mentions an essay concerning 'Beurtheilung des Aeschylus, Sophokles, Euripides,' and plans for a history of tragedy crop up repeatedly in the letters. See Most (1993) and Behler (1986) on the roots and influence of Schlegel's judgments. On the causes and implications of such rankings of the Greek tragedians, see Höhle (2009).

¹⁰⁸ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 298: 'knows how to mix terror and emotion beneficently in the most perfect equality.'

Schiller and Goethe for suggesting that there is a kind of reconciliation in works like the *OT*, but the same point will be carried further by Schelling and Hegel, who similarly oppose the harmonious impression of ancient tragedy with the disharmonious effect of modern tragedy. Schlegel's idealization of the effect of ancient tragedy is, for better and for worse, one of his most important legacies, and will be a continual point of contention in German Idealism.

Shakespeare is, as ever, the example of a modern poet who can stand the comparison with Sophocles. Like Herder, Schlegel argues for different evaluative criteria for Shakespearean works, but he rejects the notion that Shakespeare, like Sophocles, was following nature in the form of his dramas.¹⁰⁹ Rather, Shakespeare's works appear as the height of artifice and individuality, and to create an effect diametrically opposed to that of Sophocles. Shakespeare appears in no way to be Sophocles's brother:

Wer seine Poesie als *schöne* Kunst beurteilt, der gerät nur in tiefere Widersprüche, je mehr Scharfsinn er besitzt, je besser er den Dichter kennt. Wie die Natur Schönes und Häßliches durcheinander mit gleich üppigem Reichtum erzeugt, so auch Shakespeare. Keines seiner Dramen ist *in Masse* schön; nie bestimmt Schönheit die Anordnung des Ganzen. Auch die einzelnen Schönheiten sind wie in der Natur nur selten von *häßlichen Zusätzen* rein, und sie sind nur *Mittel* eines andern Zwecks; sie dienen dem charakteristischen oder philosophischen Interesse.¹¹⁰

Ugliness, for Schlegel, is essential to representing the chaotic world as it appears to the philosophical mindset of modern artists. Shakespeare is the exemplary modern author and *Hamlet* the exemplary modern work because 'Es gibt vielleicht keine vollkommnere Darstellung der unauflöslichen Disharmonie, welche der eigentliche Gegenstand der

¹⁰⁹ Szondi (1974a), 109.

¹¹⁰ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 251: 'Whoever judges his [Shakespeare's] poetry as a beautiful artwork falls into ever deeper contradictions the more sense he possesses and the better he knows the poet. Just as nature bears beauty and ugliness together with equally abundant richness, so too Shakespeare. None of his dramas is primarily beautiful; beauty never determines the order of the whole. Even the individual beauties are rarely free from ugly additions, just as in nature, and they are only the means to another aim; they serve the characteristic or philosophical interest.'

philosophischen Tragödie ist.¹¹¹ Where Sophocles's 'aesthetic tragedy' moderates negative impressions with positive ones, Shakespeare's 'philosophical tragedy' creates a '*Maximum der Verzweiflung*.'¹¹² Indeed, the very category of tragedy seems only partially applicable to Shakespeare, 'denn die durchgängige Reinheit des Tragischen (eine notwendige Bedingung der ästhetischen Tragödie) würde der Wahrheit der charakteristischen und philosophischen Kunst Abbruch tun.'¹¹³ The pure genres of ancient Greece appear inadequate to the complexity of modern experience. Ancient tragedy is characterized by *Reinheit* (an echo of *Reinigung*, the standard translation of *catharsis*) and creates a pure and purifying impression, while Shakespeare offers only extremes, creating a work that reflects the chaotic disharmony of modern existence.

Schlegel describes a necessary relation between the two structures of *Bildung*. Natural development is defined cyclically, as a process of growth to a '*relatives Maximum*, ein unübersteigliches *fixes Proximum*,' beyond which it can only decline.¹¹⁴ Schlegel explains this by a logic of proportion: beauty is a perfect relation between parts, and so cannot be increased by changes in scale. Artificial development, on the contrary, is guided by infinite possibilities, which admits of no fulfilment. Its development is progressive, striving towards an absolute that can never be reached, 'weil es kein *höchstes Interessantes* gibt.'¹¹⁵ Yet as modern art achieves greater heights of individuality, it finds itself in ever greater need of an objective aesthetic principle by which it would be regulated:

¹¹¹ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 248: 'There is perhaps no more perfect representation of insoluble disharmony, which is the actual object of philosophical tragedy.'

¹¹² F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 248: 'maximum of despair.'

¹¹³ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 246: 'since the thorough purity of the tragic (a necessary condition of aesthetic tragedy) would destroy the truth of characteristic and philosophical art.'

¹¹⁴ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 288: 'relative maximum, an unsurpassable *fixes proximum*.'

¹¹⁵ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 253: 'because there is no most interesting.'

Das Übermaß des Individuellen führt also von selbst zum Objektiven, das Interessante ist die Vorbereitung des Schönen, und das letzte Ziel der modernen Poesie kann kein andres sein als das *höchste Schöne*, ein Maximum von objektiver ästhetischer Vollkommenheit.¹¹⁶

Just as natural *Bildung* spontaneously degenerated into artificial *Bildung*, so artificial *Bildung* seems now to be approaching a moment of transition, in which modern individuality and ancient objectivity will be combined. This age will, Schlegel suggests, surpass even the achievements of the ancients by combining the principles of the interesting and the beautiful. Schlegel takes from Winckelmann's *Geschichte* a concept of Greek history as *Lehrgebäude*, which would serve to orient modern practice by its example.¹¹⁷ Ancient art offers the intuition by which modern art might realize its greatest potential. The history of Greek art represents 'die *allgemeine Naturgeschichte* der Kunst,' a distillation of artistic possibilities, understanding which will temper the excessive individuality of modern art through a relation to timeless principles of creation.¹¹⁸ The sharp distinctions Schlegel has drawn are all in the service of what he repeatedly terms a 'revolution,' whereby the anarchic creativity of the modern world will be directed by the intuition gained from the study of antiquity.¹¹⁹ Such a revolution would be, following the lexical sense of the word, a progress into the past.

The objective and the local

Schlegel proposes a return to ancient artistic practice, but not through imitation of its subjects; rather, through adoption of its objective mode of representation. Reformulating the *Querelle*'s 'general' and 'particular' modes of evaluation, Schlegel makes a distinction

¹¹⁶ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 253: 'The excess of the individual therefore leads naturally to the objective, the interesting is the preparation of the beautiful, and the last aim of modern poetry can be none other than the highest beautiful, a maximum of objective aesthetic perfection.'

¹¹⁷ Matuschek (2003).

¹¹⁸ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 273: 'the general natural history of art.'

¹¹⁹ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 224.

between ‘the local’ and ‘the objective’ in Greek poetry, elements that are particular to the artist or culture (the content and forms of ancient works) and those that are universal (the mode of representation). ‘Nachahmung,’ he argues, has been misunderstood to relate to the former, when in fact, it should be applied to the latter, ‘den *Geist des Ganzen* -- die reine *Griechheit* soll der moderne Dichter, welcher nach echter schöner Kunst streben will, sich zueignen.’¹²⁰ This is the use of the study of Greek poetry: it will allow the modern to isolate ‘den *Geist des Ganzen*’ and imitate that. Schlegel argues for an essential interrelation of theory and practice, seeing understanding of ‘the objective’ as based on a knowledge gained from study. Only through an immersion in ancient poetry can the essence of its beauty be extracted and made useful in modern works. For Schlegel, though, there is no universal content of poetry, only a universal mode of representation. He sees evidence of a new age of objectivity in Goethe’s practice, which appears as the ‘Morgenröte echter Kunst und reiner Schönheit.’¹²¹ Like Herder, Schlegel adds Goethe prospectively to the pantheon of Sophocles and Shakespeare, and predicts that the completed version of *Faust* will surpass even *Hamlet*. Though Goethe’s themes are modern and characteristic, he aims, unlike Shakespeare, at an objective mode of depiction, and thus ‘*Er steht in der Mitte zwischen dem Interessanten und dem Schönen, zwischen dem Manirierten und dem Objektiven.*’¹²² Goethe represents for Schlegel the promise of a future poetry that would treat philosophical subjects aesthetically, and so combine the modern and the ancient.

¹²⁰ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 347: ‘the modern poet, who wishes to strive after real beautiful art, should dedicate himself to the spirit of the whole, the pure Greekness.’

¹²¹ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 260: ‘the dawning of true art and pure beauty.’

¹²² F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 261: ‘He stands in the middle between the interesting and the beautiful, the mannered and the objective.’

Schlegel's discussion of Goethe leads him to the theme of revolution, and to an eschatological prediction of a turning point in world history, a redemption of the fall from natural to artificial *Bildung*. The new age of objectivity will come about, not through political revolution, but through philosophical understanding:

Dann hat die ästhetische Bildung den *entscheidenden Punkt erreicht*, wo sie sich selbst überlassen nicht mehr sinken, sondern nur durch äußere Gewalt in ihren Fortschritt aufgehalten, oder (etwa durch eine physische Revolution) völlig zerstört werden kann. Ich meine die große, moralische Revolution, durch welche die Freiheit in ihrem Kampfe mit dem Schicksal (in der Bildung) endlich ein entschiedenes Übergewicht über die Natur bekommt.¹²³

Schlegel here gives an insight into the reasons for reopening the *Querelle* problematic in 1795. It is not only the incompleteness of historicizing explanations of the differences between past and present, but also a sense of being at a decisive moment in history. The 'great moral revolution' can be nothing other than Kantian critique, which, by delineating the conditions of human freedom, made the artificial *Bildung* of modernity newly conscious of itself. Schlegel describes this struggle for independence in terms that echo his reading of Sophocles as portraying 'die unaufhörliche notwendige Streit des Schicksals und der Menschheit.'¹²⁴ Modernity, in Schlegel's image, appears as a tragic hero, struggling to assert freedom against the dictates of nature, and finally gaining the upper hand. The study of Greek tragedy offers moderns the means of converting Kant's moral revolution into an aesthetic revolution.

¹²³ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 262: 'Aesthetic development has reached the decisive point, where left to itself it can no longer sink, but only be arrested in its progress through an external violence, or (as in a physical revolution) be completely destroyed. I mean the great moral revolution, through which freedom in its battle with fate (in development) finally gains a decisive predominance over nature.'

¹²⁴ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 300: 'the unending necessary struggle of fate with humanity.'

The aesthetic revolution, however, is threatened by a ‘physical revolution,’ the danger of which Schlegel had seen amply demonstrated in France.¹²⁵ Though he had at first been relatively indifferent to the events in France, they came to occupy more and more of his thoughts, and he seems to have observed them (as most German thinkers did) with an increasing sense of regret. The French Revolution spoke to a desire for radically new beginnings, but at the same time exposed the dangers of an attempt to speed the arrival of the new age Schlegel expected. The revolution must come, Schlegel suggests, of its own accord, through a constant progress of humanity in its *Bildung*. Schlegel’s ideal of perfectibility represents an aesthetic response to political upheaval, which seeks to use the knowledge of antiquity as a means of ordering modern progress to rational ends. In later years, his growing conservatism would lead him to redact most uses of the word ‘revolution’ from the text of the *Study* essay. Schlegel’s later discomfort is the best evidence of the pregnancy of these words in 1795. The Kantian and French Revolution had suggested the possibility of a comprehensive reorientation of existence along aesthetic lines: ‘Der Augenblick scheint in der Tat für eine *ästhetische Revolution* reif zu sein, durch welche das Objektive in der ästhetischen Bildung der Modernen herrschend werden könnte.’¹²⁶ The ‘aesthetic revolution’ Schlegel envisions for Germany is an implicit counterpart – a correction, even, to the French Revolution. The study of Greek poetry is a means of orienting the revolutionary energies of the time to an aesthetic end.

It was only briefly in Friedrich Schlegel’s career that tragedy held a central place in his thought. Though elements of the *Studium* essay were developed further by A.W.

¹²⁵ See Beiser (1992), 245-63.

¹²⁶ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* I, 269: ‘The moment seems in fact ripe for an aesthetic revolution, through which the objective could become dominant in the aesthetic development of the moderns.’

Schlegel's lectures on aesthetics, Friedrich had moved on from tragedy to the apparently more modern form of the novel. In one of the *Lyceum-Fragmente*, he would write that 'Alle klassischen Dichtarten in ihrer strengen Reinheit sind jetzt lächerlich.'¹²⁷ Following this programme, his drama *Alarcos* of 1802, though adopting some themes of Greek tragedy, was a decidedly eclectic mix, owing far more to the works of the Spanish Golden Age than to Sophocles. Yet the change in his thought is not as extreme as it might seem: from the beginning, Friedrich's study of Greek poetry was dedicated to modern ends, and sought to isolate the essential, 'objective' elements of ancient poetry while discarding the external, 'local' form. His rejection of the 'strict purity' of tragedy is an opening to employ the objectivity of Greek poetry in forms such as the novel. In this light, 'die Vereinigung des Wesentlich-Modernen mit dem Wesentlich-Antiken' can be seen as a goal of the early Romanticism for which Schlegel was the major theorist. There is thus no contradiction between the 'classicist' and the 'romantic' Schlegel, but a clear course from the study of Greek poetry to what he will call 'romantische Poesie.' In his contribution to the *Querelle*, he is no more an *Ancien* than a *Moderne*.¹²⁸ He reformulates the *Querelle*'s question 'antiquity or modernity?' as an imperative: 'antiquity *and* modernity.'

In the intellectual history of tragedy, Schlegel is difficult to place. For all the pregnancy of the *Stadium* essay, its discussion of tragedy does not fit into a developmental narrative of the concept of the tragic. Indeed, it explicitly opposes much of what Idealism will find in tragedy. Schlegel assigns Greek tragedy a purely aesthetic value, which is a contrast to the philosophical content of modern works. Greek tragedy's natural beauty and

¹²⁷ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 2, 154 (LF 60): 'all classical forms of poetry are in their strict purity now laughable.'

¹²⁸ Müller (2005), 858 similarly argues that Schlegel does not change parties from the *Anciens* to the *Modernes*, but was committed to both camps all along.

cathartic mode of depiction seem far removed from the central concerns of modernity, and the form therefore lies more decisively in the past for Schlegel than it will for Schiller or the thinkers of German Idealism. Schlegel's refusal to accord universal validity to tragedy may indeed represent the appeal of his thought (and certainly is a part of why it was adopted so readily by nineteenth-century philologists).¹²⁹ The form of historical thought he describes has more in common with Herder than with his friend Schelling or his antagonist Schiller. Yet his method of historicizing nevertheless finds a contemporary value in and even a necessity for Greek literature (as Herder could not). Schlegel's historical thought, which this chapter has glimpsed only from a very limited angle, sees modernity as a work-in-progress and antiquity as a completed whole; moderns use the models gained from antiquity to fashion and refashion themselves continuously. The form of the parallel – which brings about the recognition of this difference and this role for antiquity – is an essential element of thinking as a modern. The relationship between antiquity and modernity is characterized by a dynamic of desire and necessity: 'Aus dem, was die Modernen wollen, muß man lernen, was die Poesie werden soll: aus dem, was die Alten tun, was sie sein muß.'¹³⁰ From his study of philology, perhaps, Schlegel gained a sense of the reality *and* ideality of Greek tragedy, its concrete presence and its elusive absence for moderns. His is one of the first self-conscious efforts to reconcile universalism and historicization in the discussion of Greek literature. If his understanding of Greek tragedy itself is less than convincing, his argument for its role as a dialectical partner for modernity is prophetic.

¹²⁹ Bohrer (1994), 128 celebrates Schlegel's theory for its avoidance of *Geschichtsphilosophie*.

¹³⁰ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 2, 157 (LF 84): 'From what the moderns will, one must learn what poetry should become. From what the ancients do, what it must be.'

Chapter 3

Friedrich Schiller: tragedy, sublimity, history

Friedrich Schiller is the greatest tragedian of German literature, yet his thought on tragedy has been consistently underappreciated. For intellectual historiography, Schiller has the misfortune of occupying the period between the philosophies of Kant and Hegel, and of responding to the former and seeming to anticipate the latter. Schiller shows thinking about art in a moment of transition between aesthetics proper (a theory of the perception of beauty) and the philosophy of art (a theory of the ontological significance of art) that emerges in German Idealism. Yet it is only in retrospect that we see this as a logical progression, due to the fact that the winners – Hegel and Hegelians – have written the history of philosophy. The following and final chapters will argue that the most original thinkers on ancient tragedy, Schiller and Hölderlin, have been largely overshadowed by Schelling's and most of all by Hegel's more systematic thought on tragedy. This is a result not only of the vagaries of intellectual history, but also of difficulties in approaching Schiller's and Hölderlin's thought: their understandings of tragedy cannot be found complete in a single text, but are scattered through published and unpublished works, forewords and afterwords, letter exchanges, and the practices of translation and creation. Neither are systematic thinkers, but their thought (the word is more appropriate than 'theory') is nonetheless deeply philosophical. For both, tragedy poses existential questions; their refusal to find definite answers, as their contemporaries did, is perhaps their greatest claim to continuing relevance.

Yet where Hölderlin's thought was initially neglected, but has increasingly found defenders in the last half-century, Schiller's full significance has been hiding in plain sight. The reason is that Schiller *did* formulate a coherent theory of tragedy in the years 1792-3,

which has dominated discussions of the subject and overshadowed his less focused, but (I argue) richer later thought. Where Schiller's earlier theory represents a free application of the Kantian sublime to tragic heroes, his later discussions exhibit a greater attention to Greek tragedy and poetics, and present a more idiosyncratic and equivocal view. He puts forward an understanding that not only points to the direction that German Idealism would take, but represents a significant end in itself, preferable in many ways to the metaphysics of Hegel and Schelling. Where the systems of German Idealism and Schiller's earlier thought find tragedy's philosophical value in the teleological emergence of a higher good, for the later Schiller the chaos of tragedy remains constructively unresolved. Tragedy's significance for Schiller comes not from its ability to transcend disorder, but from its exercise of the audience's rational powers in the face of the irreducibly irrational. This stoical philosophy considers tragedy as an analogue of history. Tragedy becomes a mode of understanding historical existence, and a surrogate for philosophical reflection. This chapter will seek to show the depth and complexity of Schiller's late thought on tragedy in two steps: first, by placing tragedy in the context of Schiller's aesthetics, it will show tragedy's privileged role as the genre of sublimity; and second, it will point out a previously unrecognized development in Schiller's thought on Greek tragedy, which, it is argued, is essential to understanding his 'classical' theory and dramaturgy.¹ Schiller's thought on tragedy, it is hoped, will appear in its full consequence and interest.

¹ This step outside of a chronology is intended to emphasize, against most accounts, the changes in Schiller's later thought, and provides the frame for the genealogy proper of the second section.

I. Tragic education: the 1801 *Kleinere prosaische Schriften*

Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen (1795) is Schiller's most significant contribution to aesthetics, and one of the most familiar philosophical texts of the *Goethezeit*. It distills Schiller's thought on art, and so is helpful to understanding all that follows and much that has come before in his writings. In the text, Schiller addresses both the importance of antiquity in modern development and the place of art in existence generally. The arguments and method of the *Ästhetische Briefe* influenced German Idealism profoundly, and formed the conceptual link between the aesthetics of Kant and German Idealism's philosophy of art. Hegel, in the introduction to his lectures on aesthetics, points to Schiller's concepts of reconciliation and unity as significant advances over Kant, allowing for Idealism's own philosophy to emerge.² Though the line from Schiller to Hegel is indisputable, the progressive and necessary character of this development should remain an open question. As will become clear, the Hegelian narrative overlooks a significant element of Schiller's thought. The *Ästhetische Briefe* are in an important respect incomplete, in that they do not grapple with the problem of reconciliation at its most pressing – as it is posed in tragedy. Ultimately, the reconciliation that Schiller finds in art in 1795 (and that Idealism develops further) proves unsatisfying to him, and leads him to revisit his thought on tragedy and the sublime. Tragedy and the historical condition of modernity are essentially linked in Schiller's writings, which constantly juxtapose modern alienation with ancient harmony. Tragedy represents a test case for the reconciliatory possibilities of art in the modern world.

The *Ästhetische Briefe* begin in a sense of crisis, which is both philosophical and political. In an earlier version of the work, known as the *Augustenburger Briefe* (1793),

² Hegel, *WZB* 13, 90.

Schiller describes the aporia of the revolution of Kantian philosophy: ‘Die Revolution in der philosophischen Welt hat den Grund, auf dem die Ästhetik aufgeführt war, erschüttert. [...] Kant hat schon [...] zu einer neuen Kunsttheorie die Fundamente, wo nicht gegeben, doch vorbereitet.’³ Schiller is not alone in seeing an incompleteness to Kant’s aesthetics, in that it suggests, but ultimately leaves undefined, the connection between aesthetic judgment and morality. Schiller’s discontent arises from the sense that Kant has not given the beautiful its full due: ‘Wenn ich der Verbindung nachdenke, in der das Gefühl des Schönen und Großen mit dem edelsten Teil unsers Wesens steht, so kann ich sie unmöglich für ein bloßes subjektives Spiel der Empfindungskraft halten.’⁴ Kant had insisted on the subjective character of aesthetic judgment, that it responds not to intrinsic qualities of the object itself, but to a correspondence between the object and the subject’s faculties of reason, which are set by the object into a pleasurable state of play (*Spiel*).⁵ Though Kant had laid out the conceptual apparatus for discussing the interactions of different cognitive faculties, he had not, Schiller believed, offered the last word on how these interactions proceed. Schiller’s attempt to complete the Kantian theory takes the form of an elevation of *Spiel*, which seeks to show that the play experienced in aesthetic judgment is itself morally improving.

At the same time, Schiller recognized that the project of aesthetics had been put in the shade by political upheavals. ‘Ist es nicht *außer der Zeit*,’ he writes, ‘sich um die Bedürfnisse der *ästhetischen* Welt zu kümmern, wo die Angelegenheiten der *politischen* ein so viel

³ Schiller, *FA* 8, 492: ‘the revolution in the philosophical world has shaken the basis on which aesthetics was conducted. Kant has already, if not given, then at least prepared the foundations of a new theory of art.’

⁴ Schiller, *FA* 8, 493: ‘If I consider the relation in which the feeling of the beautiful and great stands to the most noble part of our being, then I can not possibly take it for a mere subjective play of the power of feeling.’

⁵ Kant, *AA* 5, 190.

näheres Interesse darbieten?’⁶ This is a question that nearly every thinker of the time asked in one form or another. Schiller’s answer is based on his observation that the French Revolution, far from validating the political sphere of action, has shown the inherent limitations of political freedom. Before humans are able to act as independent political agents, Schiller argues, they must first develop themselves intellectually and morally. Schiller points to two paths for the improvement of character: philosophy, which seeks ‘*Berechtigung der Begriffe*’ and aesthetic culture, which leads to ‘*Reinigung der Gefühle*.’⁷ Coming at the end of a century of enlightenment, Schiller finds that the first task has been sufficiently accomplished, but the second remains – indeed, has been largely forgotten in the concentration on the first. The *Ästhetische Briefe* seek to correct the cognitive focus of Kantian aesthetics and ethics, and secure a philosophical place for emotion and experience alongside reason and deduction. The urgency of this need is nowhere clearer than in France: the human mind has rationally deduced the rights of man, but man’s feelings are still prey to confusion, selfishness, and brutality. Schiller’s criticism is quite close to Edmund Burke’s, but unlike Burke, Schiller *does* believe in the liberal ideals of the Revolution, and hopes to rescue republicanism from abuse in France and conservative critique elsewhere.⁸ Political liberation, for Schiller, must be combined with enlightened subjectivity: ‘Hier ist es nun [...] wo die Kunst und der Geschmack ihre bildende Hand an den Menschen legen, und ihren veredelnden Einfluß beweisen.’⁹

⁶ Schiller, *FA* 8, 497: ‘Is it not outside of the time to worry about the necessities of the aesthetic world, when the affairs of the political offer so much more pressing interest?’

⁷ Schiller, *FA* 8, 505: ‘justification of concepts...purification of feelings.’

⁸ Beiser (2005), 131. On the affinities between Schiller and Burke, see Borchmeyer (1983).

⁹ Schiller, *FA* 8, 505: ‘It is here that art and taste lay their developing hand on man and prove their ennobling influence.’

The Greeks offer Schiller the paradigm of a culture in which man grows as a totality, without prioritizing reason or sense: ‘Zugleich voll Form und voll Fülle, zugleich philosophierend und bildend, zugleich zart und energisch sehen wir sie [die Griechen] die Jugend der Phantasie mit der Männlichkeit der Vernunft in einer herrlichen Menschheit vereinigen.’¹⁰ As throughout his thought, Schiller emphasizes the contrast to an alienated present. Where the Greek represented ‘die Totalität der Gattung,’ in the modern world ‘wir sehen nicht bloß einzelne Subjekte sondern ganze Klassen von Menschen nur einen Teil ihrer Anlagen entfalten, während daß die übrigen, wie bei verkrüppelten Gewächsen, kaum mit matter Spur angedeutet sind.’¹¹ Schiller’s critique of modern alienation is at its most biting in the *Ästhetische Briefe*, and is sharpened by the contrast with an idealized antiquity. The question, made urgent both by Kantian philosophy and the events in France, is how to recreate the wholeness of the ancient subject in alienated modernity.

The experience of beauty, Schiller argues, unifies the opposing realms of human cognition, and so recreates something like the condition of ancient wholeness. Schiller places Kant’s suggestion that the judgment of taste combines theoretical and practical reason in a social and historical context. Beauty, he argues, is able to provide the totalizing and intra-subjective experience that modern societies lack. In artistic works, a timeless ideal enters history, and offers a universal model of harmonious existence. This goal has been realized only once in a whole society, in ancient Greece, but can be reconstituted individually through aesthetic experience. The experience of beauty is a means of overcoming one’s particular circumstances through a glimpse into a universal state. The artist must commit an act of

¹⁰ Schiller, *FA* 8, 570: ‘At once full of form and full of plenitude, philosophizing and developing, tender and energetic, we see them unite the youth of fantasy with the virility of reason in a glorious humanity.’

¹¹ Schiller, *FA* 8, 571: ‘totality of his race...we see not merely single subjects but whole classes of men manifest only one part of their talents, while the others, like crippled growths, are hardly suggested with a faint trace.’

purifying violence, opposing the historical world with an ahistorical ideal. Schiller employs the language of tragedy to describe the power of aesthetic experience to resist historical circumstances:

Der Künstler ist zwar der Sohn seiner Zeit, aber schlimm für ihn, wenn er zugleich ihr Zögling oder gar noch ihr Günstling ist. Eine wohltätige Gottheit reiße den Säugling bei Zeiten von seiner Mutter Brust, nähre ihn mit der Milch eines bessern Alters, und lasse ihn unter fernem griechischen Himmel zur Mündigkeit reifen. Wenn er dann Mann geworden ist, so kehre er, eine fremde Gestalt, in sein Jahrhundert zurück; aber nicht, um es mit seiner Erscheinung zu erfreuen, sondern furchtbar wie Agamemnons Sohn, um es zu reinigen.¹²

Modernity appears as a degenerate age that calls for the cathartic appearance of a tragic avenger. This points forward to a central element of Schiller's later thought: tragedy is a means of redeeming modernity by shocking it out of its unhappy complacency. Like Orestes, the modern artist finds himself an alien in his own homeland, and must act against the current of his time to restore a lost order. The experience of 'a better age' in Greece provides the model for the cleansing order needed in modernity. Schiller does not, though, prescribe a return to Greek practice; rather, he calls for a translation of atemporal Greek form to modern subjects: 'Den Stoff zwar wird er [der Künstler] von der Gegenwart nehmen, aber die Form von einer edleren Zeit, ja jenseits aller Zeit, von der absoluten unwandelbaren Einheit seines Wesens entlehnen.'¹³ Schiller's image of ancient Greece is self-consciously ahistorical. It is an ideal that exists 'beyond all time,' which can be accessed only through aesthetic

¹² Schiller, *FA* 8, 583: 'The artist is indeed the son of his time, but alas for him if he is also its pupil or even its favourite. Let a benevolent godhead tear him as an infant early from his mother's breast, nurse him with the milk of a better age, and let him ripen to maturity under a distant Greek sky. When he has become a man, then let him return, an alien figure, to his age; but not to please it with his appearance, rather, terribly, like the son of Agamemnon, to purify it.'

¹³ Schiller, *FA* 8, 584: 'He will take his material from the present, but he will borrow the form from a more noble time, indeed, from beyond all time, from the absolute unchangeable unity of his being.'

experience. Aesthetic education is the means of actualizing the Greek ideal in the present, but must take the form of opposition to the degeneracy of modernity.

The passage above introduces the opposition of *Form* and *Stoff*, which is central to the essay's dialectic of *Triebe*. *Form* and the *Formtrieb* are the expression of man's rational side, which seeks to impose order on existence. The *Stofftrieb*, on the contrary, constitutes man's animal nature, demanding satisfaction of immediate needs and appetites. Schiller's thought here is broadly Kantian in that it begins from the division of intellect and sense, but his description of the two as subjective, psychological drives, is his own (though the concept of the *Trieb* is Fichtean). The two drives tend in opposite directions, one pressing to impose reason, the other seeking to satisfy sense. The ideal would be a tension between the two impulses. This state, in which the drives are in a dynamic balance, is the state of *Spiel*. A logic of reciprocity, in which the drives mutually oppose and temper one another, informs the whole of the essay.¹⁴ Neither drive should be allowed to dominate in individual development, but they should exist in a tension of reciprocal negation:

Der Sachtrieb schließt aus seinem Subjekt alle Selbsttätigkeit und Freiheit, der Formtrieb schließt aus dem seinigen alle Abhängigkeit, alles Leiden aus. Ausschließung der Freiheit ist aber physische, Ausschließung des Leidens ist moralische Notwendigkeit. Beide Triebe nötigen also das Gemüt, jener durch Naturgesetze, dieser durch Gesetze der Vernunft. Der Spieltrieb also, als in welchem beide verbunden wirken, wird das Gemüt zugleich moralisch und physisch nötigen; er wird also, weil er alle Zufälligkeit aufhebt, auch alle Nötigung aufheben, und den Menschen, sowohl physisch als moralisch, in Freiheit setzen.¹⁵

¹⁴ Grimm (1999) points out the Fichtean provenance of Schiller's concept of *Wechselwirkung*.

¹⁵ Schiller, *FA* 8, 608: 'The matter-drive excludes from its subject all independence and freedom, the form-drive excludes all dependence, all suffering. Exclusion of freedom is physical necessity, while exclusion of suffering is moral necessity. Both drives constrain the disposition, one through natural laws, the other through the laws of reason. The play-drive, then, as that in which the two act together, will constrain the disposition morally and physically at once. It will, because it annuls all contingency, also annul all constraint, and set man, physically and morally, in freedom.'

Schiller's dialectic operates through a paradoxical logic, with true freedom emerging from reciprocal constraint. It is in passages like these that Schiller most clearly points the way to Hegel, whose dialectic similarly operates through reciprocal *Aufhebung*. Yet the difference between the forms of reconciliation attained is important: Hegel's *Aufhebung* is a force of history on the subject, in which transitory oppositions are continually negated. Schiller's, on the other hand, is a force of the subject on history, an ecstatic suspension, but not a negation of a timeless opposition.¹⁶ This is characteristic of Schiller's version of dialectical thought, which understands the mediation of opposites as a state of tension, rather than subsumption. In the aesthetic state, neither drive predominates, but both, through their reciprocal negation, contribute to the fullest autonomy.

Schiller interprets, extends, and arguably perverts Kant in many ways, but perhaps the greatest concerns the status of history: where Kant's transcendental analytic is fundamentally ahistorical (describing conditions that obtain in any and all times), Schiller's aesthetic thought is thoroughly conditioned by historical consciousness. Though it is not explicit on every page, the opposition of antiquity's harmonic unity and modernity's alienated multiplicity is constant in the text, and the attempt to mediate between ancient and modern modes an overriding goal in Schiller's thought. The ideal of antiquity teaches the formal principles for a new relation to the content of modern reality. This effort constitutes the 'total revolution' of his project, which continues and corrects the political and epistemological revolutions through an aesthetic one.¹⁷ Schiller applies a Kantian understanding of man's constitution, defined by the opposition of freedom and necessity, to the historical dilemma of

¹⁶ Martin (1996), 57-8 describes this contrast in greater depth, and suggests a continuity between Schiller's and Nietzsche's historical thought.

¹⁷ Schiller, *FA* 8, 667.

modernity, caught between the ideal of ancient Greece and the reality of the French Revolution.¹⁸ The aesthetic state reconciles oppositions by giving each equal rights: reason and sense, theory and practice, antiquity and modernity.

The two genii

Though the *Ästhetische Briefe* contain references to tragedy and language of purification, the work does not contain anything like a theory of tragedy. Indeed, the state of play, which is always connected in Schiller's thought to the beautiful, does not seem to be of great relevance to tragedy. Schiller thinks of tragedy in terms of the sublime (*das Erhabene*), another important Kantian concept. In connecting tragedy with sublimity, though, he follows not the Kant of the Third Critique (for whom both the sublime and beautiful were mainly qualities of nature) but Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757, translated into German in 1773 by Christian Garve) and Moses Mendelssohn's 'Betrachtungen über das Erhabene und das Naive in den schönen Wissenschaften' (1758).¹⁹ Both Kant and Schiller understand the sublime and the beautiful as fundamentally differing modes of aesthetic experience: where the beautiful produces a pleasure of the imagination in free play, the sublime is a mixed pleasure. Integrating this mixed pleasure with the project of 'aesthetic education' would require a new line of argument that Schiller does not pursue (and would have to complicate the concept of *Spiel* substantially). The *Briefe* may nod to the sublime in their description of beauty as either 'schmelzend' or 'energisch,' which recalls Burke's division of the sublime and beautiful on

¹⁸ See Alt (2006) for this dichotomy as the condition of Schiller's 'modern construction of antiquity.'

¹⁹ On Burke, tragedy, and the sublime see Albrecht (1975), 39-51. On Mendelssohn, see Zelle (1987), 330-6 and, on his reading of Burke, 342-47.

physiological grounds.²⁰ Yet Schiller's attention focuses almost solely on 'die schmelzende Schönheit,' and leaves the description of 'energische Schönheit' wholly implicit.²¹ Schiller's thought here is frustratingly unsystematic, and does not make the clear division between the modes of aesthetic experience that guided both Kant and Burke.

Schiller, though, is aware of this silence, as is clear in his selection of essays for the third volume of his *Kleinere prosaische Schriften*, published in 1801. The volume bookends the *Ästhetische Briefe* with two essays, 'Über das Erhabene' and 'Über das Pathetische.' These two short works, I suggest, can be understood as forming the counterpart to the analysis of beauty in the *Briefe*. 'Über das Erhabene' seems to have been written somewhat later than 'Über das Pathetische,' which was first published as part of a longer essay ('Vom Erhabenen') in 1793.²² Schiller's theory of the sublime in 'Über das Erhabene' forms the basis for his theory of tragedy in 'Über das Pathetische,' and together, they form the counterpart to the analysis of beauty in the *Ästhetische Briefe*. Schiller's account sees the sublime as a mode of spectatorship, and refigures Aristotelian *catharsis* as a cognitive transformation of the viewer, an understanding that will have important consequences for Idealism (and may already respond to impulses from Schelling). Schiller argues that tragedy's fictional catastrophes create a disharmony that educates the audience for the real experience of historical chaos.

²⁰ Schiller, *FA* 8, 616: 'melting' or 'energetic.' On Schiller and Burke, see Witte (1975), 317.

²¹ This has created a great deal of confusion. Pugh (1996), 305 argues, against the commonplace that 'energische Schönheit' stands in for the sublime, that elements of the sublime are present in Schiller's subdivision of 'schmelzende Schönheit,' which therefore needs no counterpart. On the other hand, Petrus (1993) 31-40 reconstructs the opposition as a dialectic of the sublime and beautiful, mediated in the play drive. Yet this ignores 'Über das Erhabene,' in which the relation is clearly a hierarchy. Zelle (1995), 176 sensibly sees this as an aporia of Schiller's thought and does not pursue it further.

²² The dating of 'Über das Erhabene' is problematic. See Barone (2004), 112-4 for an overview and argument for a dating after 1796, with which I agree. The organization of the 1801 edition is often overlooked, but makes obvious that the essay revises the first part of Schiller's 1793 'Vom Erhabenen.'

The sublime is a mode of aesthetic education, but of a very different kind from the utopian vision of the *Ästhetische Briefe*. The tragic sublime, though it does not explicitly contradict the theory of play, significantly undermines its power of reconciliation.²³ Where the *Briefe* go back to a mythical beginning of culture to show the liberating role of beauty in individual development, Schiller's theory of the sublime seeks to strengthen the subject for the experience of chaos in the here and now. It thus seems to reflect, even more than the theory of beauty, Schiller's anguished relation to the French Revolution. The sublime is not a liberation from historical events – indeed, this seems impossible in the later essay – but from the subjective experience of grief. Though the *Briefe* are more explicit in their concern with current events, Schiller's theory of tragedy may be the more politically and historically engaged, as it requires no utopian visions for the reconciliation it tries to effect.

While Schiller's model of the beautiful is distinctly antique, his notion of the sublime is absolutely modern. A passage from the *Augustenburger Briefe* makes clear that he thinks of the opposition historically and hierarchically:

Für den Menschen aus der Hand der Natur ist also nicht sowohl das Erhabene als das Schöne Bedürfnis; denn von Größe und Kraft ist er längst gerührt, ehe er für die Reize der Schönheit anfängt, empfindlich zu werden. Für den Menschen aus der Hand der Kunst ist hingegen das Erhabene Bedürfnis, denn nur allzugerne verscherzt er im Stand der Verfeinerung eine Kraft, die er aus dem Stand der Wildheit herüber brachte.²⁴

Schiller sees the sublime as more relevant to the modern condition, the restoration of a power lost in cultural life. The logic of reciprocity is at work in arguing that culture takes part in a dialectic with nature, and that the mediation of the two leads to an ideal tension. Antiquity's

²³ Zelle (1995), 179.

²⁴ Schiller *FA* 8, 520: 'For the man in the hand of nature, the need is therefore not so much for the sublime as for the beautiful, since he has long been moved by size and power before he begins to be receptive to the charms of beauty. For the man in the hand of art, the need is on the contrary for the sublime, since in the state of refinement he all too gladly fritters away the power that he brought with him from the state of wildness.'

rawness seems to require the refinement of beauty, while modernity's decadence is best served by the power of the sublime. The theory of the sublime can be understood as the modern counterpart to the 'aesthetic education' gained from the experience of beauty in the ancient world.

As a mixed pleasure, the sublime is the more accurate reflection of modern, alienated experience. 'Über das Erhabene' makes the point starkly, arguing for a progressive hierarchy of beauty and sublimity. They are 'Zwei Genien [...] die uns die Natur zu Begleitern durchs Leben gab.'²⁵ The experience of beauty

verkürzt uns durch sein munteres Spiel die mühsame Reise, macht uns die Fesseln der Notwendigkeit leicht, und führt uns unter Freude und Scherz bis an die gefährlichen Stellen, wo wir als reine Geister handeln und alles körperliche ablegen müssen, bis zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit und zur Ausübung der Pflicht. Hier verläßt er uns, denn nur die Sinnenwelt ist sein Gebiet, über diese hinaus kann ihn sein irdischer Flügel nicht tragen.²⁶

The 'play' of the beautiful appears here as only the beginning of aesthetic education, ultimately inadequate for the realization of the rational powers of the individual. Schiller finds that beauty prepares the individual for independence, but is so bound to the world of sense that it cannot realize the possibilities of reason. This reveals an important ambiguity in the *Briefe*, which seem to argue both that the aesthetic state is a preparation for moral action and the end itself.²⁷ Schiller's succession of the beautiful and sublime recalls the historical model of *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, in which the natural harmony of the ancient world proves insufficient to the complexities of modern experience.²⁸ The reciprocal

²⁵ Schiller, *FA* 8, 826: 'two genii, which nature gave us as companions through life.'

²⁶ Schiller, *FA* 8, 826: 'shortens for us the burdensome journey with its lively play, makes for us the bonds of necessity light, and leads us with joy and jest to the dangerous places where we act as pure spirits and must set aside all that is bodily, up to the knowledge of truth and fulfillment of duty. Here it leaves us, since only the world of sense is its realm, its worldly wings cannot bear it beyond.'

²⁷ Gadamer (2010), 88 describes this as an ambiguity between education *through* art and education *to* art.

²⁸ Pugh (1996), 376.

dialectic that pervades Schiller's thought is complicated by his progressive parallel: modernity begins in a divided subjectivity unknown to the ancient world, and so demands a different form of aesthetic experience. The *Spiel* of the aesthetic state appears now as a fleeting moment of harmony, insufficient to reconcile the alienation of modernity.

Something more than the play of the beautiful is necessary to free man from the chaos of contemporary history. This is the sublime, which, Schiller argues, wins a rational pleasure and a moral education from painful spectatorship. Following Kant, Schiller understands the experience of sublimity as a negative sensory impression that causes the subject to become aware of the power of reason. The sublime object creates 'das peinliche Gefühl unserer Grenzen' in that it represents an insurmountable obstacle to the understanding (*Verstand*).²⁹ This can be created either by the perception of an object too great to comprehend (roughly what Kant had called the 'Mathematisch-Erhabenes') or the sense of an overwhelming, life-threatening power (Kant's 'Dynamisch-Erhabenes'). Recognition of the impotence of the individual in the sensible world, according to Kant, goes hand in hand with an experience of the power of the subject in the realm of reason (*Vernunft*): 'Erhaben ist, was auch nur denken zu können ein Vermögen des Gemüths beweiset, das jeden Maßstab der Sinne übertrifft.'³⁰

For Kant, the ability to comprehend the magnitude of what had seemed to overwhelm sense proves 'die Überlegenheit der Vernunftbestimmung unserer Erkenntnißvermögen über das größte Vermögen der Sinnlichkeit.'³¹ The sublime is the pleasure that results when *Vernunft* becomes aware of its own power. By referring the sublime to the higher human

²⁹ Schiller, *FA* 8, 827: 'the painful feeling of our limits.'

³⁰ Kant, *AA* 5, 250: 'Sublime is that which only to be able to think proves a power of the mind that surpasses any standard of sense.'

³¹ Kant, *AA* 5, 257: 'the dominance of the rational determination of our cognitive powers over the greatest power of sense.'

power of reason, Kant suggests a moral quality to the pleasure. Schiller goes even further: the pleasure does not come simply from the superiority of reason, but from the reflection on the power of the human will to rise above sensible constraint.³² While both the sublime and the beautiful end in a sense of freedom, the freedom of the sublime is self-conscious, while that of the beautiful is not. A sublime action demonstrates the strength of human morality in contrast to the weakness of human physical powers. This is for Schiller a progressive, educative experience, which steels individuals rationally against their own physical impotence.

At the root of Schiller's concept of the sublime lies a sense of man not being at home in the world. This is not, as in the *Ästhetische Briefe*, a reversible social alienation. It is rather a constant and insurmountable alienation caused by historical existence itself:

Die Welt, als historischer Gegenstand, ist im Grunde nichts anders als der Konflikt der Naturkräfte unter einander selbst und mit der Freiheit des Menschen und den Erfolg dieses Kampfs berichtet uns die Geschichte. [...] Nähert man sich nur der Geschichte mit großen Erwartungen von Licht und Erkenntnis – wie sehr findet man sich da getäuscht! Alle wohlgemeinte Versuche der Philosophie, das, was die moralische Welt *fodert*, mit dem, was die wirkliche *leistet*, in Übereinstimmung zu bringen, werden durch die Aussagen der Erfahrungen widerlegt.³³

Intellect and experience appear irreconcilable, the conflict of man's 'sensible-rational' nature unending. The pessimism of these words contrasts sharply with Schiller's earlier thoughts on 'Universalgeschichte,' which had been dominated by a faith in progress, and a belief that historical reality could be understood by philosophical abstraction.³⁴ 'Über das Erhabene'

³² Kirwan (2005), 75.

³³ Schiller, *FA* 8, 835: 'The world, as a historical object, is basically nothing else than the conflict of the powers of nature with one another and with the freedom of man, and history tells the result of this struggle. If one approaches history with great hopes of light and knowledge – how much one finds oneself disappointed! All well-intentioned efforts of philosophy to bring what the moral world demands into agreement with what the real world permits are refuted by the testimonies of experiences.'

³⁴ See Riedel (2002).

reflects the disappointment Schiller had felt in watching the French Revolution degenerate into terror, and does not even admit of the solution proposed in the *Ästhetische Briefe*. Irrationality, destruction, and chaos appear to be the unalterable fact of existence, which no philosophy can improve. All humans find themselves in the very conflict of physical impotence and moral purpose that creates the possibility of the sublime.

The individual's ability to withstand real chaos, Schiller argues, is increased by exposure to mimetic scenes of pathos. The sublime takes on a stoic characteristic, as an awareness of the inevitable failure of human freedom.³⁵ It is a form of enlightened spectatorship, through which one attains a distance and perspective on one's own suffering. The experience of viewing the pathetic becomes a rehearsal for the catastrophes of life: 'Das Pathetische, kann man daher sagen, ist eine Inokulation des unvermeidlichen Schicksals, wodurch es seiner Bösartigkeit beraubt, und der Angriff desselben auf die starke Seite des Menschen hingeleitet wird.'³⁶ It is only near the end of the essay, in an extraordinary rhetorical display, that Schiller makes explicit the connection to tragedy:

Zu dieser *Bekanntheit* nun verhilft uns das furchtbar herrliche Schauspiel der alles zerstörenden und wieder erschaffenden, und wieder zerstörenden Veränderung – des bald langsam untergrabenden, bald schnell überfallenden Verderbens, verhelfen uns die pathetischen Gemälde der mit dem Schicksal ringenden Menschheit, der unaufhaltsamen Flucht des Glücks, der betrogenen Sicherheit, der triumphierenden Ungerechtigkeit und der unterliegenden Unschuld, welche die Geschichte in reichem Maß aufstellt, und die tragische Kunst nachahmend vor unsre Augen bringt.³⁷

³⁵ See Neymeyr (2008) for a fuller account of stoicism in Schiller's theory of tragedy.

³⁶ Schiller, *FA* 8, 837: 'The pathetic, one can say, is an inoculation from inescapable fate, through which it is robbed of its evil and its attack deflected to the strong side of man.'

³⁷ Schiller, *FA* 8, 837: 'Towards this acquaintance we are assisted by the terrible majestic spectacle of alteration, all-destroying, re-creating, and again destroying – of the ruinations that sometimes undermine slowly and sometimes attack quickly, we are assisted by the pathetic pictures of man struggling with fate, of the unstoppable flight of happiness, of deceptive security, of triumphant injustice and defeated innocence which history ranges in rich measure, and tragic art brings imitating before our eyes.'

The language and stoical mechanism recalls Rochefort's essay in the 1785 *Théâtre*, which Schiller almost certainly knew:³⁸ tragedy, by confronting us with the fragility of human life, makes its upheavals more bearable. Yet Schiller's pessimism goes further than Rochefort's did, envisioning history as an inscrutable process that eludes any rational explanation. Schiller understands the events of tragedy on the model of the sublime in nature, as a chaos that admits of no human order.³⁹ Tragedy imitates the injustice of the historical world and portrays man's doomed attempt to resist nature's hostility. It thereby increases the audience's capability for recognition of their own freedom, even in the most terrible historical circumstances. This makes the tragic sublime – and not the beautiful – the conclusion to Schiller's project of aesthetics: 'so muß das Erhabene zu dem Schönen hinzukommen, um die *ästhetische Erziehung* zu einem vollständigen Ganzen zu machen.'⁴⁰

The sublime and the pathetic

As Schiller ordered the pieces in 1801, 'Über das Erhabene' precedes and 'Über das Pathetische' follows the *Ästhetische Briefe*, a bracketing that suggests a hierarchy of the sublime over the beautiful. Since 'Über das Erhabene' was not published while Schiller was most active as a philosopher and journal editor, it seems likely to have been composed after his return to tragedy as a creative author. The final essay included in the 1801 volume, 'Über das Pathetische,' was composed before 1793 (when it was published with a different companion piece), and discusses how the playwright can best create the pathos necessary for

³⁸ He had used the *Théâtre* in 1788, and may well have returned to it later when studying Greek tragedy more extensively.

³⁹ Barone (2004), 203.

⁴⁰ Schiller, *FA* 8, 838: 'the sublime must be added to the beautiful in order to make aesthetic education a complete whole.'

sublime experience. It has a more positive tone than ‘Über das Erhabene,’ focusing on tragedy’s affirmation of human freedom:

Der letzte Zweck der Kunst ist die Darstellung des Übersinnlichen und die tragische Kunst insbesondere bewerkstelligt dieses dadurch, daß sie uns die moralische Independenz von Naturgesetzen im Zustand des Affekts versinnlicht.⁴¹

Schiller’s emphasis here is on the resistance portrayed by the hero in tragedy, where in ‘Über das Erhabene’ it had been on the audience’s acceptance of the limits of resistance through repeated exposure to the sublime. Though it is nearly always neglected in modern editions, which place ‘Über das Pathetische’ with its earlier – and in 1801 rejected – companion piece, ‘Vom Erhabenen,’ there is a logical progression between the two essays in the later organization: ‘Über das Erhabene’ describes humanity’s need for a viewpoint from which to view historical chaos, while ‘Über das Pathetische’ shows how tragedy fulfills this need. Schiller’s focus, however, has shifted in the time between the composition of the two essays, from an understanding of the sublime in terms of human action to one that sees it as a property of historical events. Schiller’s 1801 revision of his theory of the sublime suggests that the catastrophes of tragedy and history are parallel, and demand the same stoic response of the viewer. Like Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin at the very same time, Schiller understands tragedy therapeutically, as a way to make sense of a chaotic world. Schiller’s therapy, however, is anthropic where Idealism’s is ontological. Tragedy for Schiller helps the individual to come to terms with the limits of human freedom.

In ‘Über das Pathetische,’ Schiller understands Kant’s argument that freedom cannot be demonstrated as a challenge of representation, which is answered by the sublime. Through

⁴¹ Schiller, *FA* 8, 423: ‘The final aim of art is the representation of the supersensible and tragic art effects this in particular in that it makes us sensible of moral independence from laws of nature in the state of affect.’

depiction of suffering, the tragic poet demonstrates the autonomy of the individual *ex negativo*, by representation of struggle against constraint.⁴² Suffering is the occasion for exercise of the will of the hero and the (negative) appearance of human freedom. The plot of tragedy should set up the mechanism of the sublime by confronting the hero with a physical constraint that allows for an assertion of autonomy. Schiller thus makes the sublime immanent to human action, an argument Kant does not (and probably would not) make. It is much more Mendelssohn who guides Schiller in focusing on the heroic suffering of a single tragic figure. For Mendelssohn, admiration (*Bewunderung*) for the tragic figure creates the feeling of the sublime.⁴³ Schiller understands the audience's identification with the hero's freedom as a result of the pathetic: 'Das *Sinnenwesen* muß tief und heftig *leiden*; Pathos muß da sein, damit das *Vernunftwesen* seine Unabhängigkeit kund tun und sich *handelnd* darstellen könne.'⁴⁴ From the affective experience of sympathetic suffering, the cognitive recognition of freedom emerges. Pathos is thus 'die erste und unnachlässliche Forderung an den tragischen Künstler.'⁴⁵

Schiller's elevation of suffering to the first rule of tragedy grounds a polemic against French drama, and in favour of the Greeks: 'Nie schämt sich der Grieche der Natur, er läßt die Sinnlichkeit ihre vollen Rechte, und ist dennoch sicher, daß er nie von ihr unterjocht werden wird.'⁴⁶ The perennial example is the *Philoctetes*, which demonstrates the Greek closeness to nature in its unsparing depiction of physical pain. Yet exemplary for Schiller is

⁴² Berghahn (1986), 31.

⁴³ Barone (2004), 81.

⁴⁴ Schiller, *FA* 8, 423: 'The sensible being must deeply and severely suffer; pathos must be present so that the rational being can announce its independence and present itself in acting.'

⁴⁵ Schiller, *FA* 8, 423: 'the first and unavoidable demand on tragic artists.'

⁴⁶ Schiller, *FA* 8, 424: 'The Greek is never ashamed of nature, he allows sense its full rights and is still certain that he will never be enslaved by it.'

not the suffering in itself (as for Diderot and Lessing), but the resistance to suffering.⁴⁷ ‘Die Helden sind für alle Leiden der Menschheit so gut empfindlich als andere, und eben das macht sie zu Helden, daß sie das Leiden stark und innig fühlen, und doch nicht davon überwältigt werden.’⁴⁸ This heroic stoicism makes up the second law of tragedy, ‘Darstellung des moralischen Widerstandes gegen das Leiden.’⁴⁹ Such struggle does not take place within the sensible, but *against the sensible*, and therefore proves the existence of a higher human faculty.⁵⁰ The audience recognizes the struggle of the tragic hero as an expression of human freedom, where it would otherwise appear as pure suffering.⁵¹ Schiller’s theory represents a balance between affective and cognitive understandings of tragedy. Indeed, he suggests a kind of chiasmus between the two: tragedy’s affect leads to a cognitive recognition of freedom, which is in turn part of an affective education for real suffering.

By ascribing the tragic sublime to the conflict of freedom and necessity, Schiller anticipates the concept of the ‘the tragic’ that occurs in German Idealism, in which tragedy is understood as the depiction of a universal, ontological dialectic.⁵² Though he is by no means the first person to suggest that tragedy represents a conflict of fate and free will (the question of their relation pervades eighteenth century discussions of the *OT*), his 1792-3 essays canonize it as tragedy’s generic essence.⁵³ Yet Schiller’s position between eighteenth- and

⁴⁷ See Schings (1980), 46-51 for Schiller’s response to the *Mitleid* debate between Lessing and Mendelssohn.

⁴⁸ Schiller, *FA* 8, 425: ‘The heroes are as sensitive to all the sufferings of humanity as others, and just that makes them heroes, that they feel suffering strongly and deeply, and yet are not overwhelmed by it.’

⁴⁹ Schiller, *FA* 8, 426: ‘representation of moral resistance to suffering.’

⁵⁰ Schiller, *FA* 8, 430.

⁵¹ Homann (1977), 71.

⁵² See Schmitt (1992); Courtine (1993), 170-1.

⁵³ Most (1993), 163 points out that ‘Über das Pathetische’ does not concern Greek tragedy specifically, and so suggests that Schlegel’s *Studium* essay was the first text to see the conflict as the essence of *Greek* tragedy – though this depends on how one dates Schelling’s *Philosophische Briefe*. Best to see it, as Most does, as being ‘in the air’ at the time, which depends (as does so much of idealist aesthetics) on Schiller, just as its wider dissemination depends on A.W. Schlegel.

nineteenth-century aesthetics is only a small part of his claim to importance. His thought on tragedy shows aesthetics and philosophy of art in a productive relationship that will almost immediately be lost in the works of Schelling and Hegel. His stoic understanding of the sublime places the affective pleasure and displeasure of tragedy into a cognitive, philosophical relationship. Tragedy makes human freedom visible, but also shows the historical constraints on that freedom. It teaches a means of resistance to suffering, but not a standpoint from which suffering dissolves or appears rational. The tragic sublime completes the aesthetic education gained from the experience of beauty – not by suspending time, but by making temporality bearable. Tragedy's progress from sensible displeasure to rational acceptance represents the hope, but not the knowledge, that history can be viewed 'as a sublime object.'

II. Ancient tragedy and modern freedom

Schiller's theory of the tragic sublime can be understood as an answer to the political dilemma sketched in the *Ästhetische Briefe*, though a far less optimistic one than the return to the beautiful wholeness of antiquity. Broadly speaking, Schiller pursues two responses to the crises of his time: either recreating the wholeness of antiquity under modern conditions (connected most often with beauty, visual art, and idyll), or accepting stoically the impossibility of any modern wholeness (connected with the sublime, music, and tragedy). Schiller's ultimate inclination to the latter is obvious not only in the parallel of the genii in 'Über das Erhabene,' but in the focus of his all-too-brief future as a creative artist. Between 1796 and his death in 1805, he would write four works (the *Wallenstein* trilogy, *Maria Stuart*, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, and *Die Braut von Messina*) that represent arguably the

most important body of tragedy after the death of Racine. With the exception of *Braut* (to which we will return), Schiller's 'classical' tragedies all concern real figures, and explore dilemmas of historical and political life. They depict the very inscrutability that Schiller had found at the heart of history. Tragedy's sublime education is Schiller's response to the problem of modernity.

Schiller's relation to Greek tragedy, however, is elusive.⁵⁴ Given his highly developed historical philosophy on one hand and theory of tragedy on the other, one would expect a sustained consideration of Greek works and their difference from modern tragedies (like those of Herder and the Schlegels). Schiller never undertakes such a parallel of tragedy, though one does find comparisons – which are by no means consistent – scattered throughout his writings. Part of this can be put down to a reticence to proclaim on literature in a language in which he had not progressed far, especially given that his most frequent interlocutors, Humboldt and Goethe, were far more conversant with ancient works.⁵⁵ Part may be explained by the tendency in Schiller's thought to overlook particular details in order to construct antiquity as a counter-image to modernity.⁵⁶ But a more specific difficulty attends Greek tragedy: an ancient art form defined by the sublime does not fit into Schiller's historical or aesthetic philosophies. The tragic sublime, as a means of rational resistance to sensible violence, should be unnecessary in an age before the conflict of reason and sense. Tragedy, which responds to alienation from historical circumstances, seems out of place in

⁵⁴ The most sustained considerations in recent years, those of Schwinge (2008 and 2003) and Latacz (1997) suffer by a tendency to privilege Schiller's earlier thoughts over his later ones and a failure to contextualize ancient tragedy within Schiller's historical and aesthetic philosophies. Both seek ultimately, though on a shaky methodological basis, to explain the 'failure' of *Braut*. More fruitful, I hope, is to elucidate the changing place of Greek tragedy in Schiller's aesthetic thought. Frick (1998), Pugh (2005) and particularly Alt (2006) lay the groundwork with their periodizations of Schiller's relation to antiquity.

⁵⁵ Frick (1998), 92.

⁵⁶ Alt (2006), 354.

Schiller's view of ancient culture. The Greek tragic sublime is in a sense impossible for Schiller, since it would take place between ancient beauty and modern sublimity

The origin of Schiller's dilemma can be explained biographically, as the result of coming to Greek tragedy late in life, well after he had become an established and successful dramatist. Not only was Schiller reading Greek tragedy in translation, but he was approaching it with a notion of tragedy already extensively formed – by Shakespeare, French classical tragedy, Lessing, and Goethe, among others. When Schiller began his intensive study of Euripides in 1788, tragedy already had a meaning for him, and this often conflicted with what he found in the Greeks. His early thought on tragedy is pervaded by an agonistic character, documented in a series of translations (at second hand), reviews, and the theoretical essays of 1792-3. Throughout this phase, the opposition of ancient and modern tragedy, where it surfaces, tends to be binary and querulous, always declaring a preference for modern works based on their moral qualities. The modern prejudice recedes, though, as Schiller develops a historical philosophy that seeks a productive relationship between antiquity and modernity. Critics have largely failed to recognize this development, and have taken Schiller's early essays to be representative of his later thought. However, a diachronic investigation of Schiller's thought on Greek tragedy reveals significant changes in his later poetics and conception of antiquity. Following Schiller's return to literary production and further intensive study of Greek works in 1797, the querulous relation of his earlier years gives way to a genuine dialectic, and leads to dramaturgical developments in Schiller's later dramas.⁵⁷ The poetics of Schiller's so-called 'classical' phase, the following will argue, are

⁵⁷ For reasons of space, *Maria Stuart* and *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* will not be considered here in relation to ancient tragedy. On the former, see Lampert (2005), 263-5; on the latter (as a reflection on ancient theory of

developed in dialogue with Greek tragedy, as an effort to understand the possibilities of human freedom in modernity.

'The progress of moral culture'

Schiller undertook his first sustained study of the Greeks in the summer of 1788. The immediate impetus may have been the publication of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* in 1787, which he was contracted to review. The *Iphigenie* arrived in an atmosphere of increasing interest in Greek tragedy in Germany: the same year saw the publication of Christian Graf zu Stolberg's important translation of Sophocles, part of a burgeoning translation literature. Schiller declared his hope that 'mir ein vertrauter Umgang mit den Alten äusserst wohl thun – vielleicht Classicität geben wird.'⁵⁸ Later that year, he began metrical renderings of Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis* and parts of the *Phoenician Women*, relying first on Brumoy (he borrowed the relevant volumes of the 1785 edition from Wieland, who was also a significant encouragement to the study of antiquity⁵⁹), then on the German prose versions of Steinbrüchel and Köhler, and finally on Josua Barnes's parallel Latin-Greek text.⁶⁰ He conceived the project pragmatically, as an effort at 'Reinigung' of his own writing,⁶¹ and hoped

daß ich mir, bey mehrerer Bekanntschaft mit griechischen Stücken, endlich
das Wahre, Schöne und Wirkende daraus abstrahiere und mir mit Weglaßung

tragedy), see Wilm (2003). Schadewaldt (1969), 290-92 and Koopmann (1998), 148-52 offer useful overviews, which point to the need for a more sustained consideration.

⁵⁸ Schiller, *FA* 11, 318 (To Körner, 20.8.1788): 'an intimate contact with the ancients will do me extreme good – perhaps give me classicity.'

⁵⁹ Hinderer (2009), 300-2.

⁶⁰ Köhler is not mentioned anywhere in Schiller's letters, but some of the conjectures from his 1778 translation (which otherwise largely follows Steinbrüchel) make it into Schiller's text. See Ingenkamp (1995), 782-4.

⁶¹ Schiller, *FA* 11, 318 (To Körner, 20.8.1788): 'meinen eigenen Geschmack zu reinigen' and again: 11, 354 (To Körner, 11.12.1788): 'Mein Stil hat dieser Reinigung sehr nöthig.'

des Mangelhaften ein gewisses Ideal daraus bilde, wodurch mein jetziges corrigiert und vollends gerundet wird.⁶²

The logic anticipates the Orestes passage from the *Ästhetische Briefe*, but on a purely stylistic level: the ideal distilled from Greek works will purify modern complexity. Schiller's instrumental perspective led him to the Aulian *Iphigenia* (which Racine had adapted previously), as an ancient work that offered possibilities for improvement. Schiller recognized that the piece is 'nicht sein [Euripides] bestes Stück. [...] Die Hauptsache ist die Manier, die im schlechten herrscht wie im besten, und in jenem fast noch leichter bemerkt wird.'⁶³ Far from seeking an aesthetic ideal (for which he would likely have looked to Sophocles), Schiller was interested in elements that could be mastered and put to use in his own work.⁶⁴ Schiller's most striking intervention is to leave out the messenger speech that concludes his sources (which do not question the authenticity of the messenger speech as modern editors do). The play ends with Iphigenia's exit and the laconic note: 'Hier schließt sich die dramatische Handlung. Was noch folgt, ist die Erzählung von Iphigeniens Betragen beim Opfer und ihrer wunderbaren Errettung.'⁶⁵

A few elements of Schiller's *Iphigenie* are worth remarking, as they distill some broader interests. The theme of sacrifice for the common good was already important to Schiller (especially in *Die Räuber* and *Don Karlos*), and it seems to have drawn him to the Euripidean Iphigenia, whose selfless actions could be harmonized with a Christian

⁶² Schiller, *FA* 11, 398 (To Körner, 9.3.1789): 'that I will, through greater acquaintance with Greek plays, finally abstract for myself the true, beautiful, and effective from them, and by leaving out what is deficient, create for myself a certain ideal, through which my current one will be corrected and completely rounded.'

⁶³ Schiller *FA* 11, 354 (To Körner, 12.12.1788): 'not his best work...the main thing is the manner, which reigns in bad works as well as in the best, and in the former is almost more easily observed.'

⁶⁴ Petersen (1974) 75-81.

⁶⁵ Schiller *FA* 9, 75: 'Here ends the dramatic action. What follows is the narration of Iphigenia's conduct at the sacrifice and her amazing rescue.'

conception of duty.⁶⁶ Schiller draws attention to the nobility of Iphigenia's sacrifice in his notes: 'Kann etwas wichtiger und erhabener sein, als die – zuletzt doch freiwillige – Aufopferung einer jungen und blühenden Fürstentochter für das Glück so vieler versammelten Nationen?'⁶⁷ 'Das Erhabene' here does not have the theoretical basis that it will after the reading of Kant, but nevertheless shows the same interest in tragedy as a vindication of freedom. Noteworthy also is Schiller's translation of the choruses, which, following Barnes's close attention to verse forms, uses rhyme and irregular strophic form to distinguish choral songs from blank verse dialogue.⁶⁸ This attention to the chorus and the internal diversity of Greek tragedy will be important in Schiller's plans for *Braut*, and is reflected throughout his later dramas in their freedom of rhyme and metre.⁶⁹ Here, it may reflect the influence of Brumoy's and Rochefort's 'Discours,' which had emphasized the importance of the chorus in ancient drama. Schiller seems to have enjoyed the poetic challenge, and his choral odes stand out for their metrical invention and the relative latitude in translation.⁷⁰

Besides the translations themselves, the most important product of his 1788-9 engagement with Greek tragedy is a review of Goethe's *Iphigenie*, published in 1789. Here Schiller first articulates an opposition of ancient and modern tragedies, concentrating on their respective instantiations of moral autonomy. On its publication, Goethe's play seemed to many readers, Schiller included, a thoroughly successful revival of ancient poetry. Schiller

⁶⁶ Miller (2008), 119. On sacrifice in Schiller's theory of the sublime, see Alt (2008), 42-4.

⁶⁷ Schiller *FA* 9, 79: 'Can anything be more important and sublime than the – ultimately free-willed – sacrifice of a young and blooming daughter of a prince for the happiness of so many gathered nations?'

⁶⁸ Barnes's edition was originally published in 1694, and reprinted through the eighteenth century. It includes a wealth of material, but important to Schiller would have been the attempt to mimic Greek verse forms in the Latin translation, which neither Steinbrüchel nor Köhler hazard.

⁶⁹ See Lampert (2005) 249-59.

⁷⁰ Miller (2008), 163-5.

singles out the unmistakably Winckelmannian categories of *Ruhe*, *Würde*, and *Ernst* as ancient qualities that Goethe's drama incorporates.⁷¹ He goes on to summarize, with extensive quotations, Euripides's play (relying mostly on Brumoy) and then Goethe's, promising a full comparison in the upcoming issue. This seems never to have been written, and the journal was discontinued. One passage from the published essay stands out particularly, a comment on Orestes's crazed monologue in Goethe's piece. Schiller leaves no doubt as to his preference, not just for Goethe's *Iphigenie*, but for modern tragedy generally:

Hätte die neuere Bühne auch nur dieses einzige Bruchstück aufzuweisen, so könnte sie damit über die alte triumphieren. Hier hat das Genie eines Dichters, der die Vergleichung mit keinem alten Tragiker fürchten darf, durch den Fortschritt der sittlichen Kultur und den mildern Geist unsrer Zeiten unterstützt, die feinste edelste Blüte moralischer Verfeinerung mit der schönsten Blüte der Dichtkunst zu vereinigen gewußt.⁷²

This extravagant praise, which continues in the same vein for the rest of a long paragraph before an extensive excerpt from the speech, is explained partly by the fact that the publisher of the journal and Goethe's publisher are one and the same. But the argument that modern Christian morality lifts tragedy to heights unattainable in ancient Greece is familiar from the *Querelle*, and Schiller would have found variations in Brumoy. Though Schiller recognizes that there is something of use to the modern poet in Greek forms, the primitive morality of ancient tragedies seems to render them aesthetically inferior.

Schiller's theory of the sublime at first consolidated his dismissive opinion of Greek tragedy. 'Über die tragische Kunst' was the second of three essays on tragedy to be published in 1792-3. The theory of the sublime in tragedy is broadly similar to that of the other essays,

⁷¹ Schiller, *FA* 8, 939.

⁷² Schiller, *FA* 8, 964: 'If the modern stage could boast even just this fragment it would triumph over the ancient. Here, the genius of a poet who should fear comparison with no ancient tragedian, supported by the progress of moral culture and milder spirit of our times, has known how to unite the finest, most noble blossom of moral refinement with the most beautiful blossom of poetry.'

but here has a stronger moralizing tendency. For Schiller, very much under the influence of French classical tragedy and Goethe's *Iphigenie*, the best tragedy comes 'wo die Ursache des Unglücks nicht allein nicht der Moralität widersprechend, sondern sogar durch Moralität allein möglich ist.'⁷³ The model of such a work is Corneille's *Le Cid*, in which Chimène and Rodrigue 'gewinnen unsre höchste Achtung, weil sie auf Kosten der Neigung eine moralische Pflicht erfüllen.'⁷⁴ Their demonstration of moral freedom at the expense of their own happiness stands in contrast, Schiller writes, to Greek's tragedy's concept of impersonal fate. Schiller prefers the modern conflict of duties to the ancient struggle against fate because

blinde Unterwürfigkeit unter das Schicksal [ist] immer demütigend und kränkend für freie sich bestimmende Wesen. Dies ist es, was uns auch in den vortrefflichen Stücken der Griechischen Bühne etwas zu wünschen übrig läßt, weil in allen diesen Stücken zuletzt an die Notwendigkeit appelliert wird, und für unsre Vernunftfordernde Vernunft immer ein unaufgelöster Knoten zurück bleibt.⁷⁵

The criticism is similar to that in the *Iphigenie* essay: the heroes of Greek tragedy do not act with the autonomy demanded of modern characters, and so cannot achieve the greatest tragic effect. Here, it is combined with a Kantian account of morality as the exercise of freedom over the demands of nature. Schiller understands Greek tragedy to be based on a capricious divine necessity, which forecloses any perception that the events of tragedy are guided by 'einer teleologischen Verknüpfung der Dinge, einer erhabenen Ordnung, eines gütigen Willens.'⁷⁶ In 1792, the goal of tragedy is to prove the order of the world by demonstrating the power of human freedom. Greek works are unsuited to the task because they are animated

⁷³ Schiller, *FA* 8, 260: 'when the origin of the unhappiness not only does not contradict morality, but is only possible through morality.'

⁷⁴ Schiller, *FA* 8, 260: 'win our highest respect because they fulfill a moral duty at the cost of their inclination.'

⁷⁵ Schiller, *FA* 8, 261: 'blind subjection to fate is always humiliating and insulting for a free, self-determining being. This is what leaves us something to be desired even in the most splendid pieces of the Greek stage, because in all these pieces necessity is ultimately invoked, and an unresolved knot is always left behind for our reason-demanding reason.'

⁷⁶ Schiller, *FA* 8, 261: 'a teleological connection between things, a sublime order, a benevolent will.'

by an inscrutable theology. Schiller accordingly decides the parallel of tragedies in favor of modernity: 'Müßten wir Neuern wirklich darauf Verzicht tun, griechische Kunst je wieder herzustellen, wo nicht gar zu übertreffen, so dürfte die Tragödie vielleicht allein eine Ausnahme machen. Ihr allein ersetzt vielleicht unsre wissenschaftliche Kultur den Raub, den sie in der Kunst überhaupt verübte.'⁷⁷ Greek tragedy appears to be lacking the rational basis of modern works, and so to be unable to achieve their sublime effect. Throughout Schiller's early engagement with Greek tragedy, his parallel thought is binary and querulous, arguing, like Perrault and the *Modernes*, for the superiority of modern tragedy on the basis of its more advanced morality.

The 'poetic truth' of tragedy

Schiller's faith in progress, however, does not last. The degeneration of the French Revolution into the Terror contributes to a darker tone in his later writings on the sublime and to a less rationalistic aesthetic of tragedy. Even as early as 1793, in his remarks on the pathetic, Schiller shows an increasing respect for Greek tragedy's depiction of freedom and necessity. He lauds its heroes who, though suffering from external and irrational forces, nevertheless retain their nobility; their stoic resistance constitutes 'ein Gesetz, das der Griechische Genius der Kunst vorgeschrieben hat.'⁷⁸ As Schiller begins to doubt the supreme power of reason and freedom, the circumscribed autonomy of Greek tragedy becomes less of a problem. Indeed, the subjection of Greek heroes to fate may make them more suited to Schiller's later theory, in which the sublime emerges from an irreconcilably chaotic world.

⁷⁷ Schiller, *FA* 8, 262: 'If we moderns really must abandon the effort ever to restore Greek art if not to surpass it, tragedy alone might constitute an exception. To it alone perhaps our scientific culture restores the loss it has brought about for art generally.'

⁷⁸ Schiller *FA* 8, 426: 'a law which the Greek genius has prescribed for art.'

The downfall of the tragic hero in such a world would not prove the triumph of reason over sense, but only depict the unending struggle of human freedom against nature.

The turning point in Schiller's thought on tragedy comes in 1797, when, at the suggestion of Goethe, he studied Sophoclean tragedy (presumably in Stolberg's translation) and Aristotle's *Poetics* (in Curtius's translation). This has largely not been recognized by critics, who tend to overlook the scattered, though highly significant theoretical considerations of Schiller's letters.⁷⁹ The period of Schiller's study of the *Poetics* was also the period at which he was turning back to drama after a long hiatus. For the first time in his life, ancient tragedy enters into a productive tension with his practice. Schiller will no longer be concerned to declare the priority of one age in a binary opposition, but rather to restore dialectically elements of Greek practice. His 1797 reading of the *OT* and the *Poetics* leads him to reconsider the role of freedom in tragedy. Freedom now appears as essentially tragic, and sublimity an effort to preserve and strengthen a fragile autonomy. One can speculate that Goethe, who held a far darker view of tragedy, was an important influence.⁸⁰ Where Schiller had earlier reproached Greek tragedy for its subjection of human beings to necessity, this now appears as its claim to truth.

From his reading of Sophocles, Schiller describes an insight into the importance of plot in tragedy: 'Ich finde, je mehr ich über mein eigenes Geschäft und über die BehandlungsArt der Tragödie bei den Griechen nachdenke, daß der ganze Cardo rei in der

⁷⁹ Both Schwinge (2008) and Latacz (1997) substantially ignore Schiller's reading of the *Poetics* as well as his work on *Wallenstein*, to say nothing of the historical philosophy and concept of the sublime developed after the tragedy essays.

⁸⁰ On Goethe's theory of tragedy, see Wilm (2006).

Kunst liegt, eine poetische Fabel zu erfinden.’⁸¹ This now licenses the non-naturalistic characters of Greek tragedy, who are ‘idealische Masken und keine eigentliche Individuen. [...] Man kommt mit solchen Characteren in Tragödie offenbar viel beßer aus, sie exponieren sich geschwinder, und ihre Züge sind permanenter und fester.’⁸² The lack of internality that had seemed to make Euripides’s Orestes far inferior to Goethe’s now appears to have a dramatic justification, as it allows the poet to present the action of the piece more directly. Psychology is now subordinated to a dramatic plan, making the role of individual autonomy far less central. Schiller finds that he agrees with the *Poetics*’s privilege of plot: ‘Daß er bei der Tragödie das Hauptgewicht in die Verknüpfung der Begebenheiten legt, heißt recht den Nagel auf den Kopf getroffen.’⁸³ The essence of tragedy for Schiller is no longer to be found in its depiction of suffering, but in the insight into causality. Tragedy’s ‘poetic fable’ distills and makes visible the necessity of historical events, setting the freedom of the hero within the determinism of myth. Without explicitly rejecting his earlier theory, Schiller’s engagement with Greek tragedy and poetics has caused – or at the very least helped to articulate – a reconception of tragic heroes and their freedom. Freedom is henceforth never pure, but manifests itself only within a chain of events conditioned by external forces. This brings Schiller to a reevaluation of Greek tragedy; from this point forward, he will measure his own work by the standards of ‘pure’ or ‘real’ tragedy.

⁸¹ Schiller *FA* 12, 261 (To Goethe, 4.4.1797): ‘I find, the more I consider my own work and the treatment of tragedy among the Greeks, that the whole *cardo rei* lies in the art of creating a poetic fable.’

⁸² Schiller *FA* 12, 262 (To Goethe, 4.4.1797): ‘are ideal masks and not real individuals. One obviously gets on much better with such characters in tragedy, they show themselves more quickly and their characteristics are more permanent and strong.’

⁸³ Schiller *FA* 12, 246 (To Goethe, 5.5.1797): ‘That for tragedy he lays the greatest weight in the connection of events, is to have hit the nail straight on the head.’

The *OT* most of all inspires Schiller to develop his notion of the ideal construction of tragedy. He reports to Goethe that he has been searching for a similar subject for his own work. He points out that in it

die Handlung ja schon geschehen ist, und mithin ganz jenseits der Tragödie fällt. Dazu kommt, daß das Geschehene, als unabänderlich, seiner Natur nach viel fürchterlicher ist, und die Furcht daß etwas *geschehen seyn* möchte, das Gemüth ganz anders affiziert, als die Furcht, daß etwas geschehen möchte.⁸⁴

Schiller's understanding of fear in tragedy is no longer linked to individual suffering in the present, but rather to the loss of freedom entailed by past determination. The role of the poet, following Schiller's dialectical logic, is to fashion a freedom for the spectator, 'die individuell auf uns eindringende Wirklichkeit von uns entfernt zu halten und dem Gemüth eine poetische Freiheit gegen den Stoff zu verschaffen.'⁸⁵ 'Poetic freedom' is ensured by a plot in which the determining events have already taken place, and in which the logic of unfolding is absolutely transparent. He describes the *OT* famously as 'eine tragische Analysis. Alles ist schon da, und es wird nur herausgewickelt.'⁸⁶ In it, the poet makes necessity – which in reality is blind and chaotic – appear to unfold as a logical chain of causes and effects. The notion of spectatorship here is similar to that of 'Über das Erhabene:' the events of history and tragedy are ruled by an inscrutable force, and freedom lies only in the subjective perception of events as causally (but not teleologically) ordered. The rational necessity of tragedy's poetic fable serves as an inoculation against the blind contingency of reality.

⁸⁴ Schiller, *FA* 12, 330 (To Goethe, 2.10.1797): 'The action has already happened, and therefore falls completely outside of the tragedy. Moreover, that which has happened, as irrevocable, is by its nature far more frightening, and the fear that something has happened, grasps the mind wholly differently from the fear that something may happen.'

⁸⁵ Schiller, *FA* 12, 355 (To Goethe, 26.12.1797): 'hold reality which individually oppresses us at a distance and create for the mind a poetic freedom against the content.'

⁸⁶ Schiller, *FA* 12, 331 (To Goethe, 2.10.1797): 'a tragic analysis. Everything is already there, and it is merely unraveled.'

It is partly through the example of Shakespeare that Schiller is able to make his new understanding of tragedy poetically productive. In November 1797 he reads *Richard III* and writes to Goethe that it is ‘eine der erhabensten Tragödien die ich kenne. [...] Kein Schakespearisches Stück hat mich so sehr an die Griechische Tragödie erinnert.’⁸⁷ The judgment bespeaks the later concept of the sublime, which is now created by rational spectatorship of horror, rather than vicarious triumph of freedom. ‘Es ist gleichsam die reine Form des tragisch furchtbaren was man genießt,’ Schiller writes, ‘Eine hohe Nemesis wandelt durch das Stück, in allen Gestalten, man kommt nicht aus dieser Empfindung heraus von Anfang bis zu Ende.’⁸⁸ The frightful, the sublime, and the Greek qualities of the work are linked in Schiller’s description – an index of the vast changes in his thought from ten years previous. *Richard III* appears to Schiller ‘Greek’ and sublime because of its depiction of nemesis as an inevitable force of destruction. By placing events on stage outside the realm of free will, the poet at once binds the audience to the ‘tragisch furchtbare,’ and allows them an enjoyable distance in observing the workings of nemesis. The fear created by inevitability is rendered sublime through the insight into necessity operative within history.

In his massive *Wallenstein* trilogy (performed in 1798-9 and published in 1800), Schiller sought to put his theory into practice, combining a classical form with a modern, historical theme.⁸⁹ With reference to Aristotle, he writes, ‘Ich fühle, daß ich ihm, den unvertilgbaren Unterschied der neuern von der alten Tragödie abgerechnet, in allen

⁸⁷ Schiller, *FA* 12, 344 (To Goethe, 28.11.1797): ‘one of the most sublime tragedies that I know. No Shakespearean play has reminded me so much of Greek tragedy.’

⁸⁸ Schiller *FA* 12, 344 (To Goethe, 28.11.1797): ‘It is, so to speak, the pure form of the tragic frightful that one enjoys. A high nemesis moves through the piece in all appearances, and one does not leave the feeling from the beginning to the end.’

⁸⁹ On this coexistence of Shakespearean and Sophoclean motives, see Koopmann (1975).

wesentlichen Forderungen Genüge geleistet habe und leisten werde.’⁹⁰ The consciousness of difference, though it will never recede, is now far less important, allowing for an essential similarity of ancient and modern works. His letters repeatedly describe the final play of the trilogy, *Wallensteins Tod*, as ‘eine eigentliche Tragödie.’⁹¹ The shift in dramatic focus from character to events is undeniable: Wallenstein ‘hat nichts Edles, er erscheint in keinem einzelnen LebensAkt groß.’⁹² The weakness of Wallenstein’s character allows Schiller to depict an ironic interplay of freedom and necessity, in which Wallenstein resists his own superstition and thereby makes himself subject to the disaster it had foretold.⁹³ This is not the divine fate of Greek tragedy, but an inevitability created by the decision and indecision of the protagonist.⁹⁴

Schiller comes closest to formulating the role of fate in modern works in connection with another piece he was planning: the action should appear ‘als wenn das Schicksal unmittelbar sie dirigierte, obgleich das Zutreffen jedes einzelnen Umstands hinreichend motiviert seyn muß.’⁹⁵ Again, it is the rational necessity of events that is of the essence in tragic action, which appears simultaneously as the work of fate and the consequence of decision. *Wallenstein* stages the ambivalence about the possibilities of human freedom that Schiller gained from the French Revolution and expressed in ‘Über das Erhabene.’⁹⁶ Freedom cannot be wholly realized in historical action, which is always determined by

⁹⁰ Schiller, *FA* 12, 283 (To Körner, 3.6.1797): ‘I felt that, discounting the insurmountable difference of modern from ancient tragedy, I have afforded and will afford him satisfaction in all the essential demands.’ On the influence of Aristotle on *Wallenstein*, see Reinhardt (1976).

⁹¹ Schiller, *FA* 12, 416 (To Körner, 20.9.1798), 422 (To Iffland, 15.10.1798): ‘an authentic tragedy.’

⁹² Schiller, *FA* 12, 161 (To Humboldt, 21.3.1796): ‘has nothing noble, he appears in no single act of his life great.’

⁹³ Zanucchi (2006), 159.

⁹⁴ Feger (2007), 111.

⁹⁵ Schiller, *FA* 10, 118: ‘as if fate directed it immediately, although the conjunction of each individual circumstance must be motivated sufficiently.’

⁹⁶ Hofmann (1999), 259.

hidden forces; tragedy serves as an inoculation against historical contingency by representing human freedom struggling with an insurmountable dramatic necessity.

Schiller is adamant that *Wallenstein* should not be regarded as an attempt to revive Greek tragedy.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the lessons of Aristotle and Sophocles are profoundly present in the work's staging of the possibilities for human freedom. This was recognized immediately after its creation, in Johann Wilhelm Sövern's 1800 *Über Schillers Wallenstein in Hinsicht auf griechische Tragödie*. The work recounts Schiller's trilogy in detail, arguing that it conforms to the essence of Greek tragedy by presenting an action ruled by fate. Sövern describes it, in terms recalling an earlier Schiller, as 'die erste Spur des Zusammentreffens einer geläuterten Philosophie mit den Vorbildern der Alten; aber [sie] hat ihre Höhe noch nicht erreicht.'⁹⁸ The reason for this is that *Wallenstein* does not sufficiently demonstrate his freedom in the struggle with fate: 'Ihr Ausgang ist mehr Leiden als Handlung.'⁹⁹ This is, ironically, the reproach Schiller had made of Greek tragedy almost ten years earlier. Schiller responds in a letter that sets out his understanding of the difference between ancient and modern works:

Ich theile mit Ihnen die unbedingte Verehrung der Sophokleischen Tragödie, aber sie war eine Erscheinung ihrer Zeit, die nicht wiederkommen kann, und das lebendige Produkt einer individuellen bestimmten Gegenwart einer ganz heterogenen Zeit zum Maaßstab und Muster aufdringen, hiesse die Kunst, die immer dynamisch und lebendig entstehen und wirken muß, eher tödten als beleben. Unsre Tragödie, wenn wir eine solche hätten, hat mit der Ohnmacht, der Schläffheit, der Charakterlösigkeit des Zeitgeistes und mit einer gemeinen Denkart zu ringen, sie muß Kraft und Charakter zeigen, sie muß das Gemüth zu erschüttern, zu erheben, aber nicht aufzulösen suchen. Die Schönheit ist für

⁹⁷ See Schiller, *NA* 29, 184 (To Körner, 8.1.1798).

⁹⁸ Sövern (1800), 22: 'the first trace of the meeting of a purified philosophy with the models of the ancients; but it has not yet reached their heights.'

⁹⁹ Sövern (1800), 209: 'its conclusion is more suffering than action.'

ein glückliches Geschlecht, aber ein unglückliches muß man erhaben zu
rühren suchen.¹⁰⁰

Surprisingly, Schiller finds himself quite close to Schlegel's *Studium* essay, which he had initially ridiculed for its suggestion that ancient tragedy could be considered beautiful or harmonic.¹⁰¹ Schiller suggests that ancient culture, before the reflective differentiation of man from nature, could experience tragedy's interpenetration of fate and free will as a fact of life, allowing tragedy to express a beautiful harmony. Modern tragedy, on the other hand, experiences tragedy's depiction of the power of necessity and the inevitability of suffering as a constraint on human freedom, and so finds in tragedy a sublime, educative disharmony. An interpenetration of freedom and necessity is the defining feature of tragedy in antiquity as in modernity, but it is experienced by moderns differently, as sublimity. Modern tragedy's sublime effect strengthens an unhappy race to confront its own weakness. Tragedy, which in ancient Greece had reflected the harmony of existence, in modernity has the task of reconciling viewers to disharmony.

'The limits of ancient and modern tragedy'

The year 1802 brought Greek tragedy to the Weimar stage. August Wilhelm Schlegel's adaptation of Euripides's *Ion* was premiered on January 2, and created a minor scandal for its

¹⁰⁰ Schiller, *FA* 12, 522 (To Süvern, 26.7.1800): 'I share with you the unconditioned admiration for Sophoclean tragedy, but it was a phenomenon of its time that cannot return, and to subject the living product of a certain individual present to a completely different time as a measure and model, is to kill rather than enliven art, which must always arise and act dynamically and vividly. Our tragedy, if we were to have anything of the kind, must struggle with the powerlessness, the inertness, the characterlessness of the spirit of the time, and with a base way of thinking. It must show power and character, it must seek to shake the mind, to raise it up, but not to relax it. Beauty is for a happy race, but for an unhappy one, one must seek to move them with sublimity.'

¹⁰¹ See Schiller, *FA* 1, 619 (*Xenien* 324-8). In response to *Wallenstein*, Hegel will repeat the *Xenien* to lament that modern tragedy does not reach the same harmonic effect that ancient tragedy did. It is an index of the difference of their thought that *Wallenstein*'s failure to reach reconciliation is a fatal problem for Hegel. See Chapter 5.

unexpected mixture of tragedy and comedy. It was followed in May by Schiller's adaptation of Goethe's *Iphigenie* (unfortunately lost) and Friedrich Schlegel's classicizing tragedy *Alarcos*, widely judged a failure.¹⁰² The string of performances revived Schiller's long-postponed notion of a tragedy 'nach der strengsten griechischen Form.'¹⁰³ This became *Die Braut von Messina, oder die feindlichen Brüder: Ein Trauerspiel mit Chören*, begun in summer 1802 and finished in February 1803.¹⁰⁴ *Braut* implicitly responds to the earlier works, which Schiller saw as failed efforts to recreate Greek tragedy. Schiller's opinion of Goethe's *Iphigenie*, expressed in a January 1802 letter, shows his later understanding of Greek tragedy:

Sie ist aber so erstaunlich modern und ungr Griechisch daß man nicht begreift, wie es möglich war, sie jemals einem griechischen Stücke zu vergleichen. Sie ist ganz nur sittlich, aber die sinnliche Kraft, das Leben, die Bewegung und alles was ein Werk zu einem ächten dramatischen specifiziert, geht ihr sehr ab.¹⁰⁵

Schiller here retracts completely his judgment of 1789 that the piece in any way revives Greek tragedy.¹⁰⁶ While the opposition of modern moral culture and ancient 'sinnliche Kraft' remains, Goethe's reliance on morality appears now as a deficit. The work seems to lack the gripping power that Schiller found in Aristotle's notion of plot. In Schiller's dialectical logic, modernity's moral autonomy now demands antiquity's sensory violence.

¹⁰² On the Schlegels's works see Ritzer (2002) and Flashar (2009), 47-57.

¹⁰³ Schiller, *FA* 12, 570 (To Körner, 13.5.1801): 'according to the most strict Greek form.' Latacz (1997), 244 points out that this idea dates back to Schiller's first reading of the Greeks in 1788. See *FA* 11, 317 (To Körner, 20.8.1788).

¹⁰⁴ Schiller uses the words 'Trauerspiel' and 'Tragödie' interchangeably, as is clear in the preface to *Braut*.

¹⁰⁵ Schiller, *FA* 12, 593 (To Körner, 21.1.1802): 'It is so astonishingly modern and un-Greek that one cannot understand how it was possible ever to compare it to a Greek piece. It is wholly and only moral, but the sensible power, the life, the movement and everything that makes a work into a truly dramatic one, is quite missing.' See also *FA* 12, 356 (To Goethe, 26.12.1797), in which Schiller describes it as too epic a work for the stage.

¹⁰⁶ Sharpe (1985), 113; Jessing (2005), 151-4.

A related critique, this one directed at the very monologue Schiller had so much praised, comes in a letter to Goethe:

*Orest selbst ist das Bedenklichste im Ganzen; ohne Furien ist kein Orest, und jezt da die Ursache seines Zustands nicht in die Sinne fällt, da sie bloß im Gemüth ist, so ist sein Zustand eine zu lange und zu einformige Qual, ohne Gegenstand; hier ist eine der Grenzen des altern und neuen Trauerspiels.*¹⁰⁷

Schiller's frustration with the lack of a chorus of Furies pursuing Orestes does not originate from a comparison of Goethe's play with Euripides's, in which no Furies appear; rather, Schiller seems to be thinking of the *Eumenides* and, even more importantly, Gluck's opera *Iphigénie en Tauride*, in which a chorus of Furies torments the sleeping Orestes.¹⁰⁸ Schiller had supervised rehearsals for the piece when it was performed in Weimar in 1800, and it made a strong impression, which remained with him. In comparison to Gluck's work, Goethe's seems to lack both conflict and pathos, and therefore to violate the first of Schiller's rules from 'Über das Pathetische.' Its characters, all of them eminently rational and moral, excite neither the fear nor the pity demanded by Aristotle. Their moral autonomy now appears inimical to the essence of tragedy, which must include elements of necessity and freedom in conflict. Schiller reproaches the piece for its failure to recognize the 'limits of ancient and modern tragedies,' a critique that might apply to all three classicizing dramas of the time. Schiller's conception of dramatic action requires a vigorous, even violent representation of conflict, which would allow the equivocal character of freedom to appear. In contrast, the works of Goethe and the Schlegel brothers seem to lack the basis in a philosophy of history that would allow them to achieve the sublime effect of tragedy.

¹⁰⁷ Schiller, *FA* 12, 596 (To Goethe, 22.1.1802): 'Orestes himself is the oddest of all. Without Furies there can be no Orestes, and now that the cause of his condition does not fall within the senses, when it is only in the mind, his condition is a too-long and too-monotonous ordeal without an object. Here is one of the limits of ancient and modern tragedy.'

¹⁰⁸ See Sergl (1998), 179-88.

Schiller's model in *Braut* has taken on an Aeschylean tinge, coinciding with his study of the 1802 translation by Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg.¹⁰⁹ This is obvious in the central importance of the chorus and the motifs of family guilt and brotherly hatred. Though Schiller must also have been inspired by the *OT* and *Phoenician Women*, the plot of *Braut* recommended itself because 'das Stück läßt sich wirklich zu einer äschyleischen Tragödie an.'¹¹⁰ Indeed, the work includes many of the typical forms of Greek tragedy: a prologue followed by a choral entrance song, stichomythia, choral odes, monodies, etc.¹¹¹ Yet any comparison – with Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides – is limited: most obviously, the work takes place in medieval Sicily, centres around an amorous intrigue, and divides the chorus into two inimical groups (which may have been suggested loosely by the *Eumenides*).¹¹² But this is all to be expected if one recalls Schiller's historical philosophy and reflections surrounding *Wallenstein*: *Braut* is not, and cannot be, a Greek tragedy.¹¹³ It is rather an effort to depict tragedy's essence, its interpenetration of freedom and necessity, under the conditions of modern subjectivity. At the centre of this effort is the role of the chorus, whose spectatorship of the tragic action offers a standpoint from which the events of the drama appear sublime.

What draws Schiller to Greek tragedy is what he calls its 'economy' – that is, the way it juxtaposes the sensory impressions of music and spectacle with the pathetic elements of the plot. This coincides with the division of drama into choral odes and scenes, and creates an

¹⁰⁹ Prader (1958) shows parallels with the *OT*; Schadewaldt (1969), 294-7 with the *Phoenician Women*; Petersen (1974), 122-7 argues for *Ion* as the model. Schiller has assimilated all these influences, but cannot be said to follow any.

¹¹⁰ Schiller, *FA* 12, 626 (To Körner 9.9.1802): 'the piece allows itself to be an Aeschylean tragedy.' See also *NA* 31, 171 (To Körner, 15.11.1802).

¹¹¹ Schwinge (2008), 39.

¹¹² On the difference between Schiller's choral theory and practice, see Müller (1987).

¹¹³ Mueller (1980), 141-2 compares *Braut* with the *OT*, which leads him to condemn Schiller for misunderstanding Greek tragedy.

emotional alternation between moments of calm reflection and intense affect. Schiller describes his use of the chorus in the last theoretical text he published, ‘Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie,’ appended to *Braut* for its publication in 1803. The chorus, Schiller writes, ‘*reinigt* also das tragische Gedicht, indem er die Reflexion von der Handlung absondert.’¹¹⁴ At issue, as ever, is the question of freedom. The chorus helps to maintain the audience’s autonomy by fashioning a distance from tragic events:

Wenn die Schläge, womit die Tragödie unser Herz trifft, ohne Unterbrechung auf einander folgten, so würde das Leiden über die Tätigkeit siegen. Wir würden uns mit dem Stoffe vermengen und nicht mehr über demselben schweben. Dadurch, daß der Chor die Teile aus einander hält, und zwischen die Passionen mit seiner beruhigenden Betrachtung tritt, gibt er uns unsre Freiheit zurück, die im Sturm der Affekte verloren gehen würde.¹¹⁵

This stoic conception of tragic spectatorship goes back to ‘Über das Erhabene,’ and is here combined with the letters’s reflections on how to ensure the poetic freedom of the audience. The chorus moderates the pathos of tragedy with its calming interludes, enabling the audience the freedom to perceive tragic events as causally ordered. It affords a position from which tragedy’s dialectic of human autonomy and dramatic necessity can appear sublime.

Schiller’s understanding of the ‘limits of ancient and modern tragedy,’ however, entails a recognition of the difference between the ancient and the modern chorus. The historical dialectic of antiquity and modernity that has run through Schiller’s thought receives one of its fullest expressions in his description of the chorus between the ancient and modern stages:

¹¹⁴ Schiller, *FA* 5, 288: ‘purifies the tragic poem, in that it divides reflection from action.’

¹¹⁵ Schiller, *FA* 5, 289: ‘If the blows with which tragedy met our heart followed on one another without interruption, suffering would triumph over activity. We would become wrapped up in the content and no longer float above it. In that the chorus holds the scenes apart, and steps between the passions with its calming observations, it gives us back our freedom, which would be lost in the storm of feelings.’

Die alte Tragödie, welche sich ursprünglich nur mit Göttern, Helden und Königen abgab, brauchte den Chor als eine notwendige Begleitung; sie fand ihn in der Natur, und brauchte ihn, weil sie ihn fand. Die Handlungen und Schicksale der Helden und Könige sind schon an sich selbst öffentlich, und waren es in der einfachen Urzeit noch mehr. Der Chor war folglich in der alten Tragödie mehr ein natürliches Organ, er folgte schon aus der poetischen Gestalt des wirklichen Lebens. In der neuen Tragödie wird er zu einem Kunstorgan; er hilft die Poesie *hervorbringen*. Der neuere Dichter findet den Chor nicht mehr in der Natur, er muß ihn poetisch erschaffen und einführen, das ist, er muß mit der Fabel, die er behandelt, eine solche Veränderung vornehmen, wodurch sie in jene kindliche Zeit und in jene einfache Form des Lebens zurückversetzt wird.¹¹⁶

Ancient and modern choruses have different origins and serve different functions. The modern chorus is useful for Schiller because it is so utterly out of place in the present, and therefore sets the poetic world of tragedy outside of contemporary experience. It responds to alienation from nature through alienation from culture: ‘so sollte er uns eine lebendige Mauer sein, die die Tragödie um sich herumzieht, um sich von der wirklichen Welt rein abzuschließen, und sich ihren idealen Boden, ihre poetische Freiheit zu bewahren.’¹¹⁷ ‘Poetic’ has the same meaning here that it did in the Aristotle discussions (‘poetic fable,’ ‘poetic truth’) and denotes a symbolic quality, which allows for a distilled representation of reality to emerge.¹¹⁸ The ‘poetic truth’ of tragedy lies in the rational insight into causality that the chaos of historical existence inevitably forecloses. The chorus, which embodies both passionate sympathy and calm reflection, enacts the dialectic at the heart of sublimity.

¹¹⁶ Schiller, *FA* 5, 286: ‘Ancient tragedy, which originally concerned gods, heroes, and kings, used the chorus as a necessary accompaniment, tragedy found it in nature, and used it because it found it. The actions and fates of heroes and kings are in themselves public, and were even more in the simple primitive time. The chorus was consequently more a natural organ in ancient tragedy, it followed out of the poetic form of real life. In modern tragedy it becomes an artificial organ, it helps to bring forth poetry. The modern poet no longer finds the chorus in nature, he must create it poetically and introduce it, that is, he must undertake a transformation with the story he treats, through which it is set back into that childlike time and into that simple form of life.’

¹¹⁷ Schiller, *FA* 5, 285: ‘It should be for us a living wall that tragedy erects around itself in order to cut itself off purely from the real world and preserve its poetic freedom.’

¹¹⁸ Hinderer (2009), 316.

All art, for the Schiller of 1803, can be understood as an education in sublime spectatorship,

eine Kraft in ihm [der Mensch] erweckt, übt und ausbildet, die sinnliche Welt, die sonst nur als ein roher Stoff auf uns lastet, als eine blinde Macht auf uns drückt, in eine objektive Ferne zu rücken, in ein freies Werk unsers Geistes zu verwandeln, und das Materielle durch Ideen zu beherrschen.¹¹⁹

Tragedy accomplishes this in exemplary fashion through its affective economy, which contains the moments of sensory violence and rational reflection that constitute the dialectic of sublime experience. As the instance of distance within passion, the moment at which the material is transformed into ‘a free work of our spirit,’ the choral odes create the conditions for the audience’s freedom. Schiller’s theory of the chorus completes the transformation of his parallel thought from a static opposition into a dynamic relation. He understands the essence of tragedy, ancient and modern, as an interpenetration of fate and freedom. In the ancient world, their coincidence seemed harmonious, since it was based on a broader sense of belonging in nature; now, tragedy’s disharmonious dialectic is the occasion for the sublime education that teaches stoic resistance to chaos. Only in modernity does its full power emerge, as an expression of individual freedom within historical process. This leads Schiller to the surprising conclusion that the tragic sublime is even more necessary in modernity than it was in antiquity.

Schiller’s thought on tragedy, this chapter has argued, makes a valid claim as an alternative to Idealism’s theories, and recommends itself profoundly to contemporary thought. The hierarchy of sublimity over beauty and rejection of the earlier theory of the heroic sublime in favor of tragic inoculation have affinities with many discussions of our so-

¹¹⁹ Schiller, *FA* 5, 283: ‘awakes, trains, and develops in man a power to push the sensible world, which otherwise only weighs on us like raw material, presses on us like a blind force, into an objective distance, to transform it into a free work of our spirit, and rule the material through ideas.’

called postmodernity.¹²⁰ This exposition has sought to set Schiller in his rightful place at the centre of discussions of the place of tragedy in modernity. He establishes the terms for Idealism's understanding of the role of art in existence and its consideration of human freedom in tragedy. Both of these strands, it has been shown, emerge from reflection on the difference between antiquity and modernity. The continuing challenge and interest of Schiller's thought lies in the diagnosis of modern alienation and the prescription of tragedy as a form of therapy. Schiller, more emphatically than any previous thinker, makes tragedy a figure for sense, a means of coming to terms with historical existence. The distance from Brumoy, Steinbrüchel, and even Rochefort is unmistakable: while most previous thinkers argue that tragedy is salutary in one way or another, none see its consolation or education as being of the same order as Schiller does, and as Idealism will. Schiller's changing thought on Greek tragedy might be a microcosm of the eighteenth century's move from a querulous to a dialectical engagement with antiquity. In this development, Greek tragedy, which at the beginning of the century was a relatively obscure form, became the privileged ground for modernity's understanding of its own historical place.

¹²⁰ See Hofmann (2005).

Chapter 4

F.W.J. Schelling: Tragic reconciliation

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling has been considered, since Szondi's *Versuch*, the first 'philosopher of the tragic.' Such a narrative of rupture, though, obscures as much as it illuminates. It should be clear from the previous chapters that thought on tragedy changed profoundly in the 1790s, in response particularly to the French Revolution and Kantian philosophy. The new ways of viewing tragedy – and Szondi is right to point out their difference from earlier thought – occupied many of the most important thinkers of the time, and developed in a chaotic and occasionally acrimonious conversation. In the simplest terms, what united the disparate viewpoints was that *tragedy became a figure for sense*. In practice, this meant that tragedy, and especially Greek tragedy, was taken to be in one way or another cognitively constructive, if not metaphysically affirmative. Such an approach could be suggested in earlier thought (particularly around the concept of theodicy), but it was never central to the understanding of tragedy in the way it became after 1790. Art, in the wake of Kant's Third Critique, came to be seen as an autonomous discourse, which offered a unique way of finding reason in human existence. Though Kant had little to say about tragedy itself, the concept of 'the tragic' develops his suggestion that aesthetic judgment somehow gives an insight into the supersensible union of theoretical and practical reason. Idealist approaches make tragedy the privileged locus of this union, and therefore the highest form of art.

Picking apart the exact chronology of who thought what, when, is probably impossible. The changes in approaching tragedy were not limited to a single thinker or source of influence, and it is hard even to point to their beginning. One can, though, see two distinct approaches in the immediate post-Kantian period: one born of the engagement with

Schiller's theory of the tragic sublime, and carried further by the Schlegels and Schelling, which focused *on the ecstatic appearance of sense within chaos*; and the other, not wholly independent, but taking form in discussions between Hegel and Hölderlin in 1797-8, which found in tragedy the *dynamic emergence of sense from history*. These are based on two different forms of dialectic: the first is essentially ahistorical, based on synchronic insight, while the second is processual, based on diachronic, progressive comprehension. Szondi's conflation of all the theories into forms of a single (proto-Hegelian) dialectic is of little use for understanding the individual thinkers, and it obscures many of the most interesting intellectual possibilities that are developed in this extraordinarily fruitful period. By investigating the particularities of these theories, I try to show what common problems they respond to and in what sense their answers can be considered coherent. At the centre of all the theories considered, I argue, is a nexus of aesthetics and history, which poses a question: can Greek tragedy help to make sense of modern existence?

Between the early Schlegel, Schiller, and Schelling, the lines of continuity and influence often cross: the previous chapter has described Schiller's 1792-3 thought on tragedy, which provided the clear impetus for both Schlegel and Schelling around 1795. Schiller's thought developed further, possibly in response to the others, around 1797. Around 1800, both Schelling and Schiller described an analogy between the sublime effect of tragedy and the philosophical understanding of history, which both developed further in 1802-3. For all these points of convergence, though, there are some decisive differences. All grapple with the question of whether tragedy can be in some way reconciliatory: Schlegel in calling for a return to the 'aesthetic tragedy' of the Greeks, and Schiller in seeking a standpoint from which the events of tragedy appear rational. Schelling's position is much more emphatic, and

sets the reconciliations of tragedy and philosophy in parallel. In tragedy, Schelling finds an insight into the unity of the human faculties, which Kant had denied could be proven. Schelling's tragic philosophy seeks to solve the Aristotelian problem of *catharsis* on the basis of Kant's critical philosophy, and reciprocally, the Kantian problem of dualism through a tragic reconciliation. Yet the reconciliation he seeks is far more comprehensive than anything Aristotle could have imagined: it is an insight into the essence of existence, the unity that grounds all opposition. For Schelling, philosophy, which strives to identify this unity, and tragedy, which embodies it, both grapple with the same problem, and aim at the same *Versöhnung*.

Schelling's place in a genealogy of the tragic is less a break (as Szondi would have it) than a bridge. Though little in his reading of tragedy is original, he provides the crucial impulse for considering tragedy in metaphysical terms, and so establishes the basic context for theories at least until Nietzsche. Never before had such a philosophical importance been ascribed to the genre, and Schelling's claims for the unique role of art in existence continue to echo. Indeed, Schelling's thought has been experiencing something of a revival in recent years, and has been celebrated, in contrast to Hegel, for its refusal to view reason as all-powerful, its effort to describe limits to philosophical reflection.¹ Art, for Schelling, represents a mode of sense independent of philosophy, which offers a parallel, but not subordinate, insight.² Schelling's theory of tragedy has recommended itself for its pessimistic recognition of 'ironclad necessity.'³ Schelling's specific comments on tragedy and their place in his larger system, though, have often gone lost in these discussions. The following will

¹ Most important is Beiser (2002), which offers an account of Idealism culminating in Schelling.

² Bowie (2003), 137 contrasts Hegel and Schelling in this respect, and generally leans towards Schelling.

³ Krell (2005), 179-209, with perversely little attention to the actual pages on tragedy (though Krell's concern seems ultimately more appropriative than interpretive).

seek to understand Schelling's theory genealogically, as it emerges from idealist concerns with art, philosophy, and history, and seeks to solve dilemmas of understanding Greek tragedy that become newly pressing around 1800.

Despite the appeal of aspects of Schelling's thought and the wide influence of his theory of tragedy, the theory itself is probably the least compelling of any treated in depth here. His discussion of the specifics of tragedy is largely derivative from Schiller and Aristotle, and appropriates Greek works with relatively little sensitivity. Tragedy often takes form of a *deus ex machina* in Schelling's discussions, entering at crucial points to answer philosophical questions. It confirms, but never challenges or expands, Schelling's theories. One index of this lack of dynamism may be how little Schelling's thought on tragedy changes from 1795 to 1805. All the other idealists change their conceptions of tragedy radically during these years; Schelling does not, though the system in which tragedy is embedded is rethought continuously. Later, Schelling seems to have recognized something of the inadequacy of his account of art, and would turn away from all the discussions sketched here. His later thought, in fact, rarely treats works of art in any concrete terms. He seems to have concluded that the particularities of existing works were unable to bear the metaphysical claims he made for them. Instead, he would turn to mythology, pagan and Christian, as the sensuous expression of the absolute – a much more flexible object, and one for which metaphysical concerns are inevitable, rather than imposed (as they often seem to be in his philosophy of art). Yet this should not detract from Schelling's importance, in both a positive and negative sense, for thought on tragedy: positively, he argues that the experience of sublimity in tragedy is both terrible and somehow affirmative, an argument with affinities to Hölderlin and Nietzsche; and negatively, he confronts, unconvincingly but

suggestively, the question of the tragic in modernity. The problem of historical thought looms large for Schelling, and makes his theory of the tragic fascinatingly and importantly aporetic.

I. Idealism's tragic mythology

‘Wer mag sich im Staub des Alterthums begraben, wenn ihn der Gang *seiner* Zeit alle Augenblicke wieder auf- und mit sich fortreißt. Ich lebe u. webe gegenwärtig in der Philosophie. Die Philos. ist noch nicht am Ende.’⁴ These words, from a 1795 letter of Schelling to Hegel, express the vast expectations following the publication of elements of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* in 1794. The work attempted to formulate a philosophy that would avoid the perceived dualism created by Kantian critique by placing the final ground of reality in the subject, and so affirming human freedom unconditionally (precisely what Kant had refused to do). Like the French Revolution, of which Fichte was one of the most vocal supporters in Germany, the *Wissenschaftslehre* seemed to promise a new age of freedom secured through reason. Yet as edition after edition seemed unable to account for an objective world of nature, the hopes for Fichte’s philosophy dimmed. At the same time, the promise of the French Revolution was increasingly eclipsed by violence and outright war. The aporiae of transcendental philosophy and political revolution led Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin (like Schiller) to aesthetics as a supplement to or completion of reason.

The roots of Idealism’s aesthetic thought lie in the school friendship of Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling, all of whom were students in the Tübingen Stift in the early 1790s.

⁴ Schelling, *AA* III.1, 57 (to Hegel, 6.1.1795): ‘Who could bury himself in the dust of antiquity when the course of his time every moment carries him away and forward with it. I live and breathe presently in philosophy. Philosophy is not yet at its end.’ The context makes clear that the antiquity Schelling is speaking of is primarily that of the Old and New Testament.

The Stift education, which was free of charge and intended to educate ministers, consisted of two years of philosophy, followed by three of theology. Hegel and Hölderlin, both born in 1770, followed parallel paths, entering in 1788 and completing their education in 1793, while Schelling, five years younger, entered at the prodigious age of 15, and shared a room with Hölderlin and Hegel during part of his time there. Hegel, apparently the last to mature intellectually, maintained close correspondence with both for the next ten years, as Schelling rose to fame as a philosopher and Hölderlin struggled to find recognition as a poet. Hölderlin and Hegel remained intimate friends in the years following the Stift, documented in a touching poem of Hegel's (!) addressed to Hölderlin, 'Eleusis.'⁵ From 1797, both were based in or near Frankfurt, where Hölderlin had arranged a job for Hegel as a private tutor. Hegel and Schelling repeatedly corresponded on philosophical matters through the late 1790s, and both landed in Jena in 1801, where they brought out a joint philosophical journal in 1802-3. In the years following the Stift, the three exercised strong influences on one another's philosophical development.

From the mid-1790s, the integration of reason and aesthetics became a pressing idealist problem. The so-called 'Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus,' two pages in Hegel's handwriting dated variously between 1795-7, shows an early effort.⁶ Whether Hegel is the author or merely the copyist (it appears to be a fair copy of an earlier text) has been disputed, and the content has been ascribed to both Schelling and Hölderlin as well.⁷ The fragment outlines an aesthetic philosophy, which in one way or another could

⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 230-3.

⁶ See Hansen (1989) for a detailed overview of the reception history.

⁷ Krell (2005), 16-44 gives a lively discussion of the controversy, and a translation. The premises under which Hegel's authorship have been doubted seem questionable to me, but the tone and programme of the *Systemprogramm* does seem to reflect more than an individual effort. It is placed here, in the chapter on

describe the approaches of all three: ‘Ich bin nun überzeugt, daß der höchste Akt der Vernunft, der, in dem sie alle Ideen umfasst, ein ästhetischer Akt ist.’⁸ Aesthetics is understood as a realm of independent philosophical validity, which is no longer subordinated to, but exists in a reciprocal relation with reason. Art is not to be an object of philosophy, but a mode of philosophical reflection. Though the text is deeply embedded in the Kantian-Schillerian tradition, seeing aesthetics as the realm of mediation between human capacities, it goes further in that it suggests that this mediation has an independent philosophical value.⁹ What for Schiller appeared as a temporary state of harmony, an annulment of time within time, is for the author of the *Systemprogramm* a permanent means of directing philosophical inquiry towards ‘die Idee, die alle vereinigt, die Idee der *Schönheit*, das Wort in höherem platonischen Sinne genommen.’¹⁰ Early Idealism’s project is a kind of ‘aesthetic Platonism’ in that it sees sensible beauty as a source of philosophical enlightenment.¹¹ The confrontation of Plato’s dialogues (the *Timaeus*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus* alone were studied at the Stift) with Kant’s Third Critique is formative for all three, and the *Systemprogramm* can be understood as an effort to recover a Platonic ontology of the beautiful after Kant’s division of cognitive faculties.¹²

The *Systemprogramm* articulates its ontological programme through a critique of contemporary alienation, which is contrasted with the harmony of antiquity. This reflects the

Schelling, because it introduces themes that were important at one point to all the *Stiftler* – not to suggest that Schelling is the author.

⁸ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 235: ‘I am convinced that the highest act of reason, that in which it embraces all ideas, is an aesthetic act.’

⁹ Henrich (1984), 156.

¹⁰ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 235: ‘the idea that unifies all, the idea of beauty, the word understood in the higher Platonic sense.’

¹¹ See Düsing (1981), 113-7. He suggests, quite reasonably, that the *Systemprogramm* dates to 1797, when Hegel was in close contact with Hölderlin.

¹² See Jamme and Völkel (2003) I, 134-68 for studies of Plato at the Stift.

importance of Schiller's *Ästhetische Briefe*, yet Idealism's approach is distinguished by its absolutization of art: 'Die Poesie [...] wird am Ende wieder, was sie am Anfang war – *Lehrerin der Menschheit*; denn es gibt keine Philosophie, keine Geschichte mehr, die Dichtkunst allein wird alle übrigen Wissenschaften und Künste überleben.'¹³ Poetry appears as the origin and aim of culture, the means through which reason is realized. Echoing Schiller, the fragment suggests that such an aesthetic state was realized in antiquity, but has gone lost in the increasingly fragmented society of modernity. Early Idealism's 'idea of beauty' is a means of leading modernity to an aesthetic form of reason, which would reconcile the alienation of the time: 'wir müssen eine neue Mythologie haben, diese Mythologie aber muß im Dienste der Ideen stehen, sie muß eine Mythologie der *Vernunft* werden.'¹⁴ For the *Systemprogramm* author, a new mythology represents the means of mediating reason to a whole population. It would establish a complementarity of philosophical reason and mythological *Sinnlichkeit*: 'die Mythologie muß philosophisch werden und das Volk vernünftig, und die Philosophie muß mythologisch werden, um die Philosophen sinnlich zu machen.'¹⁵ The 'mythology of reason' would articulate the reciprocity of art and philosophy in a comprehensive, transformative act, and be 'das letzte größte Werk der Menschheit.'¹⁶ In German Idealism, Schiller's call for aesthetic education as a mediation between reason and sense takes on a social and eschatological tone. The experience of beauty is not merely individually improving, but creates the conditions for a social transformation. In a letter to Schelling of 1795, Hegel articulates the hopes for a

¹³ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 235: 'Poetry will at the end be what it was at the beginning – teacher of humanity. Because there is no philosophy, no history beyond, poetry alone will outlive all the other sciences and arts.'

¹⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 236: 'We must have a new mythology, this mythology must however stand in the service of the ideas, it must be a mythology of reason.'

¹⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 236: 'mythology must become philosophical, and the people rational, and philosophy must become mythological, to make the philosophers sensory.'

¹⁶ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 236: 'the last greatest work of humanity.'

cultural ‘revolution’ on the basis of the new philosophical impulses: ‘Vom Kantischen System und dessen höchster Vollendung erwarte ich eine Revolution in Deutschland.’¹⁷ The mention of ‘Deutschland’ here is noteworthy, as no such political entity existed at the time. Philosophy and aesthetics suggested a means of contact between the far-flung German-speaking people, and a locus of integration that would realize revolutionary ideals without violence.

The hope for a ‘mythology of reason’ was common to Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling, as it was to the ‘aesthetic revolution’ of Friedrich Schlegel and the Jena Romantics.¹⁸ Schlegel similarly connected the hope for a ‘new mythology’ with the development of idealist philosophy (meaning primarily Fichte): ‘Kann eine neue Mythologie sich nur aus der innersten Tiefe des Geistes wie durch sich selbst herausarbeiten, so finden wir einen sehr bedeutenden Wink und eine merkwürdige Bestätigung für das was wir suchen in dem großen Phänomen des Zeitalters, im Idealismus!’¹⁹ Schlegel, like the thinkers of German Idealism, saw the transcendental investigation of subjectivity as the basis for a new form of thought that would unite philosophical and aesthetic modes. Yet, for all their agreement on the need for a new form, this desideratum was fulfilled in opposite ways: where Romanticism turned to fragments, irony, and the novel, Idealism found the answer in totality, philosophical systems, and tragedy. In realizing the ‘mythology of reason,’ one might say, the Romantics laid emphasis on the mythological, the thinkers of Idealism on the

¹⁷ Hegel, *Briefe* 1, 23 (to Schelling, 16.4.1795): ‘From the Kantian system and its highest completion I expect a revolution in Germany.’

¹⁸ See Jaeschke (1990).

¹⁹ F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 2, 313: ‘If a new mythology can only work itself out as if by itself from the inmost depths of the spirit, then we find a very meaningful suggestion and a noteworthy proof for that which we seek in the great phenomenon of the age, in Idealism!’ Schlegel understands his own work as Idealism, though today the term ‘Romantic’ (also his own) is more common.

rational.²⁰ Both groups understood the condition of modernity, in contrast to antiquity, as fundamentally divided. Early Romanticism accepted this division as unbridgeable and proceeded down an infinite, playful regress of meaning. Idealism, on the other hand, was concerned primarily to reconcile the division of the modern self. This was an ontological, and not a subjective, problem, and demanded a comprehensive philosophical solution. Tragedy, as a representation of conflict leading to *catharsis*, fulfilled Idealism's hope of reconciliation, and became the exemplary poetic-philosophical form.

Tragedy at the crossroads: the Philosophische Briefe

Schelling's fundamental philosophical dilemma, like that of nearly every thinker of the time, is created by Kant's division between theoretical and practical reason, and the apparent dualism that results.²¹ Yet Schelling sees Kantian critique not as a philosophical system in itself, but as the delineation of the conditions of any possible system.²² The transcendental analytic appears to Schelling as a primarily negative effort, sweeping away the untenable assumptions of previous philosophy, but not setting a positive course for the future. Or rather, allowing for two equally justified, and seemingly irreconcilable courses, beginning with either freedom or nature. The elaboration of a philosophy based on the subjective conditions of knowledge leads to 'Criticism,' embodied in the work of Fichte. Fichte's philosophy postulates the subject's unconditioned freedom and constructs an external world in relation to the I, and so leads to an 'absolute subject.' The alternative, 'Dogmatism,' is

²⁰ Stadler (1990), 65.

²¹ This is a vast simplification, but should be sufficient for understanding Schelling's theory of tragedy, and emphasizes the continuity in his thought with previous theories – most of all Schiller's.

²² Schelling, *AA* I.3, 68.

represented by Spinoza's monistic thought,²³ which had become notorious in the 1780s in the *Pantheismusstreit* between F.H. Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn. The Spinozist position, as Schelling understands it, is a philosophy of the 'absolute object,' which affords the natural world the only reality and suggests that human subjectivity and freedom are merely epiphenomena (hence the theological danger). Schelling's 1795-6 *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* describes the problem: both worldviews are internally consistent, yet mutually exclusive. 'Eins von beiden muß geschehen. Entweder kein Subject, und ein absolutes Object, oder kein Object und ein absolutes Subject.'²⁴ If one pursues practical reason, the absolute subject leads to a transcendental philosophy that excludes any objective reality; if one pursues theoretical reason, the absolute object leads to a philosophy of nature that precludes subjective freedom. The pressing task for Schelling's philosophy is to harmonize these two discordant worldviews by demonstrating their ultimate identity.

Schelling's Idealism consists in the conviction that the opposed philosophical systems result from a division in the originary unity of 'the absolute,' conceived as the ground of all human existence and cognition. The conflict of the two systems is undecidable because they both offer means of approaching the absolute, but from different sides: 'Beide Systeme gehen auf Aufhebung jenes Widerspruchs zwischen Subject und Object – auf absolute *Identität*.'²⁵ Criticism places this identity in reflection, Dogmatism in nature, yet both are describing the same unity. The divisions experienced in reality arise from the fact that the absolute, as a state of total identity, can only be experienced as difference: 'Nur dadurch, daß wir aus dem

²³ There is also, particularly in the first four letters, a polemic against what Schelling terms *Dogmatizismus*, the attempt of Tübingen theologians to harmonize Kantian criticism with a theoretical certainty of God – a perversion of Criticism that is to be distinguished from the consequent forms of both philosophies.

²⁴ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 65: 'One of the two must occur: either no subject, and an absolute object, or no object and an absolute subject.'

²⁵ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 97: 'Both systems aim at the sublation of that contradiction between subject and object – at absolute identity.'

Absoluten heraustreten, entsteht der Widerstreit gegen dasselbe, und nur durch diesen *ursprünglichen* Widerstreit im menschlichen Geiste selbst der Streit der Philosophen.’²⁶

Schelling offers a quasi-historical narrative, which sees humanity as having emerged from a state of unconscious identity with nature; in becoming self-conscious (which entails distinguishing between subject and object), man opposes what are ultimately one, and so becomes opaque to himself. Man’s dual character, as a subject of freedom and object of nature, appears rooted in the unity of the absolute. Schelling’s therapeutic effort attempts to understand the opposition of Criticism and Dogmatism as the real – and therefore necessarily divided – manifestation of a single ontological truth.

Neither Criticism nor Dogmatism can prove the validity of its first principle, and so both systems are essentially proleptic, awaiting a validation that philosophy cannot provide.²⁷ Nor can one, according to Schelling, deduce the unity of the two systems rationally; the only means of showing the identity of theoretical and practical reason is through an action in which necessity and freedom are simultaneously realized:

Für beide Systeme bleibt also nichts übrig als, das Absolute, da es nicht Gegenstand des *Wissens* sein konnte, zum Gegenstand des *Handelns* zu machen, oder die *Handlung* zu *fodern*, durch welche das Absolute realisiert wird. In dieser nothwendigen Handlung *vereinigen* sich *beide* Systeme.²⁸

The question for Schelling is how the concept of freedom, which cannot be an object of theoretical reason, can nevertheless be experienced.²⁹ As Kant and Schiller had argued, this is only possible through negative representation, an action in which the freedom of the subject

²⁶ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 59: ‘Only in so far as we step out of the absolute does the conflict with it begin, and only through this originary conflict in the human spirit itself does the conflict of philosophers begin.’

²⁷ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 80.

²⁸ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 103: ‘For both systems there thus remains nothing more than to make the absolute, since it cannot be an object of knowledge, into an object of action, or to demand the action through which the absolute is realised. In this necessary action both systems become one.’

²⁹ Ferris (2000), 96. On Schelling’s effort to demonstrate freedom in the *Briefe*, see Boenke (1998).

shows itself in conflict with external necessity. From Schiller's 1792-3 essays, Schelling derives the notion that the sublime action of the tragic protagonist causes human freedom to appear negatively.³⁰ He places this demonstration, though, in a new ontological context: the sublime does not represent the ascendancy of individual freedom in the conflict with natural determination, but the absolute existence of such freedom. Where Schiller ascribes sublimity to the subject, Schelling finds it in the absolute.

From the beginning of the *Briefe*, the philosophical conflict is figured in the language of tragedy. The form of the letter (and there are definite echoes of the exchange with Hegel)³¹ allows Schelling a latitude that corresponds to his aim of critiquing both systems without reaching a final decision. Human reason appears as the stage for the tragic collision of freedom and necessity. The first letter introduces the conflict of human freedom against an overwhelming natural power: 'Dieser Kampf gegen das Unermeßliche [ist] nicht nur das Erhabenste, was der Mensch zu denken vermag, sondern meinem Sinne nach selbst das Princip aller Erhabenheit.'³² The problem of the *Briefe* is to understand the ontological basis of this 'principle of sublimity.' Neither Criticism nor Dogmatism seems to explain it: Criticism tends, through the focus on the activity of the subject, to undermine the power of nature, while Dogmatism threatens to rob the individual of the power of self-determination. Sublime struggle appears theoretically impossible for critical or dogmatic philosophy, since it requires an acknowledgement of the claims of the other. Tragedy, though, which depicts both freedom and necessity at their most extreme, demonstrates the possibility of their identity.

³⁰ See Courtine (1993), 166-8.

³¹ See Schelling, *AA* III.1, 20-3 (to Hegel 4.2.1795).

³² Schelling, *AA* I.3, 50: 'This struggle against the immeasurable is not only the most sublime that man is able to think, but in my opinion the principle of all sublimity.'

Schelling's final letter comes full circle to the question of sublime struggle: 'Noch Eines bleibt übrig – zu *wissen*, daß es eine objective Macht giebt, die unsrer Freiheit Vernichtung droht, und mit dieser festen und gewissen Ueberzeugung im Herzen – *gegen* sie zu kämpfen, seiner ganzen Freiheit aufzubieten, und *so* unterzugehen.'³³ This is where tragedy becomes necessary, since it shows a hero whose freedom is endangered by external causes, but who nevertheless struggles against them, proving the capacity for freedom and the power of necessity at once. The futility of such struggle acknowledges the principle of Dogmatism, while its very possibility proves the postulate of Criticism. By vindicating both human freedom and natural causality, tragedy gives an insight into the undivided state of the absolute. It does not provide a conceptual proof of this unity, but a pre-rational, aesthetic perception, a possibility that 'wenn sie vor dem Lichte der Vernunft längst verschwunden ist, doch für die Kunst – für das Höchste in der Kunst – aufbewahrt werden muß.'³⁴ Art, for Schelling, does not end the theoretical conflict of critical and dogmatic worldviews, but shows, fleetingly and intuitively, the possibility of their reconciliation.³⁵ The struggle of the tragic hero enacts the struggle of philosophy and makes the absolute identity of freedom and necessity sensible.

Schelling goes on to elaborate the philosophical conflict as a question of tragic reconciliation. Greek tragedy's depiction of struggle against fate appears as the origin of the contradiction that plagues modern thought:

³³ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 106: 'Only one thing remains – to know that there is an objective power which threatens our freedom with destruction, and with this strong and certain conviction at heart, to struggle against it, to offer up one's whole freedom, and thus to go down.'

³⁴ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 106: 'even though it has long vanished in the light of reason, must still be retained for art – for the highest in art.'

³⁵ Scheier (1996), 81.

Man hat oft gefragt, wie die griechische Vernunft die Widersprüche ihrer Tragödie ertragen konnte. Ein Sterblicher – vom Verhängniß zum Verbrecher bestimmt, selbst *gegen* das Verhängniß kämpfend, und doch fürchterlich bestraft für das Verbrechen, das ein Werk des Schicksals war!³⁶

The unique achievement of the Greeks was to represent the possibility of freedom even in the moment of absolute necessity, a contradiction that can barely be borne. Yet Greek tragedy, for Schelling, is characterized by an internal dynamic of consolation, which made it ‘erträglich’ to human reason.³⁷ The tragic hero – and Schelling is clearly thinking of the Oedipus of the *OT* – becomes a criminal not through a free action, but through the work of fate. Though objectively, he is undeniably guilty, he remains subjectively innocent of the crime, and defends his innocence against the necessity that would condemn him. This opposition of innocence and guilt is a commonplace of eighteenth-century discussions of the *OT*, but Schelling gives it a Schillerian twist by finding a vindication of freedom in the struggle against fate.³⁸ ‘Daß der Verbrecher, der doch nur der Uebermacht des Schicksals unterlag, doch noch *bestraft* wurde war Anerkennung menschlicher Freiheit, *Ehre* die der Freiheit gebührte.’³⁹ This process of opposition and acknowledgment is fundamental to idealist efforts at reconciliation, and offers a form of consolation in destruction.

Schelling’s Oedipus is a heroic character, who, by accepting his own guilt and punishing himself, simultaneously proves the power of fate and human freedom. Schelling recalls the opening words of the *Briefe*: ‘Es war ein *großer* Gedanke, willig auch die Strafe für ein *unvermeidliches* Verbrechen zu tragen, um so durch Verlust seiner Freiheit selbst

³⁶ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 106: ‘One has often asked how Greek reason could bear the contradictions of their tragedy. A mortal – determined by destiny to become a criminal, himself fighting against this destiny, and still awfully punished for the crime, which was the work of fate!’

³⁷ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 106.

³⁸ Lurje (2004), 229-32.

³⁹ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 107: ‘That the criminal, who was only laid low by the strength of fate, still more was punished, was an acknowledgement of human freedom, honour which was due to freedom.’

eben diese Freiheit zu beweisen, und noch mit einer Erklärung des freien Willens unterzugehen.⁴⁰ The sublimity of tragedy appears when the hero chooses what fate had ordained. In this moment, freedom and necessity appear as an identity, simultaneously mortified and vindicated.⁴¹ The importance of Schiller for this description should not lead one to overlook the ontological turn: Schelling lays the tragic conflict deeper than Schiller did, in the originary absolute. Whereas for Schiller human existence is tragic, for Schelling human essence is tragic.

Schelling emphasizes, however, that Greek tragedy's reconciliation is confined to the aesthetic realm: 'Aber ein solcher Kampf ist nur zum Behuf der tragischen Kunst denkbar: zum System der Handelns könnte er schon deßwegen nicht werden, weil ein solches System ein Titanengeschlecht voraussetzte.'⁴² Tragic heroes appear as superhuman beings, endowed with the strength to demonstrate their freedom even in the moment of destruction. Whether such an action is possible in the present is unclear, and the conflict of the philosophical systems does not seem to be resolved. Tragedy is therefore of limited use to Schelling, since its realization of the absolute is only possible aesthetically. Schelling's turn to tragedy in the *Briefe* has a paradoxical aim: to advance philosophy by regress to a no-longer-valid origin.⁴³ The account of tragedy is a microcosm of the *Briefe* as a whole, a representation of philosophical opposition as unresolvable and essential.⁴⁴ Schelling interprets this in a positive light in the closing paragraph: 'Nicht klagen wollen wir, sondern froh sein, daß wir endlich

⁴⁰ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 107: 'It was a great thought, willingly to bear the punishment for an unavoidable crime, and so through the loss of freedom to prove that very freedom, and with a declaration of free will to go down.'

⁴¹ Courtine (1993), 161.

⁴² Schelling, *AA* I.3, 108: 'But such a struggle is only imaginable for the purpose of tragic art: it could not become a system of action even for this reason alone, that such a system would presuppose a race of titans.'

⁴³ Hühn (1998), 115-7.

⁴⁴ George (2005), 144.

am Scheideweg stehen, wo die Trennung unvermeidlich ist.’⁴⁵ The echo of Oedipus at the place where three roads meet reinforces the affinity of ancient tragedy and modern philosophy: both depict a fundamental ambiguity of human freedom. The ‘fate’ of philosophy is that it must either accord the subject or the object primacy, choosing one path while neglecting the other. In the *Briefe*, Schelling seeks, like Oedipus, to determine the cause of this double bind. The ultimate causality that Oedipus ascribes to Apollo, Schelling finds in the tragic division of the absolute.

The organ and document: the System des transzendentalen Idealismus

The *Philosophische Briefe* ultimately find Greek tragedy aporetic for philosophy. Though tragedy represents the possibility of a reconciliation of freedom and necessity in the absolute, it cannot guide real action in the present, and therefore cannot form the basis for a philosophical system. Tragedy explains how philosophy arrived at its crossroads, but does not point the way forward. Schelling’s *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800) returns to the relation of art and philosophy, but draws a more optimistic conclusion. Though the *System* at no point mentions individual works, the discussion of art, the following will argue, is pervaded by the tragic language of the *Philosophische Briefe*. In the *System*, Schelling conceives of the role of art through the model of tragedy. Tragedy’s representation and reconciliation of contradiction becomes for Schelling the programmatic function of all artwork and philosophy. Yet in seeing tragic art as the conclusion of philosophical reason, Schelling arrives at a new aporia: the specificity of artistic experience – most of all the sublimity of tragedy – is lost in philosophical speculation.

⁴⁵ Schelling, *AA* I.3, 111: ‘We do not wish to mourn, but rather to be happy, that we stand finally at the crossroads, where division is unavoidable.’

Schelling's goal in the *System* remains to ground the relationship between subject and object without falling into critical solipsism or dogmatic determinism. In the years between the *Philosophische Briefe* and the *System*, Schelling had pursued the two paths concurrently, publishing works in the Kantian-Fichtean tradition of transcendental philosophy and, separately, on natural philosophy. The combination of the two approaches would – Schelling believed – lead to a deduction of the absolute, as the ground of both the subject and nature. The *System* attempts this synthesis, arguing that the subject, in order to have knowledge of any object, must first have a pre-theoretical consciousness of itself. In this self-consciousness, which Kant had termed 'intellektuelle Anschauung,' the individual would be aware of itself as a subject of freedom. For Kant, such an intuition was impossible, since it would be based on *a priori* conceptual knowledge (whereas intuition must be gained from sensory experience). Schelling accepts that intellectual intuition cannot be proven to exist, but nevertheless postulates it in order to proceed:

Das Ich ist nichts anderes als ein *sich selbst zum Objekt werdendes Produciren*, d.h. ein intellectuelles Anschauen. Nun ist aber dieses intellectuelle Anschauen selbst ein absolut freies Handeln, diese Anschauung kann also nicht demonstriert, sie kann nur gefordert werden; aber das Ich ist selbst nur diese Anschauung, also ist das *Ich*, als Prinzip der Philosophie, selbst nur etwas, das *postuliert* wird.⁴⁶

This is one side of the dilemma of the *Briefe*: human freedom cannot be deduced rationally. Self-consciousness, Schelling finds, is characterized by the same opacity as human autonomy.⁴⁷ In order to prove the freedom of the individual to itself, philosophy must make conscious what in intellectual intuition is unconscious. The final question of transcendental

⁴⁶ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 62: 'The I is nothing other than a producing that makes itself into an object, that is, an intellectual intuiting. But since this intellectual intuiting itself is an absolutely free action, this intuition therefore cannot be demonstrated, it can only be demanded. But the I is itself only this intuition, therefore the I, as a principal of philosophy, is itself only something that is postulated.'

⁴⁷ See Lypp (1972), 106-8.

philosophy is thus, ‘wie dem Ich selbst der letzte Grund der Harmonie zwischen Subjectivem und Objectivem objectiv werde?’⁴⁸

Art, Schelling argues, is created by a union of conscious and unconscious processes within the subject, and so mirrors the dialectic of self-consciousness. As the product of conscious and unconscious activity, it proves that the subject is constituted both subjectively and objectively. Art creates an ‘aesthetic intuition,’ in which both sides of self-consciousness are objectified, accomplishing a mediation of thinking to itself.⁴⁹ Art completes the philosophical system by making intellectual intuition objective, and is thus ‘das einzige wahre und ewige Organon zugleich und Document der Philosophie.’⁵⁰ Art closes the circle that began with intellectual intuition (a mediation of subject and object *within* the subject) by showing the objective possibility of mediation. It both secures and completes the deductions of reason by grounding theory in a practice. The temporal relation of art and philosophy, which Schelling characterized as succession in the *Briefe*, becomes in the *System* a coexistence.

The language of Schelling’s deduction of the role of art points unmistakably to tragedy, to a conception of existence as fundamentally dual and contradictory. The role of art is to reconcile the original division of the absolute in a kind of philosophical *catharsis*: ‘Die Philosophie geht aus von einer unendlichen Entzweyung entgegengesetzter Thätigkeiten; aber auf derselben Entzweyung beruht auch jede ästhetische Production, und dieselbe wird durch

⁴⁸ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 310: ‘how does the final ground of harmony between subjective and objective become objective to the I itself?’

⁴⁹ Schneider (1983), 231.

⁵⁰ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 328: ‘only true and eternal organ and at once the document of philosophy.’

jede einzelne Darstellung der Kunst vollständig aufgehoben.⁵¹ Schelling's description of the work of art recalls that of the tragic subject: both negate the fundamental division of philosophy by demonstrating the reality of both principles. Schelling describes artistic creation as the product of an external force acting through subjectivity of the artist, and creating an object in which freedom and necessity are indistinguishable:

Dieses unveränderlich Identische, was zu keinem Bewußtseyn gelangen kann, und nur aus dem Product widerstrahlt, ist für das Producirende eben das, was für das Handelnde das Schicksal ist, d.h. eine dunkle unbekannte Gewalt, die zu dem Stückwerk der Freyheit das Vollendete, oder das Objective hinzubringt.⁵²

Schelling returns to the *Briefe*'s description of tragedy as the interpenetration of fate and free will, but with an essential difference: the concept of struggle has been set aside, or at least depotentialized.⁵³ The artist does not oppose the 'dark, unknown violence' of fate as the tragic hero does, but rather lets it act through him. Tragedy's epiphany of the absolute in paradox has become a pervasive fact of existence, and not the distinctive knowledge of ancient Greece.

Schelling describes the tragic interpenetration of freedom and necessity as a constant in human action. Freedom is never experienced without its opposite: 'Ein solches Eingreifen einer verborgenen Nothwendigkeit in die menschliche Freiheit wird vorausgesetzt nicht etwa nur von der tragischen Kunst, deren ganze Existenz auf jener Voraussetzung beruht, sondern

⁵¹ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 326: 'Philosophy begins from an infinite division of opposed activities; but any aesthetic production is based on the same division, which is completely negated through each single representation of art.'

⁵² Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 316: 'This unchangeable identical, which cannot attain to any consciousness, and only shines out from the product, is for the one producing just what fate is for the one acting, that is a dark, unknown violence, which brings the completeness or the objective to the piece-work of freedom.'

⁵³ Boenke (1998), 156.

selbst im Wirken und Handeln.’⁵⁴ This grounds an analogy of tragedy and history. The understanding of history, Schelling points out, is based on a tension between result and intentionality, in which subjective freedom become indistinguishable from objective necessity: ‘Die Geschichte aber objectiv angesehen ist nichts anderes als eine Reihe von Begebenheiten, die nur subjective, als eine Reihe freyer Handlungen erscheint.’⁵⁵ From the historical viewpoint, the freedom of the individual is subsumed in a string of causality. This means that subjectively free actions, when viewed objectively, appear motivated by a kind of fate. History thus brings to bear the same identity of freedom and necessity that tragedy (and art in general) does.⁵⁶ This identity no longer appears only in sublime action, but is documented constantly in the character of historical existence. The difference from Schiller’s analogy of tragedy and history is striking: where Schiller sees the chaos of history transformed into rational causality in tragedy, Schelling sees tragedy as a mirror of historical reason. All human beings have become tragic heroes in the *Schauspiel* of history.⁵⁷

A similar normalization is clear in Schelling’s discussion of the sublime. The experience no longer brings with it the distinctive Schillerian validation of human freedom, but seems distinguished from beauty only in its form:

Wo Schönheit ist, der unendliche Widerspruch im Object selbst aufgehoben ist, anstatt daß, wo Erhabenheit ist, der Widerspruch nicht im Object selbst vereinigt, sondern nur bis zu einer Höhe gesteigert ist, bey welcher er in der

⁵⁴ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 293: ‘Such an intervention of a hidden necessity in human freedom is assumed not only in tragic art, whose entire existence is based on such an assumption, but in effecting and acting themselves.’

⁵⁵ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 296: ‘History, viewed objectively, is nothing other than a series of events, which only appears subjectively as a series of free actions.’

⁵⁶ Loock (2007), 460.

⁵⁷ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 301. See Moiso (2004), 452-9.

Anschauung unwillkürlich sich aufhebt, welches alsdann ebensoviel ist, als ob er im Object aufgehoben wäre.⁵⁸

Schelling seems to reject Schiller for Kant, seeing the sublime as a property only of the viewing subject and not of the object (or action) itself. The description of sublime harmony now lacks the triumphant quality of Schiller's or Schelling's earlier descriptions of tragedy.⁵⁹ The transformation of sensible disharmony into rational pleasure takes place without agency, and so does not afford the second-order acknowledgement of the power of freedom. The experience of the sublime loses all pathos. What is so striking about the *System* is that Schelling figures tragedy and art in general in typical idealist terms as a conflict of freedom and necessity, but barely poses reconciliation as a problem. For the *System*'s 'aesthetic absolutism,' art offers proof of the unity of theoretical and practical reason, yet seems to have no independent role.⁶⁰ Tragedy's resolution of opposition does not appear as a struggle, but as an immanent synthesis. The absolute autonomy of the *System*'s self-reconciling work of art is ultimately no less aporetic than the merely aesthetic reconciliation of the *Briefe*.

II. The problem of reconciliation: *Die Philosophie der Kunst*

The *System*'s pan-tragic philosophy is ultimately a non-tragic philosophy. The irony of the *System* is that, in affording art the greatest value of practically any philosopher in history, Schelling makes an account of the specificity of artistic works impossible. All works, according to the *System*, manifest the same unity of conscious and unconscious action, and

⁵⁸ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 321: 'Where beauty is, the infinite contradiction is sublated in the object itself; whereas, where sublimity is, the contradiction is not united in the object, but only raised to a height, in which it sublates itself unintentionally in the intuition, which is then just the same as if it were sublated in the object.'

⁵⁹ Looock (2007) 461 points to Schiller's *Ästhetische Briefe* as a source for such a harmonious concept of beauty. This is entirely consonant with Chapter 3's contention that sublimity and beauty are two fundamentally conflicting lines of thought for Schiller; Schelling here (and only here) opts for the beautiful rather than the sublime.

⁶⁰ Lypp (1972), 133.

reach the same harmony of freedom and necessity. Artistic process serves a programmatic function for the *System*, but the *System* does not reflect in any substantial way on artistic products. Schelling seems to have recognized this deficit. His lectures on the *Philosophie der Kunst* (delivered and circulated between 1802-5, but only published posthumously) are based on a new philosophical approach, known as *Identitätsphilosophie*. Schelling's approach in his identity philosophy unifies the two strands of thought that in the *System* could only be reconciled in intuition: transcendental (subjective) and natural (objective) philosophy. Schelling begins now from the postulate of absolute identity (rather than subjective cognition), and seeks to show how the unity of the absolute manifests itself in reality. In order to explain how an unchanging identity can give rise to the diversity of existence, he introduces three *Potenzen*: ideality, reality, and *Indifferenz* (in which the two are so balanced as to be indistinguishable). The absolute, Schelling argues, is never experienced whole, but in varying degrees of sensuality (real), intelligibility (ideal), or in a balance of the two (*Indifferenz*). All existence manifests the absolute identity of real and ideal, but with a certain accent, depending on its reigning potency. Just as a single organism can have body parts with differing characteristics, so the absolute can be unified while still being differentiated. The concept of potences allows Schelling to acknowledge diversity within reality without giving up the postulate of an ideal unity. Consequently, the task of philosophy changes from transcendental analysis to 'construction,' by which Schelling means the process of showing how the real proceeds from the absolute in its various potences. Schelling's identity philosophy seeks to show the essential unity that lies behind all difference, and therefore only recognizes the particular in so far as it points to the universal. At the same time, however, the

postulate of potences allows for an infinite diversity against the universalist background.⁶¹ The tension between these two imperatives, to demonstrate identity and to account for specificity, is a characteristic of all philosophical systems of the arts, but is particularly self-conscious in Schelling's identity philosophy.

The *Philosophie der Kunst* (*PdK*) begins with a definition of art and its relation to philosophy, which seems to revise the relation of the *System*. Philosophy and art relate to one another now as *Urbild* and *Gegenbild*, respectively, of the absolute: where philosophy represents the absolute identity of reality and ideality to the intellect, art reflects this identity in sensible form, as real indifference. Art, as a sensuous medium, begins in the real and reaches indifference with the ideal in beauty. Philosophy, however, in recognizing the potences of the absolute and formulating them conceptually, is '*Der vollkommene Ausdruck [...] der absoluten Identität als solcher oder des Göttlichen, sofern es das Auflösende aller Potenzen [ist]*.'⁶² For Schelling, beauty is the sensible expression of what reason knows as truth, and thus forms a reflective medium without which philosophy would be impossible.⁶³ Yet it is philosophical construction rather than artistic representation that now has the task of leading back to the ground of all opposition. The difference from the *System* is clear: where earlier art was a means of making objective the unity for which subjective philosophy strives in vain, now it is art that is subsumed by philosophy.

Mythology plays an essential role in the *PdK*, as '*die nothwendige Bedingung und der erste Stoff aller Kunst*,' a conception that looks back to the *Systemprogramm*.⁶⁴ Mythology

⁶¹ Wanning (1988), 39.

⁶² Schelling, *SW* I.5, 381: 'the full expression of absolute identity as such or of the divine, to the extent that it is the dissolving of all potences.'

⁶³ Barth (1991), 21.

⁶⁴ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 405: 'the necessary condition and the first material of all art.'

for Schelling is the sensible means of representing the absolute, as it is incorporated in divinity. Schelling's interest in myth and desire for a rebirth of mythology was a constant through his career, and would culminate in his late *Philosophie der Mythologie* (1842-6). In the *System*, too, mythology had been crucial, as 'das Mittelglied der Rückkehr der Wissenschaft zur Poesie,' which Schelling hoped for at some indefinite point in the future.⁶⁵ Schelling's construction of mythology in the *PdK* helps to describe the difference of ancient and modern (by which he understands Protestant Christian) culture as logically necessary – that is, as reflecting the division that the absolute undergoes in entering reality. Greek mythology is oriented to the here and now and is characterized by a natural, realistic potency, while Christian art's eschatology makes it fundamentally historical, looking forward to the ideal and the infinite. Christian mythological consciousness appears as deficient to Schelling because its divinities are not experienced in reality, but set off in the past and future. Schelling describes the transition in mythology as a fall narrative, in which man loses the grounding in the real that had previously existed:

Der Stoff der griechischen Mythologie war die Natur, die allgemeine Anschauung des Universums als Natur, der Stoff der christlichen die allgemeine Anschauung des Universums als Geschichte, als einer Welt der Vorsehung. Dies ist der eigentliche Wendepunkt der antiken und modernen Religion und Poesie. Die moderne Welt beginnt, indem sich der Mensch von der Natur losreißt aber da er noch keine andere Heimath hat, so fühlt er sich verlassen. Wo ein solches Gefühl sich über ein ganzes Geschlecht ausbreitet, wendet es sich freiwillig oder durch inneren Trieb gezwungen der ideellen Welt zu, um sich dort einheimisch zu machen.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Schelling, *AA* I.9.1, 329: 'the medium of the return of science to poetry.'

⁶⁶ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 427: 'The material of Greek mythology was nature, the general intuition of the universe as nature, the material of Christian mythology was the general intuition of the universe as history, as a world of providence. This is the actual turning point of ancient and modern religion and poetry. The modern world begins when man tears himself loose from nature, but since he does not yet have any other home, he feels abandoned. When such a feeling comes over an entire race, it turns either voluntarily or compelled by an inner urge to the ideal world to make itself at home there.'

Schelling sees modernity as defined by loss, by the absence of ancient gods and beliefs. The consciousness of history that has been gained appears as cold comfort for the loss of a sense of being at home in the real world.

Schelling's description of the transition from ancient to modern religion, unusually for his time, seeks to determine the cause of the opposed worldviews.⁶⁷ With meaning no longer present in earthly existence, Christianity turns to the future, awaiting the redemption of finite existence. This makes modern art for Schelling a deficient form of ancient, since the absolute is represented as beyond reality.⁶⁸ Seeing modern art as essentially lacking, Schelling describes it existing 'nur als Uebergang oder als in der Nichtabsolutheit im Gegensatz mit der ersten.'⁶⁹ Like the *Systemprogramm* and the *System*, the *PdK* brings modernity's lack of mythology to the fore. A new mythology, Schelling hopes, will overcome the division between real and ideal introduced by Christian understanding of history. Schelling imagines this as an age beyond history, in which history's 'Nacheinander in ein Zumal [sich] verwandeln wird.'⁷⁰ Negation of historical time in artistic identity is the goal of Schelling's method of construction and of his aesthetic-philosophical programme. This adds a dimension of pathos to the *PdK*: it is in part an effort to prove that art in modernity can achieve the same heights it did in antiquity (which in the *Briefe* appeared impossible).⁷¹

Yet at the same time as Schelling seeks to demonstrate the inessential nature of history, he is thoroughly aware of historical difference. The opposition of Greek and

⁶⁷ Zhai (2007), 169.

⁶⁸ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 430.

⁶⁹ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 456: 'only as transition or as in the non-absoluteness in opposition to the first.'

⁷⁰ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 449: 'its succession will transform into a simultaneity.'

⁷¹ Fackenheim (1996), 89.

Christian mythologies forms the basis for a parallel of the content of ancient and modern art that structures Schelling's entire discussion. Schelling's focus on art as a relation of man to divinity reverses Schlegel's and Schiller's opposition of ancient beauty and modern sublimity. Ancient art knows no ideal world and so seeks to make the finite itself infinite; this 'Aufstand' of the real against the ideal is the principle of sublimity, on which ancient art is based. Modern art, however, seeks to shed its finitude and reach the infinite through 'Hingabe' of the individual to the divine; this leads it to the principle of beauty.⁷² As in the *Philosophische Briefe*, the immanence of divine meaning made the Greeks uniquely capable of tragedy. Since they were not seduced by an ideal world lying outside of reality, the Greeks were a freer and therefore more sublime people. Despite Schelling's contention that the opposition of ancient and modern art is 'ein bloß formeller, so die Konstruktion eben in der Negation oder Aufhebung bestehend,' he shows an unusual sensitivity to the differences of Greek and Christian worldviews.⁷³ Far more than most thinkers of the time, he grounds the opposition of antiquity in modernity in historical circumstances – even while insisting that history is inessential.

Schelling's identity philosophy is proverbially considered ahistorical, a reproach that gains much of its validity through the retrospective contrast with Hegel's thought.⁷⁴ Yet Schelling's approach is more audacious in its relation to history than is generally recognized: his view of historical difference does not ignore, but rather negates historical temporality. Art is a moment of insight into the identity that historical existence obscures.⁷⁵ Schelling's construction recognizes fully the historicity of phenomena, but denies that historical process

⁷² Schelling, *SW* I.5, 430.

⁷³ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 372: 'a merely formal one, so its construction consisting in negation or sublation.'

⁷⁴ Explicitly in Szondi (1974d), 307; essential for Szondi's critique is Habermas (1954), 196-8.

⁷⁵ Wanning (1988), 102.

has any ontological validity. In comparison to the constant oppositions of antiquity and modernity of the time, this must be understood as a principled position, and not as a failure to attain Hegel's historicization of ontology. Schelling's system is not so much ahistorical as anti-historical.⁷⁶ For the discussion of individual works of art, there are advantages to this refusal to see historical process as purposeful: unlike in Hegel's late aesthetics, the artistic phenomenon has a certain independence from the historical system through which it is understood. The tension between recognition of historical difference and reconciliation in identity becomes particularly conscious in Schelling's theory of tragedy, which seeks, against efforts at historicization, to show that ancient and modern tragedy have a common essence.

The necessity of reconciliation

The tension between the universal and particular is no less present in Schelling's synchronic system of the arts than in his diachronic account. The forms of art, for Schelling, have an *a priori* necessity to them, which determines their possibilities and laws.⁷⁷ The arts are divided between the sensuous 'real series' of sight and sound and the intellectual 'ideal series' of poetry. Each series is further divided according to its potences: music (real), painting (ideal), and plastic arts (indifference) make up the real series; lyric (real), epic (ideal), and drama (indifference) compose the ideal series. The triadic structure is hierarchical, with the forms of indifference attaining a clear priority, and the ideal series privileged because of its medium of language (which for Schelling represents itself a form of indifference, as the sensible medium of intellectual content). As the form of indifference within the medium of language, drama is

⁷⁶ Plumpe (1993), 193 interprets this as an early form of the post-modern negation of history.

⁷⁷ Szondi (1974d), 189.

‘die höchste Erscheinung des An-sich und des Wesens aller Kunst.’⁷⁸ All drama, Schelling argues, is based on a tension between freedom and necessity since its content is made up of actions and reactions. Tragedy’s priority over comedy is secured by its depiction of a struggle between subjective freedom and objective necessity, which represents ‘die ursprüngliche und absolute Erscheinung dieses Streits.’⁷⁹ As in the *Briefe*, the depiction of originary conflict is the basis for ‘das *Erhabene* in der Tragödie, dadurch erst verklärt sich die Freiheit zur höchsten Identität mit der Nothwendigkeit.’⁸⁰

Given its idealist premises, Schelling’s account of tragedy is surprisingly Aristotelian; much of it appears an effort to deduce the *Poetics a priori*. This should place in question Szondi’s thesis of a qualitative break between Schelling and previous discussions. In terms of substance, the continuity of the *PdK* with previous theories of tragedy (Schiller’s and Schlegel’s particularly) is ultimately more marked than its difference. Schelling’s achievement is not to refound thought on tragedy as a ‘philosophy of the tragic’ so much as it is to harmonize previous theories with an idealist ontology. The section on tragedy begins with a definition:

Das Wesentliche der *Tragödie* ist also ein wirklicher Streit der Freiheit im Subjekt und der Nothwendigkeit als objektiver, welcher Streit sich nicht damit endet, daß der eine oder der andere unterliegt, sondern daß beide siegend und besiegt zugleich in der vollkommenen Indifferenz erscheinen.⁸¹

The definition follows from the premises of identity philosophy, and emphasizes that the essence of tragedy is its reconciliation of opposition in indifference. Schelling makes tragedy

⁷⁸ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 687: ‘the highest appearance of the *an sich* and of the essence of all art.’

⁷⁹ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 693: ‘absolute and original appearance of this conflict.’

⁸⁰ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 699: ‘the sublime in tragedy, through which first freedom is transformed into the highest identity with necessity.’

⁸¹ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 693: ‘The essential of tragedy is therefore a real struggle of freedom in the subject and necessity as the objective, which struggle does not end with one or other defeated, but rather that both at once appear conquering and conquered in complete indifference.’

analogous to the process of philosophical construction, which also aims to show how real divisions proceed from absolute unity. The extensive discussion of the principles of tragedy that follows is essentially a commentary on this definition, and one surprising continuity with much traditional poetics appears immediately: a normative aim. This has been largely absent from Schelling's discussions of epic and lyric, which are far more historical and descriptive in their method. For reasons that will become clear in the historical discussion, the speculative construction of tragedy is simultaneously a normative poetics.

The first question Schelling poses to his definition is how necessity should be represented in tragedy, what kind of opposition the hero should confront. For an answer, he turns to Aristotle, considering the possibilities for *peripeteia* discussed in *Poetics* (1453a), and reaching the same conclusion that the hero of tragedy should come to misfortune 'durch einen *Irrtum*, und daß derjenige, dem dieß begegnet, von solchen sey, die zuvor im großen Glück und Ansehen gestanden.'⁸² Schelling's idealist turn is to see an ontological necessity to *hamartia*, offering, against Aristotle, 'noch eine höhere Ansicht. Es ist die, daß die tragische Person *nothwendig* eines Verbrechens schuldig sey (und je höher die Schuld ist, wie die des Oedipus, desto tragischer oder verwickelter). Dieß ist das höchste denkbare Unglück, ohne wahre Schuld durch Verhängniß schuldig zu werden.'⁸³ Where Aristotle had seen *hamartia* as proceeding from the subject (and therefore, in Schelling's terms, as an act of freedom), Schelling sees guilt as the result of pure necessity. This brings Schelling, as it did in the *Briefe*, to the story of Oedipus, which he recounts in detail, and to Phaedra, whom

⁸² Schelling, *SW* I.5, 694: 'through an error, and that he who meets this should be such as previously stood in great happiness and respect.'

⁸³ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 695: 'a still higher viewpoint. It is, that the tragic person be necessarily guilty of a crime (and the greater the guilt, like that of Oedipus, the more tragic or complex). This is the highest conceivable misfortune: without true guilt to become guilty by destiny.'

he describes as guilty by a similarly external fate. ‘Wir sehen also, daß der Streit von Freiheit und Nothwendigkeit wahrhaft nur da ist, wo diese den Willen selbst untergräbt, und die Freiheit auf ihrem eignen Boden bekämpft wird.’⁸⁴ For Schelling, *hamartia* makes manifest an ontological conflict, and reveals an essential ambiguity to human freedom, which is always conditioned by necessity.

The tragic conflict Schelling describes is familiar from the *Briefe*, and much of the discussion repeats the opening of the Tenth Letter. One major point of difference is worth remarking, and corresponds to the identity philosophy’s general approach to art. In the *PdK*, Schelling poses the question of reconciliation far more urgently than he had earlier: ‘Sind, frug man, diese Widersprüche nicht rein zerreißend, und wo liegt der Grund der Schönheit, welche die Griechen in ihren Tragödien nichts desto weniger erreicht haben?’⁸⁵ This is not a question of tragic content, but of tragic effect, and concerns the meaning of *catharsis*. Tragedy must resolve the contradictions it creates in order to afford a purifying glimpse into the unity of the absolute. This is possible, as we know from the *Briefe*, through a heroic action in which the subjectively innocent hero accepts guilt and punishment as his own, sacrificing and proving his own freedom in the same instant.

In the act of the tragic hero, the threatening power of fate is transformed into the sublimity of an insight into freedom: ‘Von dem Augenblick an erscheint die nicht zu überwältigende Macht des Schicksals, die absolut-groß schien, nur noch relativ-groß; denn sie wird von dem Willen überwunden, und zum Symbol des absolut Großen, nämlich der

⁸⁴ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 696: ‘We see therefore, that the conflict of freedom and necessity only truly is there, where the latter undermines the will itself, and freedom is attacked on its own ground.’

⁸⁵ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 696: ‘Are, one asked, these contradictions not purely shattering, and where lies the basis of the beauty which the Greeks nevertheless achieved in their tragedies?’

erhabenen Gesinnung.’⁸⁶ The Schillerian-Kantian roots of this are obvious, but the sublime for Schelling is even more bound to the viewer’s affective experience than it was for Schiller (for whom sublimity could be a property of actions themselves, rather than residing only in perception). Sublimity for Schelling is an ontological description of Aristotelian *catharsis*, and answers the problem of reconciliation in Greek tragedies: ‘Dieß ist der Grund der Versöhnung und der Harmonie, die in ihnen liegt, daß sie uns nicht zerrissen, sondern geheilt, und wie Aristoteles sagt, gereinigt zurücklassen.’⁸⁷ *Catharsis* and *Versöhnung* for Schelling describe the same process, a reconstitution of affective harmony from the discord of tragedy’s events.⁸⁸ His speculative theory of tragedy explains Aristotelian *catharsis* as an ontological insight.

Schelling goes on to discuss the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ form of tragedy, which correspond roughly to Aristotle’s distinction between the objects of representation on one hand, and the means and method on other (1450a). His discussion of the inner form emphasizes the necessity that should reign over all aspects of tragic plot and character. Events should appear to be caused by a higher power, and characters should appear unwavering in their convictions and consistent in their actions. His emphasis on tragedy’s internal necessity recalls the discussion of *μῦθος* (1451a), which similarly calls for a plot made up only of events that follow necessarily on one another. Schelling cites Aristotle’s authority in discussing the *Sitten* of tragedy (the standard translation of *ἥθος*), and *das*

⁸⁶ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 698: ‘From this moment the unconquerable power of fate, which seemed absolutely-great, now appears only relatively-great, since it is overcome by the will and becomes a symbol of the absolute greatness, that is, of the sublime disposition.’

⁸⁷ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 697: ‘This is the basis of the reconciliation and harmony which lies in them, that they do not leave us shattered but healed, and as Aristotle says, purified.’

⁸⁸ Wilm (2010), 89.

Außerordentliche (a translation of θαυμαστόν), and similarly rejects the *deus ex machina*.⁸⁹

The discussion of the outer construction is less extensive, consisting of an account of the unities of action, time, and place, and the obligatory polemic against French dramatists. The unities, Schelling argues, arise from the necessity internal to the action, and thus are logically bound to the inner construction and essence of tragedy.

Schelling elaborates the Aristotelian unity of action in ancient tragedy with the one truly non-Aristotelian element of his theory, an account of the chorus that goes far beyond the scanty mention in the *Poetics*: ‘Die herrlichste und durchaus von der erhabensten Kunst eingegebene Erfindung ist in dieser Beziehung der *Chor* der griechischen Tragödie.’⁹⁰ In seeing the chorus as an integral element of ancient tragedy, Schelling reflects the Weimar choral craze of his friends the Schlegel brothers and of Schiller, which he had observed from nearby Jena.⁹¹ In the 1802 Berlin *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur* (which Schelling did not attend, but of which he borrowed the manuscript), A.W. Schlegel described the chorus as the means by which ‘fand die Griechische Kunst auch die Rückkehr von den unvermeidlichen Dissonanzen zur vollendeten Harmonie.’⁹² Schelling is quite critical of *Braut*’s use of the chorus, but his description of choral function seems indebted to Schiller’s: ‘[er] den Zuschauer unmittelbar auf das höhere Gebiet der wahren Kunst und der symbolischen Darstellung erhebt.’⁹³ The chorus for Schelling, as for Schiller, is a means of setting the

⁸⁹ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 701-3.

⁹⁰ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 705; ‘the most masterful and thoroughly inspired discovery of the most sublime art is in this respect the chorus of Greek tragedy.’

⁹¹ See Schelling, *AA* III.2.1, 395 (to A.W. Schlegel, 4.1.1802); *AA* III.2.1, 426 (to A.W. Schlegel, 4.4.1802); *AA* III.2.1, 447 (to A.W. Schlegel, 30.7.1802). Schelling is extremely positive about the *Alarcos* in his letters to Schlegel, though it is hard to know how much he is sparing the feelings of his friend.

⁹² A.W. Schlegel, *KAV* 1, 724: ‘Greek art also found the return from inevitable dissonances to completed harmony.’ See Schelling, *AA* III.2.1, 468 (to A.W. Schlegel, 3.9.1802).

⁹³ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 705: ‘it raises the viewer immediately to the higher realm of true art and of symbolic representation.’

world of tragedy outside of real contingency and allowing for absolute identity to emerge. It also serves an affective function similar to Schiller's: 'so war der Chor gleichsam ein stetiges Besänftigungs- und Versöhnungsmittel der Tragödie, wodurch der Zuschauer zur ruhigeren Betrachtung geleitet und von der Empfindung des Schmerzens gleichsam dadurch erleichtert wurde.'⁹⁴ The chorus secures the viewer's affective freedom, and thus eases tragedy's process from conflict to reconciliation. Its symbolic quality allows for the calming insight into the ground of reality.

The theory of tragedy in the *PdK* is pervaded by an imperative of reconciliation, conceived simultaneously as an affective state and a philosophical insight. Tragedy's proof of the absolute union of freedom and necessity now brings with it an affirmation far more comprehensive than it did in the *Briefe*, in which Oedipus's sublime acceptance of necessity had appeared impossible in the modern age. The *PdK* discusses a number of ancient works, which, Schelling argues, are united by their reconciliatory character. Particular emphasis is given to the *Eumenides* for its representation of a reconciliation experienced by the characters (and not simply by the audience, as in the *OT*): 'Die Tragödie kann auch mit vollkommener Versöhnung nicht nur mit dem Schicksal, sondern selbst mit dem Leben enden, wie Orest in den Eumeniden des Aeschylus versöhnt wird.'⁹⁵ Orestes's acquittal appears as an internal proof of tragedy's reconciliatory character, an alternative to the reconciliation through sublime action of the *OT*. The *OC* as well is important to Schelling for its depiction of a peaceful death after suffering. The discussion of the inner form of tragedy closes with a quotation from the *OC*, in which the voice calling Oedipus to his resting place

⁹⁴ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 706: 'the chorus was tragedy's constant means of soothing and reconciling at once, through which the viewer was led to more calm observation and at the same time relieved of the feelings of pain.'

⁹⁵ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 698: 'Tragedy can end with a complete reconciliation not only with fate, but even with life, as Orestes in the Eumenides of Aeschylus is reconciled.'

illustrates religious reconciliation and ‘höchste Verklärung.’⁹⁶ These are all seen as proof of the essentially affirmative quality of Greek tragedy. When Schelling defines ‘das einzig wahrhaft *Tragische* in der Tragödie,’ he is speaking most of all of this moment of reconciliation.⁹⁷

Given the changes within Schelling’s overall understanding of the absolute, the continuity of his theory of tragedy from the *Philosophische Briefe* to the *PdK* is noteworthy. Though the role of tragedy and art in relation to philosophy changes fundamentally in the ten years between the two works, the description of tragedy remains practically identical. For the Schelling of 1795 and 1805, tragedy manifests the absolute unity of the opposed principles of human existence. Though Schelling’s philosophy is often considered to be basically un-tragic (the comparison to Hegel always implicit or explicit),⁹⁸ the structure of tragedy is absolutely pervasive in his thought through the identity system. Indeed, the achievement of tragedy represents for him the highest goal of philosophy: depiction of the absolute as the ground of all contradiction. Tragedy exemplifies the general function of art, as the appearance of absolute identity in sensible form.⁹⁹ The continuity of tragic structure in Schelling’s early thought shows that, even before he elaborated a philosophy of the tragic, he was seeking philosophical identity in tragedy.

The tragic in history

‘The tragic’ is an ahistorical category, but tragedy has a history. Schelling’s deduction of the essence of the genre has been thoroughly oriented to Greek works, which represent for him

⁹⁶ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 704: ‘highest transfiguration.’

⁹⁷ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 697: ‘the one true tragic in tragedy.’

⁹⁸ Schmidt (2001), 80.

⁹⁹ Jähnig (1969) II, 244.

the pure form of tragedy. The challenge will be to apply the definition to modernity, which Schelling has found to be essentially deficient because of its eschatological mythology. The question of whether the tragic is possible in modernity goes to the heart of Schelling's concept of construction: if historical differences are inessential, modern works must be able to effect the same reconciliation that ancient tragedy does. Whether this is the case, however, appears uncertain, and the problem endangers Schelling's fundamental postulate of identity.¹⁰⁰ Schelling follows the *Studium* essay in seeing a fall of tragedy already in antiquity, repeating the Schlegels's condemnation of Euripides.¹⁰¹ The difference between Aeschylus and Sophocles on one hand and Euripides on the other centres on the possibility of an aesthetic reconciliation:

Im Allgemeinen kann man also behaupten, daß Euripides vorzüglich nur groß ist in der Darstellung der Leidenschaft, nicht aber weder in der harten aber ruhigen Schönheit, welche Aeschylus, noch in der mit Güte gepaarten und zur Göttlichkeit geläuterten Schönheit, welche Sophokles eigenthümlich ist.¹⁰²

Euripides lacks the 'hohe sittliche Stimmung,' which would elevate emotional content to a higher aim.¹⁰³ Where Sophocles and Aeschylus appear as representatives of *polis* morality and piety, Euripides addresses himself to the irrational and the individual, failing to provide the cathartic reconciliation of his predecessors. He is ultimately 'weniger Priester der ungeborenen und ewigen, als Diener der zeitlichen und vergänglichen Schönheit.'¹⁰⁴ This tendency towards the historical and transitory suggests a commonality between the Euripidean and Christian worldviews. Schelling's organic model of development (a direct

¹⁰⁰ Wanning (1988), 245.

¹⁰¹ See F. Schlegel, *KFSA* 1, 323; A.W. Schlegel, *KAV* 1, 747.

¹⁰² Schelling, *SW* I.5, 710: 'In general one can observe that Euripides is eminently great only in the presentation of passion, not however either in the hard but calm beauty that is particular to Aeschylus, nor in the beauty, paired with goodness and purified to divinity, that is particular to Sophocles.'

¹⁰³ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 709: 'high ethical atmosphere.'

¹⁰⁴ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 711: 'less the priest of unborn and eternal beauty than the servant of temporal and passing beauty.'

inheritance from Schlegel) sets the highpoint of tragedy in Sophocles, and the decline that leads to the birth of modernity in Euripides. This fall – which characterizes tragedy and art in general – turns from the eternal to the transitory, and from societal morality to individual passion. With the content of tragedy now pervaded by subjective passions, the possibility of an ontological insight comes into question.

The leading thread in Schelling's discussion of modern tragedy is the question of fate: 'Ist in der modernen Tragödie ein wahres Schicksal, und zwar jenes höhere, welches die Freiheit in ihr selbst ergreift?'¹⁰⁵ Schelling's uncertainty places in doubt his construction of antiquity and modernity as merely differentiated in potency. In order to prove the inessential nature of history for art, he must prove that the identity of freedom and necessity can be expressed in the art of modernity, as it was in antiquity. Schelling had seemed to foreclose this possibility in the *Briefe* in admitting that the possibility of sublimity had 'vanished in the light of reason.' But such an answer is unacceptable for the identity philosophy; ontology cannot be historically dependent. Even before Hegel's thesis of the 'Vergangenheitscharakter der Kunst,' Schelling grapples here with the problem of whether art can still manifest the highest human interests. The example of ancient Greece, as the time in which art reached its greatest societal importance, both suggests and undermines the possibility of such a role for art in modernity.

Tragedy for Schelling always brings to bear religious questions of human meaning and belief, but it does so differently in antiquity and modernity. This reflects the theological education of the Tübingen Stift, in which the study of Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian antiquities coexisted alongside one another. Schelling's parallel, though its aim is to

¹⁰⁵ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 720: 'Is there in modern tragedy a true fate, and particularly that higher one, which grasps freedom in itself?'

reconcile antiquity and modernity, provides an unusually sharp view of their difference. The understanding of guilt divides ancient from modern morality. Guilt in (Protestant) Christianity is always a sin against God, and based on the free choice of the individual; an unavoidable crime is thus impossible. Greek religion, on the contrary, did not know evil as a metaphysical possibility, and saw guilt as radically determined by circumstance. Christian religion appears unable to recognize the tragic paradox of subjective innocence in objective guilt, and so is incapable of depicting the ontological conflict of freedom and necessity.

Schelling demonstrates the possibilities for Christian tragedy in the plays of Shakespeare. Without a divine fate determining action, character becomes the dominant force: ‘An die Stelle des alten Schicksals tritt bei ihm [Shakespeare] der Charakter, aber er liegt in diesen ein so mächtiges Fatum, daß er nicht mehr für Freiheit gerechnet werden kann, sondern als unüberwindliche Nothwendigkeit dasteht.’¹⁰⁶ Subjective inclinations and weaknesses appear in Shakespeares’s plays to determine a character’s action so strongly as to function as an ersatz for fate. Yet the necessity created is not insurmountable, nor is it blameless. Schelling repeats the commonplace that Shakespeare represents ‘das Charakteristische,’ but grounds this observation in a worldview that ascribes all responsibility to individual choice. Macbeth is the paradigm of a character who commits an evil act in which ‘es liegt keine objective Nothwendigkeit der That darin. [...] Es ist also der Charakter, der entscheidet.’¹⁰⁷ Shakespeare’s tragedies recognize only the causality of human

¹⁰⁶ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 720: ‘In the place of ancient fate, character appears in his works, but he lays in it such a powerful *fatum* that it can no longer be counted for freedom, but appears as insurmountable necessity.’

¹⁰⁷ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 721: ‘there resides no objective necessity for the deed. Hence it is character that decides.’

freedom, depicting ‘*Freiheit mit Freiheit streitend*.’¹⁰⁸ They are too mired in the contingent and historical to represent the absolute.

Shakespearean tragedy, though not truly tragic, nevertheless has a different beauty from that of ancient tragedy. Schelling’s description is reminiscent of Herder’s, seeing Shakespeare as portraying human existence in all its individuality, where Greek tragedy created a closed totality. Tragedy in modernity appears an entirely different instrument than it did in antiquity:

Allein jene alte Lyra lockte aus vier Tönen die ganze Welt: das neue Instrument ist tausendsaitig, es zerspaltet die Harmonie des Universums, um sie zu erschaffen, und darum ist es stets weniger besänftigend für die Seele. Die strenge, alles lindernde Schönheit kann nur mit Einfachheit bestehen.¹⁰⁹

Though Shakespeare’s plays achieve a kind of harmony, it is chaotic and unsettling, commensurate to the complex reality of modernity. Indeed, characteristic of modern drama is a ‘*Mischung des Entgegengesetzten*’ in which tragedy and comedy interpenetrate.¹¹⁰ This hybrid quality of modern drama destroys the insight into the tragic, which is based on seeing through opposition to identity.¹¹¹ Whereas Greek tragedy achieved a clarity detached from the passion of events on stage, Shakespeare leaves our thoughts and emotions impure. His works, Schelling echoes Schlegel in arguing, plunge us deeper into reality, rather than raising us to a vision of absolute identity.

Shakespeare, then, does not offer the reconciliation of ancient Greek tragedy. Though Schelling has based his account of modern drama entirely on Shakespeare, he must look elsewhere for the true tragic in modernity:

¹⁰⁸ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 722: ‘freedom struggling with freedom.’

¹⁰⁹ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 723: ‘The ancient lyre alone enticed the whole world with four strings. The new instrument has a thousand strings; it splits the harmony of the universe in order to create it, and for that reason it is always less calming for the soul. The austere, all-soothing beauty can exist only with simplicity.’

¹¹⁰ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 718: ‘mixing of opposed elements.’

¹¹¹ Wanning (1988), 243.

Wir würden Shakespeares Kunst doch immer nur mit einer Art von Trostlosigkeit anschauen können, wenn wir ihn unbedingt als den Gipfel der romantischen Kunst im Drama betrachten müßten, da man ihm doch immer vorerst die Barbarei zugeben muß, um ihn innerhalb derselben groß, ja göttlich zu finden. Shakespeare läßt sich in seiner Unbeschränkung mit keinem der alten Tragiker vergleichen, wir müssen aber auf einen Sophokles der differenzierten Welt hoffen dürfen; in der gleichsam *sündlichen* Kunst auf eine Versöhnung.¹¹²

In denying antiquity's presence of the divine in earthly existence, Christian mythology seems to deny the tragic insight into the ultimate unity of oppositions. This is the case for Protestantism, at least. Schelling has thus far distinguished Catholicism from Christianity, thereby laying the groundwork for an alternative modern mythology, in which tragedy's reconciliation might be possible. Catholicism is 'seiner Natur nach eine Mischung des Heiligen und Profanen, die Sünden statuirt, um an ihrer Versöhnung die Kraft der Gnadenmittel zu beweisen.'¹¹³ Where Protestantism saw sin as a choice of the individual, Catholicism makes sin unavoidable. It thus allows for a true conflict of freedom and necessity, which will be resolved in divine forgiveness.

The Spanish dramatist Calderón de la Barca enters as a *deus ex machina* to demonstrate the possibility of the tragic in modernity. The strain of Schelling's description is undeniable: he recognizes that Calderón comes 'von einer bisher weniger bekannten Seite her,' and, indeed, knows only one of his works, *La Devoción de la Cruz*, lately translated into

¹¹² Schelling, *SW* I.5, 725: 'We would always be able to view Shakespeare's art only with a kind of disconsolateness if we had to consider him absolutely as the pinnacle of romantic art in drama, since one first has to admit in him a barbarism in order to find him great, indeed divine within it. Shakespeare can be compared in his boundlessness with none of the ancient tragedians. We must, however, be allowed to hope for a Sophocles of the differentiated world, for a reconciliation within what we might call sinful art.'

¹¹³ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 720: 'by its nature a mixture of the holy and the profane, which assumes sins to prove in their reconciliation the power of grace.'

German by A.W. Schlegel.¹¹⁴ Yet, ‘wie sich aus Einem Werk des Sophocles sein ganzer Geist ahnden läßt,’ so Schelling believes that he has recognized the tragic spirit of the Spaniard on the basis of one play.¹¹⁵ The tragic element in Calderón’s work lies in the way it portrays a modern, Christian counterpart to ancient fate:

Das Erste und gleichsam der Grund des ganzen Gebäudes seiner Kunst ist freilich, was ihm die katholische Religion gegeben hat, zu deren Anschauungen des Universums und der göttlichen Ordnung der Dinge es wesentlich gehört, daß die *Sünde* sey und Sünder, damit an ihnen Gott durch Vermittlung der Kirche seine Gnade bewaise. Damit ist eine allgemeine Nothwendigkeit der Sünde eingeführt, und in dem vorliegenden Stück des Calderon entwickelt sich das ganze Schicksal aus einer Art göttlicher Schickung.¹¹⁶

Where the tragic in antiquity depicted guilt as a result of unavoidable error, Calderón recognizes a ‘general necessity of sin’ that makes humans guilty through divine necessity. Schelling’s description of the play emphasizes that the characters, like Oedipus, become guilty through circumstances beyond their control. Yet whereas ancient tragedy depicted necessity in order to show the triumph of human freedom, Calderón aims to demonstrate the benevolence of the divine. The tragic in paganism leads to a vindication of the immanent (as human freedom), in Catholicism to a proof of the transcendent (the grace of God). Both reach the reconciliation that is fundamental to the tragic, but Calderón’s is appropriate to the differentiated Christian world, in which meaning resides solely in God.

¹¹⁴ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 726: ‘from a previously little-known corner.’ Schelling borrowed the manuscript of Schlegel’s translation from Goethe, who was enthusiastic about the piece. See *AA* III.2.1, 501-2 (to A.W. Schlegel, 21.10.1802).

¹¹⁵ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 726: ‘just as from one work of Sophocles one can surmise his entire spirit.’

¹¹⁶ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 726: ‘The first principle and the foundation of the entire edifice of his art is admittedly what the Catholic religion has given him, to which view of the universe and of the divine order of things it essentially belongs that there be sin and sinners so that through the mediation of the church God may prove his grace. Thus is introduced a general necessity of sin, and in Calderón’s piece under discussion the entire fate develops out of a kind of divine fate.’

Like the Greek tragedians, Calderón offers a quasi-philosophical, ontological insight in his works. He is characterized by *Vernunft*, and depicts ‘die absolute Welt selbst’ as the identity of earthly potences.¹¹⁷ In affording a glimpse of absolute identity, his works reach the same reconciliatory ending as those of Greek tragedians: ‘Diese Versöhnung besänftigt, wie das Ende des Oedipus oder das letzte Loos der Antigone.’¹¹⁸ The parallel of Calderón and Sophocles replaces the conventional Shakespearean one to prove that the tragic is possible in modernity. Where the consideration of Shakespeare led the parallel into aporia, Calderón allows it to proceed on the basis of identity. Schelling’s relief at finding a genuine modern tragedy is palpable in a letter to A.W. Schlegel just after reading the piece: ‘Ich sehe, daß was man sich in der Theorie als ein Problem dachte, dessen Lösung in der Ferne läge, hier wirklich geleistet ist’¹¹⁹ Schelling had evidently been seeking just such a work, which would prove that art in the modern world can serve the same moral, ontological end it did in antiquity. Unlike Hegel, Schelling refuses to believe that the function of art changes over time. This explains also the normative tinge to the discussion of ancient tragedy: Schelling has made the reconciliatory quality of Sophocles the measure of all tragedies. In this sense, he is indeed the first philosopher of the tragic, the first for whom the description of a work as a tragedy carries a philosophical content. As the discussion of Calderón shows, there is a historical aim to this normativity: it establishes the criteria for a true modern tragedy.

Yet the weakness, if not the scandal, of Schelling’s reconciliation of ancient and modern tragedy cannot be overlooked. Schelling’s introduction of Calderón to fulfill the systematic imperative of reconciliation is so transparently wilful as to put itself in question.

¹¹⁷ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 729: ‘the absolute world itself.’

¹¹⁸ Schelling, *SW* I.5, 731: ‘this reconciliation soothes like the end of Oedipus or the final lot of Antigone.’

¹¹⁹ Schelling, *AA* III.2.1, 502 (to A.W. Schlegel, 21.10.1802): ‘I see that what in theory one thought to be a problem whose solution lay in the distance, here really is afforded.’

Tragedy for Schelling, as for Hegel, is problematic because it is at once a reflection of the systematic construction (as an insight into the unity beyond conflict) and an element within the system, characterized by a further historical heterogeneity. Hegel's theory of tragedy will solve the problem of historical difference in a far more satisfying way, but it will not be able to escape the double bind of thinking Greek tragedy as absolutely valid and historically situated. Yet all this should not obscure Schelling's contribution to the understanding of Greek tragedy: it appears as a privileged form of insight and a vital task for thought in the present. Schelling inaugurates a tradition of reading tragedy as a locus of independent meaning. He attributes a timeless significance to Greek tragedy, and at the same time establishes the problem of whether a modern work can attain the same philosophical reconciliation. Tragedy is for Schelling caught between the particularities of ancient Athens and the generality of the absolute. This sense of tragedy as at once a universal insight and the distinctive knowledge of ancient Greece leads inevitably to the question of the death of tragedy, which will trouble both Hegel and Hölderlin. Schelling formulates it thus, contemporary to the *PdK* lectures: 'Eine Nation, die nichts Heiliges hat, oder der ihre Heiligthümer geraubt werden, kann auch keine wahre Tragödie haben.'¹²⁰ Does modernity, Schelling must ask, have any true tragedy?

¹²⁰ Schelling, *SW* I.6, 573: 'A nation that has nothing holy or that has had its holy objects robbed from it, cannot have any true tragedy.'

Chapter 5

G.W.F. Hegel: the fate of tragedy

Hegel's theory of the tragic begins with a protest: 'Leben gegen Leben; aber es steht nur Tod gegen Leben auf, und unglaublich! abscheulich! der Tod siegt über das Leben! Dies ist nicht tragisch, sondern entsetzlich! Dies zerreißt (s. Xenien) [das Herz], daraus kann man nicht mit erleichterter Brust springen!'¹ Hegel is responding to Schiller's *Wallenstein*, in a note dated to around 1800. The short text sketches an implicit contrast of ancient and modern tragedy. The comparison that lies behind Hegel's thinking becomes clear through a reference to two of Schiller's *Xenien*. They go:

Griechische und moderne Tragödie.
Unsre Tragödie spricht zum Verstand, drum zerreißt sie das Herz so
Jene setzt in Affekt, darum beruhigt sie so!

Entgegensetzte Wirkung.
Wir modernen, wir gehn erschüttert, gerührt aus dem Schauspiel,
Mit erleichterter Brust hüpfte der Griechen heraus.²

Using Schiller's words, Hegel suggests a contrast of ancient, reconciliatory tragedy, and modern, heart-rending tragedy. Schiller's distichs had been meant ironically, as a satire of Friedrich Schlegel's *Studium* essay and its opposition of the cathartic effect of ancient tragedy and the 'maximum of despair' created by modern works. Yet Hegel takes them as a serious characterization of the two ages, and finds that the end of *Wallenstein* proves the opposition: it is 'nicht tragisch, sondern entsetzlich.' Hegel's concept of tragedy, like Schelling's, has a normative quality: tragedy *should* offer reconciliation, and a work that

¹ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 619: 'Life against life; but only death stands up against life, and unbelievable! terrible! Death triumphs over life! This is not tragic, but awful! This tears the heart, one cannot leap out with lightened breast!'

² Schiller, *FA* 1, 619: 'Greek and modern tragedy: Our tragedy speaks to the understanding; therefore it tears the heart so. / Theirs creates emotion; therefore it calms so!

Opposed effect: We moderns, we go shaken, moved from the play. / With a lightened breast the Greek hopped out.'

does not do so is not tragic. Yet reconciliation appears to be the exclusive property of ancient works. The negative, painful effect of modern tragedy represents a philosophical problem for Hegel, as it suggests that modernity no longer can achieve the comprehensive reconciliation that was possible in antiquity.

Hegel is troubled most of all by the conclusion of *Wallenstein*. The final image, in one of Schiller's great *coups de théâtre*, is not a retrospective gesture, as in nearly all ancient and Shakespearean tragedies. It is instead the horror of Octavio Piccolomini, Wallenstein's best friend turned enemy, on learning that he now takes Wallenstein's place as Duke. Schiller's stage direction reads 'Octavio erschrickt und blickt schmerzvoll zum Himmel.'³ Hegel seems just as shattered by the conclusion of the work as Octavio, seeking a heavenly justification that will not come: 'Wenn das Stück endigt, so ist alles aus, das Reich des Nichts, des Todes hat den Sieg behalten; es endigt nicht als eine Theodizee.'⁴ The ending of *Wallenstein* is so shocking to Hegel because it seems unguided by any kind of justice, poetic or divine: the title character, a war leader who betrays his king, has been murdered suddenly and ignominiously, without the chance to repent or even to recognize the consequences of treason. The contingency and openness of the ending appear distinctively modern, devoid of affirmation or reason. Hegel sees no necessity guiding the drama, nothing that would allow the audience to grasp historical events as theodicy.

What is lacking in *Wallenstein* is encapsulated by Hegel's concept of fate (*Schicksal*, from the verb *schicken*, to send). Hegel's mature philosophy might be understood as an effort to reconcile the subject to *Schicksal*, to comprehend the real as 'geschickt.' The concept of

³ Schiller, *FA* 4, 293: 'Octavio goes pale and looks, full of pain, to heaven.'

⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 618: 'When the piece ends, everything is over, the realm of nothing, of death has attained triumph; it does not end as a theodicy.'

Schicksal is important for Hegel's theory of tragedy in two ways: first (and common to all the theories of Idealism), tragedy depicts events ruled by *Schicksal*, and so gives an insight into otherwise inscrutable historical process; second (and unique to Hegel), tragedy as a literary genre has its own *Schicksal*, in that it exists within history and is subject to historical change. This second element of fate renders modernity problematic, as the age in which the reconciliatory force of ancient tragedy no longer seems to obtain (as in the *Wallenstein* fragment). Unlike Schelling, who sought to prove a similarity between fate in the ancient and modern worlds, Hegel tries to account for their difference. There are two interlocking elements to Hegel's theory of tragedy, both of them directed towards understanding historical process: an account of how ancient tragedy provides a kind of reconciliation, and a theory of history that shows why this is no longer possible in modernity. In order to understand tragedy philosophically, Hegel must articulate reasons for the destruction portrayed in ancient works, and for the lack of reconciliation in modern ones. It is this effort, the following will argue, that places his thought on tragedy within the tradition of the *Querelle*.

The mention of 'theodicy' in the *Wallenstein* essay is pregnant: reconciliation for Hegel cannot be divided from its religious background. A genealogical investigation of the concept of the tragic in Hegel reveals a persistent concern with tragedy as an affirmation of the reason behind historical process. Hegel's mature philosophy replaces 'God' with 'substance' as the motive force of history, but the effort to justify reality by reference to a transcendent logic remains. The religious origins and context of Hegel's account are often sanitized by contemporary readings that see Hegel's theory of tragedy primarily in ethical

terms.⁵ While it would be impossible to deny that tragedy is deeply bound up in ethical life for Hegel, ethical action is always seen within its religious and historical context. Hegel never takes ethical life in isolation, but argues that it is determined by the particular stage of spirit at a given point. Though it is often forgotten, the ethical world of Greek tragedy for Hegel is fundamentally deficient, a passing moment in the progress of spirit as it moves to Christianity and dialectical philosophy.

The concept of fate for Hegel takes part in an effort to reveal meaning in historical events, and thereby to reconcile the individual to the world.⁶ Though this may be deeply alien to contemporary points of view, it is not necessarily ‘untragic.’⁷ There have been many attempts, particularly in English, to ‘save’ Hegel’s theory by downplaying its teleological aspect.⁸ A.C. Bradley influentially describes it as a theory of tragic conflict;⁹ Walter Kaufmann goes further in arguing that Hegel has no theory but only ‘ideas about tragedy.’¹⁰ Both of these, and the many commentators who follow them, miss the point. Hegel’s theory of tragedy, like his philosophical system, is oriented from the beginning to the end of his career to dissolving opposition in reconciliation.¹¹ This effort, as the *Wallenstein* fragment shows, necessarily poses the question of modern reconciliation, which seems to take on a different form than it did in ancient Greece. Moderns must be guided by a different fate than that portrayed in Greek tragedy. The originality and power of Hegel’s thought consists in its

⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, the major studies are Gethmann-Siefert (2005), Menke (1996), and Schulte (1992), and in English, the chapter in Schmidt (2001).

⁶ See Hardimon (1994) for a sensitive interpretation of reconciliation as fundamental to Hegel’s social thought.

⁷ As Galle (1993) and Pöggeler (1993), among others argue. See the Introduction and Finlayson (1999), 500-3.

⁸ Menke (1996), 41 distinguishes, following Karl Jaspers, between a (good, non-metaphysical) ‘tragic knowledge’ and a (bad, metaphysical) ‘tragic *Weltanschauung*.’

⁹ Bradley (1909), 73 acknowledges, with staggering understatement, that ‘the end is not without an aspect of reconciliation.’ Gellrich (1988) is the most important recent investigation of tragic conflict in Hegel.

¹⁰ Kaufmann (1971).

¹¹ Beistegui (2000) is one of the few English commentators to see this as the essence of Hegel’s theory of tragedy.

effort to reconcile modernity to its own lack of fate, to show human history as a tragic – which is to say, reconciliatory – process.

I. The play of the absolute

The roots of Hegel's concept of the tragic can be found in unpublished reflections on fate and religious reconciliation dated to the years 1798-1800, when Hegel was living in Frankfurt. *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal* is the name given to a complex of fragmentary texts that begins to work out Hegel's dialectical method of historical thought.¹² It presents major difficulties of edition, as a series of related though not clearly ordered shorter texts, of language, for its esoteric and often mystical expression, and of content, because of its chilling condemnation of Judaism.¹³ Yet the text cannot be reduced to an anti-Semitic screed or a Christian apologetic. It is one of Hegel's most original and linguistically beautiful works, containing the seeds of much of his later thought. The influence of Hölderlin, who was living near Frankfurt at the time, is undeniable in the text's philosophical content and mode of expression (though not in the specifics of its religious vision: to Hölderlin's credit or discredit, he never showed much interest in Judaism). Although little concrete evidence of their closeness at the time survives, the fragmentary texts that both produced in the years 1798-9 suggest an extraordinarily fertile intercourse. They took part in a shadowy group known as the *Bund der Geister* with Isaak Sinclair and Jacob Zwilling, both important and original minds.¹⁴ Though Hegel published nothing while in Frankfurt, it seems

¹² See Bourgeois (1970).

¹³ On the most important response, Jacques Derrida's *Glas*, see Leonard (2010b).

¹⁴ See Brauer (1993) on Sinclair; Henrich and Jamme (1986) on Zwilling.

to have been the site of his intellectual coming of age, and laid the groundwork for the dialectical method and philosophical system that he would develop later in his career.

In the years 1798-9, the thought of both Hegel and Hölderlin becomes newly pervaded by tragedy, as they struggle with personal, philosophical, religious, aesthetic, and social questions. The political situation of central Europe at the time was precarious: Frankfurt was caught up in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, occupied by the French in 1792, 1796, and 1799. Throughout the decade, war was never far away, and this consciousness left its mark strongly on the thought of both. Though both had dreamed of revolutionary change, they were continually confronted with the disappointing reality of the attempts to create a republican polity. Particularly following the 1797 Congress of Rastatt, the realization of the democratic hopes of the Revolution appeared impossible.¹⁵ The failure of the ideals that had inspired them in the Stift led both Hegel and Hölderlin to develop ways of finding sense in catastrophe; this brought them, together and separately, to ancient tragedy.¹⁶ Chapter VI will trace Hölderlin's turn to tragedy, while the following will seek to elucidate the genesis of Hegel's tragic thought. The Frankfurt texts are essential to understanding Hegel's concept of tragedy, as they show him developing the concepts of fate and history that will guide his account of the tragic.

During the Frankfurt years, Hegel's thought does not explicitly deal with aesthetics, yet an aesthetic approach to philosophy (as in the *Systemprogramm*) is fundamental to his way of thinking. This represents perhaps Hölderlin's greatest mark on Hegel's thought. In the Frankfurt years, Hegel first formulates his difference from Kant in what has been termed a

¹⁵ Jamme (1983), 231.

¹⁶ Jamme (1983) presents a similar thesis in his sixth chapter as 'Hegel's and Hölderlin's original insight.'

Vereinigungsphilosophie, which gained its primary impulses from Hölderlin.¹⁷ For Hölderlin and the Frankfurt Hegel, beauty is not simply a characteristic of art or nature, but a mode of being in which the division of subject and object is suspended, and the unity of human faculties reconstituted. They understand art and philosophy as efforts to reconcile an original act of division, the *Ur-teil*, in which consciousness became aware of itself, and the opposition between subject and object was created. The influence of the Platonic tradition and Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* is unmistakable, but Idealism's project is distinguished by its social and metaphysical approach to the problem of reconciliation, which led Hegel and Hölderlin, like Schelling, to religion and mythology as the mediation between earthly existence and rational essence.¹⁸ In *Der Geist des Christentums*, Hegel no longer subscribes to the *Systemprogramm*'s optimistic belief that beauty and reason would be realized in a future mythology, but instead seeks a form of existing religion that would be itself aesthetic. This leads him to think Christianity on the model of Greek tragedy, and vice versa.

As throughout Hegel's thought on tragedy, the historical opposition of antiquity and modernity determines *Der Geist des Christentums*: here, the contrast is explicitly drawn between Judaism and Christianity, though it is inextricable from an opposition of ancient Greece and modern Germany. Judaism is characterized by an Enlightenment (and specifically Kantian) relation to moral law, while Christianity is governed by a *Schicksal* that is distinctly Greek. Hegel exemplifies the 'positivity' of Judaism, its dependence on an outside force for definition, through the contrast with the Greeks, contrasting the social organization in Athens with the Mosaic state. Where the Greek state was built on autonomy

¹⁷ Henrich (2010), 22-30. Jamme (1983), 150-82 is a detailed exposition of this break and Hölderlin's role.

¹⁸ See Gethmann-Siefert (1984), 79-87 on the importance of Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* for Hegel's understanding of reconciliation.

and self-sufficiency, the laws of Judaism appear as a compensation for the culture's basic weakness and instability. Hegel traces this weakness back to the Flood, which he sees as decisive for the mindset of a people for whom the natural world is always hostile.¹⁹ Noah's need to raise himself above the fragility of real existence led him to set up a sphere of laws that would govern his people. Having turned away from the real to the ideal world, the Jews always understand themselves in opposition to a hostile, external force. Hegel interprets Abraham's leaving Chaldaea as 'eine Trennung, welche die Bande des Zusammenlebens und der Liebe zerreit.'²⁰ Jews will henceforth always be either the oppressed or the oppressors; a dynamic, 'living' relationship to God or other people is impossible. Hegel describes the contrast between Greek and Jewish states in terms of religion and political organization, finding that, whereas the Greek *polis* gives its citizens genuine freedom, the Jewish community seeks constantly to bind its members with rigid laws.²¹ Implicitly, this is a critique of the state of the modern German people – disparate, isolated from the world, seeking morality in submission to duty.²² Hegel's idealizing view of ancient Greece is articulated most of all through the opposition with a fallen state of division that characterizes both Judaism and German Enlightenment modernity.

The historical thought of *Der Geist des Christentums* is always binary: Greek/Jew, Christian/Kantian morality, antiquity/modernity. Behind all of these oppositions lies a normative concept of reconciliation, which accounts for the priority of one age over the other. Hegel describes Greek and Christian worldviews as based on an understanding of

¹⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 274.

²⁰ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 277: 'a division, which tears the bands of living-together and love.'

²¹ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 285-91.

²² This becomes particularly clear in Hegel's slightly later *Die Verfassung Deutschlands*. On the parallels, see Jamme (1983), 262-5.

morality as a dynamic concept, where Jewish and Kantian thought are based on static adherence to duty. Hegel formulates the difference in a pregnant paradox that shows normative and descriptive concepts of tragedy and *Schicksal* in tension. Judaism's unhappy fate is a tragedy that is not tragic:

Das große Trauerspiel des jüdischen Volks ist kein griechisches Trauerspiel, es kann nicht Furcht noch Mitleiden erwecken, denn beide entspringen nur aus dem Schicksal des notwendigen Fehltritts eines schönen Wesens; jenes kann nur Abscheu erwecken. Das Schicksal des jüdischen Volks ist das Schicksal Makbeths, der aus der Natur selbst trat, sich an fremde Wesen hing, und so in ihrem Dienste alles Heilige der menschlichen Natur zertreten und ermordern, von seinen Göttern (denn es waren Objekte, er war Knecht) endlich verlassen, und an seinem Glauben selbst zerschmettert werden mußte.²³

Hegel's contrast of Greeks and Jews reveals itself simultaneously as a contrast of ancient and modern tragic heroes. Though the description of Greek tragedy as based on necessary error recalls Schelling's *Philosophische Briefe*, 'schönes Wesen' points to a different model of the tragic hero – more Antigone than Oedipus, and in this context, Jesus most of all.²⁴ The 'untragic' fates of Judaism and Macbeth come from their dependence on an external power; by choosing to rely on a divine but inscrutable force, they remove themselves from any recognition of reason in events. They understand fate only as contingency, and so are objects of disgust rather than pity. Much like Schelling, Hegel sees the recognition of necessity as key to tragic reconciliation. For both, the concept of the tragic has a normative element, describing a way of making sense of catastrophe through reason. For the young Hegel, tragedy should perform theodicy, making the necessity and justice of fate clear. His

²³ Hegel, *WZB* 1, 297: 'The great tragedy of the Jewish people is no Greek tragedy, it can awake neither fear nor pity, since both arise only from the fate of a necessary error of a beautiful being; it can only awake disgust. The fate of the Jewish people is the fate of Macbeth, who stepped out of nature itself, relied on alien beings, and then in their service had to trample and kill all that is holy in human nature, had to be finally deserted by his gods (since these were objects, he was the servant) and destroyed by his faith itself.'

²⁴ For reasons of space, I pass over a difficult but important opposition of *Schicksal* and *Gesetz*, in which the figures of Jesus, Oedipus, and Antigone all seem to exemplify the possibility of reconciliation in their acceptance of an unjust punishment.

oppositions of the two tragedies of *Wallenstein* and the tragedy of Judaism with Greek tragedy contrast dissonant and harmonious worldviews, and formulate the problem of historical reconciliation that pervades his mature philosophy. From now on, he will be concerned to understand the difference between fate in the ancient and modern worlds, to describe the *Schicksal* of *Schicksal*.

The life of the ethical: the Naturrecht essay

Modernity for Hegel is characterized more by the awful punishment of Macbeth than the tragic fate of Oedipus. As Hegel's historical thought develops, he comes to see this difference as founded in the condition of modern social existence, and no longer as a philosophical-theological position to be overcome. This leads him to consider the transition from antiquity to modernity as itself a tragedy – but one that, as always in Hegel's thought, has a reconciliatory conclusion. By grounding modernity's lack of aesthetic reconciliation in religious and philosophical progress, Hegel in a sense changes from the party of the *Anciens* to the *Modernes*. Where Hegel's early thought had opposed ancient reconciliation with modern despair, he now seeks to show that modernity's lack of aesthetic reconciliation represents a progress beyond the tragic world of ancient Greece. History for Hegel is ruled by a tragic fate, a process of continual *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*, which leads constantly through negation to reconciliation. The theodicy demanded in the early essays is transformed into a philosophical method: the task of the philosopher is to understand the process by which reason is manifested in history. The explicitly religious character of this understanding recedes somewhat in Hegel's later years, but the challenge remains to affirm what Hegel will call 'die Tragödie im Sittlichen.'

Much changed in Hegel's life between the Frankfurt fragments discussed above and Hegel's first statement of tragedy as a historical dialectic in the essay *Über die wissenschaftliche Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, seine Stelle in der praktischen Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften* (1802-3, abbreviated *Naturrecht*).²⁵ Moving from Frankfurt to Jena, he reconnected with Schelling and turned his attention fully to philosophy. Jena and nearby Weimar were at the time the centre of German intellectual and literary life: Schiller and Herder were still alive and residing within walking distance of Goethe in Weimar, the Schlegel brothers were based in Jena, and after Fichte's controversial departure in 1799, Schelling was the major philosophical figure at the University there. By reviving the earlier friendship with the younger though more established Schelling, Hegel planted himself in the middle of a rich intellectual ferment.

Hegel's most important difference from Schelling, which emerges over the course of their time in Jena, concerns the importance of history, or more broadly, the interaction of philosophical theory and empirical reality. For Schelling, both history and empiry are more or less incidental to the single, timeless truth of absolute identity. For Hegel, on the other hand, the absolute only exists historically, and philosophical knowledge is necessarily historical knowledge. Where for Schelling the concept of the absolute subsumes individuality, in Hegel's understanding, the absolute is always emergent from individuality. This process is a dialectic, in which opposed elements are reconciled in the development of a 'sublated' (*aufgehoben*) state. From this higher viewpoint, elements that appeared contradictory or incompatible reveal themselves as parts of the same whole. One cannot but speak of this process normatively, as progress. Hegel's fundamental contention, where he

²⁵ 'The scientific ways of treating natural law, its place in moral philosophy, and its relation to the positive sciences of the law.'

most significantly breaks with Hölderlin's philosophy of union, is that this unity does not precede difference, but emerges out of difference. Philosophy's aim is ultimately not the reconstitution of an original union, but the attainment of a viewpoint in which difference appears as itself constructive. The philosopher, like the tragic spectator, cannot reunite what the play of history opposes, but can rationally reconcile himself to the consequences. For Hegel, history is tragedy, and philosophy *catharsis*.

Hegel's polemic in the *Naturrecht* essay situates itself between two partial viewpoints and seeks to determine the necessity of their opposition. On one hand lies the empirical understanding of natural law, as formulated most influentially by Hobbes. Hobbes argues that humans in the state of nature find themselves in constant conflict, which leads inevitably to the construction of an absolute power as guarantor of individual safety. In contrast to this stands a Kantian-Fichtean theory that seeks to deduce social relations from individual faculties, and sees freedom as the natural state of existence that the law seeks to propagate. Hegel's critique of the opposing viewpoints takes the form of a historical narrative, which argues that the givens of modern society – most of all, the primacy of the individual – themselves have a dialectical past of which philosophy has failed to take account. Hegel argues that modern individuality can only be understood as emerging from a contradiction in ancient political existence. His account of natural law does not begin with the individual (like Hobbes and Kant), but with the people (*Volk*). The focus on the collective as the seat of natural law is Hegel's decisive difference from previous treatments of the subject, and reflects his increasing orientation to Aristotle.²⁶ Both Aristotle's privileging of the collective over the individual and his notion of organic teleology are fundamental to the *Naturrecht*

²⁶ Ilting (1974).

essay. Hegel understands society on the model of a biological organism, which develops according to its own internal necessity until its immanent contradiction emerges and the organism changes form.

The model for Hegel's *Volk* is the ancient Greek *polis*, which he views as a complex and internally differentiated social organism. The need to defend against external dangers on one hand and to satisfy the physical demands of the city on the other leads to a division of the people into two classes: the free citizenry, who are willing to fight and die for their *polis*; and a subordinate class of workers, who ensure the self-sufficiency of the city. Unlike the first, which enjoys the full benefits of democracy, the second class has no stake in civic life, but enjoys the protection of the state. The ethical consciousness of the first class, Hegel argues, is 'absolute' because it always stands in relation to the ultimate freedom of death.²⁷ The ethical consciousness of members of second class is only relative, since their duty does not place them in existential danger. Yet the lower class is essential to the functioning of the state, since its labour supports the system by which the first is able to perpetuate itself. Only through the relative unfreedom of the second class can the absolute freedom of the first be maintained. Where the first class offers life to the state and receives freedom in return, the second class offers freedom to the state and receives life in return. Hegel sees this internal duality as an unsustainable contradiction, which will be resolved in a dialectical movement, whereby the opposed classes become one.

Hegel points to a moment of transition in the Roman Empire, in which both slavery and aristocratic privileges were abolished, and the two classes made equal under a system of laws. Hegel summarizes this in a paradox, 'mit dem Aufhören der Freiheit hat notwendig die

²⁷ Wildt (1982), 314.

Sklaverei aufgehört.²⁸ Now that the political class has been abolished, the entire polity lives according to their own private desires, and the need for a system of laws arises to protect individual property.²⁹ Hegel has been describing, it now becomes clear, the emergence of bourgeois society and the legal system that enables it.³⁰ In such a society, the ‘political nullity’ of the bourgeoisie, their removal from the work of defending the state, makes the collective unstable and creates a condition (much like Hobbes described) of insecurity between citizens.³¹ This is a different insecurity from that experienced by the warrior-citizens of the *polis*: it is not confined to moments of existential danger in battle, but is a constant possibility of death and privation.³² Only by erecting an ‘inorganic’ system of laws can individual existence be (partially) secured. In this state, there is a balance between the protection afforded by the law and the oppositions that remain within the state,

so [...] daß dieses Bezwingen selbst indifferentiert und versöhnt ist, welche Versöhnung eben in der Erkenntnis der Notwendigkeit und in dem Rechte besteht, welches die Sittlichkeit ihrer unorganischen Natur und den unterirdischen Mächten gibt, indem sie ihnen einen Theil ihrer selbst überläßt und opfert.³³

The stability of the state is guaranteed through a sacrifice of ethicality (*Sittlichkeit* – the awkward word is necessary to differentiate it from morality, *Moralität*). The sacrifice consists in relinquishing the absolute freedom of the first class of citizens to the state of laws. Where previously the ethical dialectic of the state had been concentrated in the first class (whose willingness to die placed them in a relation to the ‘chthonic powers’), it is now spread

²⁸ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 491: ‘with the end of freedom, slavery necessarily ended as well.’

²⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 492.

³⁰ Schnädelbach (2000), 51.

³¹ Hegel *WZB* 2, 494.

³² Wildt (1982), 315.

³³ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 494: ‘so that this forcing is itself undifferentiated and reconciled, which reconciliation consists in the recognition of necessity and in the law that ethicality makes to its inorganic nature and the chthonic powers, in that it gives over and sacrifices to them a part of itself.’

out across the community, in which all are subjected to a (milder) external necessity, and all receive a (less extensive) freedom in return. In order to attain a balance between the rights of individuals, all must be subjected to an impersonal law. Sacrifice for Hegel is an essential part of ethical existence; the value and necessity of a bourgeois, law-governed state is that it shares sacrifice equally across the community.

Hegel understands the creation of the modern state as the sacrifice of absolute ethical life to empirical reality. The sacrifice takes place in ‘the ethical’ (*das Sittliche*) itself, as individual freedom is sacrificed for collective stability. By means of such a sacrifice, the community is able to recognize and thereby reconcile its relation to death:

die Kraft des Opfers besteht in dem Anschauen und Objectivieren der Verwicklung mit dem Unorganischen, durch welche Anschauung diese Verwicklung gelöst, das Unorganische abgetrennt, und als solches erkannt, hiermit selbst in die Indifferenz aufgenommen ist, das Lebendige aber, indem es das, was es als einen Teil seiner selbst weiß, in dasselbe legt und dem Tode opfert, dessen Recht zugleich anerkannt und zugleich sich davon gereinigt hat.³⁴

Anerkennung and *Reinigung* in this context cannot but recall Aristotelian *anagnorisis* and *catharsis*, here understood as characteristics of social existence. The collective, by setting up a system of laws and punishments (*das Unorganische*), makes death a permanent but confined element of existence. Absolute individual freedom is sacrificed to the collective good, thereby ‘acknowledging and purifying itself’ from the power of death. The dialectic of freedom and compulsion that determines ethical life has changed its form: where it used to involve an individual relation to death, it now takes the form of a collective subjection to the

³⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 494: ‘the power of the sacrifice consists in the intuition and objectification of the entanglement with the inorganic, through which intuition this entanglement is released, the inorganic divided, and recognized as such, and itself thus taken up into the indifference; the living, however, in that it lays what it knows to be a part of itself in this [the inorganic], and sacrifices to death, has at once acknowledged its [death’s] right and purified itself from it.’

law. Hegel understands existence as a constant process of sacrifice, in which the ethical takes on a tragic character.

Athens and the absolute

From the subjective process of acknowledgment and purification (the experience of the collective in relation to death), Hegel turns to the metaphysical life of the ethical itself:

Es ist dies nichts anderes als die Aufführung der Tragödie im Sittlichen, welche das Absolute ewig mit sich selbst spielt, – daß es sich ewig in die Objektivität gebiert, in dieser seiner Gestalt hiermit sich dem Leiden und dem Tode übergibt, und sich aus seiner Asche in die Herrlichkeit erhebt.³⁵

The life of the ethical is experienced as an *Aufführung* in that it is the particular realization of a constant process, pre-determined by the dialectical structure.³⁶ The script is the life of the ethical substance, which exists only dynamically, in process of taking on objective form. In doing so, it becomes subject to the complications and pains of earthly existence – death most of all. But the individual death it suffers, since it is a death for the collective, is itself the realization of ethical life.³⁷ The model for the *Tragödie im Sittlichen* is undeniably Christ's sacrifice, and the metaphor of the phoenix rising from the ashes cannot but recall the Resurrection. Tragedy is an appropriate metaphor for such sacrifice not only because it depicts the death of the individual, but because it arouses the proper cathartic effect. In tragedy, as in Hegel's history of social life, the viewer understands individual destruction as necessary, acknowledging and transcending the relation to death.

³⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 495: 'This is nothing else than the performance of the tragedy in the ethical, which the absolute always plays with itself, that it brings itself forth always in objectivity, in this form thus gives itself over to suffering and death, and raises itself out of its ashes into glory.'

³⁶ Lypp (1972), 186.

³⁷ Schulte (1992), 53.

As a constant necessity of sacrifice, Hegel understands the tragedy of the ethical ahistorically, without relation to any particular society. Yet ancient Greece seems to have a unique relation to this process, which is manifested in the content of Attic tragedy. Hegel describes the *Eumenides* as a representation of the dialectic whereby destructive, chthonic powers are simultaneously acknowledged and reconciled. This is not for Hegel primarily a historical occurrence, but a depiction of the domestication of the inorganic that all societies must undertake. Unlike Schelling, who was simultaneously preparing his *Philosophie der Kunst* lectures, Hegel is not so much interested in the acquittal of Orestes as in the societal change for which Orestes is the catalyst.³⁸ He sees the conclusion of the *Eumenides* as an example of the process by which a collective acknowledges and reconciles itself to the chthonic powers:

Das Bild dieses Trauerspiels näher für das sittliche bestimmt, ist der Ausgang jenes Prozesses der Eumeniden, als der Mächte des Rechts, das in der Differenz ist, und Apollos, des Gottes des indifferenten Lichtes, über Orest vor der sittlichen Organisation, dem Volke Athens, – welches menschlicher Weise als Areopagos Athens in die Urne beider Mächte gleiche Stimmen legt, das Nebeneinanderbestehen beider anerkennt, allein so den Streit nicht schlichtet, und keine Beziehung und Verhältnis derselben bestimmt, aber göttlicherweise als die Athene Athens den durch den Gott selbst in die Differenz Verwickelten diesem ganz wiedergibt und mit der Scheidung der Mächte, die an dem Verbrecher beide teilhatten, auch die Versöhnung so vornimmt, daß die Eumeniden von diesem Volke als göttliche Mächte geehrt würden, und ihren Sitz jetzt in der Stadt hätten, so daß ihre wilde Natur des Anschauens der ihrem unten in der Stadt errichteten Altare gegenüber auf der Burg hoch thronenden Athene genösse, und hierdurch beruhigt wäre.³⁹

³⁸ Bourgeois (1986), 457. Compare Schelling, *SW* I.5, 698. Bourgeois assumes that the influence went from Schelling to Hegel, but there is no real evidence for this; just as likely, it seems to me, is the reverse (since Hegel, unlike Schelling, can be shown to have been interested previously in the *Eumenides*). Perhaps not coincidentally, the *Eumenides* was translated for the first time into German by Friedrich Leopold zu Stolberg in 1802.

³⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 495: ‘The image of this tragedy determined more closely for the ethical, is the end of that trial of the Eumenides (as the powers of law which is in difference) and Apollo (the god of undifferentiated light) concerning Orestes, before the ethical organization, the people of Athens – which in human fashion, as the Areopagus of Athens lays equal votes in the urns of both powers, acknowledges the coexistence of both, and so

Hegel describes here a process of opposition and resolution in a new coexistence. In civic life ('*menschlicherweise*'), the conflict between the ethical imperatives is undecidable, as shown in the equal votes of the Areopagus. Through Athena's intervention ('*göttlicherweise*'), however, the unreconciled opposition of the two sides reaches a state of stability, in which the power of the negative is acknowledged, and its destructive force given fixed form within the state: the Furies are transformed into Eumenides. The *Eumenides* would depict the process of absolute freedom giving way to a law-governed society. For Hegel, this process is not bound to Athens (and indeed, does not seem possible to locate historically), but is a constant necessity of collective existence.

Hegel's surprising excursus into Greek tragedy is much more than an illustration of his point that communities are constituted by a tension of positive and negative forces. Greek tragedy again has a normative force, in that it enacts the process by which one becomes reconciled to historical necessity. Tragedy does not simply depict the sacrifice of the ethical to empirical reality, but also, in its cathartic ending, justifies the sacrifice. Hegel moves between the use of tragedy as an ontological metaphor (for the life of the ethical), a historical paradigm (of political transition), and an artistic representation.⁴⁰ The genre serves as a means of linking all three, by providing an affirmative way of understanding metaphysical, historical, and aesthetic contradiction. On the metaphysical level, tragedy shows how the ethical life can purify itself after the necessary sacrifice it makes in empirical existence. On the historical level, tragedy acknowledges the necessity of the downfall of archaic *polis*

alone does not calm the conflict, and defines no connection and relation; but in divine fashion, as the Athena of Athens wholly returns him who is entangled in difference by the god himself to it [the people], and with the division of the powers, both of which had a claim to the criminal, also undertakes reconciliation, that the Eumenides would be honoured by this people as divine powers, and now have their seat in the city, so that their wild nature would enjoy the view from the altar erected to them in the city below of Athena throned high on the mountain across, and thereby would be calmed.'

⁴⁰ Bourgeois (1986), 489.

morality. Finally, Hegel turns to the artistic level, in which tragedy, now considered as a literary genre in contrast with comedy, provides an insight into the ontological relation of ethical spheres, and is therefore ‘ein absolutes Kunstwerk.’⁴¹

The description of tragedy brings Hegel to the concept of fate, returning to his own earlier reflections in *Der Geist des Christentums*. Hegel sees tragedy and comedy as inverses of one another, with tragedy animated by recognition of necessity, *Schicksal*, and comedy by inessential drives, *Schicksallosigkeit*:

Wenn die *Tragödie* darin ist, daß die sittliche Natur ihre unorganische, damit sie sich nicht mit ihr verwickelt als ein Schicksal von sich abtrennt und sich gegenüberstellt und, durch die Anerkennung desselben in dem Kampfe, mit dem göttlichen Wesen als der Einheit von beidem versöhnt ist, so wird dagegen, um dieses Bild auszuführen, die *Komödie* überhaupt auf die Seite der Schicksallosigkeit fallen.⁴²

Hegel’s notion of *Schicksal* here is an idiosyncratic one. It is not, as for Schelling, a necessity that stands in opposition to the subject, but a subjective creation of ethical nature. By transforming the inorganic, destructive powers into *Schicksal* (i.e., establishing the Eumenides as a permanent force in the city), ethical life acknowledges and reconciles its relation to death. *Schicksal* has the role of mediating between empirical and absolute understandings of ethics; it is the way in which objective necessity can be grasped by subjective consciousness. This sense of a constant necessity of sacrifice and change in empirical reality explains why tragedy, with its basis in ancient ethical life, is no longer possible for Hegel. Greek tragedy is the depiction of absolute *Sittlichkeit* giving way to law-

⁴¹ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 500: ‘an absolute artwork.’

⁴² Hegel, *WZB* 2, 496: ‘If tragedy lies in the fact that the ethical nature, in order that it not entangle itself with the inorganic, divides the inorganic from itself as a fate and opposes it to itself, and through the acknowledgment of the same [fate] in struggle against it is reconciled to the divine essence as the unity of both, then in contrast, in order to complete the picture, comedy would fall on the side of fatelessness.’

governed, relative *Sittlichkeit*. It is a genre of transition, both because of what it depicts and because of the historical moment in which it existed.

The concept of fate is central, though in somewhat covert fashion, to the *Naturrecht* essay as a whole. Mentions of *Schicksal* create a circular structure to the essay, in which the account of the tragedy in the ethical is the turning point. Hegel deploys the word only twice outside of the pages on tragedy and comedy, in the first and last sentences of the essay. *Schicksal* is used at the beginning of the essay to describe the ‘fate’ of natural law as a philosophical concept that has been considered unworthy of metaphysical treatment and thus ‘ganz unabhängig von der Idee gehalten.’⁴³ Natural law is fated to be considered only in empirical terms, a fatelessness that Hegel’s essay seeks to remedy. He accomplishes this by the account of tragedy, which restores fate to natural law by arguing that social existence is bound up in the fate of ethical substance. *Schicksal* then returns in the closing words of the essay, when Hegel describes the negative element of existence, which *Sittlichkeit* ‘abwehrt, es [das Negative] sich als objektiv und Schicksal gegenüberstellt und dadurch, daß sie ihm eine Gewalt und ein Reich durch das Opfer eines Teils ihrer selbst mit Bewußtsein einräumt, ihr eigenes Leben davon gereinigt erhält.’⁴⁴ In order for ethicality to purify itself, it transforms the destructive elements of empirical existence into the objective form of fate. This is not only a description of the genesis of tragedy, but a justification of it – even down to the vocabulary of purification. The *Naturrecht* essay is the closest Hegel ever comes to viewing tragedy in ethical terms, but even here, the understanding of ethical life is thoroughly Christian in its account of *Schicksal* as a purification through sacrifice. Ancient

⁴³ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 435: ‘held wholly independent of the idea.’

⁴⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 2, 530: ‘repels, opposes it to itself as objective and fate, and thus, in that it [the ethical] consciously grants it power and a realm through the sacrifice of a part of itself, holds its own life purified from it.’

tragedy for Hegel reconciles individual sacrifice for collective salvation by depicting *Sittlichkeit* as it ‘raises itself out of its ashes into glory.’

II. The fate of spirit: *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*

‘Tragic’ for Hegel is the emergence of singularity from opposition. In the *Naturrecht* essay, he described this process at work in the ethical life of societies; in *Der Geist des Christentums*, he demanded it in religious life. In the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*PdG* 1807), Hegel integrates individual, social, and historical development into the concept of *Geist*, spirit. The *PdG* traces the path of individual consciousness from the most basic sensory perceptions through self-consciousness to reason, and then of collective spirit through ethical understanding and religion to reach ‘absolute knowledge.’ At every stage of this process, consciousness finds in itself a contradiction that it must resolve through an insight into the identity of what appear as opposing principles. *Geist*, Hegel writes in the preface to the work, ‘ist diese Bewegung, sich ein Anderes, d. h. Gegenstand seines Selbsts zu werden und dieses Anderssein aufzuheben.’⁴⁵ The *PdG*’s understanding of *Geist* is dynamic and progressive: always shifting form, following a necessary path from the simplest to the most developed consciousness. Since spiritual progress can only come about through an insight into the insufficiency of the current state of understanding, the moment of negation, *Aufhebung*, is of central importance in Hegel’s text. It describes an act whereby the necessity of an opposition is recognized, and the opposition transcended by a higher (*aufgehoben*) insight. It is unmistakably a tragic (in Hegel’s sense) moment.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 38: ‘is this movement, to become another, that is an object of itself, and to sublimate this being-other.’

⁴⁶ Jurist (1993) sketches an interpretation of the *PdG* on the model of Greek tragedy.

In the *PdG* as throughout Hegel's later thought, the progressive, positive element in tragedy comes to outweigh the *Trauer* experienced at the sacrifice of a previous state of consciousness. Where the *Naturrecht* essay saw tragedy as an unending process of division and reconstitution (and therefore not a progress), the dialectic, performed over and over in the *PdG*, is now each time a means of resolving contradictions in existence and moving to a higher state of spirit.⁴⁷ The irony of Hegel's 'pantragism,' however, is that Greek tragedy is relegated to a stage of consciousness that Hegel's philosophy seeks to overcome.⁴⁸ Tragedy in ancient Greece for Hegel is the manifestation of a primitive form of ethical and religious thought and its inevitable crisis. Tragedy necessarily leads beyond itself, as the social organization of ancient Greek culture is *aufgehoben* in modernity.

Though Hegel's use of tragedy and tragic models often takes place on a level of forbidding abstraction, it reveals nevertheless a strong interest in the concrete political life of ancient Greece. This distinguishes the *PdG* from the volumes published posthumously as *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, a collation of lecture notes made in the 1820s that has become part of the standard edition of Hegel's works.⁴⁹ The *Ästhetik* is often justly reproached for its normative classicism and tendency to dissolve empiricism in abstraction. Yet much of what appears implausibly generalizing in the *Ästhetik* lectures makes more sense in the context of the *PdG*. Here, the discussion of tragedy is exemplary rather than interpretive, and thoroughly historicizing (if not historical): the dilemmas of tragedy are seen as meaningful only for a particular moment in time, demonstrating a transient stage of individual and social

⁴⁷ On Hegel's self-critique in the *PdG*, see Schulte (1992), 98.

⁴⁸ Hyppolite (1964) describes this as the victory of panlogism over pantragism – an appropriate characterization of Hegel's development.

⁴⁹ The 1832-45 *Werke* forms the basis of *WZB*, which remains the only complete edition of Hegel's works (a historical-critical edition, *Gesammelte Werke*, still lacks the crucial volume in which *Der Geist des Christentums* appears). Misleadingly, *WZB* prints posthumous reconstructions of Hegel's lectures as Hegel's works.

development. Greek tragedy represents the moment at which ancient social organization and religion begin to unravel, preparing the transition to Christian modernity. As ever, Hegel conceives of tragedy in terms of a contrast of tragic antiquity and untragic modernity, but the *PdG* offers a way of understanding and affirming this opposition. Hegel accounts for the absence of the tragic in modernity by a theory of progress, in which antiquity itself is subject to a tragic fate.

The ethical world

The *PdG* deals with tragedy in two steps: first, in the chapter ‘Geist,’ in which the ethical aspect of tragic conflict is primarily at issue; and then in the chapter ‘Religion,’ in which theological and aesthetic aspects of the genre are treated. Between the two passages, the basic understanding and models of tragedy remain fairly constant, with Sophocles’s Theban Plays and Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* dominating (though Hegel also makes important reference to *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*). In both chapters, tragedy is a genre of transition: ethically, from a collective understanding of law to an individualistic one; religiously, from a polytheistic to a monotheistic understanding of divinity; and aesthetically, from art’s role as the manifestation of the most important interests of a collective to a secondary place in society. Both ‘Geist’ and ‘Religion’ are fundamentally accounts of societal development, though they are not strictly historical descriptions. Hegel’s aim is to show the place of tragedy – what oppositions it manifests, resolves, and ultimately moves beyond – in the experience of spirit attaining absolute knowledge. Demonstrating the role of tragedy in the grand history of the spirit entails, in the ‘Geist’ chapter, a description of the content of tragedy as *reflecting* the ethical understanding of the Greek *polis*, and in the ‘Religion’ chapter, a description of the form of

tragedy as *representing and transforming* the theology of ancient religion. The two stages build on one another: in ‘Geist’, Hegel shows a contradiction inherent to ancient ethics, which is resolved in ‘Religion’ through a new religious consciousness and a change in the function of art. The responson of the two chapters is rarely given sufficient critical weight, likely because of the tendency to focus on Hegel’s representation of ethical conflict rather than his theory of religious reconciliation. The following will show that for Hegel tragedy is always progressive, and leads the spirit from a primitive, tragic understanding of ethics to a developed and untragic religious self-consciousness.

The ethical life of the Greek *polis* is determined by the received wisdom of the collective, ‘es ist an und für sich, der absolute *reine Willen Aller*, der die Form des unmittelbaren *Seins* hat.’⁵⁰ ‘Unmittelbar’ here denotes an unreflective acceptance of what is given by custom, a simple adherence to divine imperative. This type of consciousness is always deficient for Hegel, because it does not recognize the need for reflection. Hegel demonstrates such immediacy on the figure of Antigone, who appears at the end of the chapter ‘Vernunft’ and then becomes central to ‘Geist’ immediately following.

Das Selbstbewußtsein ist ebenso einfaches, klares *Verhältnis* zu ihnen [himmlische Gestalten]. Sie *sind*, und weiter nichts, – macht das Bewußtsein seines Verhältnisses aus. So gelten sie der *Antigone* des Sophokles als der Götter *ungeschriebenes* und *untrügliches* Recht:
nicht etwa jetzt und gestern, sondern immerdar
lebt es, und keiner weiß, von wannen es erschien.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 321: ‘it is of and for itself, the absolute pure will of all, which has the form of immediate being.’

⁵¹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 321: ‘The self-consciousness is just a simple, clear relation to them. They are, and nothing more, – makes up the consciousness of its relation. Thus they count for the Antigone of Sophocles as the unwritten and infallible law of the gods: Not at all now and yesterday, but always / it lives, and no one knows, from whence it appeared.’

To demonstrate this immediate consciousness, Hegel quotes Antigone's words in his own translation (456-7: οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε καὶ χθές, ἀλλ' αἰεί ποτε / ζῆ ταῦτα, κούδεις οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου φάνη). He is scrupulous in the citation and translation: a footnote refers to the line number of the original, and the translation follows Greek word order closely, introducing archaisms (*immerdar* for αἰεί ποτε, *von wannen* for ἐξ ὅτου, where *immer* and *wovon* would have been more idiomatic) that correspond better to Greek structure. This is important to note because Hegel will take significant liberties with another passage from *Antigone* later. The character of Antigone for Hegel embodies the ethical consciousness that makes the transition from reason to spirit through her conviction of the necessity of an ethical guide for action. The citation of her account of duty is pivotal as a bridge from the individual consciousness that Hegel has been describing in the previous chapters to the social consciousness that will be the object of the chapters following.⁵² For Hegel, tragedy is from the first embedded in the account of collective existence.

The words 'tragedy' and 'Greece' are absent from the chapter 'Der wahre Geist. Die Sittlichkeit,' yet the chapter's narrative is unmistakably drawn from Sophocles's depiction of ancient Thebes. As in the *Naturrecht* essay, the dissolution of the *polis* is understood as the performance of a 'tragedy in the ethical.' Yet in the *PdG* the downfall (*Untergang*) of the ancient ethical regime that Hegel earlier had regretted, now appears as a necessary transition (*Übergang*), and even progress (*Fortgang*). The *PdG* not only seeks, like the *Naturrecht* essay, to understand the necessity of world-historical change, but to affirm it. In the transition from the *Sittlichkeit* of ancient Greece to the Roman *Rechtszustand*, Hegel sees a development away from the immediate ethical obligations of ancient religion 'zum

⁵² Speight (2001), 51-3 describes this dual character of Antigone as opening the question of (social) action while at the same time moving beyond the Kantian question of individual conscience.

wirklichen Selbstbewußtsein...zum Anundfürsichseienden, aber darin ist eben die Sittlichkeit zugrunde gegangen.⁵³ A sense of regret at the loss of this immediate ethical consciousness, though, is present in Hegel's account. There is always a tension in Hegel's descriptions of antiquity between his philosophy of progress and his romantic image of the Greeks.⁵⁴ Ancient Greece for Hegel represents both an ahistorical ideal and an irrevocably past reality.

Hegel describes the 'sittliche Welt' of the Greeks as divided into the oppositions that give the chapter its heading, 'Das menschliche und göttliche Gesetz, der Mann und das Weib.'⁵⁵ This social division is a result of the way that spirit realizes itself in ancient consciousness: the Greeks cannot experience the totality of ethical obligations, but only one side or another of 'sittliche Substanz.' *Sittlichkeit* is thus characterized by an antithetical structure, which will have to be sublated in order for spirit to progress. Tragedy will be this process, as the presentation of opposition and resolution in a higher union. Hegel's account of the interaction of spheres (male/female, public/private, state/family) is highly complex, and has formed the crux of most interpretations of his theory of tragedy, especially those that seek to criticize or deconstruct it.⁵⁶ Gender has often been the matrix on which Hegel's understanding of *Antigone* has been read, but this is only one aspect of his thought.⁵⁷ For the present, it is important mainly to see how deeply the structure of Greek tragedy pervades Hegel's entire account of ethicality. *Antigone* provides much more than an illustration of the

⁵³ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 328: 'to real self-consciousness...being in and for itself – but therein ethicality has been destroyed.'

⁵⁴ Pinkard (1994) 138-46 argues that Hegel is here arguing against contemporary idealizations of Greece. This has little evidence to support it; the idealization is Hegel's own and the 'polemic' is, as will become obvious, not an unambiguous rejection.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 328: 'The ethical world. Human and divine law, man and woman.' This is the title of the sub-chapter.

⁵⁶ See Leonard (2005) 96-156 for discussions of Lacan, Irigaray, and Derrida.

⁵⁷ Particularly important in recent years is Butler (2000). See Burian (2010) for a sensitive discussion of gender in Hegel and his readers.

spirit as it exists in ancient Greece, but is substantially the basis for Hegel's narrative. This is, however, not to argue that Hegel offers a coherent reading of *Antigone* in the chapter – as will become clear, he uses the text to establish the basic terms of his discussion, but departs from it in substantial ways when it comes time to draw conclusions.

Hegel understands the ancient *polis* as divided between the realms of the family and the state, as a result of immediate adherence to one or the other element of *Geist*. Where civic life entails duty to an abstract collective, family life binds its members to one another as individuals. The family seeks to preserve its members, yet each member also has duties to the state, in which individuality is subsumed into the collective. The exceptions to the rule of the state are women, who do not contribute to the protection of the collective, and the dead, who no longer have a role in it. Only when dead does a (male) individual belong exclusively to the family; alive, he is bound to offer himself to the state. The care of the dead is thus the prerogative of the family, the only element of familial life that is not subject to state imposition. Through burial of its members, the family asserts itself against the ultimate negation of death, turning the natural and apparently inscrutable process into 'ein *Getanes*.'⁵⁸ 'Diese letzte Pflicht macht also das vollkommene *göttliche* Gesetz oder die positive *sittliche* Handlung gegen den Einzelnen aus.'⁵⁹ Where the state negates individuality, the family preserves it, yet the two sides of culture are generally complementary, since the family's power begins where the state's ends. When, however, the rights of one are transgressed by the other, the immanent contradiction of the two sides of *polis* life will become clear.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 332: 'something done.'

⁵⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 334: 'This last duty makes up the complete divine law or the positive ethical action for the individual.'

Having set out the opposition of family and state, Hegel discusses the varieties of relations within the family at great length. The digression is an odd one and much commented on, but there is a close link between *Antigone* and Hegel's theory.⁶⁰ He sees only the relation of brother to sister as pure, that is, free from desire (which characterizes marital relations) or asymmetry (which characterizes parental relations). The equality between a brother and sister is given once and for all by birth; their relation is without all contingency, and allows for the fullest realization of the self and other: 'Das Moment des anerkennenden und anerkannten *einzelnen Selbsts* darf hier sein Recht behaupten, weil es mit dem Gleichgewichte des Blutes und begierdeloser Beziehung verknüpft ist.'⁶¹ This exposition has to be understood as a response to Antigone's speech at lines 905-12, in which she prioritizes her duty to her brother over that to a husband or children – words that famously scandalized Goethe.⁶² Hegel historicizes the sentiment, seeing Antigone's duty to her brother as the expression of the specific way in which public and private spheres relate in Greek society. A brother represents for a sister the irreplaceable link between family and state. He is thus definitive for the sister's role in the collective in a way no other family member can be. Hegel's vision of ethical life in the ancient world is in large part an explanation of this particularity of Sophocles's text. Greek ethical understanding dictates Antigone's absolute adherence to family bonds, which take the double form of duty to her brother and duty to the dead.

⁶⁰ Harris (1997), 188.

⁶¹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 337: 'The moment of acknowledging and acknowledged individual self can here claim its right, because it is bound to the equality of blood and desire-free relation.'

⁶² And not only Goethe: they have often been suspected by textual critics for their odd construction, but now are largely accepted.

The end of ethical action

Hegel has set the stage for conflict by describing a society in which the powers of ethical substance find themselves in tension. This opposition will play out in a transgression that upsets the balance of the two powers that make up ethical life. The transgression that disturbs ‘die sittliche Welt’ is itself a ‘sittliche Handlung,’ the title of the next sub-chapter. Ethical action at this stage of spirit is inherently unstable, since it is based on a single duty rather than a relation to the fullness of *Substanz*. Where the previous chapter was essentially static, this one will be dynamic, and concern ‘das menschliche und göttliche Wissen, die Schuld and das Schicksal.’⁶³ The *Schicksal* at issue is not only the fate of the agent, but of the ethical world in which he or she acts. In the course of the chapter, ethical consciousness will come to experience its own insufficiency. Greek tragedy exemplifies the process by which ancient society recognizes that the complementarity it had maintained between the claims of the individual and the claims of the collective is in fact an unsustainable contradiction. *Antigone* is for Hegel a document of the growing individualism of ancient Greek culture. Though suppressed within the action of the play, the individual will have the final word, turning the ethical world of Greece into the legal state of Rome.

From the societal focus of the previous chapter, Hegel turns to the agent in the ethical world. The agent, because of the division in ethical consciousness, can only act in such a way as to realize one or another power of ethical substance. It experiences ethicality as a single law to be followed absolutely. There is within the subject ‘keine Willkür und ebenso kein Kampf, keine Unentschiedenheit.’⁶⁴ Such consciousness cannot comprehend other ethical imperatives and so understands resistance to its actions ‘als eine *unglückliche* Kollision der

⁶³ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 342: ‘Human and divine knowledge, guilt and fate.’

⁶⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 342: ‘no wilfulness, and likewise no struggle, no indecisiveness.’

Pflicht nur mit der rechtlosen *Wirklichkeit*.⁶⁵ Hegel demonstrates the conflict with recalcitrant reality on the example of Antigone. The human laws of the state seem violent and unjust in opposing her chthonic duty. With a consciousness that knows only one half of the ethical imperative, she neglects another, equally valid claim. In acting on the basis of one duty, the subject creates ‘am Bewußtsein der Gegensatz des *Gewußten* und des *Nichtgewußten*.’⁶⁶ It is crucial that Hegel places both claims, human and divine law, within a single consciousness, even though at this stage of spirit the subject can only be aware of one or the other. In acting, ethical consciousness transgresses its own, unknown half, and ‘wird also durch die Tat zur *Schuld*.’⁶⁷ Guilt is not a result of evil or avoidable error, but of the finitude of ethical understanding at this state of spirit.⁶⁸ For Hegel, the *hamartia* of the tragic figure is a blindness that is inherent to *Sittlichkeit* itself.

The onesided action of the ethical subject necessarily calls up the complementary law as an opposed, vengeful power. The ethical agent does not realize that the law it has opposed is part of the wholeness of its own consciousness. The coming-to-light of a contradiction immanent to the agent constitutes the Hegelian *anagnorisis* of tragedy, and, in a *tour de force* of philosophical reasoning, binds together the tragedies of Oedipus, Antigone, and Creon. Hegel describes a process of increasing self-awareness in the events of the house of Labdacus. Hegel does not name the subjects, but the first step is obviously the story of Oedipus:

Die Wirklichkeit hält daher die andere, dem Wissen fremde Seite in sich verborgen und zeigt sich dem Bewußtsein nicht, wie sie an und für sich ist, – dem Sohne nicht den Vater in seinem Beleidiger, den er erschlägt, – nicht die

⁶⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 343: ‘as an unhappy collision of duty only with law-less reality.’

⁶⁶ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 344: ‘in consciousness an opposition of the known and the unknown.’

⁶⁷ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 346: ‘through action becomes guilt.’

⁶⁸ See George (2006) 87-92.

Mutter in der Königin, die er zum Weibe nimmt. Dem sittlichen Selbstbewußtsein stellt auf diese Weise eine lichtscheue Macht nach, welche erst, wenn die Tat geschehen, hervorbricht.⁶⁹

Oedipus for Hegel represents the onesidedness of unreflective knowledge. The irony of Oedipus's fate is exemplary of ethical consciousness in general, which is never able to reflect on itself, and so calls up retribution against it. There is a constructive aspect to Oedipus's tragedy, as the unity of ethical substance is finally revealed to him: 'In dieser Wahrheit tritt also die Tat an die Sonne, – als ein solches, worin ein Bewußtes einem Unbewußten, das Eigene einem Fremden verbunden ist.'⁷⁰ Hegel describes Oedipus's recognition as a kind of progress, as the transcendence of an opposition within his own consciousness. Through catastrophe, tragedy demonstrates the incompleteness of his previous knowledge.

The next step in Hegel's discussion of tragic fate and *anagnorisis* is the story of Antigone. Hegel prefers it to the story of Oedipus because Antigone explicitly weighs two laws against one another, and chooses to disregard one (rather than being unaware of the contradiction). In her action, 'die vollbrachte Tat verkehrt seine Ansicht,' and leads Antigone to recognize that the opposed duty is based in the same substance that makes up her own consciousness.⁷¹ For Hegel, the ethical subject transcends the onesidedness of knowledge through an acknowledgement of guilt:

Das sittliche Bewußtsein muß sein Entgegensetztes um dieser Wirklichkeit willen und um seines Tuns willen als die seinige, es muß seine Schuld anerkennen:
weil wir leiden, anerkennen wir, daß wir gefehlt.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 347: 'Reality holds the other side, alien to knowledge, hidden in itself and does not show itself to consciousness as it is in and for itself – does not show the son the father in the insulter whom he strikes, – nor the mother in the queen that he takes to wife. In this way a light-shy power follows ethical self-consciousness, and breaks forth only when the deed is done.'

⁷⁰ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 347: 'In this truth the deed comes to light, – as one, in which something conscious is bound to something unconscious, one's own to the alien.'

⁷¹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 348: 'the completed deed reverses its intention'

Dies Anerkennen drückt den aufgehobenen Zwiespalt des sittlichen *Zweckes* und der *Wirklichkeit*, es drückt die Rückkehr zur sittlichen *Gesinnung* aus, die weiß, daß nichts gilt als das Rechte.⁷²

Hegel does not here (unlike a few pages before) cite the reference, but it is to *Antigone*, line 926. The reason for Hegel's elliptical quotation is obvious when one looks at the original context. The full sentence reads: ἀλλ'εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδ'ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς καλά, / παθόντες ἄν ξυγγοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότες.⁷³ Hegel's translation ignores the fact that the citation is the second part of a conditional sentence, with the optative verb expressing irreality. This would be a scandalous misreading of Sophocles if Hegel were making a literary argument. Yet it is not the specific instance of Sophocles's play that is at issue, but rather ethical consciousness at this stage of spirit. Antigone's words represent for Hegel the possibility of acknowledging the opposed principle, which has emerged out of the reaction to the deed. Whether Sophocles's Antigone actually does so is for Hegel secondary; what she shows is that tragedy has opened ethical consciousness to recognizing its own error. This is a step beyond the previous certainty, and shows a glimmer of the reflective ethical understanding that is emerging. Yet, as Hegel well knows, Antigone does not take this step – indeed, it is only incipient within Greek ethicality, and will only become fully possible at a higher stage of spirit.

To complete the vindication of the unity of ethical substance, Creon as well as Antigone must be punished for his one-sidedness. Hegel introduces this symmetry with the next lines of Antigone's speech (again uncited): 'Sie [die sittliche Individualität] hat aber dabei die Gewißheit, daß diejenige Individualität, deren Pathos diese entgegengesetzte Macht

⁷² Hegel, *WZB* 3, 348: 'The ethical consciousness must acknowledge what is opposed as its own for the sake of this reality and for the sake of its deed, it must acknowledge its guilt: *Because we suffer, we acknowledge that we have erred*. This acknowledging expresses the sublated opposition of the ethical aim and reality, it expresses the return to an ethical attitude, which knows that nothing is valid but the right.'

⁷³ *Ant.* 925-6: 'But if these things are [deemed] good among the gods, then in suffering we would know that we have erred.'

ist, *nicht mehr Übel erleidet, als sie zugefügt.*⁷⁴ Again, Hegel translates only the protasis of the conditional sentence, which reads in full: εἰ δ' οἷδ' ἀμαρτάνουσι, μὴ πλείω κακὰ / πάθοιεν ἢ καὶ δρῶσιν ἐκδίκως ἐμέ.⁷⁵ Antigone's expression of an equality to the injury on both sides (rather than her desire for retribution) is the crux of Hegel's citation. The advancing ethical consciousness recognizes that both powers have been injured, and that both guilty parties will suffer. It is only then that the end of the ethical action is attained, and the guilt of both sides is acknowledged as their fate: 'Erst in der gleichen Unterwerfung beider Seiten ist das absolute Recht vollbracht und die sittliche Substanz als die negative Macht, welche beide Seiten verschlingt, oder das allmächtige und gerechte *Schicksal* aufgetreten.'⁷⁶ The true subject of tragedy is the ethical substance, not any character or characters. In the recognition of the justice of fate, the ethical substance comes to comprehend the necessity of a reflective moment within itself. Here it is clear that Hegel's employment of Sophoclean models is not an interpretation of one or another work, but of the process of recognition that takes place in tragedy. He sees Greek tragedy as the depiction of a stage in the development of spirit. The inadequacy of its ethical world forces spirit to take on a negative quality.

The opposition of family and collective on which the ancient state rests has shown itself to be irreconcilable. Hegel, with the stories of tragedy in mind, summarizes the unsustainable division of the ancient state:

Indem das Gemeinwesen sich nur durch die Störung der Familienglückseligkeit und die Auflösung des Selbstbewußtseins in das allgemeine sein Bestehen gibt, erzeugt es sich an dem, was es unterdrückt und was ihm zugleich wesentlich ist, an der Weiblichkeit überhaupt seinen inneren

⁷⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 349: 'It [ethical individuality] has however the certainty that that individuality whose pathos is the opposed power, *does not suffer more evil than it inflicts.*'

⁷⁵ *Ant.* 927-8: 'If these men err, let them not suffer any evils greater than they do unjustly to me.'

⁷⁶ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 349: 'The absolute law is first completed in the equal subjugation of both sides, and the ethical substance emerges as the negative power which engulfs both sides, or the all-powerful and just fate.'

Feind. Diese – die ewige Ironie des Gemeinwesens – verändert durch die Intrige den allgemeinen Zweck der Regierung in einen Privatzweck, verwandelt ihre allgemeine Tätigkeit in ein Werk dieses bestimmten Individuums und verkehrt das allgemeine Eigentum des Staats zu einem Besitz und Putz der Familie.⁷⁷

The privatization of life that Hegel had seen in the emerging bourgeoisie now has its roots in female self-assertion and subversion of collective aims in service of the family. The ‘eternal irony’ is that the collective, in order to be a collective, must make the individual inimical to it. The female, whose individuality is not subsumed by duty to the state asserts the right of the individual and brings about the growing importance of private life. Hegel understands this as the result of an immanent contradiction in society, and much as he regrets the fall of the ancient *polis*, he has no doubt that it is necessary.

The ethical spirit of the community, constituted by the subordination of the family, ultimately must recognize the power of the individual: ‘Wie vorhin die Penaten im Volksgeiste, so gehen die *lebendigen* Volksgeister durch ihre Individualität jetzt in einem *allgemeinen* Gemeinwesen zugrunde, dessen *einfache Allgemeinheit* geistlos und tot und dessen Lebendigkeit das *einzelne* Individuum, als Einzelnes, ist.’⁷⁸ *Geist* no longer finds its adequate manifestation in collective existence, but has become the property of individuals. Hegel has demonstrated such a world-historical transition on the model of *Antigone*. The work seems to represent the dissolution of the unified collective into a disparate group of individuals. Sophocles depicts the process by which the unity of ethical substance becomes

⁷⁷ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 352: ‘In that the commonwealth gives itself permanence only by the disturbance of family happiness and the dissolution of self-consciousness in the general, it creates for itself its inner enemy on that which it oppresses and what is at once essential to it, on femaleness in general. This – the eternal irony of the commonwealth – changes through intrigue the general aim of the government into a private aim, transforms its general activity in a work of this particular individual and reverses the general ownership of the state into a possession and maintenance of the family.’

⁷⁸ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 354: ‘As before only the Penates perished in the spirit of the people, so now the living spirits of the people perish through their individuality in a general commonwealth, whose simple generality is spiritless and dead and whose liveliness is the singular individual, as singular.’

visible through the contradiction of family and state, woman and man. In the insight into this unity, however, the possibility of Greek ethicality is past, and the power of negation is acknowledged. Tragedy thus appears as the exemplary agent of *Übergang* within ancient society. The model of tragedy has served as an illustration of historical necessity and an acknowledgment of negation, but no positive reconciliation has been found. This will come only in Hegel's return to tragedy later in the work, when he treats it as an artistic genre and a product of a historical world in transition. In the chapters on the 'Kunstreligion' of the Greeks, Hegel will describe the possibility of a reconciliation within tragedy and with the end of tragedy.

Recognition and reconciliation

Hegel does not offer a theory of tragedy nor even quite a reading of *Antigone* in the 'Geist' chapter. At most, he could be said to use tragedies (most of all, though not exclusively, *Antigone*) as phenomena through which to understand Greek ethical life. He does not generalize about the genre, nor does he seek to account for its artistic form in any way. Yet most commentators on tragedy in the *PdG* have taken the pages in 'Geist' to be definitive for Hegel's understanding of tragedy.⁷⁹ This is usually based on a retrospective imposition of the theory of the *Ästhetik* lectures, in which the *Antigone*'s ethical conflict does seem to be definitive of Hegel's very concept of tragedy. Yet such a reading is methodologically unsound, as Hegel did not oversee the publication of the later text, and was at any rate giving the lectures as an introduction to aesthetics. The only explicit theory of tragedy that Hegel ever wrote comes in the *PdG* chapter 'Religion,' in which Hegel gives an account of the

⁷⁹ Donougho (2006) is a notable exception.

genre and its role in Greek culture. For Hegel, tragedy has a specific cognitive role in a specific historical moment: it is the medium through which ancient Greece became aware of the inadequacy of its form of religion. Most of what comes before in Hegel's thought on tragedy is background, and most of what comes after is repetition.

Hegel's discussion of tragedy in the 'Religion' chapter of the *PdG* assumes the structures established in the 'Geist' chapter. The ethical world of tragedy is again characterized by a division of substance as it is grasped by consciousness; this leads to the onesided actions of the protagonists, the collision of their opposed aims, and a change in the form of spirit. Yet the context and with it, Hegel's viewpoint has shifted. Tragedy again appears as a process of transition, but of an even more monumental kind than that described previously. It is not only the moment at which ancient 'Kunstreligion' is recognized as insufficient, but itself points forward to the 'offenbare Religion' of Christianity. The tragedy of the ancient *polis* stood at the very beginning of the 'Geist' chapter, but it now appears at the end of the central section of the 'Religion' chapter. Where tragedy was previously the most primitive form of spirit, it now represents a semi-developed form of religion. The differing historical place of Greek art within the *PdG* speaks to the difference between 'Geist' and 'Religion' in Hegel's system. Religion for Hegel is the way that consciousness of a moral order (the development of which was depicted in 'Geist') takes on concrete form, as the knowledge of divinity. What distinguishes religion from the previous experiences of spirit is that it is conscious of the need for an absolute.⁸⁰ With this change in focus comes also a change in model: where the story of Antigone permeated the 'Geist' chapter's discussion of ethicality, a series of tragic figures are discussed in 'Religion,' all of whom in

⁸⁰ Lauer (1993), 258.

one way or another come to recognize the onesidedness of their knowledge as a theological deficit. Such recognition is precisely what Hegel could not show definitively in *Antigone*, and so resorted to a decontextualized quotation. In the latter chapter, the underlying figure seems to come from the *Oresteia* or the *OC* (which Hegel is reported to have translated as a young man).⁸¹ Both works for Hegel represent the progress through transgression and retribution to reconciliation. Hegel's theory of tragedy, as is often observed, takes its model of ethical conflict from *Antigone*, but the following will show that the model of reconciliation – which has the last word – is much more Aeschylean or late-Sophoclean.

Tragedy's systematic importance in both 'Geist' and 'Religion' comes from its transitional quality. In the latter chapter, this is a progress from polytheism to a kind of proto-monotheism. The transition is in Hegel's mind a definite advance, and brings with it the affirmative reconciliation that was missing from 'Geist's' description of tragedy as a loss of ethical certainty. On an aesthetic plane, Hegel can only regret the fall of the ancient Greek *polis*; on a religious plane, however, the end of Greek polytheism creates the possibility of Christianity and its reflective relation to divinity. This is the next stage in the progress of *Geist* to its fullest self-consciousness, at which it 'aus der Form der *Substanz* in die des *Subjekts* getreten [ist].'⁸² By the end of Hegel's discussion of 'Kunstreligion,' *Geist* will have recognized the need for an absolute, and, crucially, found it in itself.⁸³ As the means of this development, Greek tragedy is pivotal in Hegel's argument. Through tragedy, the individual is reconciled (*versöhnt*) through a forgetting (*Vergessenheit*) of polytheistic divinity. Tragedy ultimately demonstrates art's inadequacy as a representation of the highest possibilities of

⁸¹ Rosenkranz (1844) [1977], 11.

⁸² Hegel, *WZB* 3, 545: 'has stepped from the form of substance into that of subject.'

⁸³ See Bubner (2007) for the pivotal place of art-religion.

spirit, and thus begins the transition from a religious consciousness that could be expressed in objective form to one that is necessarily subjective.

In Greek ‘Kunstreligion,’ religious consciousness, which was previously concerned to find unconscious expressions for its understanding of the divine (in eastern ‘natural religion’), now finds that the absolute must be represented as individuality. This impulse creates the form of the Pantheon, composed of divinity in particular, human form. Since at this stage, divinity can be adequately depicted in the objectivity of artistic works, Hegel describes the place of art in classical society as ‘absolute:’

Früher ist sie das instinktartige Arbeiten, das, ins Dasein versenkt, aus ihm heraus und in es hinein arbeitet, nicht an der freien Sittlichkeit seine Substanz und daher auch zum arbeitenden Selbst nicht die freie geistige Tätigkeit hat. Später ist der Geist über die Kunst hinaus, um seine höhere Darstellung zu gewinnen, – nämlich, nicht nur die aus dem Selbst geborene *Substanz*, sondern in seiner Darstellung als Gegenstand *dieses Selbst* zu sein.⁸⁴

In the art-religion of the Greeks, the material of art expresses substance, and so manifests divinity as far as possible in existence. Hegel will later describe art of this kind as the first moment of absolute spirit, to be overtaken by religion and philosophy.⁸⁵ Monotheism’s realization that the absolute has a unified agency (as subject), however, will make art’s objective depiction of the divine impossible. Hegel’s treatment of Greek art-religion is notable for its nostalgic quality: like every other form of spirit examined previously, it is *Übergang*, a stage in the larger narrative of progress; yet as ‘absolute,’ it is also an end in itself, and Hegel unusually will pause to reflect on the *Untergang* of art’s highest possibility. The *PdG*’s account of Greek culture is conditioned by a tension between the absolute validity

⁸⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 514: ‘earlier it is the instinctive working, which, sunk into existence, works out of it and into it, does not have its substance in free ethicality and therefore does not have the free spiritual activity for the working self. Later spirit is beyond art, in order to win its higher presentation, – that is, to be not only a substance born from the self, but to be as an object of this self in its presentation.’

⁸⁵ See Nuzzo (2006).

of its art, and the relative validity of its religion, and stands out in the work for its ambivalence.

Tragic knowing and forgetting

Within art-religion, Hegel describes three stages of self-consciousness, characterized by increasingly anthropomorphic representations of the divine: ‘das abstrakte Kunstwerk’ of sculpture, oracles, and cult-worship, in which divinity is hierarchically separated from humanity, gives way to ‘das lebendige Kunstwerk’ of mysteries and religious festivals, in which divinity is understood as present in collective existence. In the final stage, ‘das geistige Kunstwerk,’ the gods take on subjectivity themselves as they are represented, first indirectly in epic narrative, and then directly in dramatic performance. In each moment of ‘das geistige Kunstwerk,’ the language that mediates divinity becomes increasingly individual: first it is the inscrutable oracular utterance, then the esoteric speech of mysteries, then the narrative voice of the bard. Yet the bard only narrates; divinity in epic is removed from human consciousness and language. Tragedy finally will unify divine and human consciousness to depict ‘*selbstbewußte Menschen, die ihr Recht und ihren Zweck, die Macht und den Willen ihrer Bestimmtheit wissen und zu sagen wissen.*’⁸⁶ Tragedy is born for Hegel when divine substance becomes the content of human speech, as characters express their religious consciousness and obligations in words.

The way divinity comes to bear in tragedy’s actions is familiar from the ‘Geist’ chapter, but Hegel now accounts for the theatrical medium in a way that he did not earlier. Hegel understands tragedy’s form as characterized by an internal temporality, created by the

⁸⁶ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 534: ‘self-conscious men, who know their right and their aim, the power and the will of their determination, and know how to speak it.’

opposition of the chorus and protagonists. The chorus's consciousness for Hegel is primitive and discontinuous, '*der allgemeine Boden* worauf die Bewegung dieser aus dem Begriffe erzeugten Gestalten vorgeht, ist das Bewußtsein der ersten vorstellenden Sprache und ihres selbstlosen, auseinander gelassenen Inhalts.'⁸⁷ The 'allgemein' quality of the chorus is their failure to make distinctions between duties to one god or another. Seeking to satisfy a myriad of incompatible divine imperatives, their religious consciousness is empty of the particularity that could render a basis for action. The chorus does not take a clear position on the ethical aims of the protagonists, but only offers irrelevant and promiscuous praise of the gods. Their religious consciousness has not moved beyond the archaic Pantheon of capricious divinities, and so cannot see the ethical necessity of the downfall of the protagonists. The chorus's primitive theology sees the divine world as irreducibly chaotic, ruled by a threatening, alien fate.

The protagonists, on the contrary, are too immediately bound up in divine substance, and recognize only a single ethical duty. In them, spirit appears '*in der einfachen Entzweiung des Begriffs. [...] Seine [Geists] Substanz zeigt sich daher nur in ihre zwei extremen Mächte auseinandergerissen.*'⁸⁸ Hegel now interprets the onesidedness of the characters as fulfilling a religious function. Their ethical consciousness shrinks the chorus's undifferentiated Pantheon to the two opposed realms that Hegel had found at the centre of Greek culture. The religious consciousness of tragic protagonists can only recognize a single god, just as their ethical consciousness could only adhere to a single obligation. Since the protagonists define themselves by the knowledge of a single divinity, the other divinity remains hidden, and will

⁸⁷ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 535: 'the general ground, on which the movement of these figures created by the concept takes place, it is the consciousness of the first representing speech and its selfless, disparate content.'

⁸⁸ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 536: 'in the simple division of the concept. Its substance shows itself therefore split into its two extreme powers.'

appear in the course of tragedy as a destructive, unknown power. The model behind this process is the role of the Erinyes in the *Eumenides*, which had appeared prominently in the *Naturrecht* essay as well as in *Der Geist des Christentums*. Tragedy for Hegel is often associated with the accomplishment of divine justice, as adherence to a single divinity calls up retribution from another. Hegel demonstrates the problem of the protagonists's ignorance successively on Oedipus, Orestes, Macbeth, and Hamlet, all of whom, he argues, are destroyed by a divinity they cannot fully comprehend.

Hegel presents tragic guilt now as a problem of knowledge. The partiality of knowledge gained from divinity links Oedipus's trust in the oracle with Orestes's trust in Athena – and in a surprising jump to modern tragedy, Macbeth's reliance on the witches. All, Hegel argues, commit crimes because their theological understanding is incomplete. Their modes of religious knowledge appear as manifestations of a truth that nevertheless remains half hidden:

Der, welcher die rätselhafte Sphinx selbst aufzuschließen vermochte, wie der kindlich Vertrauende werden darum durch das, was der Gott ihnen offenbart, ins Verderben geschickt. Diese Priesterin, aus der der schöne Gott spricht, ist nichts anderes als die doppelsinnigen Schicksalsschwester, die durch ihre Verheißungen zum Verbrechen treiben und in der Zweizüngigkeit dessen, was sie als Sicherheit angaben, den, der sich auf den offenbaren Sinn verließ, betrügen.⁸⁹

Hegel points to the ambiguous language of tragedy as itself a cause of destruction. Taking words at face value, all these figures injure themselves. Tragic understanding, since it is always partial, makes the actions and words of the protagonists obscure to themselves, their

⁸⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 537: 'He, who himself was able to unlock the riddling Sphinx, like the childish trusting one, are sent to ruin by that which the god revealed to them. This priestess from whom the beautiful god speaks, is none other than the ambiguous fate-sisters, who drive him, who relied on the apparent sense, to crime by their promises and deceive in the double-tongued character of what they presented as security.'

doing and undoing simultaneously.⁹⁰ For the audience viewing, tragedy makes clear that the fullness of religious life exceeds any one of the pagan divinities. The ‘besonnener und gründlicher’ consciousness that emerges is like that of Hamlet, who ‘auf die Offenbarung, die der Geist des Vaters selbst über das Verbrechen, das ihn mordete, machte, mit der Rache zaudert, und andere Beweise noch veranstaltet.’⁹¹ Hamlet seems to take account of the uncertainty of religious knowledge, in a way that Oedipus, Orestes, and Macbeth do not. By not trusting in language, he seems to have learned the lesson of tragedy (though not, obviously, to the point where he avoids his own death). Hegel may be suggesting a historical differentiation of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, like he would make in the aesthetics lectures and like Schelling had made recently in his lectures, but it is not explicit.

Hegel understands *anagnorisis* as an insight into the insufficiency of the forms of knowledge represented on stage. This comes about in the moment of punishment, as the protagonist’s assertion of one value calls up ‘die Erinnye der anderen feindlich erregten Macht und Charakters. Dies *untere* Recht sitzt mit Zeus auf dem Throne und genießt mit dem offenbaren und dem wissenden Gotte gleiches Ansehen.’⁹² The wholeness of religious life can only be known retrospectively, after retribution has proven the wrongness of the original action (as in the *Antigone* quotations):

Die Wahrheit aber der gegeneinander auftretenden Mächte des Inhalts und Bewußtseins ist das Resultat, daß beide gleiches Recht und darum in ihrem Gegensatz, den das Handeln hervorbringt, gleiches Unrecht haben. Die

⁹⁰ Hamacher (1998), 110. George (2006), 112-5 discusses riddling in the context of Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

⁹¹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 537: ‘more prudent and sounder...after the revelation which the ghost of the father himself made of the crime that killed him, hesitates with revenge and sets up still other proofs.’

⁹² Hegel, *WZB* 3, 538: ‘the Erinyes of the other power and character aroused to hostility. This nether right sits with Zeus on the throne and enjoys the same respect with the revealed and the knowing god.’

Bewegung des Tuns erweist ihre Einheit in dem gegenseitigen Untergange beider Mächte und der selbstbewußten Charaktere.⁹³

The truth of tragedy, for Hegel, emerges from the characters's downfall, as an insight into the unity of what seemed to be opposed. The protagonists have been destroyed, but the audience recognizes that the opposition they represented was an inessential one, that religious knowledge must take on a new form. Theology can no longer be based on immediate adherence to duty, but must become a reflection on the good. This insight could not be gained within the frame of the play, but comes only from observing the downfall of the characters. Tragedy's end is not the presentation of conflict, but the insight into unity that emerges.

Reconciliation now enters the discussion of tragedy as a cathartic experience, the forgetting of the previous certainties of the protagonists. Hegel describes two possibilities for tragic reconciliation in a way that suggests the two ancient tragic protagonists alluded to above, Oedipus and Orestes:

Die Versöhnung des Gegensatzes mit sich ist die *Lethe* der *Unterwelt* im Tode, – oder die *Lethe* der *Oberwelt*, als Freisprechung nicht von der Schuld, denn diese kann das Bewußtsein, weil es handelte, nicht verleugnen, sondern vom Verbrechen, und seine sühnende Beruhigung. Beide sind die *Vergessenheit*, das Verschwundensein der Wirklichkeit und des Tuns der Mächte der Substanz, ihrer Individualitäten, und der Mächte des abstrakten Gedankens des Guten und des Bösen.⁹⁴

The models seem to be Oedipus's calm death in the *OC* and Orestes's acquittal in the *Eumenides*. Reconciliation for both comes through a forgetting, in which they abandon the

⁹³ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 539: 'The truth however of the opposed powers of content and consciousness is the result that both have equal right and therefore, in their opposition which the action creates, equal wrong. The movement of the deed shows their unity in the reciprocal downfall of both powers and the self-conscious characters.'

⁹⁴ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 539: 'The reconciliation of the opposition with itself is the *Lethe* of the underworld in death, or the *Lethe* of the upper world, as acquittal not from guilt (since consciousness cannot deny this because it acted), but from the crime, and its expiatory calm. Both are forgetfulness, the disappearance of reality and the deed of the powers of substance, their individualities, and the powers of abstract thought of good and evil.'

inessential knowledge that has governed their lives. This is no longer a simple loss, as it was in ‘Geist,’ but brings with it a recognition of ‘die gleiche Ehre und damit die gleichgültige Unwirklichkeit Apolls und der Erinnye, und die Rückkehr ihrer Begeisterung und Tätigkeit in den einfachen Zeus.’⁹⁵ Hegel describes a progress beyond the opposed realms of Athenian divinity he had pointed to in the *Naturrecht* essay, and beyond the onesidedness of ethical and religious consciousnesses he has described previously in the *PdG*. The return to a unified divinity is a restitution of the division that spirit had to undergo in entering real existence; in understanding the opposed imperatives as emanating from a single divine substance, consciousness makes the decisive step towards monotheism. The religious truth that emerges from tragedy reconciles the conflict and destruction portrayed. For Hegel, it is the redemptive endings of the *Oresteia* and *OC* that depict the essential process of tragedy, the progress from division to reconciliation.

The end of tragedy

The end of tragedy brings with it the end of the art-religion of the Greeks. Tragedy’s reconciliatory insight into the unity of divine substance renders the individualized gods of the pantheon obsolete: ‘Dieses Schicksal vollendet die Entvölkerung des Himmels, der gedankenlosen Vermischung der Individualität und des Wesens.’⁹⁶ Greek tragedy reveals that divine substance cannot be individualized as *pathos* or knowledge, but has itself an individual, subjective form. Divinity must be understood as an incorporeal whole, and not as discrete individuals. This alteration of religious consciousness is a shared end of tragedy and

⁹⁵ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 540: ‘equal honour and therefore the equal unreality of Apollo and the Erinyes, and the return of their spirituality and action into the single Zeus.’

⁹⁶ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 540: ‘This fate completes the depopulation of heaven, the thoughtless mixing of individuality and essence.’

ancient philosophy for Hegel. He sees Socrates's questioning as analogous to tragedy's representation of the inadequacy of human religious knowledge, and as a force for progress in consciousness. There is for Hegel no true subjectivity in Greek tragedy or religion. Tragedy, in representing the too-immediate unity of human and divine, is both the peak of art-religion and the moment at which its inadequacy first appears. After the insight of tragedy, the apparent unity of individuality and divine substance is broken, introducing a division between actor and role: 'Der Held, der vor dem Zuschauer auftritt, zerfällt in seine Maske und in den Schauspieler, in die Person und das wirkliche Selbst.'⁹⁷ Now that identification with a single element of divinity (which made the individual into a *persona* of substance) is impossible, the real self can appear on stage.

The art form of the real self in everyday existence is comedy. It depicts, in the parabasis, an interplay of the masked self and the real one – now separated and at odds. The self-consciousness of comedy can put on and take off the mask at will, and the fluidity of its identity represents the dissolution of tragic certainty. With the transition from tragedy to comedy, the art-religion reaches the height of anthropomorphism; yet in doing so, it has revealed the insufficiency of artistic representation to the substantial interests of consciousness. Comedy's irony has a tinge of bitterness to it, as the vacuum of certainty left by the disappearance of the tragic pantheon is experienced as a loss. Individuality rather than religious or social obligation becomes the reigning principle, a change that reveals – as in both the 'Geist' chapter and the *Naturrecht* essay – fissures in the unity of the *polis*, 'die gänzliche Befreiung der Zwecke der unmittelbaren Einzelheit von der allgemeinen Ordnung

⁹⁷ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 541: 'the hero who appears before the audience decomposes into his mask and the actor, into the person and the real self.'

und der Spott jener über diese.’⁹⁸ Comedy’s anarchy makes possible the emergence of a new order, in which religion will no longer find its home in the objective form of art but in the subjective form of reflection. The art-religion, which is not only a stage in this development but, as drama, represents the transition, is thus a *mise-en-abîme* of Hegel’s system. Greek tragedy and dialectical philosophy for Hegel present the same insight into the fate of consciousness.

The process initiated by tragedy and completed in comedy is paradigmatic of Hegel’s method, which seeks to articulate the path of consciousness as it progresses through the stages of spirit. The concept of *Schicksal*, central to the *Geist des Christentums* notes and the *Naturrecht* essay, retains its pregnancy in the *PdG*. Hegel deploys it quite carefully, not to indicate an imposed, external necessity (the more usual sense of the term, as found in Schelling and Schiller), but to describe a recognition of dialectical necessity. The structure of the *PdG* has been the coming-to-consciousness of *Schicksal*, a process both represented and completed in tragedy. The recognition of necessity is initially an object of unhappiness, ‘der Schmerz, der sich als das harte Wort ausspricht, daß *Gott gestorben ist*.’⁹⁹ Hegel will introduce the compensation of Christianity for the loss of ancient art-religion, but it appears at first as a catastrophic, epochal change. No other rupture in the *PdG*’s constant process of transformation leaves such a void behind it. Hegel pauses to remember the religion of ancient Greece and his language takes on a rare elegiac tone: ‘Die Bildsäulen sind nun Leichname, denen die belebende Seele, so wie die Hymne Worte, deren Glauben entflohen ist, die Tische der Götter ohne geistige Speise und Trank, und aus seinen Spielen and Festen kommt dem

⁹⁸ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 543: ‘the complete emancipation of the aims of immediate individuality from the general order and the ridicule of this order.’

⁹⁹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 547: ‘it is the pain that speaks itself as the harsh word that God is dead.’

Bewußtsein nicht die freudige Einheit seiner mit dem Wesen zurück.¹⁰⁰ Greek art-religion, with its anthropomorphic divinity, can never regain its power. Though Hegel recognizes the necessity of the *Schicksal* that has rendered art inadequate to the expression of the divine, he does so with a sadness that recalls Schiller's or Hölderlin's more nostalgic moments.

Hegel's elegiac look back at the arts in ancient Greece, though, attains a form of reconciliation in the concept of memory, *Erinnerung*. The passage is worth quoting at length for its beauty and for its melancholic, reflective tone, which is rare if not unique in the *PdG*:

Den Werken der Muse fehlt die Kraft des Geistes, dem aus der Zermalmung der Götter und Menschen die Gewißheit seiner selbst hervorging. Sie sind nun das, was sie für uns sind, – vom Baume gebrochene schöne Früchte: ein freundliches Schicksal reichte sie uns dar, wie ein Mädchen jene Früchte präsentiert; es gibt nicht das wirkliche Leben ihres Daseins, nicht den Baum, der sie trug, nicht die Erde und die Elemente, die ihre Substanz, noch das Klima, das ihre Bestimmtheit ausmachte, oder den Wechsel der Jahreszeiten, die den Prozeß ihres Werdens beherrschten. – So gibt das Schicksal uns mit den Werken jener Kunst nicht ihre Welt, nicht den Frühling und Sommer des sittlichen Lebens, worin sie blühten und reiften, sondern allein die eingehüllte Erinnerung dieser Wirklichkeit.¹⁰¹

The final metaphor is important in the history of historical thought: Herder had used the image of the seed and the shell (*eingehüllt* is literally 'en-shelled') in order to demonstrate that the essence of Greek tragedy was still somehow accessible, and could be compared to Shakespearean works. For Hegel, penetrating the shell of ancient art is impossible; its power

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 547: 'The statues are now corpses, from which the enlivening soul has flown, like belief from the words of hymns, the tables of the gods are without spiritual food and drink, and from games and festivals the happy unity of the self with essence does not return to consciousness.'

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *WZB* 3, 547: 'The works of the muses lack the power of spirit, to which certainty of self came from the crushing of gods and men. They are now that which they are for us – beautiful fruits broken from a tree: a friendly fate offered them to us, like a girl presents us with those fruits. There is no real life of their existence, not the tree that bore them, not the earth and the elements that made their substance, not the climate that made their particularity, or the change of seasons which governed the process of their becoming. Thus fate gives us with the works of that art not its world, not the spring and summer of ethical life in which they bloomed and ripened, but alone the veiled memory of this reality.'

remains only a memory, and a veiled one at that. If there is a moment in the *PdG* at which the negative side of tragedy breaks through Hegel's efforts at historical reconciliation, it is here.

Yet Hegel does find a way to reconcile himself to the loss of ancient immediacy. Through a play on the word *Erinnerung*, he suggests that the memory of antiquity is simultaneously its dialectical preservation, as something internal (*Er-Innern*). The dialectic allows Hegel to describe how the historical existence of ancient Greece acquires a transhistorical validity, as a memory through which spirit comes to understand itself. As an essential moment in spirit's path, tragedy is preserved even in the more advanced forms of consciousness. Hegel recognizes the relative validity of Greek tragedy, as a past moment in development, while at the same time seeing it in absolute terms, as a necessary stage of spirit. The concept of tragedy is the ground for the confrontation between the two historical viewpoints. Even as the works of the past have lost in immediacy, they have gained in spiritual value. This is the tragic fate of Greek art-religion, which is recognized and reconciled in the *PdG*:

Aber wie das Mädchen, das die gepflückten Früchte darreicht, mehr ist als die in ihre Bedingungen und Elemente, den Baum, Luft, Licht usf. ausgebreitete Natur derselben, welche sie unmittelbar darbot, indem es auf eine höhere Weise dies alles in den Strahl des selbstbewußten Auges und der darreichenden Gebärde zusammenfaßt, so ist der Geist des Schicksals, der uns jene Kunstwerke darbietet, mehr als das sittliche Leben und Wirklichkeit jenes Volkes, denn er ist die *Er-Innerung* des in ihnen noch *veräußerten* Geistes, - er ist der Geist des tragischen Schicksals, das alle jene individuellen Götter und Attribute der Substanz in das eine Pantheon versammelt, in den seiner als Geist selbst bewußten Geist.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Hegel, *WZB* 3, 548: 'But as the girl who offers the plucked fruits is more than the nature composed of its conditions and elements, the tree, light, air etc., which immediately presented them, in that she brings together all this in the gleam of her self-conscious eye and the offering gesture, thus is the spirit of the fate which these artworks present more than the ethical life and reality of that people, for it is the memory/internalizing of the spirit that in them was still expressed. It is the spirit of the tragic fate, which collects all the individual gods and attributes of substance into one pantheon, into spirit conscious of itself as spirit.'

Chapter 6

Friedrich Hölderlin: tragedy and paradox

‘Die Bedeutung der Tragödien,’ Hölderlin writes in an undated note, ‘ist am leichtesten aus dem Paradoxon zu begreifen.’¹ It is a principle of Hölderlin’s thought that presence can only be grasped through absence, ‘alles Ursprüngliche [...] erscheint zwar nicht in ursprünglicher Stärke nicht wirklich sondern eigentlich nur in seiner Schwäche.’² The tragic is based on a reciprocal tension between infinite signified and its finite signifier, in which ‘das Zeichen [ist] an sich selbst unbedeutend, wirkungslos, aber das Ursprüngliche ist gerade heraus.’³ ‘Das Zeichen’ here is the hero, who experiences the transience of human existence in destructive form, but in doing so, gives a glimpse, negatively, into ‘das Ursprüngliche.’ The hero’s fall is the negative manifestation of an ontological fullness – a structure Hölderlin takes over from Schiller’s and Schelling’s theory of the sublime. This pattern of negative representation is characteristic of all existence for Hölderlin: nature’s power is only experienced in its decline, so in tragedy the hero’s strength only becomes visible in its negation, ‘das Zeichen wenn sie [die Natur] sich in ihrer stärksten Gaabe darstellt = 0.’⁴ Tragedy, as the form in which existence appears at its most fragile, is simultaneously the form in which existence appears at its fullest. Hölderlin’s understanding of the tragic can be understood as an effort to redeem history, by referring what passes in time to what remains outside of time. Unlike Hegel, though, Hölderlin sees no progress in history, but only a constant, cyclical process of *Übergang* through *Untergang*. This means that the tragic, for

¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 383: ‘The meaning of tragedies is most easily grasped out of paradox.’ *FHA* dates the note ca. 1802, though this is controversial.

² Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 383: ‘everything primal does not in fact manifest itself in its primal strength, not really, but actually only in its weakness.’

³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 383: ‘the sign itself is insignificant, ineffective, but the primal is straight out.’

⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 383: ‘the sign when nature represents itself in its strongest gift = 0.’

Hölderlin, is never in the past, though the forms of Greek tragedy most definitely are. Hölderlin's thought on the place of antiquity in modernity thinks the tension between universalizing and relativizing views of the Greeks through more consequentially than any previous thinker, and arrives at paradox. The Greeks are indispensable and the Greeks are unnecessary. Tragedy is impossible and tragedy is unavoidable. Or, as Hölderlin wrote during his madness (in lines referring to Oedipus), 'Leben ist Tod, und Tod ist auch ein Leben.'⁵

Tragedy in Hölderlin's thought is consistently linked to historical process, as a representation of the creation of the new from the destruction of the old. Hölderlin's tragic thought, like Hegel's, has a progressive element to it, which understands the genre as pointing forward in form and in content: formally, tragedy stands in a dialectical system of poetics, in which the tragic is always in a process of metamorphosis;⁶ and tragic content is the representation of a meeting of contraries and the emergence of a new order. In Hölderlin's own writing life, moreover, Greek tragedy has a forward-looking quality: it is the form through which he trains himself as a lyric poet. The dynamics of this process are paradigmatic for Hölderlin's thought on antiquity, which envisions *das Fremde* and *das Eigene* in a dialectical relation. Modernity for Hölderlin only comes to full consciousness of itself through engagement with the alterity of antiquity. The notion of self-definition from otherness is central to Hegelian dialectic as well, but Hölderlin's historical thought is distinguished by its refusal to afford one age a priority. Though Hölderlin has no doubt that he must define himself wholly as a modern, he sees the continuous engagement with antiquity as the only way to make that modernity authentic. For Hölderlin, antiquity is a

⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 9, 35: 'life is death and death is also a life.'

⁶ I will only touch on this aspect. It is explored in depth in Ryan (1960).

living presence whose urgency comes from its untimeliness. In the mediation between present and past, the timeless emerges in the form of paradox.

In recent years, Hölderlin's thought on tragedy has been very much in fashion, and has been extensively researched and interpreted. What often falls out of these discussions, the following will show, is that Hölderlin's understanding of tragedy is a form of historical thought, bound to his concept of poetic creation. The tragic for Hölderlin is radically historical, both in its mode of depiction (which takes place in a dialectic of antiquity and modernity) and in what is depicted (the process of *Untergang* and *Übergang*). Tragedy is the figure of the past meeting the present, the alien meeting the proper. This meeting of opposites is always catastrophic and paradoxical, characterized by a form of knowledge in forgetting. The authentic poetry of Hölderlin's time, which is attained through a tension between antiquity and modernity, is emergent from the historical process of tragedy. This makes Hölderlin's theory of tragedy a mediation between ancient and modern forms, and between abstract philosophical considerations and concrete poetic processes. Hölderlin does not choose between universalizing and relativizing ancient art; he does both continuously and paradoxically. This is the achievement of his thought and its continuing challenge.

In order to understand Hölderlin's thought on tragedy genealogically, one must abandon a prejudice that has pervaded accounts of his relation to antiquity. The notion of an 'abendländische Wendung' or 'Überwindung des Klassizismus' – which purportedly took place sometime after the publication of *Hyperion* II (1799) and before the Sophocles translations (1804) – is still powerful in Hölderlin studies.⁷ The normative and teleological

⁷ The phrases are from Michel (1922) and Szondi (1978c). Though Szondi is concerned to do away with the triumphalist and often nationalistic interpretations that preceded him, his premise is teleological through and through.

implications are obvious in the terminology, and have made it easy for critics to dismiss Hölderlin's earlier works as classicizing or subject to the 'tyranny of Greece.'⁸ This is not the place for a defence of *Hyperion*, a far more self-conscious and contradictory work than is often thought, and a genealogy of Hölderlin's thought on ancient Greece generally, which might help us beyond the unhelpful opposition of classicism and originality, would exceed the scope of any single chapter.⁹ The following will argue that Hölderlin's thought develops profoundly in the late 1790s, in response to a number of factors (personal, political, artistic), which are concentrated around the concept of the tragic and issue in a historical poetology of tragedy.

Hölderlin comes to articulate his relation to antiquity by thinking the tragic, and this articulation necessarily takes on a different form than it had previously. Hölderlin's thought is not a progress from tyranny to transformation but a continual investigation of 'der Gesichtspunkt aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben' (the title of a draft sketch dated to 1799).¹⁰ Ancient and modern cannot be merged in atemporal identity (Schelling) nor can they be kept apart in historical progress (Hegel); their true relation is a form of harmonic opposition, a paradoxical simultaneity of different ages. Hölderlin's most ambitious attempt to put this principle into operation is his 1804 *Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles*, translations of the *OT* and *Antigone* with accompanying *Anmerkungen*. The volumes represent one of modernity's most fascinating, difficult, and rewarding responses to Greek tragedy. A

⁸ The phrase is from Butler (1935).

⁹ Important general discussions in English are Hamlin (2007), which illuminates the literary works, though with an occasionally questionable methodology; Louth (1998), which focuses on Hölderlin's translation and is extremely insightful on the relation between antiquity and modernity; and Harrison (1975), which is useful and highly philological. Lacoue-Labarthe (1989), 236-47 is important and challenging, and connects (as I do) Hölderlin's turn to tragedy with his changing relation to antiquity.

¹⁰ *FHA* 14, 95: 'the viewpoint from which we should consider antiquity.'

genealogy of the tragic in Hölderlin's thought, it is hoped, will render his Sophocles both more comprehensible and more strange.

I. Tragedy and history: from Hyperion to Empedocles

Hölderlin's thought on tragedy, like Schiller's and Hegel's, undergoes a profound shift in the late 1790s. It is relatively easy to date his turn to tragedy, because it is visible in the difference between the first volume of *Hyperion, oder der Eremit in Griechenland*, published in 1797, and the second, published in 1799. The novel traces, in a series of retrospective letters, the life of Hyperion, a young Greek of the eighteenth century, who seems caught between the ideals of the ancient world and the reality of the modern. Hyperion's story centres on two great passions: a social one, for the struggle against the occupying Turks and the revival of Hellenic society, and a romantic one, for the beautiful yet remote Diotima. These undeniably parallel Hölderlin's own enthusiasm for the French Revolution and his illicit liaison with Susette Gontard, the wife of the man in whose house he was working as a private tutor. The first volume, published while Hölderlin was still employed by the Gontards in Frankfurt, includes rhapsodic passages of revolutionary and romantic hopes. By the end of the second volume, published after Hölderlin had left the house and was carrying on the relationship with Susette in secret, Hyperion's hopes have come to nothing, and he has become the 'hermit in Greece' of the book's subtitle. The difference in tone is unmistakable, captured in the epigraph to the second volume, from the *OC* (given in Greek): 'μη φυναι, τον

απαντα νικα λογον· το δ'επει φανη βηναι / κειθεν, οθεν περ ηκει, πολυ δευτερον ως ταχιστα'
[sic].¹¹

The *OC* has an important place in the novel, and in Hölderlin's thought on tragedy. A translation of its 'Athens ode' preserved among Hölderlin's papers seems to be the earliest document of an interest in Sophocles, and is likely dated to the year 1797.¹² On the page, it is preceded by a poem beginning 'O Schlacht fürs Vaterland!', suggesting a correspondence between Sophocles's patriotism and Hölderlin's own. The *OC* seems a particularly modern work to Hölderlin. The connection between Hölderlin's Germany and Oedipus's Athens is explicit in the penultimate letter of *Hyperion*, when the hero describes his arrival in Germany 'wie der heimathlose blinde Oedipus zum Thore von Athen, wo ihn der Götterhain empfing; und schöne Seele ihm begegneten.'¹³ Hyperion establishes an analogy between Oedipus's joyful reception and his own – only to demolish it, finding that 'ich kann kein Volk mir denken, das zerrißner wäre, wie die Deutschen.'¹⁴ Where ancient Athens represented a refuge of wholeness, modern Germany seems a prison of fragmentation. The second volume of the novel consistently juxtaposes Hyperion's hopes for the future with his present despair, and nowhere more so than in these evocations of Sophocles, which refer both to the most joyous moment of the *OC* and to the gloomiest. In the years between the first and second volume, a darker vision of existence has entered Hölderlin's thought, which is articulated through references to tragedy.

¹¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 11, 694: 'Not to be born surpasses all account, but once one appears, the best by far is to return from whence one came as quickly as possible.' cf. *OC* 1224-7.

¹² *FHA* 20, 91.

¹³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 11, 774: 'like the homeless blind Oedipus to the gates of Athens, where the grove of the gods received him, and beautiful souls met him.'

¹⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 11, 774: 'I can think of no people that would be more torn than the Germans.'

Hegel, of course, went through a similar development at the same time, in conversation with Hölderlin. In Hölderlin's earliest thought, just as in Hegel's, tragedy does not have the central place it will from 1797 onward. Both were impressed by a teacher at the Stift, Karl Philipp Conz, who pointed them to the Greeks, via Winckelmann, and who gave a series of lectures on Euripides in 1790.¹⁵ Though one finds occasional mention of tragedy in what survives from Hölderlin's time at the Stift and the years immediately following, none of his early writings shows the kind of deep engagement that is obvious later. Hölderlin seems to have been far more interested in Pindar's lyrics, in visual art, and perhaps most in the philosophy of the Greeks, especially Plato.¹⁶ Platonic idealism is one of the backgrounds for the *Systemprogramm*'s call for a reconciliation of earthly division through a poetic philosophy, a vision that affords little room to tragedy and contradiction, as both Hölderlin and Hegel later seem to have understood. It is impossible to know exactly what happened in the discussions between Hölderlin and Hegel in Frankfurt, but what emerges from them is a view of existence newly penetrated by tragedy, in which the faith that informs their earlier philosophy of union cannot be wholly affirmed. Henceforward, history does not appear to Hölderlin or Hegel as a return to original division, but as a succession of necessary catastrophes. Hegel's view of this history was teleological and ultimately optimistic, and led him to a tragic philosophy; Hölderlin's perspective was ateleological and increasingly pessimistic, and led him to attempt to write a philosophical tragedy.

As early as 1794, Hölderlin had mentioned his desire, after finishing *Hyperion*, to write a tragedy on the theme of the death of Socrates 'nach den Idealen der griechischen

¹⁵ Lamrani (1985).

¹⁶ See the 1790 'Geschichte der schönen Künste unter den Griechen' (*FHA* 17, 45-66) for an early document of Hölderlin's interests, and the texts collected in Jamme and Völkel (2003) I.

Dramen.¹⁷ As it turned out, *Hyperion* I occupied him until 1797, and only after finishing it does any further evidence of his intention crop up. The theme is still the death of a philosopher, but now it is that of Empedocles, the Sicilian pre-Socratic whose story Hölderlin would have found in Diogenes Laertius (among a number of sources). The spectacular manner of his death – Diogenes reports stories both of him leaping into Etna and of his deification – seems to have attracted Hölderlin most of all.¹⁸ The change in conception suggests that Hölderlin was drawn more to the natural philosophy in verse of Empedocles than the more ethically-oriented dialogues of Socrates. Empedocles is often described as a poet in Hölderlin's sources, and Diogenes reports that he was a tragedian. Hölderlin uses Empedocles's isolation in nature to great dramatic effect, and fills his speech with a lapidary, mysterious language that would have been out of place in Socrates's more social character. On a dramaturgical level, it is also important that the death of Empedocles would have to take place off-stage, as in a Greek tragedy, whereas the scene of Socrates's death had already been written, in distinctly prosaic fashion, by Plato. Hölderlin's thought on tragedy is constantly concerned with the limits of the representation; Empedocles's death, as basically unrepresentable, must have recommended itself as a place to think through those limits.

Some time before he began to write in earnest, Hölderlin completed a rough plan for a five-act tragedy on the story of Empedocles. He writes to his brother in 1797 that he has 'den ganz detaillirten Plan zu einem Trauerspiele gemacht, dessen Stoff mich hinreißt.'¹⁹ This must be the 'Frankfurt Plan,' in which Hölderlin lays out his first vision of the work. The story builds from Empedocles's sense of alienation from the world around him, through a

¹⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 199 (to Neuffer, 10.10.1794): 'according to the ideals of Greek drama.'

¹⁸ Hölscher (1965), 12.

¹⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 291 (to Carl Gock, beginning of September): 'made a very detailed plan for a tragedy, whose subject thrills me.'

series of relatively minor irritations, to his leap into the crater. In comparison to eighteenth-century discussions, Hölderlin emphasizes both the philosophical purpose and the melancholy discontent in Empedocles's character.²⁰ Empedocles is

ein Todtfeind aller einseitigen Existenz, und deswegen auch in wirklich schönen Verhältnissen unbefriedigt, unstät, leidend, blos weil sie besondere Verhältnisse sind und, nur im großen Akkord mit allem Lebendigen empfunden ganz ihn erfüllen, [...] blos weil er, so bald sein Herz und sein Gedanke das Vorhandene umfaßt, ans Gesez der Succession gebunden ist.²¹

'The law of succession' here seems to encompass the whole of earthly actions and relations, which are unsatisfying because of their transient character. Empedocles disdains the particular because he sees individuality as passing, and seeks only to understand its relation to eternity. The finitude of existence, represented by the law of succession, does not allow the freedom he desires, which ultimately must be sought in a form of infinity – that is, in death. Empedocles in Hölderlin's first plan resembles Hyperion: restless, unsatisfied, seeking a higher purpose. Empedocles's dramatic and tragic nature is secured by the way that he finds an action that expresses this predicament, while on the contrary Hyperion proved unable to take such a decisive action. Where *Hyperion* ends indeterminately, pointing to the future, the 'Frankfurt Plan' ends retrospectively, with the citizens assembling on Etna, 'um laidzutragen, und den Tod des großen Mannes zu feiern.'²²

The 'Frankfurt Plan' is roughly concurrent with the beginnings of work on *Hyperion* II, and the parallel between the two heroes is explicit in a passage recounting a visit to Etna.

²⁰ Birkenhauer (1996), 224.

²¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 544: 'an enemy to the death of all one-sided existence, and therefore also dissatisfied in really beautiful relations, unsettled, pained, simply because they are particular relations and only when experienced as in a great accord with all that is living fulfil him wholly, simply because, as soon as his heart and his thoughts grasp what is present, he is bound to the law of succession.'

²² Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 546: 'to bear the grief and to celebrate the death of the great man.'

Here again, Hölderlin emphasizes Empedocles's alienation from daily life, his longing for a more all-encompassing existence:

Gestern war ich auf dem Aetna droben. Da fiel der große Sicilianer mir ein,
der einst des Stundenzählens satt, vertraut mit der Seele der Welt, in seiner
kühnen Lebenslust sich da hinabwarf in die herrlichen Flammen, denn der
kalte Dichter hätte müssen am Feuer sich wärmen, sagt' ein Spötter ihm nach.
O wie gerne hätt' ich solchen Spott auf mich geladen!!²³

Empedocles's death represents the great action that Hyperion seeks for himself, but ultimately finds impossible in modern existence. Such ridicule is reported in Diogenes and in Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which recalls how Empedocles *ardentem frigidus Aetnam / insiluit*.²⁴ The suggestion that such heroic action would appear absurd in modern society is important for Hölderlin, and will develop into an understanding of the difference between the tragic in antiquity and modernity. Ancient Greece appears as the period in which tragic action was possible, while in modernity, such action would appear ridiculous. The elegiac sense of this opposition will recede in later years, as Hölderlin formulates a broader understanding of the relation of antiquity and modernity that emphasizes dialogue over difference.

Death and transfiguration: the first drafts of Empedokles

If in the 'Frankfurt Plan,' Empedocles's predicament seemed to be that of a great soul in a too-narrow world, Hölderlin's later attempts move steadily away from this individualistic viewpoint, to seeing Empedocles's predicament and death as a moment in a larger social transformation. Empedocles becomes a revolutionary figure, who seeks to lead the

²³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 11, 772: 'Yesterday I was up on Etna. There the great Sicilian occurred to me, who once, fed up with the counting of hours, acquainted with the soul of the world, in his bold desire for life, threw himself down into the awesome fires, because the cold poet had to warm himself on the fire, a mocker said about him. Oh, that I had brought such mockery on myself!'

²⁴ *Ars* 465: 'coolly leapt into burning Etna.'

Agrigentines to a state of republican independence and a renewed culture. This is for Hölderlin an urgent contemporary need. The French Revolution had emboldened republicans in the south of Germany to seek a more active role in governing the Württemberg lands, and many hoped that French forces would destabilize the monarchy sufficiently to topple it.²⁵ A letter of 1799 describes a parallel between the artistic revival of tragedy and the political revival of republicanism:

die ehrwürdige tragische Form ist zum Mittel herabgewürdigt worden, um gelegentlich etwas glänzendes oder zärtliches zu sagen. [...] Sie war todt geworden, wie alle andre Formen, wenn sie die lebendige Seele verloren, der sie wie ein organischer Gliederbau dienten, aus der sie sich ursprünglich hervor bildeten, wie z.B. die republikanische Form in unsern Reichstädten todt und sinnlos geworden ist, weil die Menschen nicht so sind, daß sie ihrer *bedürften*, um wenig zu sagen.²⁶

The parlous state of tragedy in modern times is linked in Hölderlin's mind to a general condition of rootlessness, which also finds expression in a lack of republican ambitions. *Empedokles* might be an effort to restore the soul to the genre of tragedy, and is born of a desire for a new social order. Here, as frequently in Hölderlin's thought, tragedy and a republican polity are seen as intimately connected. Yet there is also a kind of incongruence between the artistic and political levels: Empedocles's spiritual significance seems to exceed the social forms of his time, and forces him to give up his own individuality for the good of the collective. In the same way, perhaps, Hölderlin understood his own work: a singular manifestation that preserves and actualizes a general capacity for transformation.

²⁵ Prignitz (1985), 13.

²⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19 385 (to Neuffer, 3.7.1799): 'the honourable tragic form has been degraded into an occasional means of saying something brilliant or moving. It had become dead, like all other forms when they have lost the living soul that served them as an organic set of limbs, from which they originally developed themselves, as, for example, the republican form has become dead and senseless in our cities of the empire, because the people are not such that they need it, to say the least.'

Hölderlin's new understanding of Empedocles as a republican revolutionary is suggested by Diogenes, who reports that the philosopher was an advocate of civic freedom, declining the kingship of Agrigento when it was offered him (VIII, 63). Hölderlin seems to have seen a parallel with Napoleon, and the verso of a draft of a poem entitled 'Empedokles' contains another entitled 'Buonaparte.' The latter was not continued beyond a very rough first draft, but touches on some of the themes Hölderlin was thinking about in relation to the drama. It constructs, in priamel form, a contrast between poets – 'heilige Gefäße sind die Dichter' – and Buonaparte, who would 'zersprengen / wo es ihn fassen wollte, das Gefäß / der Dichter.' Buonaparte exceeds all that would contain him, 'er kann im Gedichte / nicht leben und bleiben / Er lebt und bleibt / in der Welt.'²⁷ This might be a contrast to Empedocles, whose discontent with the vessels for his spirit led him to retreat from the world. Both – the juxtaposition might suggest – are revolutionary spirits, who took different paths to realizing their selves: Napoleon in life, Empedocles in death.

When Hölderlin finally began to write the work in late 1798, his vision of Empedocles's motivation had become more concrete than in the 'Frankfurt Plan.' The first draft introduces a more significant incitement for the dramatic action than the domestic spat of the 'Plan,' rendering Empedocles more equivocal, as well as more Sophoclean. Though once adored by the Agrigentines for his quasi-divine power over nature, he has committed an act of excess, calling himself a god in a moment of drunkenness, which has turned his city against him and left him abandoned by the gods. By speaking what should not be spoken, Empedocles has committed an impious crime, a *nefas*, and brought about his downfall. Hölderlin's understanding of *nefas* here will be repeated in his analysis of the *OT*, which sees

²⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 5, 418: 'Holy vessels are poets...burst where it sought to grasp him, the vessel of the poets...he cannot live and remain in the poem, he lives and remains in the world.'

the catastrophe as a result of Oedipus's excessive language. Hölderlin may have come across the word in Seneca, where it is often used to describe a crime, but he takes the word, unusually, in its etymological meaning, to denote a crime of speech, a blasphemy.²⁸ A priest of the state describes Empedocles's fall in a way that places him in a line of tragic heroes undone at the height of their greatness:

Es haben ihn die Götter sehr geliebt.
Doch nicht ist er der Erste, den sie drauf
Hinab in sinnlose Nacht verstoßen,
Vom Gipfel ihres gütigen Vertrauns
Weil er des Unterschieds zu sehr vergaß
In übergroßen Glück, und sich allein
Nur fühlte.²⁹

Empedocles has given way to egoism, forgotten his place in the world and the difference between god and man. This notion of an excessive closeness to divinity is central to Hölderlin's understanding of Oedipus's fall, and there are strong parallels in the description of Empedocles's banishment from Agrigento and Oedipus's curse of the murderer of Laius.³⁰ At this stage, Hölderlin seems to be trying to harmonize his understanding of Empedocles's restless discontent with the models of ancient tragedy, by introducing an act of excess as the cause for his self-destruction.

The beginning of the second act parallels the *OC*, with Empedocles, accompanied by his student Pausanias, arriving on Etna and meeting a farmer who refuses them hospitality (as

²⁸ Seneca's *Oedipus* features the word prominently in the prologue: *est maius aliquod patre mactato nefas?* (18: 'is there any crime greater than a father slain?'), and, a compound of *fas* bringing out the etymology: *infanda timeo* (15: 'I fear unspeakable things').

²⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 703 (204-10): 'The gods have loved him greatly, but he is not the first whom they then thrust down into senseless night, from the height of their kind trust, because he too much forget the difference in too-great happiness, and felt only himself alone.'

³⁰ Also important is the story of Tantalus in Pindar's *Olympian* 1, lines 30-4 of which are copied at the end of the first act (*FHA* 13, 730). Though the lines in the manuscript are not directly related to the story, Hölderlin's description of Empedokles seems indebted to Pindar's of Tantalus: ἀλλὰ γὰρ καταπέψαι / μέγαν ὄλβον οὐκ ἐδυνάσθη, κόρῳ δ' ἔλεν / ἄταν ὑπέροπλον (55-7a: but he could not digest his great happiness, and by his excess he got overwhelming ruin).

Oedipus and Antigone meet an Athenian shepherd at Colonus). Empedocles, like Oedipus, knows that he will find his end in this place, and seems to grow in stature as he thinks forward to his death: ‘Mit Sterblichen und Göttern / Bin ich bald versöhnt, ich bin es schon.’³¹ A mass of Agrigentines enters, begging him to return to the city, as they believe his supernatural powers will bring divine favour – another echo of the *OC*. Empedocles refuses, and urges them to be brave in the face of the change his loss will bring about: ‘Menschen ist die große Lust / Gegeben, daß sie selber sich verjüngen. / Und aus dem reinigenden Tode, den / Sie selber sich zu rechter Zeit gewählt, / Erstehn, wie aus dem Styx Achill, die Völker.’³² Empedocles understands himself as the ‘purifying death’ through which his people will come into their own, another suggestion of the Colonean Oedipus, as well as the Christian Passion. In describing this individual death for collective rejuvenation, Hölderlin, probably in conversation with Hegel, merges a Greek and Christian understanding of sacrifice.³³ Depicting the rejuvenated world after Empedocles’s death seems to have eluded him, however. Hölderlin leaves the revolutionary hopes as open in the drama as they were in the political situation of the day. The draft ends abruptly after Empedocles’s death, at the moment when fear and hope, sorrow and joy coincide.

Hölderlin’s second draft is less a wholly new effort than a revision and refinement on the scheme of the first. This must be partly for formal reasons, as Hölderlin recasts the drama from blank verse into a freer, but still basically iambic metre (early drafts of *Hyperion* show even more radical formal changes, from prose to verse, and epistolary to narrative). The

³¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 736 (1146-7): ‘With mortals and gods I am soon reconciled, I am already.’

³² Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 744 (1395-9): ‘To men is given the great desire that they make themselves young. And from the purifying death which they choose for themselves at the right time, rise up, as Achilles out of the Styx, the peoples.’

³³ Jamme (1983), 312.

major difference in content concerns Empedocles's character, which is now less defined by the *nefas* of the first version. The motivation for his banishment is a conspiracy against him, which makes Empedocles into a Christ-like or Promethean character, who has usurped the rights of the priests. His crime now seems milder, yet more dangerous to the existing order than it did in the previous version. Hölderlin must have been uncertain how to depict the central figure, and hesitates between motivating Empedocles's fall by excess, as in the first version, or by the power relations in Agrigento. Empedocles appears in the second version more human, his death less the work of a transformational destiny than of a subjective choice. The tone at the end of the work does not bear the burden of depicting a transformed society, and celebrates Empedocles's death as a triumph over fear, but not as a social rejuvenation. Hölderlin sketches a far more limited reconciliation in the second version than in the first. Yet this too proved inadequate to Hölderlin's vision: he broke off and, in a series of extraordinary essays, began to consider tragedy and the tragic anew.

Tragic oppositions: the Grund zum Empedokles

Empedocles's philosophy is best known for its opposition of the powers of φιλότης and νεῖκος, which constitute the basic forces of existence. Diogenes reports a fragment that suggests a constant process of union and separation at the heart of history: ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν' εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα, / ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ δίχ' ἕκαστα φορεύμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει.³⁴ Empedocles's philosophy is based on a cyclical notion of time, which must have appealed to Hölderlin as a kind of revision of the philosophy of union.³⁵ Instead of seeing an endpoint

³⁴ *Lives* VIII, 76: 'At one time by love all things coming together in one, at another time each thing borne apart by the hatred of strife.'

³⁵ On Hölderlin's philosophical affinities with Empedocles, see Fóti (2006), 55-64.

that would ultimately heal division, he now envisions becoming and passing away, in Empedoclean fashion, as necessarily linked, but without end. Yet Hölderlin retains a Christian, eschatological belief in the redemption of time, as moments of divine presence punctuate the constant process of becoming and passing away.³⁶ Hölderlin might be understood to hold two contradictory concepts of revolution: the strict lexical sense (*revolvere*) of a turning without end, which informs earlier usage of the word, and the new understanding of revolution as catastrophic upheaval. In his poetics of tragedy, Hölderlin explores both possibilities, seeing the genre as poised between continuity and rupture.

Hölderlin's first group of essays surrounding *Empedokles*, written after giving up the second draft and before beginning the third, explores how the tension between union and division can be depicted in tragedy. A tension between form and content is a constant of Hölderlin's poetological thought: tragedy, based on the greatest *Innigkeit* (intimacy or intensity) in content, requires a correspondingly objective mode of depiction.³⁷ Tragic drama does not present the poet's subjectivity, but transforms the intimacy of the poet into 'ein kühneres fremderes Gleichniß und Beispiel.'³⁸ As in Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*, the tension between subjective and objective principles (here, intimacy and its dramatic representation) obeys a logic of reciprocity. The more intense the emotion, the more impersonal the depiction must be to counter-balance it: 'Je unendlicher, je unaussprechlicher, je näher dem nefas die Innigkeit ist, je strenger und kälter das Bild den Menschen und sein empfundenes

³⁶ Hölscher (1965), 57.

³⁷ See Ryan (1960), 330-44.

³⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 869: 'a bolder, more foreign likeness and example.'

Element unterscheiden muß um die Empfindung in ihrer Gränze vestzuhalten.³⁹ The logic of reciprocity makes tragic drama the form of the *nefas*, able to depict objectively what exceeds the speech of an individual. Such reciprocity is fundamental not only to Hölderlin's poetics, but to his thought on the relation of antiquity to modernity. In *Empedokles*, he seeks to express the most important concerns of his contemporary world in the alien medium of an ancient story. For Hölderlin, there is a process of translation, a meeting of proper and foreign, at work in all poetic creation.

Hölderlin describes the *Grund zum Empedokles* in a highly complex poetological text. At the heart of the story of Empedocles, Hölderlin finds the opposition of nature and *Kunst* (in both senses of 'art' and 'artifice,' though without negative connotations).⁴⁰ The natural for Hölderlin describes that which tends to the infinite; it is an unconscious force that exists in and of itself. The artificial, on the contrary, is characterized by finitude, consciousness, and reason – represented most of all by humans. Empedocles, as a philosopher of natural process, appears to Hölderlin as a figure who embodies the potencies of both nature and art: he is 'Ein Mensch, in dem sich jene Gegensätze so innig vereinigen, daß sie zu *Einem* in ihm werden.'⁴¹ Yet this closeness to nature cannot be sustained; as a union of contraries, it is inherently unstable. Empedocles's character is defined by the transitional quality of his age: 'Sein Schiksaal stellt sich in ihm dar, als in einer augenblicklichen Vereinigung, die aber sich auflösen muß, um mehr zu werden.'⁴² Hölderlin moves away from seeing Empedocles's

³⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 869: 'The more infinite, the more inexpressible, the closer to the *nefas* the intimacy is, the more strongly and coldly the image must distinguish man and its felt element in order to keep the feeling in its limits.'

⁴⁰ I am simplifying this relation greatly. For a fuller explanation of the opposition, see Dastur (1997), 119-35.

⁴¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 872: 'a man in which those oppositions unified themselves so intimately, that they become one in him.'

⁴² Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 873: 'His fate presents itself in him as in a momentary unification, which however must dissolve itself, in order to become more.'

excess as an individual crime calling for punishment, towards an understanding of his suicide as an act of fate.⁴³ In Hölderlin's developing conception of the tragic, the downfall of the hero brings the latent oppositions of the time to a catastrophic and transformative confrontation. It is here also that Hölderlin breaks out of the cyclical time taught by Empedocles: though Hölderlin sees history as a constant process of becoming and passing away (and not, like Hegel, as a progressive teleology), he preserves the Christian sense that this process can and will be redeemed by divine presence.

The *Grund zum Empedokles* describes Empedocles's fate, *Schiksaal*, which Hölderlin understands in two senses: Empedocles bears a destiny that has been assigned to him; and that destiny makes him a messianic figure, sent to his people for their salvation. He is the figure in whom individual and collective fate coincide. Hölderlin's understanding of this interplay recalls both the Colonean Oedipus and Christ – individuals whose deaths bring collective good. Empedocles's tragic nature lies in his place between the particular and the general; his singular union of the oppositions of his time points forward to a collective state of harmony. In words that prefigure his understanding of Sophocles, Hölderlin writes:

*die Probleme des Schiksaals in dem er [Empedokles] erwuchs, sollten in ihm sich scheinbar lösen, und diese Lösung sollte sich als eine scheinbare temporäre zeigen, wie mehr oder weniger bei allen tragischen Personen, die alle in ihren Charakteren und Äußerungen mehr oder weniger Versuche sind, die Probleme des Schiksaals zu lösen.*⁴⁴

Hölderlin's understanding of 'all tragic persons' as 'attempts to solve the problem of fate' is fundamental to his theory of the tragic in Sophocles, and explains something of the need he felt for tragedy in his time. Tragedy for Hölderlin is defined by the way it represents fate

⁴³ Birkenhauer (1996), 468.

⁴⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 874: 'the problems of fate in which he grew up were to solve themselves in him apparently, and this solution was to show itself as an apparent temporary one, as more or less with all tragic persons, who in their characters and expressions are all more or less attempts to solve the problems of fate.'

within temporality.⁴⁵ Hölderlin sees the political events of his age as chaotic, unguided by any fate; in *Empedokles*, he imagines what a revolutionary, fate-creating individual might be. By the time he writes these words, though, the tragic hero no longer looks like Napoleon, the individual bringing about social transformation by his own will.⁴⁶ It looks now like the poet and philosopher Empedocles, who manifests the possibility of a renewed society, but as a transient figure, a sacrifice. The solution to the fatelessness of Hölderlin's time no longer lies in the heroic individual, but in the self-effacement of the sacrifice, which points an errant society to its future fate.

The tragedy of historical process: the third Empedokles and 'Das untergehende Vaterland'

The poetological essays Hölderlin wrote following the second draft of *Empedokles* show his conception of the work in transition, as he moved from a fairly conventional narrative of a heroic individual who falls by an excess (a version of Aristotelian *hamartia*) to a speculative theory of the tragic hero as a sacrifice solving a collective problem of fate (a mix of late Sophocles and the New Testament). Hölderlin's reformulation of *Schicksaal* as a relation of individual and society lies at the basis of his third version of *Empedokles*, which thematizes the link between singular action and collective transformation in two major ways: firstly, by introducing a figure to counter-balance Empedocles, who questions his ability to bring about the transformation he envisions; and secondly, by introducing – if only in a few, aborted lines – a tragic chorus on the Greek model, which seems to depict the unhappy state of the collective and their hunger for the salvation that Empedocles offers. The first of these innovations brings the work closer to the *Antigone*, the second to the *OT*. At around the same

⁴⁵ Dastur (1997), 56.

⁴⁶ Prignitz (1985), 33.

time, Hölderlin wrote out a metrical scheme for the first stasimon of *Antigone*, suggesting that his interest in Greek tragedy was taking on still more active forms around this time. Ultimately, Hölderlin will see his engagement with Greek tragedy and his hopes for German culture as coextensive.

From a plan for Hölderlin's third draft, we notice that the work has taken on a more Greek form: the action all takes place on Etna, apparently in one day, and is depicted in scenes of no more than a few characters. It now begins after Empedocles has left Agrigento, banished by his brother the king, apparently in an effort to seize power. Empedocles does not regret his exile, but rather seems freed by it, and is resolved to die. The whole action, even more than in the previous drafts, is now a prelude to his suicide, and it is no surprise that the *Ajax* shows up in some of Hölderlin's poetological notes around this time. Yet the motif of shame has become so abstract as to have almost disappeared. Empedocles's decision now seems to arise mainly from a consciousness of fate, a belief that his own individuality must be subsumed into a larger plan. As he explains to Pausanias, 'Und was ich mein', es ist von heute nicht, / Da ich geboren wurde, wars beschlossen. / Sieh auf und wags! was Eines ist, zerbricht.'⁴⁷ Along with this understanding of the inevitability of individual destruction goes a prophetic consciousness of rebirth, with which Empedocles comforts his despairing pupil: 'Geh! fürchte nichts! es kehret alles wieder, / Und was geschehen soll, ist schon vollendet.'⁴⁸ The scene between Empedocles and Pausanias is important for understanding Hölderlin's conception of tragedy: it juxtaposes an apparently naive regret for the death of the individual with a more enlightened view of this downfall as a necessary transition. Hölderlin will

⁴⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 936 (162-4): 'And what I intend, is not of today; when I was born it was decided. Look up and dare! What is one shatters.'

⁴⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 940 (315-6): 'Go! fear nothing! all returns again, and what should happen is already completed.'

juxtapose these two viewpoints in his next poetological essay, 'Das untergehende Vaterland,' but he here makes their conflict a part of tragedy itself, staging the question of the meaning of tragic death.

The following scene, the last that Hölderlin sketched in any detail, continues this questioning of the death of the tragic hero. It introduces the character of Manes, a blind prophet recalling Sophocles's Tiresias, who comes to warn Empedocles against his course of action (the name suggests the Greek μάντις, 'seer,' and μανία, 'frenzy,' as well as the German *mahnen* and Latin *moneo*, both meaning 'to warn'). The confrontation questions Empedocles's resolution by suggesting that the act of suicide may itself be a crime. Manes has recognized that the transitional nature of the time requires an individual to mediate between man and divinity. The question, though, is whether Empedocles is this figure. 'Nur Einem ist es recht, in dieser Zeit,' Manes prophesies, 'Nur Einen adelt deine schwarze Sünde.'⁴⁹ The confrontation between tragic hero and prophet recalls the *OT* and the balance of two theologies seems close to the *Antigone*. However, the image of sacrifice is distinctly Christian.⁵⁰ Hölderlin's notes for the continuation suggest that Empedocles will be recognized, like Christ and the Colonean Oedipus, as the one able to bring the blessings of the gods on men through his death. Yet the change in Hölderlin's overall conception of tragedy is important: he now understands tragedy as questioning the certainty of transformation that he had earlier assumed. The essence of tragedy remains social revolution; its action, however, has become newly agonistic.

⁴⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 942 (356-7): 'Only for one is it right, in this time, your black sin ennobles only one.'

⁵⁰ Birkenhauer (1996), 531.

The bridge between individual and collective fates seems to be represented by a chorus. The last words Hölderlin wrote before breaking off are found on a page headed 'Neue Welt.' It contains a few hermetic lines, presumably the sketch for a choral ode:

und es hängt, ein ehern Gewölbe
der Himmel über uns, es lähmt Fluch
die Glieder den Menschen, und ihre stärkenden, die erfreuenden
Gaaben der Erde sind, wie Spreu, es
spottet unser, mit ihren Geschenken die Mutter
und alles ist Schein –

O wann, wann öffnet sie sich
die Fluth über die Dürre.⁵¹

In a moment of affliction, the chorus seems to look forward to the 'new world,' which Empedocles will usher in. Behind these lines lies the parodos of the *OT*, which present the chorus in a similar situation, supplicating the gods to lift the plague on the city, and seeking Oedipus's wisdom. Beyond the situational parallel, some of Sophocles's pestilence imagery recurs: νοσεῖ δέ μοι πρόπας / στόλος (169-70); οὔτε γὰρ ἔκγονα κλυτὰς χθονὸς αὔξεται (171-2).⁵² Hölderlin depicts the chorus at a moment where the rejuvenation that Empedocles promises seems impossibly far off. They wish, further down the page, 'Daß er beschwöre den lebendigen Geist', reviving a living presence that has gone lost in their idle society.⁵³ Hölderlin seems himself uncertain as to how to depict this 'new world' emerging from the ashes of the old, and his plan for the continuation leaves a number of empty spaces, which he never filled in.

⁵¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 946 (495-502): 'And it hangs, a brazen vault, the heaven above us, it lames, the curse, the limbs of men, and her strengthening, gladdening gifts of earth are like chaff, it mocks us, with her presents, the mother, and all is semblance. O when, when, will it open, the flood over the drought?'

⁵² 'My whole people is diseased;' 'nor does the offspring of the famed land grow.' Hölderlin's translations of these lines are: 'krank ist mir das ganze Volk;' 'Noch erwachsen / Die Sprossen des rühmlichen Lands' (*FHA* 16, 97).

⁵³ 'Hölderlin, *FHA* 13, 946 (495-502): 'that he conjure the living spirit.'

Hölderlin probably meant to return to *Empedokles*, as suggested by his leaving the left side of the pages blank as he was writing the essay that begins ‘Das untergehende Vaterland....’ It is another text meant only for his own purposes, and served to clarify his thoughts on the historical process depicted in *Empedokles*.⁵⁴ ‘Das untergehende Vaterland’ responds to a problem of representation: how can decline and destruction be depicted in such a way that they do not appear overwhelmingly negative? Hölderlin’s concern is therapeutic, seeking a way to understand tragedy’s *Untergang* as *Übergang*. He considers a moment of historical change in which an existing society begins to dissolve, and ‘eine neue Welt, eine neue, aber auch besondere Wechselwirkung, sich bilde[t].’⁵⁵ Hölderlin is interested now primarily in the gap between the two states, the old world and the new. In this moment of transition, between one state and another, all historical possibilities come to bear: ‘die Welt aller Welten, welche immer ist und seyn muß [...] stellt sich nur in aller Zeit – oder im Untergange oder im Moment, oder genetischer im werden des Moments und Anfang von Zeit und Welt dar.’⁵⁶ Historical change is characterized by a paradoxical structure, manifesting the fullness of all possibilities in the gap between one age and another. The foundation of this process is typical of Hölderlin’s Idealism: the absolute can only be experienced in negation and struggle. The singular becomes a sign for the general, making the tragic moment itself ‘wie die Sprache, Ausdruck Zeichen Darstellung eines lebendigen aber besondern Ganzen.’⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Mögel (1994) cautions against reading the essay as a general statement, but the parallels with the Sophocles notes are so striking that it is hard not to understand the text as having (if not in intention, as least in effect) a programmatic significance for Hölderlin’s thoughts on the relation of tragedy and history.

⁵⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 174: ‘a new world, a new, but also particular reciprocity develops itself.’

⁵⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 174: ‘the world of all worlds, which always is and must be presents itself only in all time – or in decline or in the moment, or more genetically in the becoming of the moment, and the beginning of time and world.’

⁵⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 174: ‘like language, expression sign presentation of a living but particular whole.’

Tragedy expresses the whole through the negation of the part, just as sacrifice becomes the sign of a coming transformation.

Hölderlin's view of tragedy as prolepsis is now complicated by a sense of the complexity of the moment of decline. The moment of dissolution is an in-between state that is frightening in its negativity. Hölderlin suggests two ways of experiencing the transition: 'die Empfindung der Auflösung' in which the possible becomes real as a frightening new state, and 'die Erinnerung des Aufgelösten' in which the past is preserved in recollection.⁵⁸ Like Hegel in the concept of *Er-Innerung*, Hölderlin understands tragedy as a form that preserves the past mnemonically. Memory constitutes a form of 'idealische Auflösung,' in contrast to the 'reale Auflösung' of being caught in the experience of the moment. The ideal dissolution of memory, for Hölderlin, is the corrective for the sensation of loss that threatens to overwhelm the individual in moments of change:⁵⁹ 'Diese idealische Auflösung ist furchtlos. Anfangs- und Endpunkt ist schon gesetzt, gefunden, gesichert, deswegen ist diese Auflösung auch sicherer unaufhaltsamer, kühner, und sie stellt sich hiemit, das was sie eigentlich ist, als einen reproductiven Act, dar.'⁶⁰ Memory, Hölderlin goes on to explain, moves through the stages of the transition, thereby attaining an understanding of the continuity of past and present (which otherwise would seem to be irreconcilable). By filling in the gap between old and new, memory allows the individual to grasp the moment of *Untergang* as *Übergang*. Understanding the simultaneity of destruction and creation in the process of change, the remembering subject and the tragic poet are able to ground themselves

⁵⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 174: 'sensation of dissolution...memory of the dissolved.'

⁵⁹ Hühn (1997), 139.

⁶⁰ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 175: 'This ideal dissolution is fearless. Beginning and endpoint are already set down, found, secured, therefore this dissolution is also more secure, more inexorable, bolder, and it manifests itself as what it actually is, as a reproductive act.'

in the chaotic present and prepare for the uncertain future. Tragic language has a retentive and progressive character: by preserving the past world ideally, it smoothes the transition to the new world. This is a form of the reconciliation we have encountered throughout idealist thought, though a rather more limited one than Hegel or Schelling envision. For Hölderlin, tragedy's presentation of destruction is affirmative only in an individual sense, not as an ontological insight. The absolute necessity behind *Übergang* remains hidden, even as its necessity relative to the subject becomes clear through recollection.

Hölderlin's increasing pessimism about the possibility of the heroic individual in history is reflected in his attention to the therapeutic function of tragic representation. Tragedy offers an insight into the paradoxical qualities of existence, the way that destruction and creation are inseparable. This represents for Hölderlin a new, speculative understanding of history, which sees temporal process as governed by a logic of becoming and decline. History for Hölderlin is characterized by moments of catastrophic and revolutionary change, which proceed from individuals to society at large. Tragedy is the representation of such moments, and its objectifying form allows for them to be understood as productive and necessary. Unlike Hegel, Hölderlin does not understand history as progressive or teleological; in fact, he seems to grow increasingly skeptical towards the possibility of genuine renewal through catastrophe. Yet he retains a belief that, in tragedy, destructive process can be grasped under the sign of reason. There is no theodicy to be found in tragedy, but only a clearer vision of the inscrutability of the divine. The search for a form that would objectify the chaos of his own time will lead Hölderlin, on one hand, to abandon original drama in order to concentrate solely on lyric, and on the other, to translation of Sophocles. The decisive change in Hölderlin's thought, which will lead him from the poetological

sketches surrounding *Empedokles* to the Sophocles translations and notes, is a growing sense of the contrast between ancient and modern poetic modes. Tragedy and history will remain essentially linked, but Hölderlin will see the tragic as manifested differently in different times and places.

The tragic and modernity

Hölderlin spent much of 1800 and 1801 in a productive solitude, working primarily on lyric poetry. The summer or early fall of 1800 finds him translating the first stasimon of *Antigone*, which may be an early effort at what would become the Sophocles translations. The context of the translation among Hölderlin's notes is interesting: it is preceded by a poem that would be titled 'Ermunterung' and followed by lines to what would become 'Dichterberuf.'⁶¹ Hölderlin must have broken off mid-composition to translate the lines of Sophocles, which seem to have an exhortatory function. The lines he wrote following relate to the relation of man and god, and suggest an inexorability to fate that Hölderlin would have found in the continuation of the Sophocles ode. He seems almost to be continuing the ode in his own words. Such a reciprocity of translation and poetic practice is paradigmatic for Hölderlin's relation to the Greeks after 1800: translation is not an end in itself, but a means to the creation of original poetry.

An even more striking interplay of translation and creation is found around the same time, in a fragment of the *Bacchae* prologue. Hölderlin translates the first twenty-four lines of Dionysus's speech, and then breaks off; the next text on the page, a few lines down, is a

⁶¹ FHA 16, 56.

prose sketch beginning ‘Wie wenn der Landmann....’⁶² This is an early draft of what would become ‘Wie wenn am Feiertage,’ one of Hölderlin’s most celebrated fragmentary poems, generally considered the first of his ‘hymns.’ Between the two texts, there are parallels of natural imagery, concentrating on particularly Dionysiac motifs (the grape-vine, thunder), juxtaposed with a time in which ‘die Natur ist jezt mit Waffenklang erwacht.’⁶³ Hölderlin suggests an analogy between his own time of military strife and the upheaval that Dionysus brings to Thebes. Tumultuous arrivals bind together mythical Greece and modern Germany, with Dionysus as the ‘god of revolution,’ announcing the change.⁶⁴ In Hölderlin’s imagination, the events of the *Bacchae* are absolutely contemporary; mythical and historical narratives blend together just as Greek tragedy and German lyric poetry do.

There is a form of syncretism at work throughout Hölderlin’s later poetry, a juxtaposition of ancient and modern that is new in comparison to his earlier writings, which often reflect on the difference of the two ages. I take this to be the genuine shift in Hölderlin’s so-called ‘overcoming of classicism.’ The Greeks remain touchstones of poetry and culture, but he accents their presence in modernity differently: instead of lamenting the contrast between ancient union and modern division, he sees an engagement with the difference of antiquity as the way to an authentically modern poetry. Hölderlin articulates this shift most of all through the concept of the *Vaterland*. *Vaterland* can take on an extraordinary variety of meanings in Hölderlin’s writing, denoting by turns his own homeland of Swabia, German modernity in general, the occident, and even a purely spiritual

⁶² Hölderlin, *FHA* 17, 631; cf *FHA* 8, 544.

⁶³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 8, 551: ‘nature is now awakened with the clash of weapons.’

⁶⁴ Böschstein (1989), 127.

state of totality.⁶⁵ Common to all these meanings is a sense, which may be more or less geographically and temporally localized, of a sphere of existence characterized by essential relations between all parts⁶⁶ – as Hölderlin formulated it in ‘Das untergehende Vaterland,’ ‘Natur und Menschen insofern sie in einer besondern Wechselwirkung stehen.’⁶⁷ The *Vaterland* is a state in which nature and culture reach a stable and productive relation, such as existed in ancient Greece and will, Hölderlin hopes, be established again in modernity. It does not denote a particular national collective, but a spiritual community centred around political and aesthetic ideals.⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, Hölderlin’s interest in the *Vaterland* coincides with his giving up *Empedokles* and an increasing pessimism about the French Revolution.⁶⁹ Yet this is not a turn to modern Germany or away from ancient Greece; rather, it is an orientation to a future, imagined state of union of the essential qualities of the two.

Hölderlin’s understanding of the *Vaterland* runs through his writings after 1800, and elaborates a poetic ideal that can be understood as a dynamic balance of ancient and modern elements. This is most visible in two letters to his friend Casimir Ulrich Böhlendorff, dated late 1801 and 1802. When Hölderlin wrote the first, he was preparing to leave his home in Nürtingen to take up a post as a tutor in Bordeaux, a journey of weeks, much of which he made by foot. He wrote the second on his return, having given up the job soon after arrival and completed the long and dangerous journey back, reaching his home ragged and almost raving. The period in between seems an abyss in Hölderlin’s life, and his friends would

⁶⁵ Kreuzer (1981), 19.

⁶⁶ Gaier (1987), 30-3.

⁶⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 14, 174: ‘nature and humans in so far as they stand in a particular reciprocity.’

⁶⁸ Bennholdt-Thomsen and Guzzoni (2004), 203. They argue that Hölderlin increasingly finds this ideal unrealisable after 1803 – a thesis that I believe is untenable in relation to the Sophocles *Anmerkungen*, which are my primary concern here.

⁶⁹ Prignitz (1985), 37.

remark on the changes in him upon his return.⁷⁰ The Böhlendorff letters bookend his absence, and are a stark document of the changes in his mental state. The immediate impetus for Hölderlin's first letter is a response to Böhlendorff's drama, *Fernando, oder die Kunstweihe*, a work in the tradition of bourgeois tragedy, centring on forbidden love in a domestic context, and notable mainly for its strong artist-mythology.⁷¹ Though the work is subtitled 'A dramatic idyll,' Hölderlin judges it 'im Ganzen, eine *ächte* moderne Tragödie,' a label Hölderlin does not use lightly, two years after abandoning his own effort at *Empedokles*.⁷² It is difficult to see what in the work Hölderlin was responding to, both because of its mediocre quality and its extraordinary distance from Hölderlin's own poetry. Yet it is an index of Hölderlin's changing thought on the relation of antiquity and modernity that he describes *Fernando* so, using the occasion to formulate the philosophy of historical creation that informs his later works.

Nowhere before in Hölderlin's thought do we find so sharp a distinction between ancient and modern tragedy, or between ancient and modern poetry in general. The reflections surrounding *Empedokles* had all assumed that 'the tragic' was a constant quality, and the work, though not adhering strictly to Greek forms, employed ancient dramaturgical elements and themes freely. This no longer seems possible in 1801. The oppositions that characterize writing are now historical as well as stylistic: *das Eigene* for Hölderlin denotes characteristics that are indigenous to modern poetry – 'Klarheit der Darstellung,' 'GeistesGegenwart und Darstellungsgabe;' *das Fremde* describes qualities associated with

⁷⁰ Hegel, *Briefe* 1, 71-3 depicts the reactions of Hegel and Schelling.

⁷¹ An excerpt is in Jamme and Völkel (2003) IV, 35-44.

⁷² Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 492 (to Böhlendorff, 4.12.1801): 'on the whole, a true modern tragedy.'

the Greeks, 'Feuer vom Himmel,' 'schöne [...] Leidenschaft.'⁷³ The only way to achieve excellence is by a tension between the national and the foreign, which would combine clarity in representation with passion in content. Hölderlin writes:

Es klingt paradox. Aber ich behaupt' es noch einmahl, und stelle es deiner Prüfung und deinem Gebrauche frei; das eigentliche nationale wird im Fortschritt der Bildung immer der geringere Vorzug werden. Deswegen sind die Griechen des heiligen Pathos weniger Meister, weil es ihnen angebohren war, hingegen sind sie vorzüglich in Darstellungsgabe, von Homer an, weil dieser außerordentliche Mensch seelenvoll genug war, um die abendländische *Junonische Nüchternheit* für sein Apollonsreich zu erbeuten, und so wahrhaft das fremde sich anzueignen.⁷⁴

Hölderlin sees the natural constitution of moderns as fundamentally different from that of ancients, and therefore, requiring a different tendency in art. There is an echo of Schiller's *Form-* and *Stofftriebe* and the historical philosophy surrounding them: antiquity is characterized by its raw, passionate materials, which require the coolness of modern forms as a counterweight. Hölderlin understands all art, ancient and modern, as requiring a balance between nature and artifice, and thereby recognizes a historicity and processual quality to Greek culture that is unusual for its time.⁷⁵ He draws attention to the fundamental differences between ancient and modern works, but sees them as representing complementary processes.

The logic of this historical philosophy is only dimly apparent in the letter, but will become more clear in the Sophocles notes. Hölderlin's reflections on antiquity and modernity here as elsewhere are fundamentally connected to the quality of the tragic. It is necessary to

⁷³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 492: 'clarity of presentation... presence of spirit and faculty of presentation;' 'fire from heaven... beautiful passion.'

⁷⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 492: 'It sounds paradoxical. But I observe it once again and offer it freely to your verification and use. The actually national will, in the process of development, always become a smaller advantage. Therefore the Greeks are less masters of holy pathos, since it was native to them; however they are exceptional in their faculty of presentation from Homer onwards, because this extraordinary man was full of feeling enough to attain the occidental Junonian sobriety for his realm of Apollo, and so truly to appropriate the foreign.'

⁷⁵ Szondi (1974a), 190. See also Szondi (1978c).

quote *in extenso* to make sense of Hölderlin's train of thought. The passage follows directly on the above:

Bei uns ist's umgekehrt. Deswegen ist's auch so gefährlich, sich die Kunstregeln einzig und allein von griechischer Vortrefflichkeit zu abstrahieren. Ich habe lange daran laboriert und weiß nun daß außer dem, was bei den Griechen und uns das höchste sein muß, nämlich dem lebendigen Verhältniß und Geschick, wir nicht wohl etwas gleich mit ihnen haben dürfen. Aber das eigene muß so gut gelernt sein, wie das Fremde. Deswegen sind uns die Griechen unentbehrlich. Nur werden wir ihnen gerade in unsrem Eigenen, Nationellen nicht nachkommen, weil, wie gesagt, der *freie* Gebrauch des *Eigenen* das schwerste ist.

Das hat dein guter Genius der eingegeben, wie mir dünkt, daß du das Drama epischer behandelt hast. Es ist, im Ganzen, eine *ächte* moderne Tragödie. Denn das ist das tragische bei uns, daß wir ganz stille in irgend einem Behälter eingepackt vom Reiche der Lebendigen hinweggehn, nicht daß wir in Flammen verzehrt die Flamme büßen, die wir nicht zu bändigen vermochten. Und wahrlich! das erste bewegt so gut die innerste Seele, wie das letzte. Es ist kein so imponantes, aber ein tieferes Schicksal und eine edle Seele geleitet auch einen solchen Sterbenden unter Furcht und Mitleiden, und hält den Geist im Grimm empor.⁷⁶

Hölderlin rejects one form of engagement with antiquity, the abstraction of rules for creation, in favour of another: following the example of the Greeks in order to learn 'der *freie* Gebrauch des *Eigenen*.' This seems a specifically modern problematic for Hölderlin, resulting from the power of the example of the Greeks, which threatens to overwhelm the modern poet and lead to naive imitation. Similarly, in a letter to Schiller, Hölderlin describes his study of antiquity as having proceeded, 'bis es mir die Freiheit die es zu Anfang so leicht

⁷⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 492: 'For us it is the reverse. Therefore it is also so dangerous to abstract rules of art only and alone from Greek excellence. I have long laboured at it and know now that besides that which must be the highest for the Greeks and us, that is, living relation and skill, we cannot well have anything in common with them.

But the proper must be learnt as well as the foreign. Therefore the Greeks are indispensable to us. Only we will not match them precisely in that which is our proper, national, because, as I said, the free use of one's own is the most difficult.

Your good genius has prompted you in this, it seems to me, so that you have treated drama more epically. It is, on the whole, a true modern tragedy. For this is the tragic with us, that we go away from the realm of the living totally quiet, packed in some sort of container, not that, consumed in flames, we atone for the flames we were not able to tame.

And truly! the first moves the inmost soul as well as the last. It is not so imposing a fate, but a deeper one, and a noble soul accompanies such a dying one with fear and pity, and holds the spirit up amid the wrath.'

nimmt, wieder gegeben hatte.⁷⁷ By liberating himself from the exemplary power of the Greeks, Hölderlin believes he is able to use modern elements with freedom and mastery.⁷⁸ Like Schiller in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, Hölderlin describes the challenge of the contemporary artist as coming to terms with the difference between ancient and modern art. Having done so, the poet will reconstitute the ‘lebendiges Verhältniß und Geschick’ of ancient poetry, but in different form.

Hölderlin’s contrast of ‘the tragic’ in antiquity and modernity suggests the difference between Böhlendorff’s *Fernando* and Hölderlin’s *Empedokles*. The title character in Böhlendorff’s drama is imprisoned, ‘ganz stille in irgend einem Behälter eingepackt’ at the time that his lover dies, while Hölderlin’s title character is of course ‘in Flammen verzehrt.’ Hölderlin now recognizes the latter as a distinctly antique fate, not possible in modern drama, and commends Böhlendorff for portraying a tragic fate suited to the modern world. Hölderlin seems to reject his earlier understanding of modern tragedy, suggesting that the tragic in modernity has to have a more spiritual content than it did in antiquity. Hölderlin sees a universal validity to the quality of the tragic, yet at the same time he recognizes the pastness of the fate depicted in Greek tragedies. It is this dual consciousness that motivates Hölderlin’s translation of Sophocles: in the works of antiquity, ‘the tragic’ is most easily visible; it can then, Hölderlin hopes, be used by modern poets in their own, *vaterländisch* works.⁷⁹ As the next letter to Böhlendorff shows, Hölderlin’s journey to France left him with an increased sense of his own national qualities. He expresses his faith in modern poets ‘weil wir, seit den Griechen, wieder anfangen, vaterländisch und natürlich, eigentlich originell zu

⁷⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 486: ‘until it had given me back the freedom which it took so easily at the beginning.’

⁷⁸ Gadamer (1967), 32.

⁷⁹ Louth (1998), 56 describes translation aptly as ‘a kind of theory in practice.’

singen.’⁸⁰ For the Hölderlin of 1802, the highest goal is *vaterländisch* poetry; this can only be attained, however, through engagement with foreign works. Hölderlin’s translations will be the means of attaining the freedom necessary for this dynamic, discovering the *vaterländisch* through the other.

II. Sophocles, ancient and modern: *Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles*

The tension between philosophical generalization and literary interpretation has run through idealist thought on tragedy, but is formulated most self-consciously by Hölderlin. In the *Anmerkungen* to his 1804 translations of the *OT* and *Antigone*, Hölderlin considers the conflict between a universalist conception of ‘the tragic’ and a historicizing viewpoint on the specificity of tragedies. The notes, the following will show, enact the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* in its idealist form, as a quarrel between understanding Greek tragedy as the expression of a particular moment, and as the locus of a universal truth. Hölderlin’s originality and interest lie in the paradoxical way he reconciles the two viewpoints, arguing that it is precisely because Greek tragedy is so extremely distant from modern concerns that it is so uniquely valuable. To put it paradoxically, antiquity’s timeliness lies in its untimeliness.

My reading is controversial because it locates Hölderlin’s (and by extension, Idealism’s) core concern less in ‘the tragic’ than in the modern, and its relation to antiquity, and thus sees it as continuous with the eighteenth-century development of historicism, and as parallel to the emerging study of *Altertumswissenschaft*. Both Schelling and Hegel, it has been shown, display a deep anxiety about the modernity of ‘the tragic.’ Unlike Hölderlin,

⁸⁰ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 499: ‘since we, since the Greeks, begin again to sing nationally and naturally, really originally.’

however, they are concerned to resolve this anxiety – Schelling by dissolving the particularity of the genre in an ahistorical universal, and Hegel by aestheticizing the pastness of antiquity as an object of elegiac *Er-Innerung*. Hölderlin, however, accepts and even heightens the paradoxical nature of ‘the tragic’ in modernity. He understands ‘the tragic’ as a specifically ancient category, which is at once formative of the modern. Our modernity is defined by ancient tragedy both as a presence and an absence.

Though it is not often remarked, Hölderlin’s 1804 *Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles* substantially represents the arrival of idealist thought on the tragic within public discourse. Neither the brief discussions in Schelling’s *Philosophische Briefe* nor in Hegel’s *Naturrecht* essay offer anything like a theory of tragedy, and neither mentions ‘das Tragische.’ This may account in part for the universal bafflement that greeted the publication of the *Anmerkungen*, which persisted until the second half of the twentieth century, long after Hölderlin’s rehabilitation as a poet. Yet while the notes have a reputation for difficulty, they differ from the other essays treated in this chapter in that they were written for publication. They are the only theoretical texts Hölderlin published, and have, despite their extreme idiosyncrasy, an exoteric quality. Though the *Anmerkungen* are difficult, the following will be guided by an assumption that they do make sense, and have a clear structure and argument, however recondite.

Both the *Oedipus* and *Antigone* notes are divided into three sections, which can roughly be labelled ‘technical,’ ‘interpretive,’ and ‘historical.’ Hölderlin begins both notes with a fairly general discussion of the form of tragedy, in which he describes an atemporal poetological standard. This is followed, in the second section, by a discussion of passages, in which Hölderlin unfolds his interpretations of the plays and justifies his translation practice.

The second sections focus on two temporalities, which Hölderlin suggests are analogous: that internal to the tragedies, the changes undergone within the time of the play, and that of translation, the process whereby ancient Greek becomes modern German. The third sections then turn to the question of presentation (*Darstellung*), and develop a theory of the interplay between tragedy's form (the concern of the first section) and the temporalities of the works themselves (the concern of the second section).⁸¹ Combining the technical concerns of the first sections and the interpretive concerns of the second, the third sections describe the tragic within and as historical process. Between the two sets of notes, moreover, there is a developmental structure: those to *Oedipus* establish the fundamentals for the *Antigone* discussion, which often refers backwards. Because of the parallelism between the two sets of *Anmerkungen*, it will be easier to treat each of the sections separately, in order to show the continuities and developments between them. I argue that Hölderlin's three areas of concern are related in a historical dialectic: the technical and interpretive first sections present an antinomy between a universalizing and a historicizing relation to tragedy, which Hölderlin seeks to resolve in the third, by a theory of the difference and reciprocal implication of antiquity and modernity. The figure for this coexistence in contradiction is 'the tragic.'

'The lawful calculation'

Hölderlin begins his discussion with a historical opposition and an imperative: 'Es wird gut seyn, um den Dichtern, auch bei uns, eine bürgerliche Existenz zu sichern, wenn man die Poësie, auch bei uns, den Unterschied der Zeiten und Verfassungen abgerechnet, zur $\mu\eta\chi\alpha\nu\eta$

⁸¹ Adler (1983), 214 labels the three sections 'form,' 'content,' and 'conclusion' – which is basically right, though inspecific.

der Alten erhebt.’⁸² Placed at the beginning of Hölderlin’s *Anmerkungen*, these words have a programmatic function. μηχανή (machine, device) is the word used for the crane on which gods appeared in later fifth-century tragedy, and suggests here that Greek poetry was a means of making divinity appear. Raising poetry to the level of the ancients entails making it once more the site of an encounter with the divine. Hölderlin’s hope to secure a civic role for poets suggests that his goal is nothing less than the (re)introduction of poetry into larger cultural life, political as well as religious. Here, as ever, the Greeks are the model: Sophocles was the *vaterländischste Mann* to Stolberg, and from the time of *Empedokles*, Greek tragedy appealed to Hölderlin as a civic form of art. Hölderlin has no doubt that the forms of poetry must change, but the role of poets may be restored, ‘den Unterschied der Zeiten und Verfassungen abgerechnet.’ With this hope in mind, Hölderlin writes in the dedication of the translations that he has chosen the task ‘weil es zwar in fremden, aber festen und historischen Gesezen gebunden ist. Sonst will ich, wenn es die Zeit giebt, die Eltern unsrer Fürsten und ihre Size und die Engel des heiligen Vaterlands singen.’⁸³ Greek tragedy recommends itself for its lawful quality, adopting which will allow modern poets to step into the religious and civic role of ancient tragedians. Poetic products must change along with the forms of divinity and political life, but the cultural role of poets in ancient Greece may be restored.

Yet, before this is possible, a reform of modern art is necessary. Hölderlin judges modern poetry to be chaotic, lamenting its unreliability in comparison to Greek. Modernity’s lack of artistic skill is related to a deficit in understanding, a failure to comprehend the means

⁸² Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 249: ‘It would be good, in order to secure for poets a civic existence among us as well, if one raised poetry, among us as well, the difference of times and constitutions discounted, to the μηχανή of the ancients.’

⁸³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 75: ‘because it is bound in foreign, but strong and historical laws. Otherwise I wish, if there is time, to sing the parents of our dukes and their seats and the angels of the holy nation.’

of poetry: ‘Man hat, unter Menschen, bei jedem Dinge, vor allem darauf zu sehen, daß es Etwas ist, d.h. daß es in dem Mittel (moyen) seiner Erscheinung erkennbar ist, daß die Art, wie es bedingt ist, bestimmt und gelehret werden kann.’⁸⁴ Hölderlin describes a philosophical mode of cognition at the heart of poetic process, a marked difference from the genius mythologies of his time. By analyzing ancient works, Hölderlin will understand the process necessary for modern ones. What is needed, he suggests, are ‘sicherer und charakteristischer Prinzipien und Schranken. Dahin gehört einmal eben jener gesezliche Kalkul.’⁸⁵ The ‘gesezliche Kalkul’ would direct poetry by a delineation of the possibilities particular to modern development. The lawful process appears to be valid in all time, even as the particular law is essentially historical.

The law governing a work of poetry cannot be dictated in advance, but must be related to its particular content. It is here that Hölderlin begins to describe the particularity of the tragic:

Das Gesez, der Kalkul, die Art, wie, ein Empfindungssystem, der ganze Mensch, als unter dem Einflusse des Elements sich entwickelt, und Vorstellung und Empfindung und Räsonnement, in verschiedenen Successionen, aber immer nach einer sichern Regel nacheinander hervorgehn, ist im Tragischen mehr Gleichgewicht als reine Aufeinanderfolge.⁸⁶

Hölderlin describes two dynamics mediated by the law: a dynamic of succession, in which the whole is to be grasped as what develops from various parts emerging and passing away in succession, and a dynamic of simultaneity, in which the whole is to be grasped as a balance of

⁸⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 249: ‘One must, among men, for every thing, primarily see that it is something, i.e., that it is recognizable in the medium (*moyen*) of its appearance, that the way it is conditioned can be determined and taught.’

⁸⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 249: ‘more secure and more characteristic principles and limits. To these belongs first even that lawful calculation.’

⁸⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 250: ‘The law, the calculation, the way a system of feelings, the whole man, as under the influence of the element develops itself, and representation and feeling and reason, in differing successions, but always according to a secure rule, emerge after one another, is in the tragic more balance than pure sequence.’

conflicting elements.⁸⁷ The dynamic of succession is proper to language as such, but the specificity of tragic language is that it establishes an element of simultaneity, through which the whole can be grasped. The element of simultaneity is particularly important in tragedy because the changes brought about by succession are uniquely catastrophic. The diachronic instability of tragedy must be counteracted by its specific rhythm, which is governed by balance, since ‘der tragische *Transport* ist nemlich eigentlich leer, und der ungebundenste.’⁸⁸ ‘Transport’ for Hölderlin seems to refer to the way tragedy shows the hero in transition from one state to another through *peripeteia*. Tragic *transport* is ‘eigentlich leer’ and ‘der ungebundenste’ because it has an eccentric tendency, pulling the individual out of security into chaos. As in the *Empedokles* complex, Hölderlin describes temporality as the essence of tragedy’s content.

In order to counteract the threatening *transport* of tragic content, the ‘rhythm’ of tragedy must be a balance between the two halves of the drama. Hölderlin describes a ‘caesura’ within tragedy ‘um nemlich dem reißenden Wechsel der Vorstellungen, auf seinem Summum, so zu begegnen, daß alsdann nicht mehr der Wechsel der Vorstellung, sondern die Vorstellung selber erscheint.’⁸⁹ The caesura is the moment at which the audience gains the distance necessary to understand the wholeness of ‘the tragic *transport*,’ apprehending the transience of succession as a secure simultaneity. Since tragedy represents a catastrophic change in the world depicted, it must afford a standpoint outside of that world in order for the necessity of change to become clear. The caesura might be understood as an element of the

⁸⁷ Kasper (2000), 19.

⁸⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 250: ‘for the tragic *transport* is actually empty and the most unbound.’

⁸⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 250: ‘in order to meet the speeding alternation of representations at its *summum* such that the alternation of representation no longer appears, but rather the representation itself.’

‘ideal dissolution,’ a point at which *Untergang* appears as *Übergang*. In both *Antigone* and *Oedipus*, it takes the form of a moment when the tragic course of nature is revealed:

In beiden Stücken machen die Cäsur die Reden des Tiresias aus.
Er tritt ein in den Gang des Schiksaals, als Aufseher über die Naturmacht, die
tragisch, den Menschen seiner Lebenssphäre, dem Mittelpuncte seines innern
Lebens in eine andere Welt entrückt und in die exzentrische Sphäre der Todten
reißt.⁹⁰

Hölderlin understands the action of both plays as a loss of selfhood, as man is transported into another realm by the destructive power of nature.⁹¹ The prophetic speeches of Tiresias grasp this succession in a single moment. The caesura offers a secure insight into historical change, showing the wholeness of tragic action in an interruption of that action.⁹² Hölderlin’s theory of the caesura is concerned to reconcile historical transience with the security of poetic form. He elaborates an atemporal principle of tragic representation as a tension between form and content.

‘The intelligibility of the whole’

In turning to the particularities of *Oedipus* and *Antigone*, Hölderlin focuses on decisive moments – not the caesurae themselves, but the scenes just before, which would constitute the *summa* of the action. The second sections of the *Anmerkungen* take the form of commentaries, juxtaposing passages of Hölderlin’s translation with exegetical remarks. Both of Hölderlin’s commentaries point to ecstatic moments, in which characters transgress the bounds of human consciousness. In *Oedipus*, this is a speech act, a *nefas*, which leads to

⁹⁰ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 251: ‘In both pieces the caesura is constituted by the speeches of Tiresias. He enters the course of fate, as overseer of the natural power, which tragically carries man from his sphere of living, from the middlepoint of his inner life into another world, and speeds him into the eccentric sphere of the dead.’

⁹¹ Hühn (1997), 203.

⁹² See Gasché (2004).

divine retribution; in *Antigone*, the transgression is not only Antigone's political opposition to Creon, but a blasphemous appropriation of divinity. In both works, the protagonists place themselves in a new relation to the gods, which is at once profane and sacred. Hölderlin describes his fundamentally theological understanding of Greek art in a letter of 1800, writing that ancient poetry had the sole aim

die Götter und die Menschen gegenseitig näher [zu] bringen. [...] Das Trauerspiel zeigt dieses *per contrarium*. Der Gott und Mensch scheint Eins, darauf ein Schicksal, das alle Demuth und allen Stolz des Menschen erregt und am Ende Verehrung den Himmlischen einerseits und andererseits ein gereinigtes Gemüth als Menscheneigenthum zurückläßt.⁹³

Tragic action is a change in human relation to divinity, as an immediate but unstable coexistence is transformed into a mediate, but more stable one (a conception that bears strong similarities to Hegel's in the *PdG*). Hölderlin interprets the actions of *Oedipus* and *Antigone* as resulting from a blasphemous closeness to divinity, which calls for a purification of human consciousness through a demonstration of the power of the gods. The end of this cathartic process of union and separation is a new relation to the divine, which ultimately brings 'gods and humans closer together.'

The *Oedipus* notes describe an act of theological excess as the key to the work as a whole: 'Die Verständlichkeit des Ganzen beruht vorzüglich darauf, daß man die Scene ins Auge faßt, wo Oedipus den Orakelspruch *zu unendlich deutet, zum nefas* versucht wird.'⁹⁴ Oedipus, in Hölderlin's reading, misinterprets the oracle brought by Creon, which should have been construed as commanding him, in general terms, 'Richtet, allgemein, ein streng

⁹³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 19, 464 (11.1800, to Mehmel): 'to bring the gods and humans closer together. Tragedy shows this *per contrarium*. God and man appear one, upon which [comes] a fate, which arouses all the humility and pride of man, and at the end leaves behind, on one hand, respect for the heavenly ones and, on the other, a purified mind as the property of man.'

⁹⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 251: 'The intelligibility of the whole depends primarily on observing the scene in which Oedipus interprets the oracular utterance too infinitely, is tempted to the *nefas*.'

und rein Gericht, haltet gute bürgerliche Ordnung.’⁹⁵ Rather than understanding the oracular command in civic terms (which would be appropriate to his role as king or tyrant), ‘Oedipus aber spricht gleich darauf priesterlich.’⁹⁶ He understands his duty as ritual purification through the expulsion of an individual, going far beyond the general command of the oracle. When Creon explains the story of Laius’s death, Oedipus – falsely, in Hölderlin’s interpretation – conflates the broad, social degeneracy pointed out by the oracle with the unsolved crime, establishing a causality where none necessarily existed.⁹⁷ Hölderlin sees a progressive disintegration in Oedipus’s psychology, manifested in an overbearing and vindictive search for truth. Behind all this is surely the Aristotelian concept of *hamartia*, which Hölderlin understands (very much contrary to Aristotle) as an act of intellectual excess, precipitating a longer mental descent.⁹⁸ This distinguishes Hölderlin’s Oedipus from the heroic figures of Hegel and Schelling: he is a man at the verge of sanity, struggling to retain control of consciousness as it is slipping away.

Throughout his interpretation, Hölderlin calls attention to the violence of language. The key moment of the story is Oedipus’s *nefas*, rather than (as for Hegel) the revelation of truth or (as for Schelling) Oedipus’s acceptance of guilt. Oedipus is doomed by words spoken, not by actions committed. Indeed, Hölderlin sees Oedipus’s sin as his own creation, the effect of his excessive speech. For Hölderlin, *Oedipus* is the depiction of *Geist* losing control of itself, as stable consciousness is overtaken by madness.⁹⁹ Oedipus’s *nefas* has disrupted the coexistence of god and man, and set in motion a catastrophic process of

⁹⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 252: ‘judge, generally, a strict and pure court, uphold good civic order.’

⁹⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 252: ‘Oedipus however speaks immediately following as a priest.’

⁹⁷ Referring to *OT* 236-40. Menke (2009), 14-36 tries to make such a reading plausible, with interesting results.

⁹⁸ On Hölderlin and Aristotle, see Krell (2005), 280-321; Taminiaux (1995), 283-301.

⁹⁹ See Lönker (1989), 293.

division. This division takes place first of all in Oedipus's own mind, as he seeks to secure his self-knowledge in 'das närrischwilde Nachsuchen nach einem Bewußtseyn,' and finally in 'das geistesranke Fragen nach einem Bewußtseyn.'¹⁰⁰ Hölderlin describes Oedipus's language in this state as demonic: 'Weil solche Menschen in gewaltsameren Verhältnissen stehn, spricht auch ihre Sprache, beinahe nach Furienart, in gewaltsameren Zusammenhänge.'¹⁰¹ Hölderlin grounds the tragic firmly in its mode of representation, seeing the language of tragedy as itself a cause of the tragic.¹⁰² Where nearly all previous commentators on *Oedipus* had been interested in the plot or the central character, Hölderlin focuses on speech as constitutive of both. Language is the site of Oedipus's transgression and his tragedy.

Hölderlin's interpretation of *Oedipus* has received far less attention than his rather more complex (and arguably more plausible) remarks on *Antigone*. Yet the concentration on language in the notes to *Oedipus* is importantly developed in those to *Antigone*. Where Hölderlin had pointed to the way that Oedipus's language creates his tragedy, in discussing *Antigone* he suggests that the process of translation is itself a locus of the tragic. Having described the tragic as a linguistic phenomenon, Hölderlin creates an analogy between tragic *peripeteia* and his own translation. Accordingly, the *Antigone* notes emphasize the difference between ancient and modern modes of representation. *Antigone* for Hölderlin is a study in *Übergang*, which is both an element of the tragic within *Antigone*, and a characteristic of the process of translation.¹⁰³ This places tragedy for Hölderlin, as for Hegel, somewhere between

¹⁰⁰ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 254-5: 'foolish-wild search for a consciousness... insane seeking after a consciousness.'

¹⁰¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 256: 'Because such men stand in more violent relations, their speech also speaks, almost like the Furies, in more violent coherence.'

¹⁰² Schmidt (2001), 149 points out the role of language.

¹⁰³ See Ryan (1988), Kasper (2000), 112-5.

antiquity and modernity.¹⁰⁴ Hölderlin, in some of his most challenging reflections, sees transition as immanent both to Sophocles's language and to his own translation.

The transition of *Antigone* is most of all a theological one. The *Anmerkungen* draw attention to the novelty of Antigone's theology, in contrast to Creon's adherence to custom. Hölderlin further emphasizes the contrast in his translations, which have a tendency to make references to divinity more comprehensible in Christian terms. The second section begins with an exchange between Antigone and Creon: "Was wagtest du, ein solch Gesez zu brechen?" "Darum, *mein* Zeus berichtete mirs nicht."¹⁰⁵ Hölderlin has changed Antigone's words, which in his text read οὐ γάρ τι [sic] μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε, so that she speaks of 'my Zeus.'¹⁰⁶ Antigone's appropriation of the god suggests Christianity's personal relation to a single divinity. Like Oedipus, she is a theological anomaly, yet Antigone appears in a more favourable light, as looking forward to a new understanding of the gods. Translation and commentary here reinforce one another in a kind of circularity:¹⁰⁷ Hölderlin's translation has the effect of making Antigone more forward-looking – a characteristic his commentary understands as decisive for the work's content.

Hölderlin suggests that Antigone's personal relation to the gods is spreading to society at large. The relation between Creon and his son Haimon becomes a battleground for the two theologies. Hölderlin quotes from their exchange: 'Creon. Wenn meinem Uranfang ich treu beistehe, lüg' ich? / Hämon. Das bist du nicht, hältst *du nicht heilig Gottes*

¹⁰⁴ On the parallels between the two, see Düsing (1988), Pöggeler (2004).

¹⁰⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 412: "How did you dare to break such a law?" "For this reason: *my* Zeus did not announce it to me." The names of the speakers are absent from the original.

¹⁰⁶ *FHA* 16, 308 (451 in the Juntina, the edition thought to be Hölderlin's primary reference; 450 in the OCT): 'For it was not in any way Zeus who announced these things to me.'

¹⁰⁷ Schmidt (1995), 64.

*Nahmen.*¹⁰⁸ The translation loses the text's parallel construction: ἀμαρτάνω γὰρ τὰς ἐμὰς ἀρχὰς σέβων; / οὐ γὰρ σέβεις, τιμὰς γε τὰς θεῶν πατῶν.¹⁰⁹ The notes and the typography draw attention to the most significant of Hölderlin's interventions, altering the plural 'gods' to a singular 'god.' By changing Haimon's polytheism to a monotheism, Hölderlin suggests that the two generations are on different sides of a theological divide. Creon's relation to divinity is based on custom and determined by his 'Uranfang' (translating ἀρχή as 'beginning' rather than the more normal 'rule'), while Haimon's suggests that divinity is already in transition. Hölderlin comments: 'Es war wohl nöthig, hier den heiligen Ausdruck zu ändern, da er in der Mitte bedeutend ist, als Ernst und selbstständiges Wort, an dem sich alles übrige objectiviret und verklärt.'¹¹⁰ Theological differences are decisive for the conflicts of the piece, 'in der Mitte bedeutend.' As in 'Das Untergehende Vaterland,' Hölderlin sees the content of tragedy as historical change; in *Antigone*, this takes the form of a transition to a new view of divinity.

'Die Mitte' can be understood as a generalization of the concept of the caesura: a moment within *transport* in which the process of change can be grasped. Yet here it is not only the middle of the work itself, but also of the transition from Greek to German. The *transport* of tragedy and the process of translation coincide in Hölderlin's alteration of the text. He continues:

Wohl die Art, wie in der Mitte sich die Zeit wendet, ist nicht wohl veränderlich, so auch nicht wohl, wie ein Karakter der kategorischen Zeit kategorisch folget, und wie es vom griechischen zum hesperischen gehet,

¹⁰⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 341: "“If I stand by my origin faithfully, do I lie?” “That you are not, if you do not keep holy the name of god.”"

¹⁰⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 340 (746-7 in the Juntina; 744-5 in the OCT): 'Do I then err keeping holy my rule? You do not keep holy, treading on the honours of the gods.'

¹¹⁰ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 413: 'It was probably necessary to change the holy expression here, since it is meaningful in the middle, as seriousness and independent word, around which all else objectifies and transfigures itself.'

hingegen der heilige Nahmen, unter welchem das Höchste gefühlt wird oder geschieht.¹¹¹

Hölderlin differentiates between what in Greek tragedy is essential, and therefore unchangeable in translation, and what is contingent, and therefore necessary to change. This justifies Hölderlin's practice of altering the names of the gods. It is only the name, he suggests, that has changed in modernity; the essential quality of divinity remains the same. Unchangeable are the elements relating to transition: the turning of time, the action of character, and the transition from Greek to Hesperian. Hölderlin suggests that the changes of time, character, and historical epoch are somehow coincident in tragedy – and that these changes underlie the change of divine name. This develops the Böhlendorff letter's notion of Greek art striving toward the Hesperian, but now sees the dynamic as internal to tragedy. Greek tragedy's unalterable core consists in a historical transition; its contingent, alterable quality is the linguistic form of expression. Hölderlin authorizes his modernizing process of translation by what he sees as the incipient modernity of Sophocles's language.

Throughout his translation and commentary, Hölderlin seems to temporalize Antigone's fate. The last passage Hölderlin quotes describes Antigone's punishment. The chorus compares her to Danae, the Argive princess confined by her father in response to an oracular prediction. Though Hölderlin largely sticks close to the Greek in the passage, he makes a substantial alteration to the description of Danae's impregnation by Zeus in a stream of gold: 'Sie zählete dem Vater der Zeit / Die Stundenschläge, die goldnen' for καὶ Ζητὸς

¹¹¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 414: 'Indeed, the way that time turns itself in the middle is not really changeable, just as also how a character categorically follows the categorical time, and how it goes from Greek to Hesperian; on the contrary, the holy name, under which the highest is felt or takes place.'

ταμιεύε- / σκε γονὰς χρυσοῖόντους.¹¹² The changes Hölderlin introduces relate to temporality: the name ‘Zeus’ becomes ‘Vater der Zeit,’ ‘guarded the seeds’ becomes ‘zählete[...] die Stundenschläge.’ Hölderlin brings out the processual nature of Sophocles’s text, making the duration of Danae’s guarding/counting the main feature of the comparison. This removes the sexual connotations of the original and makes the lines refer to a potentially infinite time of solitary counting, the fate to which Antigone is condemned.

Hölderlin’s justification for his changes, he writes, is ‘um es unserer Vorstellungsart mehr zu nähern.’¹¹³ Though the name Zeus was significant for Sophocles’s audience, modern audiences require a description of the function of the god in order for his role to be clear. As in the earlier instance of changing plural to singular gods, it is *Ernst* that is at issue. *Ernst* seems to denote a way of reading that grasps the full theological meaning of the ancient divinity. In order to make myth meaningful, Hölderlin demythologizes the names of the gods.¹¹⁴ This is part of Hölderlin’s effort, ‘die Mythe überall *beweisbarer* dar[zu]stellen.’¹¹⁵ Modern divinity can be demonstrated only as spirit, not as a physical presence. The striking image of Danae counting the hours belongs to modern ways of representation because divinity is experienced in thought. As the Böhlendorff letter had suggested, her infinite confinement represents the distinctively modern character of the tragic as a living death. Hölderlin makes the story of Antigone more demonstrable by making her (or her analogue, Danae’s) fate and her relation to divinity more spiritual.

¹¹² Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 362-3 (947-8 in the Juntina; 950 in the OCT, with different line divisions): ‘she counted for the father of time the strokes of hours, the golden’ translating ‘she guarded the gold-streaming seeds of Zeus.’

¹¹³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 415: ‘to bring it nearer to our way of representation.’

¹¹⁴ Schmidt (1995), 70.

¹¹⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 415: ‘to present myth everywhere more demonstrably.’

Between the second, interpretive sections of the *Anmerkungen*, there seems to be a process of change already in motion: both of Sophocles's works depict closeness to divinity as destructive, yet *Antigone* points to a closer, less hierarchical theology emerging. Though Hölderlin does not explicitly state it, the difference he sketches between the two works suggests that they represent stages in a single process, begun by Oedipus's *nefas* and carried forward by Antigone's holy blasphemy, and (though this will only be clear in the following section) completed in Creon's downfall.¹¹⁶ Both *Anmerkungen* have emphasized how the language of tragedy is pervaded by theological understanding. *Antigone*'s references to the gods, in Hölderlin's translation, have a distinctly Christian tone: they suggest the personal relation to a single god, who is not known as 'Zeus' but rather *Vater*. This modern or modernizing tinge is not simply Hölderlin's imposition on the work, but is fundamental to how he understands its content: *Antigone* is a tragedy of the transition from one theology to another, from Creon's lawful hierarchy to Antigone's lawless equality. By modernizing the names of Sophocles's gods, Hölderlin brings out the modern characteristics he finds latent in *Antigone*. The work depicts the birth of modern theology out of ancient polytheism (a suggestion that is only strengthened by the similarities with Hegel). Hölderlin's modernizing translation practice represents 'wie es vom griechischem zum hesperischen gehet' in the conflict of Creon and Antigone. *Antigone*, as the final section of Hölderlin's *Anmerkungen* will show, depicts a process of *vaterländische Umkehr* in which antiquity and modernity meet.

¹¹⁶ Corssen (1949) similarly sees a continuity between *Oedipus* and *Antigone*. The opposite, and currently dominant view is represented in Lacoue-Labarthe (1989), 208-35, which sees the greater alterations to *Antigone* as bespeaking the work's greater antiquity. While this is an attractive solution and brilliantly argued, it does not follow the logic of Hölderlin's translation strategy, which aims to bring out the 'national' rather than the 'foreign' quality of the texts translated. See the letter to Wilms 28.9.1803, and Louth (1998), 63.

‘Vaterländische Umkehr’

Hölderlin has, in the first sections of the *Anmerkungen*, established an atemporal poetological rule of tragic form based on the caesura; in the second, he has interpreted *Oedipus* and *Antigone* both as depictions of tragic *transport* and as the object of the *transport* of translation. Caesura and *transport*, synchrony and diachrony, are the poles that Hölderlin’s theory of tragedy seeks to mediate. They come together in the third sections of the *Anmerkungen*, which describe ‘die Darstellung des Tragischen’ as the appearance of divine infinity in human finitude. In the paradoxical form of the tragic, the extreme of comprehension (the moment of the caesura) is coincident with the extreme of forgetting (the process of *transport*). Here is Hölderlin on *Oedipus*:

Die Darstellung des Tragischen beruht vorzüglich darauf, daß das Ungeheure, wie der Gott und Mensch sich paart, und gränzenlose die Naturmacht und des Menschen Innerstes im Zorn Eins wird, dadurch sich begreift, daß das gränzenlose Eineswerden durch gränzenloses Scheiden sich reinigt.¹¹⁷

And on *Antigone*:

Die tragische Darstellung beruhet, wie in den Anmerkungen zum Oedipus angedeutet ist, darauf, daß der unmittelbare Gott, ganz Eins mit dem Menschen (denn der Gott eines Apostels ist mittelbarer, ist höchster Verstand in höchstem Geiste), daß die *unendliche* Begeisterung *unendlich*, das heißt in Gegensätzen, im Bewußtseyn, welches das Bewußtseyn aufhebt, heilig sich scheidend, sich faßt, und der Gott, in der Gestalt des Todes, gegenwärtig ist.¹¹⁸

At the heart of both descriptions is a moment of cognition: the catastrophic union of god and man ‘sich begreift’ or ‘sich faßt’ through a process of division. This can be understood as the

¹¹⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 257: ‘The presentation of the tragic primarily relies on this: that the monstrosity, how god and man come together, and limitlessly the power of nature and the inmost of man become one in wrath, thereby understands itself, that the limitless becoming-one purifies itself through limitless division.’

¹¹⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 417: ‘Tragic presentation relies, as in the ‘Notes’ to *Oedipus* has been indicated, on this: that the immediate god, wholly one with man (since the god of an apostle is more mediate, is the highest understanding in the highest spirit), that the infinite inspiration grasps itself infinitely, that is to say, in oppositions, in consciousness that sublates consciousness, dividing itself in a holy way, and the god, in the form of death, is present.’

tragic presentation of the closeness of humanity and divinity *per contrarium*, a recognition of distance from god that brings with it a knowledge of the previous intimacy. Both *Oedipus* and *Antigone* have presented humans who come too close to divinity; these apparent unions bring about a division in which both individuals are destroyed. Hölderlin interprets this as the process of *catharsis* ('sich reinigt'), a cognitive purification brought about by the death of an individual. These confrontations leave behind (as in the earlier letter) 'Verehrung den Himmlischen einerseits und andererseits ein gereinigtes Gemüth als Menscheneigenthum.'

Hölderlin describes the events of *Oedipus* as a restoration of humanity's respect for divinity: 'der Gott und der Mensch, damit der Weltlauf keine Lücke hat und *das Gedächtniß der Himmlischen nicht ausgeht, in der allvergessenden Form der Untreue sich mittheilt, denn göttliche Untreue ist am besten zu behalten.*'¹¹⁹ The communication of god and man is disloyal in that it reverses the false closeness that previously reigned. Where Oedipus had believed himself to be favoured by the gods, he realizes that he has been cursed. This disrupts the previous coexistence of man and god, but in doing so, restores human knowledge of the power of divinity.¹²⁰ *Catharsis* seems to come from the recognition of divine causality in human events – precisely the knowledge of the caesura. As divinity is remembered, 'vergißt der Mensch sich und den Gott, und kehret, freilich heiliger Weise, wie ein Verräther sich um.'¹²¹ The turning is the ecstatic quality of *transport*, which comes about as the hero becomes unbound from his past state and enters a wholly new one, becoming 'like a traitor'

¹¹⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 258: 'god and man, so that the course of the world has no gap and the memory of the heavenly ones does not go out, communicate in the all-forgetting form of disloyalty, since divine disloyalty is best retained.'

¹²⁰ Hühn (1997), 240.

¹²¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 258: 'man forgets himself and the god, and turns, admittedly in a holy way, like a traitor.'

to himself. Hölderlin interprets tragic *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* (which, according to Aristotle, coincide in Oedipus) as a cognitive process that alters the quality of time itself.

For Hölderlin, time in tragedy is not a simple container of events, any more than language is a neutral medium of expression. Tragic time, like tragic language, has its own violent quality, which overtakes the characters of tragedy and causes *transport*. Hölderlin describes *Oedipus* as taking place ‘unter Pest und Sinnesverwirrung und allgemein entzündetem Wahsagergeist, in müßiger Zeit.’¹²² This temporality is not incidental to Oedipus’s *nefas* but might be understood to cause it: his theological excess is a symptom of the idleness of his time, which has led man to forget the prerogatives of divinity. Oedipus’s turning in disloyalty, *Umkehr* in *Untreue*, is similarly an element of the time’s own reversal:

In dieser [äußersten Gränze des Leidens] vergißt sich der Mensch, weil er ganz im Moment ist; der Gott, weil er nichts als Zeit ist; und beides ist untreu, die Zeit, weil sie in solchem Momente sich kategorisch wendet, und Anfang und Ende sich in ihr schlechterdings nicht reimen läßt; der Mensch, weil er in diesem Momente der kategorischen Umkehr folgen muß, hiermit im Folgenden schlechterdings nicht dem Anfänglichen gleichen kann.¹²³

The turning of time causes the turning of man. The previous, unreflective relation of man and god is destroyed and a new one created, as man recalls his reliance on divinity.¹²⁴ A concept of tragic fate becomes visible, which recalls the assertion of the *Grund zum Empedokles* that tragic characters are all attempts ‘die Probleme des Schiksaals zu lösen.’ Oedipus’s downfall, Hölderlin suggests, was a necessity of his time, the solution to its idleness. The disintegration Hölderlin had pointed to in Oedipus’s consciousness appears as at once a symptom of the

¹²² Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 257: ‘amid plague and confusion of sense and generally inflamed spirit of prophecy, in an idle time.’

¹²³ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 258: ‘In this man forgets himself, because he is wholly in the moment; god [forgets himself] because he is nothing but time; and both are disloyal: time because it turns itself categorically in such moments, and beginning and end simply cannot be rhymed; man because in this moment of categorical reversal he must follow, therefore in the following simply cannot equal the beginning.’

¹²⁴ Lönker (1989), 301.

time's forgetfulness of divinity and as the example that causes the remembering in disloyalty. Oedipus's *nefas* had expressed the fatelessness of his time; his fate restores time itself.

The tragic process represented in *Antigone* is described as 'vaterländische Umkehr,' which denotes alternatively *Umkehr* within the *Vaterland* and *Umkehr* into the *Vaterland*. In the last section of the *Antigone* notes, *Vaterland* can be used generically, denoting any organic unity of culture, or specifically, referring to Hölderlin's own *Vaterland*, essentially synonymous with 'Hesperian.' Hölderlin's understanding of the authentically *vaterländisch* is neither national nor temporal, but refers to an ideal, progressive quality, which lies in the future both of modernity and antiquity. *Antigone* appears as the work bridging the gap between ancient Greece and the *Vaterland*, making clear their contrast as well as their continuity. There is a form of parallel thought running through the *Antigone* notes, which centres on two major areas, language and *Vernunftform*. *Antigone* seems to show both in transition, as ancient tragedy yields to the modern quality of the tragic.

Hölderlin contrasts the speech of tragedy in Greece and the *Vaterland*: 'Das griechischtragische Wort ist tödtlichfactisch, weil der Leib, den er ergreift wirklich tödtet.' This could refer to Oedipus's curse in the *OT* or Creon's death sentence in the *Antigone*, both destructive acts committed under the corrupting influence of monarchical power.¹²⁵ The word seizes the agents of tragedy, and is thus 'factic' in the sense of the verb *facere*. What the word acts on, however, distinguishes Greek from *vaterländisch* tragic speech. The Greek word physically compels tragic characters, 'mittelbarer factisch wird, indem es den sinnlicheren Körper ergreift.'¹²⁶ On the contrary, the tragic word 'nach unserer Zeit und

¹²⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 417: 'the Greek-tragic word is deadly-factic, because the body that it seizes really kills.'

¹²⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 417: 'becomes more mediately factic, in that it seizes the more sensible body.'

Vorstellungsart unmittelbarer [wird], indem es den geistigeren Körper ergreift.¹²⁷ In Greece, speech had the power to instigate physical destruction, while in Hölderlin's time, the word contributes to destruction in a more spiritual way:

Eine vaterländische [Kunstform] mag, wie wohl beweislich ist, mehr tödtenfactisches, als tödtlichfactisches Wort seyn; nicht eigentlich mit Mord oder Tod endigen, weil doch hieran das Tragische muß gefaßt werden, sondern mehr im Geschmache des Oedipus auf Kolonos, so daß das Wort aus begeistertem Munde schrecklich ist, und tödtet, nicht griechisch faßlich, in athletischem und plastischem Geiste, wo das Wort den Körper ergreift, daß dieser tödtet.¹²⁸

Hölderlin understands the *OC* as a more *vaterländisch* work, perhaps following the chronology of the works's composition (though not the chronology of the story, in which the events of the *OC* take place between the *OT* and *Antigone*). The contrast between the *OT* and *OC* can be understood through the curses of the respective works: in the *OT*, Oedipus's curse of the murderer is undefined, but has real consequences within the work (which Hölderlin has pointed out). In the *OC*, on the other hand, Oedipus curses his son Polyneices, an act that, though terrible, is not the direct cause of the latter's death. Oedipus's curse destroys Polyneices's spirit for battle, and so is 'tödtend' but not itself 'tödtlich.' The violent quality of the Greek language, which Hölderlin's interpretations emphasize, appears as one of the distinguishing features of ancient as opposed to modern tragedy.

The other aspect of tragedy that Hölderlin contrasts in Greece and the *Vaterland* is the *Vernunftform* or, alternatively, the *Vorstellungsarten*. This is surely at the root of the difference in language, but Hölderlin uses the term to discuss a whole host of concerns

¹²⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 417: 'according to our time and way of representation, becomes more immediate, in that it seizes the more spiritual body.'

¹²⁸ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 418: 'A *vaterländisch* [form of art] may, as could well be demonstrated, be more a killing-factic than a deadly-factic word; it may not actually end with murder or death, because the tragic must still be grasped in this way, but rather more in the style of Oedipus at Colonus, so that the word is terrible out of inspired mouth, and kills, not in a Greek, palpable way, in athletic and plastic spirit, where the word seizes the body, so that it [the body] kills.'

external to tragedy (just as his discussion of tragic language seems to subsume both considerations of plot and character). The cause of the difference between ancient and modern reason is the opposing theologies of the times, which manifest themselves in opposed tendencies of the individual, and, implicitly in opposed notions of the tragic:

Für uns, da wir unter dem eigentlicheren Zevs stehen, der nicht nur zwischen dieser Erde und der wilden Welt der Todten *innehält*, sondern den ewig menschenfeindlichen Naturgang, auf seinem Wege in die andre Welt, *entschiedener zur Erde zwinget*, und da diß die wesentlichen und vaterländischen Vorstellungen groß ändert, und unsere Dichtkunst vaterländisch seyn muß, so daß ihre Stoffe nach unserer Weltansicht gewählt sind, und ihre Vorstellungen vaterländisch, verändern sich die griechischen Vorstellungen in sofern, als ihre Haupttendenz ist, sich fassen zu können, weil darin ihre Schwäche lag, da hingegen die Haupttendenz in den Vorstellungsarten unserer Zeit ist, etwas treffen zu können, Geschik zu haben, da das Schicksaallöse, das δυσμορον, unsere Schwäche ist.¹²⁹

Hölderlin's repeated use of the comparative suggests that the categories are not absolute; there is no single moment of theological change, but it is emergent already in and from the ancient texts. The modern Zeus is 'eigentlicher' – 'more actual' and 'more our own,' and so takes a greater interest in protecting humans from nature's destructive tendencies. This could characterize the theology of the *OC* (or indeed, of Christianity), in which natural process seems to be contained by a more benevolent divinity. In contrast, the need of the Greeks 'sich fassen zu können' (the Oedipus of the *OT*, for example) is a consequence of their divinity's more remote quality. Hölderlin describes a chiasmus between ancient and modern tendencies: moderns, though secure in self-consciousness, are uncertain of the physical

¹²⁹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 418: 'For us, since we stand under the more actual Zeus, who not only remains between this world and the wild world of the dead, but more decidedly forces to earth the eternal course of nature, hostile to man, on its way into the other world; and because this greatly changes the essential and *vaterländisch* representations, and our poetry must be *vaterländisch*, so that its materials are chosen according to our view of the world, and its representations *vaterländisch*, the Greek ways of representation transform themselves in so far as their primary tendency is to grasp themselves, because their weakness lay there, while on the contrary the primary tendency in the ways of representation of our time is to hit something, to have skill, because fatelessness, the δυσμορον, is our weakness.'

world; while ancients, secure in the physical world, are uncertain in their self-consciousness. Both ages strive towards what is innate to the other for completion. Thus, the young Oedipus's search for a consciousness would be typical of ancient fates, while the old Oedipus's effort to grasp his fate would be typical of modern ones. By seeking to recover something of the ancient concept of fate, modernity, like the blinded Oedipus, finds its errancy redeemed in tragedy.¹³⁰

The *Antigone* for Hölderlin represents *vaterländische Umkehr*, the change from ancient to modern theology and political organization. The focus moves away from the protagonists to the society as a whole:

In vaterländischer Umkehr [...] ist alles blos Nothwendige partheiisch für die Veränderung, deswegen kann, in Möglichkeit solcher Veränderung, auch der Neutrale, nicht nur, der *gegen* die vaterländische Form ergriffen ist, von einer Geistesgewalt der Zeit; gezwungen werden, patriotisch, gegenwärtig zu seyn, in unendlicher Form, der religiösen, politischen und moralischen seines Vaterlands.¹³¹

The word 'revolution' does not occur, but Hölderlin is clearly describing a situation like the one in France.¹³² *Antigone* is only the beginning of a larger transformation, which spreads throughout the citizenry. In the heat of the moment, even those, like Haimon, who were previously neutral are taken up in the *Umkehr*. The whole population becomes newly conscious of its patriotic qualities and opposes the old, sclerotic order, driven by a 'Geistesgewalt der Zeit' (the same violent quality of time seen in *Oedipus*). The new *Vaterland* develops through destruction of the old – the very process of *Übergang* through

¹³⁰ The provenance of the term δούμορον has never been satisfactorily explained. The word appears occasionally in the *OT* and *Antigone*, but is particularly prominent in the *OC*. *Antigone* describes herself as δούμορον δούμορα (*OC* 1109: 'ill-fated daughter of an ill-fated one').

¹³¹ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 420: 'In vaterländisch reversal ... all that is merely necessity is partisan for the change; therefore the neutral one, not only the one who is seized against the vaterländisch form, in the possibility of such a change can be compelled by a spiritual violence of the time to be patriotic, present, in infinite form, in the religious, political, and moral [form] of his *Vaterland*.'

¹³² Schmidt (1995), 72 points out that *Umkehr* could be used synonymously with *Revolution*.

Untergang that Hölderlin had treated the *Empedokles* complex.¹³³ Sophocles's work now appears as a form of the 'ideale Auflösung,' a depiction of destruction and creation as a single process.

Hölderlin describes the new order emerging from tragedy in terms that cannot but recall the French Revolution:

Die Vernunftform, die hier tragisch sich bildet, ist politisch und zwar republikanisch, weil zwischen Kreon und Antigonä, förmlichem und gegenförmlichen, das Gleichgewicht zu gleich gehalten ist. Besonders zeigt sich diß am Ende, wo Kreon von seinen Knechten fast gemißhandelt wird.¹³⁴

Hölderlin recognizes the danger of this political upheaval (the balance is held *too* equally), but does not question its necessity. Its 'tragic' character is that an old form has to be destroyed in order for a new one to emerge. Hölderlin reads the *Antigone* as staging the shift in power from Creon's hierarchical order to Antigone's egalitarian one. Though Antigone is dead, her *Vernunftform* is in the ascendant, and has spread even to Creon's servants. Greek tragedy seems to have a levelling tendency in the human sphere, striking down men who come too close to divine power. There is a parallel between Creon and Oedipus, whose subordination to his servants Hölderlin emphasized earlier: both rulers find themselves destroyed for an excess and reduced to a status below those who previously served them. Yet it appears that the transformation of *Antigone* is far more comprehensive than that of *Oedipus*. The monarchical order has been destroyed in favour of a republican constitution. For Hölderlin, who had so ardently desired such a revolution in his own time, tragedy preserves the republican form of reason as yet unrealized in modernity.

¹³³ See Hühn (1997), 246-8.

¹³⁴ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 421: 'The form of reason that develops itself here tragically is political, and even republican. because between Creon and Antigone, formal and anti-formal, the balance is held too equally. This shows itself particularly at the end, when Creon is almost abused by his servants.'

Hölderlin's conclusion returns to the beginning of the *Anmerkungen*, and the question of antiquity's exemplarity. His focus, though, has shifted, from the technique of ancient poetry to its *Vorstellungsarten*. Again, Hölderlin's discussion of the content of tragedy is bound up with the question of translation, how ancient modes of thought should be presented to the modern reader. Continuing from the discussion of Creon's abuse, Hölderlin writes:

Sophokles hat Recht. Es ist diß Schicksaal seiner Zeit und Form seines Vaterlandes. Man kann wohl idealisiren, z.B. den besten Moment wählen, aber die vaterländischen Vorstellungsarten dürfen, wenigstens der Unterordnung nach, vom Dichter, der die Welt in verringerten Maasstab darstellt, nicht verändert werden.¹³⁵

Hölderlin draws attention to the historical specificity of tragedy's form of political reason, which must be preserved in translation. The republican content emergent in tragedy is appropriate to Sophocles's democratic Athens, even though it is out of place in the modern *Vaterland*. Still, Hölderlin sees the value of Greek tragedy as giving an insight into something that is indeed eternal: 'Für uns ist eine solche Form gerade tauglich, weil das Unendliche, wie der Geist der Staaten und der Welt, ohnehin nicht anders, als aus linkischem Gesichtspunct kann gefaßt werden.'¹³⁶ Like Hegel in the simile of the maiden, Hölderlin articulates the place of Greek tragedy *for us*. Its value is not based on any timeless quality, but on the particular timeliness of its form, which – because alien – allows an insight, 'aus linkischem Gesichtspunkt' into the universal. Greek tragedy for Hölderlin is the depiction of historical process itself, affording a glimpse into the way the individual exists in a changing world. Greek forms, then, ultimately teach what it is to be modern.

¹³⁵ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 421: 'Sophocles is right. This is the fate of his time and form of his *Vaterland*. One can, indeed, idealize, i.e., choose the best moment, but the *vaterländisch* ways of representation should not be changed, at least with respect to their subordination, by the poet who presents the world in a reduced scale.'

¹³⁶ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 421: 'For us such a form is just useful, because the infinite, like the spirit of states and the world, cannot in any case be grasped otherwise than from an awkward point of view.'

Hölderlin can nevertheless prefer modern forms to ancient ones, as offering a fuller grasp of the specificity of his own time: ‘Die vaterländischen Formen unserer Dichter, wo solche sind, sind aber dennoch vorzuziehen, weil solche nicht bloß da sind, um den Geist der Zeit verstehen zu lernen, sondern ihn festzuhalten und zu fühlen, wenn er einmal begriffen und gelernt ist.’¹³⁷ Hölderlin’s notes close here, coming full circle to the question of priority with which he began. Now, though, it is modernity that is to be preferred: having gained the insight into the *Zeitgeist* from Greek tragedy, modern poets are able to create in ways the Greeks could not. Greek tragedy provides the theory that would inform authentically modern practice. There is for Hölderlin a universal validity to Greek tragedy, which is created by its particular historical character. Sophocles teaches what it is to exist in time, even as his own time is past. Yet it is only in translation, out of context, that the tragic quality of Sophocles can be actualized, as modernity discovers its own fate in Greek tragedy. The final paradox of Hölderlin’s tragic thought, then, is that the death of tragedy is the birth of the tragic.

¹³⁷ Hölderlin, *FHA* 16, 421: ‘The *vaterländisch* forms of our poets, where there are such, are however to be preferred, because they do not merely exist to learn to understand the spirit of the time, but rather to hold it fast and feel it, when once it is conceptualized and learned.’

Exodos

Births of the tragic

By 1808, ‘Tragödie’ meant Greek tragedy. Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger’s *Des Sophokles Tragödien* was the first translation of Sophocles to use the word ‘Tragödie’ exclusively, and to eschew the Germanic ‘Trauerspiel,’ which had been essentially interchangeable for the previous two centuries.¹ Solger is an interesting figure in the present context because he represents a rare meeting of philological and philosophical training: he had taken part in F.A. Wolf’s seminars in Halle while studying law there, and had also attended Schelling’s lectures in Jena and Fichte’s in Berlin. His Sophocles substantially raised the standard of German translations of tragedy and would remain a standard reference for years.² His theory of tragedy, as elaborated in a later preface and posthumously published lectures on aesthetics, deserves serious consideration in its own right.³ Solger, philologist and philosopher, shows the ambiguous intellectual movement whereby tragedy becomes at once dehistoricized and essentially Greek. His Sophocles served to disseminate an idealist viewpoint on the tragic while at the same time allowing a more direct access to the literary particularities of the text than previous translations.

Solger declares that his preface will ‘den Standpunkt des Ganzen historisch und philosophisch entwickle. [...] Der einzige Uebersetzer des Sophokles aber, der etwas der Art versucht hat, in abentheuerliche Ausschweifungen gerathen ist.’⁴ Hölderlin’s translation of

¹ A precedent is Stolberg’s 1802 *Vier Tragödien des Aeschylus*, but it does not offer any commentary, which constituted a great part of Solger’s importance. A distinction between *Tragödie* and *Trauerspiel* seems to become increasingly conscious over this period, and makes up the prehistory to Benjamin’s opposition in the *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*.

² On the Sophocles translation, see Kitzbichler (2009), 46-52; Baillot (2007).

³ On Solger’s aesthetics, see Decher (1994); Schulte (2009).

⁴ Solger (1808) I, xi-xii: ‘to develop the standpoint of the whole philosophically and historically. The only translator of Sophocles, however, who attempted anything of the kind fell into rash excesses.’ The necessity of

four years previous is undoubtedly meant here, and Solger's dismissal is typical of early responses. Yet Solger is unusual in understanding the historical and philosophical intentions of the *Anmerkungen*, its effort to describe the essence of Greek tragedy and its difference from modern works. Solger's historical viewpoint mostly takes the form of an attention to the particularities of the Greek language. He writes that his most important principle in the translation is 'alle Eigenthümlichkeiten des Alterthums und des griechischen Volkes so viel, wie möglich, zu schonen.'⁵ This leads him to an extremely detailed disquisition on Greek metrics, and the difficulties of translating them into German. Solger's rendering of the choruses takes far more account of the original metres than any previous translation, and seeks an approximation of the Greek in each one. Solger is interested in the uniqueness of Greek tragedy as an artistic form, though much less in the culture from which it arises – a view that places him close to Schelling, who is probably his greatest influence philosophically.

Solger's commentary on Sophocles demonstrates the influence of idealist readings of tragedy. The basic premise, that tragedy gives an insight into a wholeness that transcends existence, comes mainly from Schelling. Yet Solger's understanding of the action of tragedy as a sacrifice of the individual for the collective places him surprisingly close to Hölderlin and the Hegel of the *Naturrecht* essay. If there is little that is genuinely original or distinctive in Solger's thought in 1808, he ties together the strands of idealist thought in exemplary fashion:

Während also der einzelne Mensch, sein abgesondertes Dasein mit lebendigem Wollen verfolgend, von der Allgewalt des Nothwendigen

historical and philosophical introductions to translations, itself an indication of the growing sense of the alienness of ancient literature, had been emphasized influentially by Herder. See Kitzbichler (2009), 48.

⁵ Solger (1808), liv: 'to preserve as much as possible all the particularities of antiquity and the Greek people.'

ergriffen und daniedergeschlagen wird, blüht zugleich die gesamte Gattung in dem Widerscheine der ewigen Gesetzte mit unvergänglicher and unvertilgbarer Kraft des Lebens. Eine solche Nachahmung aber, welche das lebendige Wesen des Ganzen so ungetheilt und vollkommen nachahmt, und im vollsten Sinne das Wirkliche widerholt, muß auch selbst als das Wirkliche in der höchsten Bedeutung des Worts sich darstellen, der Gegenstand selbst muß sich als gegenwärtig zeigen.⁶

If one compares Solger's point of view to Stolberg's of ten years earlier or Rochefort's of twenty years earlier (to say nothing of Lessing or Steinbrüchel), the ontological context of the theory is most striking. Tragedy is meaningful in a much greater (perhaps even grandiose) way for Solger than it was for thinkers before or outside of Idealism. The rhetorical question of tragedy's impact on the viewer here takes a back seat to the philosophical question of its content. The terms of discussion have shifted from the aesthetic, as a presentation to sense, to the metaphysical, as a depiction of a reality that transcends existence. In this shift, tragedy has gained a meaning that can be extracted from its historical moment and the particularities of tragedies. Imitation has become more real than reality.

The year of Solger's Sophocles also saw A.W. Schlegel's Vienna lectures, published the next year as *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*. At least until the publication of Hegel's *Ästhetik* in 1835 (and for substantially longer outside of Germany), Schlegel's lectures were the dominant theory of tragedy throughout Europe, and their influence can still be felt today, especially in the enduring canard that the tragic chorus represents 'the ideal spectator.'⁷ Schlegel's lectures brought an idealist viewpoint on tragedy

⁶ Solger (1808), xix: 'While the individual human, pursuing his independent existence with living will, is grasped and struck down by the mighty power of the necessary, at the same time the whole race blooms in the reflection of the eternal laws with undying and indestructible power of life. Such an imitation, however, which imitates the living essence of the whole so undivided and completely, and repeats the real in the fullest sense, must also itself present itself as the real in the highest meaning of the word, the object itself must show itself as present.'

⁷ Schlegel's description is rather more complex than he is usually given credit for. See A.W. Schlegel, *KSB* 5, 65.

to its widest audience yet, and were quickly translated into French, English, and Italian.⁸ Schlegel's viewpoint on Greek tragedy represents in large part an expansion of the thoughts of his brother Friedrich, his friend Schelling, and his sometime antagonist Schiller. Yet the clarity and breadth of the lectures distinguished them from every previous idealist treatment of tragedy, and made them into an important mode of dissemination for the new understanding of the genre. Schlegel assumes no previous knowledge or language skills on the part of his listeners, and introduces them to most of the extant Greek tragedies (Euripides predictably gets a bit slighted), before moving on to comedy, Seneca, and modern works in Italian, French, Spanish, English, and finally, German. He treats an extraordinarily wide range of works, and the catholicity of his taste was surely a great part of the appeal. Such lectures, it is important to remember, would have been difficult or impossible even ten years before, as Schlegel could not have relied on his audience having access to translations of the range of Greek works he treats. Schlegel was the right person at the right time to mediate idealist aesthetics to a broad audience, and established many of the terms in which tragedy would be discussed through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Schlegel's lectures articulate a few crucial assumptions that have been fundamental, though often unspoken, among idealist thinkers. First and most obviously, *the essentialization of the tragic*, which takes on a more substantial role for Schlegel than for any previous thinker. Schlegel begins his lectures with definitions of the tragic and comic, which form the basis for all the historical discussions that follow.⁹ The methodology here is important. Discussions of *das Tragische* in Hölderlin or *le tragique* in the *Encyclopédie* had

⁸ It was translated into French in 1814, English in 1815, and Italian in 1817 (to name a few of many translations).

⁹ A.W. Schlegel, *KSB* 5, 41.

assumed that the tragic was a quality extracted from tragedies; Schlegel, though, sees the tragic as prior, the quality on which tragedies are built. The tragic appears independent of its particular instances, and works called tragedies may or may not be tragic (Shakespeare being as ever the example of such hybridity). The guarantor of continuity within the genre is no longer formal qualities of tragedy (as it was for most of the eighteenth century), but a tragic content.

In counterpart to this universalization of the tragic, Schlegel demonstrates the idealist conviction that *tragedy is essentially Greek*.¹⁰ He explains that Greek poetry has a natural unity and completeness, which allows it to incorporate the pure form of the genres. The tragic can be experienced in its fullest power only in Greek tragedy. In order to gain access to the organic quality of Greek culture and the essence of the tragic, ‘man muß bei ihnen einheimisch geworden sein, man muß gleichsam griechische Luft geatmet haben.’¹¹ The notion of a unity to antiquity that must be grasped as a whole is important as well for the rising discipline of classical philology, and one finds a similar conception expressed in Wolf’s *Darstellung der Altertumswissenschaft* of 1807. Wolf famously calls for research into antiquity that would aim at ‘*die Kenntniss der alterthümlichen Menschheit selbst, welche Kenntniss aus der durch das Studium der alten Ueberreste bedingten Beobachtung einer organisch entwickelten bedeutungsvollen National-Bildung hergeht*.’¹² Such organic development, he argues, is found in exemplary fashion in ancient Greece; therefore, research

¹⁰ A.W. Schlegel, *KSB* 5, 43.

¹¹ A.W. Schlegel, *KSB* 5, 44: ‘one must have become at home among them, one must, so to speak, have breathed Greek air.’

¹² Wolf (1869), 883: ‘the knowledge of ancient humanity itself, which knowledge proceeds from the observation, conditioned by the study of ancient remains, of an organically-developed, meaningful national development.’

into the Greeks is research into the history of humanity itself.¹³ This Winckelmannian notion explains how it is that, for Schlegel, the tragic can be ahistorical while tragedy is essentially Greek. The Greeks constitute a particular culture that, because of its achievements, has a general relevance. Knowledge of Greek tragedy, then, is both historical and universal.

Finally, Schlegel's definition of the tragic and the comic alike places *reason at the heart of drama*.¹⁴ This is so typical of contemporary critical approaches that it is easy to forget that it is an idealist discovery or invention. Few in the eighteenth century would have argued that tragedy is primarily addressed to cognition – that it affirms the justice of a divinity, that it exposes the unhappiness of existence, that it questions the hero or the state or the gods. The essence of tragedy was usually sought in its emotional effect, which might serve reason (i.e., by instilling admiration for heroic actions) but would not be itself rational. Since 1800, though, tragedy has come to be understood primarily on the basis of its content. Modern critics, beginning with Idealism, very often see tragedy as fundamentally addressed to our rational powers. Arguably, this is suggested by Aristotle's description of the pleasure of recognition (*Poetics* 1448b4), but even if so, the consequences that the last two hundred years have drawn are vastly different from anything that Aristotle imagined. Aristotle is not in the first instance interested in what tragedy is about, as is appropriate to the definition of drama as *mimesis*: drama is representation, not presentation – it has a content, but is not *about* its content. Yet it is an assumption of most approaches to tragedy today that *what happens* in tragedy is the primary object of analysis. This may be the most lasting idealist legacy, and is visible in a wide swathe of studies of tragedy of the past two hundred years.

¹³ Wolf (1869), 889.

¹⁴ A.W. Schlegel, *KSB* 5, 41.

Both Solger and A.W. Schlegel could be subjects of chapters in their own right, but my contention is that by the time their major works were published, the most productive phase of thought on tragedy in Germany was over. The period between Schiller's first application of the Kantian sublime to tragedy (1792) and Hegel's *Phänomenologie* (1807) was a period of extreme political turmoil in Europe, and, as I have pointed out, thought on tragedy very often reflected on such upheaval.¹⁵ Though the Revolution and its ensuing wars did not cause Germans to become interested in tragedy, they certainly contributed to the urgency of the theories. There is also a more prosaic reason that the years 1797-1804 particularly were so productive for thought of tragedy: rarely (never?) have so many important thinkers and artists been in such close contact. Lines of contact constantly cross between the Weimar *Klassiker* Goethe, Schiller, and Herder, the Jena *Romantiker* Schlegel brothers, and the Tübingen Idealism of Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin.¹⁶ Tragedy seems to have been the object of intense discussion in this small, interconnected group. All the major theories were elaborated in dialogue with other thinkers, and there seems to have been a process of positive feedback between them, catalyzed by the French Revolution and Kant's Third Critique. Thinking about tragedy in that time and place was, if not a universal task, certainly a uniquely important one.

¹⁵ Of course, 1808 was no less tumultuous, and Schlegel's repeated exhortations to the German *Volk* and denigrations of French authors have a martial sound to them.

¹⁶ Not to mention Wieland, Fichte, Novalis, Humboldt, Tieck, and Kleist, for all of whom tragedy was somewhat less central. One could also frame this institutionally: the circle in Weimar was centered around the Hoftheater superintended by Goethe (and supported by Herzogin Anna Amalia), and that in Jena around the University; the importance of the Tübingen Stift is obvious.

Traces of idealist thought can be found in most nineteenth- and twentieth-century writing on tragedy, whether philological or philosophical. The legacy has naturally been most prominent in Germany, but Anglophone criticism has a strong idealist strand as well. It is particularly striking in the work of Richard Jebb, Bernard Knox, and Hugh Lloyd-Jones – not coincidentally, all scholars of Sophocles. Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone*, though rarely endorsed now, very often enters into discussions of the work;¹⁷ similarly the concept of tragic irony, most often applied to Oedipus, emerges in dialogue with idealist debates of the period, and is first set down in English, in Connop Thirlwall's 1833 essay 'On the irony of Sophocles.'¹⁸ Though interest in the concept of the tragic has been waning within the Classics in recent years, it has had a deep influence on ways of understanding tragedy, and remains inevitable in popular discussions of the genre.¹⁹

The greatest exponent of an idealist theory of tragedy after Hegel is of course Friedrich Nietzsche, who held a chair of classical philology in Basel when *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* was published in 1872.²⁰ Though Nietzsche presents his theory as radically new and opposed to previous views of the Greeks, he takes over some of the central premises of idealist thought on tragedy: the metaphysical context of the tragic, the sense of tragedy as defined by an essential philosophical content, the notion of tragic experience as existentially affirmative or justificatory. All of these notions enter German

¹⁷ See Hester (1970); Conradi (2003).

¹⁸ See Behler (1970). Menke (2009) makes irony central to his own theory of tragedy.

¹⁹ Most (2000), 32 describes it as is 'the most influential paradigm for understanding the genre of tragedy until quite recently.'

²⁰ On Nietzsche's relation to philological method, see Benne (2005); Porter (2000).

aesthetics through Idealism.²¹ Nietzsche's direct knowledge of idealist thought was fairly thin: he obviously knew Schlegel's lectures and Schiller's *Braut* preface, but little else that deals directly with tragedy. From his wide reading, he would no doubt have had second-hand knowledge of Hegel's and Schelling's lectures. Hölderlin, as a school assignment of 1861 declares, was a favourite author of the young Nietzsche, though there is no proof of Nietzsche ever making anything of the *Anmerkungen*.²² Idealist thought, especially its Hegelian and Schlegelian versions, pervaded the scholarly criticism of tragedy to such an extent that his familiarity with the tradition, if not the details of any one theory, can be taken as a given.²³ The influence of *Geburt* within scholarship is well-documented, and is unsurprisingly strongest in discussions of Dionysus and the irrational in Greek culture.²⁴

In closing, though, I want to point to another side of the idealist and Nietzschean legacy that may be even more durable than the approach to tragedy. I have drawn attention to the important and problematic role of historical thought for idealist theories of tragedy. In all of the major thinkers, I have argued that thought on tragedy is bound up in a reflection on history and the role of antiquity in modernity. These reflections are not incidental to the theories of tragedy produced, but essential to them: the theory of tragedy around 1800 represents an effort to grapple with the antiquity of the ancient and the modernity of the modern. If for most of the eighteenth century and before, the central theoretical problem of tragedy was how watching the pain of others could be pleasurable, for idealist thinkers, the question was more, how an ancient art form could be meaningful today. This latter question

²¹ Bowie (2003), 275-84 similarly makes the case for seeing the Nietzsche of *GT* in idealist context.

²² Nietzsche, *KGA* I.2, 338-41. Brobjer (2001) points out that the essay is largely plagiarized, and argues (I think implausibly) that the biography from which Nietzsche took much of the school essay in 1861 lies behind the opposition of Apollonian and Dionysian.

²³ There is an immense amount of research into Nietzsche's reading. An overview of his relation to previous theorists of tragedy is in Silk and Stern (1981), 297-331.

²⁴ See Cancik (1999); Henrichs (1984); Lloyd-Jones (1979).

still deserves thought, especially as Classics tries to define itself in an academic environment where disciplinary distinctions are increasingly being questioned. Considering what classical literature means today is a first step towards formulating the role of the Classics in a broader academic context.

Within Classics, an intellectual-historical perspective on classical reception may be a way of bridging the gap between the traditional centre of the Classics and the burgeoning study of reception. Such a study would define itself more broadly than *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* typically has (and would, one hopes, avoid the teleologies that often dominate such narratives), but would similarly seek to illuminate how our understanding of the classics has been formed. It would thereby avoid the atomism that can characterize studies of reception as isolated, immediate encounters between ancient and modern, and concentrate on the processes of mediation that constitute the classical tradition. Finding out that our approaches to antiquity are historically conditioned does not invalidate them, but it may change our conception of what we do: not uncovering the truth of antiquity, but mediating ancient culture to the modern world. That is, it should make us conceive of our task as scholars of antiquity as a dialectical one.

No one understood this better than Nietzsche. His notes towards a fifth of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* from 1875, known as ‘Wir Philologen,’ remain challenging today, both as a critique of and a creed for the study of the ancient world. For Nietzsche, antiquity is ‘ein Mittel *uns zu verstehen*, unsre Zeit zu richten und dadurch zu überwinden.’²⁵ This dialectical and even antagonistic relationship between the ancient and the modern comes to the fore in Nietzsche’s conviction that, properly understood, ‘*das Alterthum im tiefsten*

²⁵ Nietzsche, *KGA* IV.1, 173: ‘a means to understand ourselves, to judge our time and thus to overcome it.’

*Sinne unzeitgemäß macht.*²⁶ Philology should use the engagement with the past to gain a critical perspective on the present. The study of the Greeks represents for Nietzsche what it did for Hölderlin: an insight, ‘aus linkischem Gesichtspunct,’ into the universal. Only a philology situated between the historical and the universal answers Nietzsche’s triple imperative: ‘*Drei Dinge muß der Philologe, wenn er seine Unschuld beweisen will, verstehen, das Alterthum, die Gegenwart, sich selbst.*’²⁷ This genealogy of the tragic, in trying to understand something of the present and ourselves, seeks ultimately to suggest new paths for understanding antiquity.

²⁶ Nietzsche, *KGA* IV.1, 125: ‘antiquity makes one untimely in the deepest sense.’

²⁷ Nietzsche, *KGA* IV.1, 203: ‘the philologist must understand three things, if he wants to prove his innocence: antiquity, the present, himself.’

Bibliography

- Adler, Hans (1990). *Die Prägnanz des Dunklen: Gnoseologie, Ästhetik, Geschichtsphilosophie bei J.G. Herder*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Adler, Jeremy (1983). 'On tragedy: "Notes on the Oedipus" and "Notes on the Antigone"', *Comparative Criticism* 5, 205-44.
- Albrecht, W.P. (1975). *The sublime pleasures of tragedy: a study of critical theory from Dennis to Keats*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Alt, Peter-André (2006). 'Die Griechen transformieren: Schillers moderne Konstruktion der Antike' in Hinderer (2006), 339-64.
- Alt, Peter-André (2008). *Klassische Endspiele: das Theater Goethes und Schillers*. Munich: Beck.
- Ammon, Christoph Friederich (1789). *Hekabe und Andromache: zwei Trauerspiele des Euripides*. Erlangen: Palm.
- Baillet, Anne (2007). "'Wenn der Geist des Sophokles so in einer blauen Flamme emporsteigt': deutsche Übersetzungen der alten Tragiker am Beispiel von Solgers Sophokles' in Senarclens (2007a), 127-54.
- Barner, Wilfried (1993). 'Anachronistische Klassizität: zu Schillers Abhandlung *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*' in *Klassik im Vergleich: Normativität und Historizität europäischer Klassiken*, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp, 62-80. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Barner, Wilfried (1997). 'Lessing und die griechische Tragödie' in Flashar (1997), 161-98.

- Barnes, Josua (1694). *Euripidis quae extant omnia: tragoediae nempe XX, praeter ultimam, omnes completae: item fragmenta aliarum plusquam LX tragoediarum; et epistolae*. V. Cambridge: Hayes.
- Barone, Paul (2004). *Schiller und die Tradition des Erhabenen*. Berlin: Schmidt.
- Barth, Bernhard (1991). *Schellings Philosophie der Kunst: göttliche Imagination und ästhetische Einbildungskraft*. Freiburg: Alber.
- Batteux, Charles (1746). *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe*. Paris: Durand.
- Batteux, Charles (1777). 'Mémoires sur la Poétique d'Aristote', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 39, 54-91.
- Batteux, Charles (1786). 'Observations sur l'Hippolyte d'Euripide et sur la Phèdre de Racine', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 42, 452-472.
- Bäuerle, Martin (2008). *Kommunikation mit Texten: Studien zu Friedrich Schlegels Philologie*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Behler, Ernst (1970). 'Der Ursprung des Begriffs der tragischen Ironie', *Arcadia* 5, 113-42.
- Behler, Ernst (1986). 'A.W. Schlegel and the nineteenth-century *damnatio* of Euripides', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 27, 335-67.
- Beiser, Frederick C. (1992). *Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism: the genesis of modern German political thought, 1790-1800*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Beiser, Frederick C. (2002). *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Beiser, Frederick C. (2005). *Schiller as philosopher*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

- Beistegui, Miguel de (2000). 'Hegel: or the tragedy of thinking' in *Philosophy and tragedy*, ed. Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks, 11-37. London: Routledge.
- Belgardt, Raimund (1967). 'Romantische Poesie in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie*', *German Quarterly* 40, 165-185.
- Belhalfaoui, Barbara (1987). 'Johann Gottfried Herder: Shakespeare – ein Vergleich der alten und der modernen Tragödie', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 61, 89-124.
- Bender, Wolfgang (1973). *Johann Jakob Bodmer und Johann Jakob Breitinger*. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Benne, Christian (2005). *Nietzsche und die historisch-kritische Philologie*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Bennholdt-Thomsen, Anke and Alfredo Guzzoni (2004). *Analecta Hölderliniana II: die Aufgabe des Vaterlands*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Berghahn, Klaus L. (1986). *Schiller: Ansichten eines Idealisten*. Frankfurt: Athenäum.
- Biet, Christian (1994). *Oedipe en monarchie: tragédie et théorie juridique à l'âge classique*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Birkenhauer, Theresia (1996). *Legende und Dichtung: der Tod des Philosophen und Hölderlins Empedokles*. Berlin: Vorwerk.
- Boenke, Michaela (1998). "'Wäre er, so wären wir nicht': zu Schellings Apologie der Freiheit im Horizont der Postulatenlehre Kants' in Jantzen (1998), 129-159.
- Bohrer, Karl Heinz (1994). *Das absolute Präsenz: die Semantik ästhetischer Zeit*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Bohrer, Karl Heinz (2009). *Das Tragische: Erscheinung, Pathos, Klage*. Munich: Hanser.
- Boileau Despréaux, Nicolas (1701). *Oeuvres diverses*. 2 vols. Paris: Thierry.

- Borchmeyer, Dieter (1983). 'Rhetorische und ästhetische Revolutionskritik: Edmund Burke und Schiller' in *Klassik und Moderne: die Weimarer Klassik als historisches Ereignis und Herausforderung im kulturgeschichtlichen Prozeß*, ed. Karl Richter and Jörg Schönert, 56-79. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Böschenstein, Bernhard (1989). *'Frucht des Gewitters': zu Hölderlins Dionysos als Gott der Revolution*. Frankfurt: Insel.
- Bourgeois, Bernard (1970). *Hegel à Francfort, ou Judaïsme – Christianisme – Hegelianisme*. Paris: Vrin.
- Bourgeois, Bernard (1986). *Le Droit Naturel de Hegel (1802-1803): commentaire: contribution à l'étude de la genèse de la spéculation hégélienne à Iéna*. Paris: Vrin.
- Bowie, Andrew (2003). *Aesthetics and subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester UP.
- Bowlby, Rachel (2010). 'Derrida's dying Oedipus' in Leonard (2010a), 187-206.
- Bradley, A.C. (1909). 'Hegel's theory of tragedy' in *Oxford lectures on poetry*, 67-95. London: Macmillan.
- Breitinger, Johann Jacob (1740) [1966]. *Critische Dichtkunst*. Zürich: Orell [Stuttgart: Metzler].
- Brauer, Ursula (1993). *Isaac von Sinclair: eine Biographie*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Brobjer, Thomas H. (2001). 'A discussion and source of Hölderlin's influence on Nietzsche: Nietzsche's use of William Neumann's *Hölderlin*', *Nietzsche-Studien* 30, 397-412.
- Brooks, William, Buford Norman, and Jeanne Morgan Zarucchi, eds. (1994). *Philippe Quinault: Alceste, suivi de la querelle d'Alceste: anciens et modernes avant 1680*. Geneva: Droz.

- Brown, John (1763). *A dissertation on the rise, union, and power, the progressions, separations, and corruptions of poetry and music*. London: Davis and Reymers.
- Brumoy, Pierre (1730). *Le théâtre des Grecs*. 3 vols. Paris: Rollin.
- Brumoy, Pierre (1759). *The Greek theatre of Father Brumoy*, trans. Charlotte Lennox. 3 vols. London: Millar, et al.
- Brumoy, Pierre (1785-9). *Le théâtre des Grecs*, rev. ed. 13 vols. Paris: Cussac.
- Bubner, Rüdiger (2007). 'The "religion of art"' in *Hegel and the arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate, 296-309. Evanston: Northwestern UP.
- Bünemann, H. (1928). *Elias Schlegel und Wieland als Bearbeiter antiker Tragödien*. Leipzig: Eichblatt.
- Burian, Peter (2010). 'Gender and the city: *Antigone* from Hegel to Butler and back' in *When worlds elide: classics, politics, culture*, ed. Karen Bassi and J. Peter Euben, 255-99. Lanham: Lexington.
- Butler, E.M. (1935). *The tyranny of Greece over Germany: a study of the influence exercised by Greek art and poetry over the great German writers of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Butler, Judith (2000). *Antigone's claim: kinship between life and death*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Cancik, Hubert (1999). 'Der Einfluss Friedrich Nietzsches auf klassische Philologen in Deutschland bis 1945: Philologen am Nietzsche-Archiv' in *Philolog und Kultfigur: Friedrich Nietzsche und seine Antike in Deutschland*, ed. Hubert Cancik and Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, 231-49. Stuttgart: Metzler.

- Chiarini, Paolo and Walter Hinderer, eds. (2008). *Schiller und die Antike*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Connon, Derek F. (1989). *Innovation and renewal: a study of the theatrical works of Diderot*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- Conradie, P.J. (2003). 'Recent criticism and Hegel's interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone*' in *Literature, art, history: studies on classical antiquity and tradition*, ed. A.F. Basson and W.J. Dominik, 197-210. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Corssen, Meta (1949). 'Die Tragödie als Begegnung zwischen Gott und Mensch', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 3, 139-187.
- Courtine, Jean-François (1993). 'Tragedy and sublimity: the speculative interpretation of *Oedipus Rex* on the threshold of German Idealism' in *Of the sublime: presence in question*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett, 157-174. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Cronk, Nicholas (2000). 'Dorval et le dialogue à trois voix: la présence de Rousseau et de Voltaire dans *Le Fils naturel* et les *Entretiens*' in *Etudes sur Le Fils naturel et les Entretiens sur le Fils naturel de Diderot*, ed. Nicholas Cronk, 123-37. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- Cronk, Nicholas (2003). *The classical sublime: French neoclassicism and the language of literature*. Charlottesville: Rookwood.
- Curtius, Michael Conrad (1753) [1973]. *Aristoteles Dichtkunst*. Hannover: Richter [Hildesheim: Olms].
- Dacier, André (1692). *La Poétique d'Aristote*. Paris: Barbin.
- Dacier, André (1693). *Tragédies grecques de Sophocle*. Paris: Barbin.

- Dacier, Joseph (1809). 'Éloge de M. Rochefort', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 57, 393-400.
- Daskarolis, Anastasia (2000). *Die Wiedergeburt des Sophokles aus dem Geist des Humanismus: Studien zur Sophokles-Rezeption in Deutschland vom Beginn des 16. bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Dastur, Françoise (1997). *Hölderlin: le retournement natal: tragédie et modernité & nature et poésie*. La Versanne: Encre marine.
- Decher, Friedhelm (1994). *Die Ästhetik K.W.F. Solgers*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Décultot, Elisabeth (2000). *Johann Joachim Winckelmann: enquête sur la genèse de l'histoire de l'art*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- DeJean, Joan (1997). *Ancients against moderns: culture wars and the making of a fin de siècle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Didier, Béatrice (2001). *Diderot, dramaturge du vivant*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Donougho, Martin (2006). 'Hegel's pragmatics of tragedy', *Idealistic Studies* 36, 156-68.
- Döring, Detlef (2009). 'Der Literaturstreit zwischen Leipzig und Zürich in der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts: neue Untersuchungen zu einem alten Thema' in *Bodmer und Breitinger im Netzwerk der europäischen Aufklärung*, ed. Anett Lütteken and Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer, 60-104. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- DuBois, Paige (2010). *Out of Athens: the new ancient Greeks*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Dubos, Jean-Baptiste (1733). *Réflexions critiques sur la poesie et sur la peinture*, rev. ed. 3 vols. Paris: Mariette.
- Duff, Tim (1999). *Plutarch's Lives: exploring virtue and vice*. Oxford: Clarendon.

- Düsing, Klaus (1981). 'Ästhetischer Platonismus bei Hölderlin und Hegel' in Jamme and Pöggeler (1981), 101-117.
- Düsing, Klaus (1988). 'Die Theorie der Tragödie bei Hölderlin und Hegel' in Jamme and Pöggeler (1988), 55-82.
- Düsing, Wolfgang (1967). *Schillers Idee des Erhabenen*. Dissertation: University of Cologne.
- Düsing, Wolfgang (1987). 'Die Tragödientheorie des späten Herder' in Sauder (1987), 238-250.
- Eagleton, Terry (2003). *Sweet violence: the idea of the tragic*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Edelstein, Dan (2010). *The Enlightenment: a genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fackenheim, Emil L. (1996). *The god within: Kant, Schelling, and historicity*, ed. John Burbidge. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Feger, Hans (2007). *Poetische Vernunft: Moral und Ästhetik im Deutschen Idealismus*. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Ferris, David S. (2000). *Silent urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, modernity*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Fink, Gonthier-Louis (1987). 'Von Winckelmann bis Herder: die deutsche Klimatheorie in europäischer Perspektive' in Sauder (1987), 156-76.
- Finlayson, J.G. (1999). 'Conflict and resolution in Hegel's theory of the tragic', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37, 493-520.
- Flaherty, Gloria (1978). *Opera in the development of German critical thought*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

- Flashar, Hellmut (2009). *Inszenierung der Antike: das Griechische Drama auf der Bühne*, 2nd ed. Munich: Beck.
- Flashar, Hellmut, ed. (1997). *Tragödie: Idee und Transformation*. Stuttgart: Teubner.
- Flavell, M. Kay (1979). 'Winckelmann and the German Enlightenment: on the recovery and uses of the past', *Modern Language Review* 74, 79-96.
- Force, Pierre (2009). 'Voltaire and the necessity of modern history', *Modern Intellectual History* 6, 457-484.
- Fóti, Véronique M. (2006). *Epochal discordance: Hölderlin's philosophy of tragedy*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1994). 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire' in *Dits et écrits*, vol. 2, 136-56. Paris: Gallimard.
- Franke, Olga (1929). *Euripides bei den deutschen Dramatikern des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Leipzig: Dieterich.
- Frick, Werner (1998). 'Schiller und die Antike' in Koopmann (1998a), 97-115.
- Fridrich, Raimund M. (2003). '*Sehnsucht nach dem Verlorenen*': *Winckelmanns Ästhetik und ihre frühe Rezeption*. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Friedland, Paul (2002). *Political actors: representative bodies and theatricality in the age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Fuhrmann, Manfred (1979). 'Die "Querelle des anciens et des modernes", der Nationalismus und die deutsche Klassik' in *Classical influences on western thought, A.D. 1650-1870*, ed. R.R. Bolgar, 107-29. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Fumaroli, Marc (2001). 'Les abeilles et les araignées' in Lecoq (2001), 7-218.

- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1967). 'Hölderlin und die Antike' in *Kleine Schriften II: Interpretationen*, 27-44. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2010). *Wahrheit und Methode (Gesammelte Werke I)*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Gaier, Ulrich (1987). 'Hölderlins vaterländische Sangart', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 25, 12-59.
- Gaier, Ulrich (2007). 'Volks poesie, Nationalliterature, Weltliteratur bei Herder' in *Die Europäische République des Lettres in der Zeit der Weimarer Klassik*, ed. Michael Knoche and Lea Ritter-Santini, 101-16. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Galle, Roland (1993). 'The disjunction of the tragic' in *Tragedy and philosophy*, ed. N. Georgopoulos, 39-56. London: Macmillan.
- Galle, Roland (2005). 'Tragisch/Tragik' in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 6, ed. Karlheinz Barck, et al., 117-71. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Gasché, Rodolphe (2004). 'Der Unterbrechende Augenblick: Hölderlin über Zäsur, Zeit und Gefühl' in *"Es bleibt aber eine Spur / Doch eines Wortes": zur späten Hymnik und Tragödientheorie Friedrich Hölderlins*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Anja Lemke, 419-445. Munich: Fink.
- Gellrich, Michelle (1988). *Tragedy and theory: the problem of conflict since Aristotle*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- George, Theodore G. (2005). 'A monstrous absolute: Schelling, Kant, and the poetic turn in philosophy' in *Schelling now: contemporary readings*, ed. Jason Wirth, 135-46. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- George, Theodore G. (2006). *Tragedies of spirit: tracing finitude in Hegel's Phenomenology*. Albany: SUNY Press.

- Gerstenberg, Heinrich Wilhelm von (1766-7) [1971]. *Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Litteratur*. Leipzig: Hansen [Hildesheim: Olms].
- Gethmann-Siefert, Annemarie (1984). *Die Funktion der Kunst in der Geschichte: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Ästhetik*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Gethmann-Siefert, Annemarie (2005). *Einführung in Hegels Ästhetik*. Munich: Fink.
- Giuliani, Luca (2001). 'Naturalisierung der Kunst versus Historisierung der Kunst' in Most (2001), 129-48.
- Goldhagen, Eustachius Moritz (1777). *Des Sophokles Trauerspiele*. Mitau: Hinz.
- Goldhill, Simon (2008). 'Generalizing about tragedy' in *Rethinking tragedy*, ed. Rita Felski, 45-65. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- Gottsched, Johann Christoph (1751) [1977]. *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, 4th ed. Leipzig: Breitkopf [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft].
- Grell, Chantal (1995). *Le 18e siècle et l'antiquité en France, 1680-1789*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- Griffith, Mark (2011). 'Twelve principles for reading Greek tragedy' in *Why Athens?: A reappraisal of tragic politics*, ed. D.M. Carter, 1-7. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Grimm, Sieglinde (1999). 'Von der sentimentalischen Dichtung zur "Universalpoesie": Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel und die "Wechselwirkung" Fichtes', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 43, 159-87.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1954). *Das Absolute und die Geschichte: von der Zwiespältigkeit in Schellings Denken*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Hall, Edith and Fiona Macintosh (2005). *Greek tragedy and the British theatre, 1660-1914*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

- Hamacher, Werner (1998). '(The end of art with the mask)', trans. Kelly Barry, in *Hegel after Derrida*, ed. Stuart Barnett, 105-130. London: Routledge.
- Hamlin, Cyrus (2007). 'Hölderlin's Hellenism: tyranny or transformation?', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 35, 252-311.
- Hansen, Frank-Peter (1989). '*Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*': *Rezeptionsgeschichte und Interpretation*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Hardimon, Michael O. (1994). *Hegel's social philosophy: the project of reconciliation*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Harris, H.S. (1997). *Hegel's ladder II: the odyssey of spirit*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Harrison, R.B. (1975). *Hölderlin and Greek literature*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Hartog, François (2005). *Anciens, modernes, sauvages*. Paris: Galaade.
- Heidegger, Martin (1980). *Hölderlins Hymnen 'Germanien' und 'Der Rhein'* (*Gesamtausgabe II*, 39). Frankfurt: Klostermann.
- Henrich, Dieter (1984). 'Aufklärung der Herkunft des Manuscriptes "Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus"' in *Mythologie der Vernunft: Hegels 'Ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus'*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Helmut Schneider, 144-69. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Henrich, Dieter and Christoph Jamme, eds. (1986). *Jakob Zwillings Nachlass, eine Rekonstruktion: mit Beiträgen zur Geschichte des spekulativen Denken*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Henrich, Dieter (2010). *Hegel im Kontext, mit einem Nachwort zur Neuauflage*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

- Henrichs, Albert (1984). 'Loss of self, suffering, violence: the modern view of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 88, 205-40.
- Hentschke, Ada and Ulrich Muhlack (1972). *Einführung in die Geschichte der klassischen Philologie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Hester, D.A. (1970). 'Sophocles the unphilosophical: a study in the *Antigone*', *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series 24, 11-59.
- Heydemann, Klaus (2009). 'Literarische Fingerübungen – oder mehr? Zur Geschichte der Sophokles-Übersetzungen im deutschen Sprachraum im 18. Jahrhundert' in *Übersetzung als Vermittlerin antiker Literatur*, ed. Wolfgang Kofler, Florian Schaffenrath and Karlheinz Töchterle, 120-137. Innsbruck: StudienVerlag.
- Hinderer, Walter (2009). 'Die antike Tragödie als Herausforderung: Schillers *Braut von Messina*' in *Schiller und kein Ende: Metamorphosen und kreative Aneignungen*, 299-342. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Hinderer, Walter, ed. (2006). *Friedrich Schiller und der Weg in die Moderne*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Hofmann, Michael (1999). 'Die unaufhebbare Ambivalenz historischer Praxis und die Poetik des Erhabenen in Friedrich Schillers *Wallenstein*-Trilogie', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 43, 241-65.
- Hofmann, Michael (2005). 'Die Bürden der "Bürgschaft": Kritische Anmerkungen zur Aktualität Schillers', *Text + Kritik: Sonderband Friedrich Schiller*, 20-31.
- Hölscher, Uvo (1965). *Empedokles und Hölderlin*. Frankfurt: Insel.

- Hölscher, Uvo (1994). 'Selbstgespräch über den Humanismus' in *Das nächste Fremde: von Texten der griechischen Frühzeit und ihrem Reflex in der Moderne*, 257-281. Munich: Beck.
- Homann, Renate (1977). *Erhabenes und Satirisches: zur Grundlegung einer Theorie ästhetischer Literatur bei Kant und Schiller*. Munich: Fink.
- Hölsle, Vittorio (2009). *Die Rangordnung der drei griechischen Tragiker: ein Problem aus der Geschichte der Poetik als Lackmustest ästhetischer Theorien*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Hühn, Helmut (1997). *Mnemosyne: Zeit und Erinnerung in Hölderlins Denken*. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Hühn, Lore (1998). 'Die Philosophie des Tragischen: Schellings "Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus"' in Jantzen (1998), 95-128.
- Hyppolite, Jean (1964). 'Le tragique et le rationnel dans la philosophie de Hegel', *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 1964, 9-15.
- Ilting, Karl-Heinz (1974). 'Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit der aristotelischen Politik' in *Georg Wilhelm Hegel: frühe politische Systeme*, ed. Gerhard Göhler, 759 -785. Frankfurt: Ullstein.
- Ingenkamp, Heinz Gerd (1995). 'Kommentar' in Schiller, *FA* 9, 753-1268.
- Jacquet, Louis (1760). *Parallèle des tragiques Grecs et François*. Lyon: Duplain.
- Jaeschke, Walter (1990). 'Ästhetische Revolution: einführende Bemerkungen' in Jaeschke and Holzhey (1990), 1-11.
- Jaeschke, Walter and Helmut Holzhey, eds. (1990). *Früher Idealismus und Frühromantik: der Streit um die Grundlagen der Ästhetik (1795-1805)*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Jähmig, Dieter (1969/9). *Schelling: die Kunst in der Philosophie*. 2 vols. Pfullingen: Neske.

Jamme, Christoph (1983). *‘Ein ungelehrtes Buch’: die philosophische Gemeinschaft zwischen Hölderlin und Hegel in Frankfurt 1797-1800*. Bonn: Bouvier.

Jamme, Christoph and Frank Völkel, eds. (2003). *Hölderlin und der deutsche Idealismus: Dokumente und Kommentare zu Hölderlins philosophischer Entwicklung und den philosophisch-kulturellen Kontexten seiner Zeit*. 4 vols. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog.

Jamme, Christoph and Otto Pöggeler, eds. (1981). *Homburg von der Höhe in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte: Studien zum Freundeskreis um Hegel und Hölderlin*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Jamme, Christoph and Otto Pöggeler, eds. (1988). *Jenseits des Idealismus: Hölderlins letzte Homburger Jahre (1804-1806)*. Bonn: Bouvier.

Jantzen, Jörg, ed. (1998). *Die Realität des Wissens und das wirkliche Dasein: Erkenntnisbegründung und Philosophie des Tragischen beim frühen Schelling*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog.

Jaucourt, Louis (1765). ‘Tragédie’ and ‘Tragique’ in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, vol. 16, 513-20 and 521. Paris: Briasson, et al.

Jauß, Hans Robert (1964). ‘Ästhetische Normen und geschichtliche Reflexion in der “Querelle des anciens et des modernes”’ in Perrault (1688) [1964], 8-64.

Jauß, Hans Robert (1970). ‘F. Schlegels und F. Schillers Replik auf die “Querelle des anciens et des modernes”’ in *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, 67-106. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

- Jenisch, Daniel (1786). *Agamemnon, ein Trauerspiel des Aeschylus*. Berlin and Libau: de Lagarde and Friedrich.
- Jessing, Benedikt (2005). 'Schillers Rezeption von Goethes *Iphigenie*', *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 122, 147-61.
- Jory, David (2001). 'Introduction' in Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 1a, 17-163.
- Judet de la Combe, Pierre (2010). *Les tragédies grecques sont elles tragiques?* Montrouge: Bayard.
- Julliard, Catherine (1998). *Gottsched et l'esthétique théâtrale française: la réception allemande des théories françaises*. Bern: Lang.
- Jurist, Eliot L. (1993). 'Tragedy in/and/of Hegel', *The Philosophical Forum* 25, 151-72.
- Kappler, Arno (1976). *Der literarische Vergleich: Beiträge zu einer Vorgeschichte der Komparatistik*. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Kasper, Monika (2000). 'Das Gesetz von allen der König': Hölderlins Anmerkungen zum *Oedipus und zur Antigone*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Kaufmann, Walter (1971). 'Hegel's ideas about tragedy' in *New studies in Hegel's philosophy*, ed. Warren E. Steinkraus, 201-20. New York: Holt.
- Kirwan, James (2005). *Sublimity: the non-rational and the irrational in the history of aesthetics*. New York: Routledge.
- Kitzbichler, Josephine (2009). 'Von 1800 bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts' in *Theorie der Übersetzungen antiker Literatur in Deutschland seit 1800*, 13-235. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Köhler, Johann Bernhard (1778). *Iphigenia in Aulis: ein Trauerspiel des Euripides*. Berlin: Nicolai.

- Kommerell, Max (1957). *Lessing und Aristoteles: Untersuchung über die Theorie der Tragödie*. Frankfurt: Klostermann
- Koopmann, Helmuth (1975). 'Antiker Mythos und moderne Geschichte: zur Begründung der klassischen Tragödie um 1800' in *Teilnahme und Spiegelung*, ed. Beda Allemann and Erwin Koppen, 263-75. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Koopmann, Helmuth, ed. (1998a). *Schiller-Handbuch*. Stuttgart: Kröner.
- Koopmann, Helmuth (1998b). 'Schiller und die dramatische Tradition' in Koopmann (1998a), 137-54.
- Korzeniewski, Uta (2003). *'Sophokles! Die Alten! Philoktet!': Lessing und die antiken Dramatiker*. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz.
- Koselleck, Reinhart (2004). *Futures past: on the semantics of historical time*, trans. K. Tribe. New York: Columbia.
- Krämer, Jörg (1998). *Deutschsprachiges Musiktheater im späten 18. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Krebs, Roland (1985). *L'idée de 'Théâtre National' dans L'Allemagne des lumières: théorie et réalisations*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Krell, David Farrell (2005). *The tragic absolute: German Idealism and the languishing of God*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Kreuzer, Johann (1981). *Erinnerung: zum Zusammenhang von Hölderlins theoretischen Fragmenten 'Das untergehende Vaterland...' und 'Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist...'*. Königstein: Hain.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe (1989). *Typography: mimesis, philosophy, politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

- Lambropoulos, Vassilis (2006). *The tragic idea*. London: Duckworth.
- Lamport, Francis (2004). “‘Und Götter auf der Erden’: humanity and divinity in some Enlightenment versions of the Iphigenia story’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 40, 41-55.
- Lamport, Francis (2005). ‘Schiller and Euripides: the translations of 1788 and Schiller’s later plays’, *German Life and Letters* 58, 247-70.
- Lamrani, R. (1985). ‘Karl Philipp Conz und Friedrich Hölderlin’, *Weimarer Beiträge* 31, 141-52.
- La Porte du Theil, Gabriel de (1795). *Théâtre d’Aeschyle*, 2 vols. Paris: Imprimerie de la République.
- Larthomas, Pierre (1980). *Le théâtre en France au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Latacz, Joachim (1997). ‘Schiller und die griechische Tragödie’ in Flashar (1997), 235-57.
- Lauer, Quentin (1993). *A reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of spirit*, 2nd ed. New York: Fordham UP.
- Lechevalier, Claire (2007). *L’invention d’une origine: traduire Eschyle en France de Lefranc de Pompignan à Mazon: le Prométhée enchaîné*. Paris: Champion.
- Lecoq, Anne-Marie, ed. (2001). *La querelle des anciens et des modernes: XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Lefranc de Pompignan, Jean-Jacques (1770). *Tragédies d’Eschyle*. Paris: Saillant and Nyon.
- Leonard, Miriam (2005). *Athens in Paris: ancient Greece and the political in post-war French thought*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Leonard, Miriam, ed. (2010a). *Derrida and antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

- Leonard, Miriam (2010b). 'Derrida between "Greek" and "Jew"' in Leonard (2010a), 135-58.
- Lloyd-Jones, Hugh (1979). 'Nietzsche and the study of the ancient world' in *Studies in Nietzsche and the classical tradition*, ed. James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner, and Robert M. Helm, 1-15. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lönker, Fred (1989). 'Hölderlins Sophoklesübersetzung III: Unendliche Deutung', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 27, 287-303.
- Loock, Reinhard (1998). 'Tragische, das' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol 10., ed. Joachim Ritter, et al., 1334-45. Basel: Schwabe.
- Loock, Reinhard (2007). *Schwebende Einbildungskraft: Konzeptionen theoretischer Freiheit in der Philosophie Kants, Fichtes und Schellings*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Louth, Charlie (1998). *Hölderlin and the dynamics of translation*. Oxford: Legenda.
- Lurje, Michael (2004). *Die Suche nach der Schuld: Sophokles' Oedipus Rex, Aristoteles' Poetik und das Tragödienverständnis der Neuzeit*. Munich: Saur.
- Lypp, Bernhard (1972). *Ästhetischer Absolutismus und politische Vernunft: zum Widerstreit von Reflexion und Sittlichkeit im deutschen Idealismus*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Macintosh, Fiona (2009). 'The "rediscovery" of Aeschylus for the modern stage' in *Eschyle à l'aube du théâtre occidental*, ed. Jacques Jouanna and Franco Montanari, 435-59. Geneva: Fondation Hardt.
- Magné, Bernard (1976). *Crise de la littérature française sous Louis XIV: humanisme et nationalisme*. Toulouse: Université de Toulouse Le Mirail.

- Malsch, Wilfried (1986). “‘Hinfällig geoffenbartes Urbild’: Griechenland in Herders typologischer Geschichtsphilosophie’, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 30, 161-95.
- Manso, Johann Caspar Friedrich (1785). *König Oedipus, aus dem Griechischen des Sophokles nebst einer Abhandlung*. Gotha: Ettinger.
- Marchand, Suzanne L. (1996). *Down from Olympus: archaeology and philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Marmontel, Jean-François (1787). ‘Tragédie’ in *Éléments de littérature*, vol 6, 282-365.
- Martin, Nicholas (1996). *Nietzsche and Schiller: untimely aesthetics*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Martinec, Thomas (2003). *Lessings Theorie der Tragödienwirkung: humanistische Tradition und aufklärerische Erkenntniskritik*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Martinec, Thomas (2005). ‘Von der Tragödientheorie zur Philosophie des Tragischen: poetikgeschichtliche Skizze eines Umschwungs’, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 49, 105-128.
- Maslan, Susan (2005). *Revolutionary acts: theater, democracy, and the French Revolution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- Mat-Hasquin, Michèle (1981). *Voltaire et l’antiquité grecque*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- Matuschek, Stefan (2003). ‘Winckelmänner der Poesie: Herders und Friedrich Schlegels Anknüpfung an die *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*’, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 77, 548-63.
- Meid, Christopher (2008). *Die griechische Tragödie im Drama der Aufklärung: ‘Bei den Alten in die Schule gehen’*. Tübingen: Narr.

- Ménil, Alain (1995). *Diderot et le drame: théâtre et politique*. Paris: Presses Universitaire de France.
- Menke, Christoph (1996). *Tragödie im Sittlichen: Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit nach Hegel*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Menke, Christoph (2009). *Tragic play: irony and theater from Sophocles to Beckett*, trans. James Phillips. New York: Columbia UP.
- Michel, Wilhelm (1922). *Hölderlins abendländische Wendung*. Weimar: Feuerverlag.
- Miller, Norbert (2008). 'Schillers Nachdichtung der *Iphigenie in Aulis* von Euripides: das ideale Drama des Klassizismus' in Chiarini and Hinderer (2008), 111-166.
- Mögel, Ernst (1994). *Natur als Revolution: Hölderlins Empedokles-Tragödie*. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Moiso, Francesco (2004). 'Die Antike in der Philosophie der Kunst' in *Das antike Denken in der Philosophie Schellings*, ed. Rainer Adolphi and Jörg Jantzen, 419-464. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog.
- Most, Glenn W. (1993). 'Schlegel, Schlegel und die Geburt eines Tragödienparadigmas', *Poetica* 25, 155-175.
- Most, Glenn W. (1997) 'Classical scholarship and literary criticism' in *The Cambridge history of literary criticism, volume 4: the eighteenth century*, ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson, 742-57. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Most, Glenn W. (2000). 'Generating genres: the idea of the tragic' in *Matrices of genre: authors, canons, and society*, ed. Mary Depew and Dirk Obbink, 15-35. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

- Most, Glenn W., ed. (2001). *Historicization – Historisierung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Mueller, Martin (1980). *Children of Oedipus, and other essays on the imitation of Greek tragedy, 1550-1800*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Müller, Joachim (1987). 'Choreographische Strategie: zur Funktion der Chöre in Schillers Tragödie *Die Braut von Messina*' in *Friedrich Schiller: Angebot und Diskurs: Zugänge – Dichtung – Zeitgenossenschaft*, ed. Helmut Brandt, 431-48. Berlin: Aufbau.
- Müller, Urs (2005). *Feldkontakte, Kulturtransfer, kulturelle Teilhabe: Winckelmanns Beitrag zur Etablierung des deutschen intellektuellen Felds durch den Transfer der 'Querelle des anciens et des modernes'*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.
- Neymeyr, Barbara (2008). 'Pathos und ataraxie: Zum stoischen Ethos in Schillers ästhetischen Schriften und in seinem Drama *Maria Stuart*', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 52, 262-88.
- Northeast, Catherine M. (1991). *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment, 1700-1762*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- Norton, Robert E. (1991). *Herder's aesthetics and the European Enlightenment*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Nowak, Kurt and Ludwig Stockinger, eds. (2000). *Gottsched-Tag: wissenschaftliche Veranstaltung zum 300. Geburtstag von Johann Christoph Gottsched*. Leipzig: Verlag der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Nuttall, A.D. (1996). *Why does tragedy give pleasure?* Oxford: Clarendon.

- Nuzzo, Angelica (2006). 'Hegel's "Aesthetics" as theory of absolute spirit', *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 4, 291-310.
- O'Dea, Michael (2000). 'Théâtre ancien, théâtre moderne: les *Entretiens sur Le Fils naturel* dans le cadre de quelques débats contemporains sur l'art dramatique' in *Diderot, l'invention du drame*, ed. Marc Buffat, 27-37. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Oergel, Maike (2006). *Culture and identity: historicity in German literature and thought, 1770-1815*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Paulin, Roger (2003). *The critical reception of Shakespeare in Germany, 1682-1914: native literature and foreign genius*. Hildesheim: Olms.
- Perchellet, Jean-Pierre (2004). *L'héritage classique: la tragédie entre 1680 et 1814*. Paris: Champion.
- Pérol, Lucette (1976). 'Diderot, les tragiques grecs et le p. Brumoy', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 154, 1593-1616.
- Perrault, Charles (1688-97) [1964]. *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences*. 4 vols. Paris: Coignard [Munich: Eidos].
- Petersen, Jürgen H. (2000). *Mimesis — Imitatio — Nachahmung*. Munich: Fink.
- Petersen, Uwe (1974). *Goethe und Euripides: Untersuchungen zur Euripides-Rezeption in der Goethezeit*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Petrus, Klaus (1992). 'Schiller über das Erhabene', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 47, 23-40.
- Pfeiffer, Rudolf (1976). *History of classical scholarship from 1300 to 1850*. Oxford: Clarendon.

- Pinkard, Terry (1994). *Hegel's Phenomenology: the sociality of reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Plumpe, Gerhard (1993). *Ästhetische Kommunikation der Moderne*, vol. 1. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Pöggeler, Otto (1993). 'Hegel und die griechische Tragödie' in *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 2nd ed., 79-109. Freiburg: Alber.
- Pöggeler, Otto (2004). *Schicksal und Geschichte: Antigone im Spiegel der Deutungen und Gestalten seit Hegel und Hölderlin*. Munich: Fink.
- Pommier, Edouard (2003). *Winckelmann, inventeur de l'histoire de l'art*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Porter, James I. (2000). *Nietzsche and the philology of the future*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Potts, Alex (1994). *Flesh and the ideal: Winckelmann and the origins of art history*. New Haven and London: Yale UP.
- Prader, Florian (1958). *Schiller und Sophokles*. Zürich: Atlantis.
- Prévost, Pierre (1782). *Les Tragédies d'Euripide*. 4 vols. Paris: Pissot.
- Prignitz, Christoph (1985). *Hölderlins 'Empedokles': die Vision einer erneuerten Gesellschaft und ihre zeitgeschichtlichen Hintergründe*. Hamburg: Buske.
- Proß, Wolfgang (1988). 'Herders Shakespeare-Interpretation: von der Dramaturgie zur Geschichtsphilosophie' in *Das Shakespeare-Bild in Europa zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik*, ed. Roger Bauer, 162-181. Bern: Lang.
- Pugh, David (1996). *Dialectic of love: Platonism in Schiller's aesthetics*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Pugh, David (2005). 'Schiller and classical antiquity' in *A companion to the works of Friedrich Schiller*, ed. Steven D. Martinson, 47-66. Rochester: Camden House.

- Racine, Louis (1733). 'Comparaison de l'Iphigénie d'Euripide avec l'Iphigénie de Racine', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 8, 288-99.
- Racine, Louis (1736). 'Réflexions sur l'Andromaque d'Euripide et sur l'Andromaque de Racine', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 10, 311-22.
- Reinhardt, Hartmut (1976). 'Schillers *Wallenstein* und Aristoteles', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 20, 278-337.
- Riedel, Volker (1996). *Literarische Antikerezeption: Aufsätze und Vorträge*. Jena: Bussert & Partner.
- Riedel, Wolfgang (2002). "'Weltgeschichte ein erhabenes Objekt': zur Modernität von Schillers Geschichtsdenken' in *Prägnanter Moment: Studien zur deutschen Literatur der Aufklärung und Klassik*, ed. Peter-André Alt, et al., 193-214. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Ritzer, Monika (2002). 'Das Experiment mit der romantischen Tragödie: August Wilhelm Schlegels *Ion* und Friedrich Schlegels *Alarcos*' in *Grenzgänge: Studien zur Literatur der Moderne*, ed. Helmuth Koopmann and Manfred Misch, 59-90. Paderborn: Mentis.
- Rocheftort, Guillaume Dubois de (1774). 'Mémoires sur les moeurs des siècles heroïques', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 36, 396-481.
- Rocheftort, Guillaume Dubois de (1777). 'Mémoire sur l'objet de la Tragédie chez les Grecs', *Mémoires de littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 39, 125-171.

- Rochefort, Guillaume Dubois de (1780). 'Recherches sur la symphonie des anciens', *Mémoires de littérature tirés des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 41, 365-81.
- Rochefort, Guillaume Dubois de (1785). 'Discours sur l'objet et l'art de la tragédie grecque' in Brumoy (1785) I, 215-68.
- Rochefort, Guillaume Dubois de (1788). *Théâtre de Sophocle*. Paris: Nyon.
- Rosenkranz, Karl (1844) [1977]. *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben*. Berlin: Duncker and Humblot [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft].
- Ryan, Lawrence (1988). 'Hölderlins Antigone: "wie es vom griechischen zum hesperischen gehet"' in Jamme and Pöggeler (1988), 103-122.
- Ryan, Lawrence J. (1960). *Hölderlins Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Sauder, Gerhard, ed. (1987). *Johann Gottfried Herder, 1744-1803*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Schadewaldt, Wolfgang (1969). 'Antikes und modernes in Schillers *Braut von Messina*', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 13, 286-307.
- Scheier, Claus-Artur (1996). 'Kants dritte Antinomie und die Genese des tragischen Gedankens: Schelling 1795-1809', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 103, 76-89.
- Schings, Hans-Jürgen (1980). *Der mitleidigste Mensch ist der beste Mensch: Poetik des Mitleids von Lessing bis Büchner*. Munich: Beck.
- Schlegel, Johann Elias (1764-73) [1971]. *Werke*, ed. J.H. Schlegel. 5 vols. Leipzig: Mumm [Frankfurt: Athenäum].
- Schlobach, Jochen (1980). *Zyklentheorie und Epochenmetaphorik: Studien zur bildlichen Sprache der Geschichtsreflexion in Frankreich von der Renaissance bis zur Frühaufklärung*. Munich: Fink.

- Schlosser, Johann Georg (1784). *Prometheus in Fesseln, aus dem Griechischen des Aeschylus*. Basel: Thurneysen.
- Schmidt, Dennis J. (2001). *On Germans and other Greeks: tragedy and ethical life*.
Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Schmidt, Jochen (1993). 'Griechenland als Ideal und Utopie bei Winckelmann, Goethe und Hölderlin', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 28, 94-110.
- Schmidt, Jochen (1995). 'Tragödie und Tragödientheorie: Hölderlins Sophokles-Deutung', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 29, 64-82.
- Schmidt, Jochen (2004). *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750-1945*, 3rd ed., vol. 1. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Schmitt, Arbogast (1992). 'Zur Aristoteles-Rezeption in Schillers Theorie des Tragischen' in *Antike Dramentheorien und ihre Rezeption*, ed. Bernhard Zimmermann, 191-212.
Stuttgart: M & P Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung.
- Schnädelbach, Herbert (2000). *Hegels praktische Philosophie: ein Kommentar der Texte in der Reihenfolge ihrer Entstehung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Schneider, Wolfgang (1983). *Ästhetische Ontologie: Schellings Weg des Denkens zur Identitätsphilosophie*. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Schulte, Michael (1992). *Die 'Tragödie im Sittlichen': zur Dramentheorie Hegels*. Munich: Fink.
- Schulte, Paul (2009). *Solgers Schönheitslehre im Zusammenhang des deutschen Idealismus: Kant, Schiller, W.v. Humboldt, Schelling, Solger, Schleiermacher, Hegel*. Kassel: Kassel UP.

- Schwinge, Ernst-Richard (2003). 'Schillers Tragikkonzept und die Tragödie der Griechen', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 47, 123-40.
- Schwinge, Ernst-Richard (2008). 'Schiller und die griechische Tragödie' in Chiarini and Hinderer (2008), 15-48.
- Senarclens, Vanessa de, ed. (2007a). *Das Tragische im Jahrhundert der Aufklärung – Le tragique au siècle des Lumières*. Hannover-Laatzten: Wehrhahn.
- Senarclens, Vanessa de (2007b). 'Les tragédies antiques à "l'examen de nos lumières": *Le théâtre des Grecs* du Père Pierre Brumoy (1730)' in Senarclens (2007a), 69-84.
- Senarclens, Vanessa de (2009). 'Éditer le théâtre antique grec au siècle des Lumières: *Le Théâtre des Grecs* de Pierre Brumoy (1730) et ses nombreuses rééditions au cours du dix-huitième siècle' in *Die Antike der Moderne: vom Umgang mit der Antike im Europa des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Veit Elm, Günther Lottes, and Vanessa de Senarclens, 243-258. Hannover: Wehrhahn.
- Sergl, Anton (1998). 'Das Problem des Chors im deutschen Klassizismus: Schillers Verständnis der *Iphigenie auf Tauris* und seine *Braut von Messina*', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 42, 165-194.
- Sharpe, Lesley (1985). 'Schiller and Goethe's *Iphigenie*', *Proceedings of the English Goethe Society* 54, 101-22.
- Sier, Kurt (2000). 'Gottsched und die Antike' in Nowak and Stockinger (2000), 89-110.
- Silk, M.S. and J.P. Stern (1981). *Nietzsche on tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Silk, M.S., ed. (1996). *Tragedy and the tragic: Greek theatre and beyond*. Oxford: Clarendon.

- Simonsuuri, Kirsti (1979). *Homer's original genius: eighteenth-century notions of the early Greek epic (1688-1798)*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Solger, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand (1808). *Des Sophokles Tragödien*. 2 vols. Berlin: Realschule.
- Sosulski, Michael J. (2007). *Theater and nation in eighteenth-century Germany*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Speight, Allen (2001). *Hegel, literature and the problem of agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Stadler, Ulrich (1990). 'System und Systemlosigkeit: Bemerkungen zu einer Darstellungsform im Umkreis idealistischer Philosophie und frühromantischer Literatur' in Jaeschke and Holzhey (1990), 52-68.
- Steinbrüchel, Johann Jacob (1759). *Electra, ein Trauerspiel des Sophocles, nebst Pindars erster Ode*. Zürich: Gessner.
- Steinbrüchel, Johann Jacob (1763). *Das tragische Theater der Griechen*. Zürich: Gessner.
- Steiner, George (1961). *The death of tragedy*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Steiner, George (1984). *Antigones*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Stockinger, Ludwig (2000). 'Gottscheds Stellung in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte' in Nowak and Stockinger (2000), 15-49.
- Stolberg, Christian Graf zu (1787). *Sofokles*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Göschen.
- Strube, Werner (2004). 'Die Entstehung der Ästhetik als einer wissenschaftlichen Disziplin', *Scientia Poetica* 8, 1-30.
- Süvern, W. (1800). *Über Schillers Wallenstein in Hinsicht auf griechische Tragödie*. Berlin: Königliche Realschule.

- Szondi, Peter (1974a). 'Antike und moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit' in *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I*, ed. Senta Metz and Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt, 11-265.
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Szondi, Peter (1974b). *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie II*, ed. Wolfgang Ietkau.
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Szondi, Peter (1974c). 'Von der normativen zur spekulativen Gattungspoetik' in Szondi (1974b), 7-183.
- Szondi, Peter (1974d). 'Schellings Gattungspoetik' in Szondi (1974b), 185-307.
- Szondi, Peter (1978a). *Schriften I*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Szondi, Peter (1978b). *Versuch über das Tragische* in Szondi (1978a), 149-259.
- Szondi, Peter (1978c). 'Überwindung des Klassizismus: der Brief an Böhlendorff vom 4. Dezember 1801' in Szondi (1978a), 345-66.
- Taminiaux, Jacques (1995). *Le théâtre des philosophes: la tragédie, l'être, l'action*.
Grenoble: Millon.
- Trott, David (2000). *Théâtre du XVIIIe siècle: jeux, écritures, regards*. Montpellier: Éditions Espaces.
- Trousseau, Raymond (1976). 'Le Théâtre tragique grec au siècle des Lumières', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 155, 2113-36.
- Unamuno, Miguel de (1972). *The tragic sense of life in men and nations*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Vöhler, Martin (2005). *Pindarrezeptionen: sechs Studien zum Wandel des Pindarverständnisses von Erasmus bis Herder*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Voltaire (1754). *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, 3rd ed. 2 vols. Leipzig: Francke.

- Walton, J. Michael (2006). *Found in translation: Greek drama in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Wanning, Berbeli (1988). *Konstruktion und Geschichte: das Identitätssystem als Grundlage der Kunstphilosophie bei F.W.J. Schelling*. Frankfurt: Haag + Herchen.
- Weilenmann, Anton (1961). *Das aufgeklärte Zürich in seinem Verhältnis zur Antike*. Winterthur: Keller.
- Wild, Christopher (2002). 'Geburt der Theaterreform aus dem Geist der Theaterfeindlichkeit: der Fall Gottsched', *Lessing Yearbook* 34, 57-77.
- Wildt, Andreas (1982). *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralkritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Wilm, Marie-Christin (2003). 'Die *Jungfrau von Orleans*, tragödientheoretisch gelesen: Schillers "Romantische Tragödie" und ihre praktische Theorie', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 47, 141-70.
- Wilm, Marie-Christin (2006). 'Die "Construction der Tragödie": zum Bedingungsverhältnis von Tragischem und Ästhetischem in Goethes Tragödientheorie', *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 123, 39-53.
- Wilm, Marie-Christin (2010). 'Ultima Katharsis: Zur Transformation des aristotelischen Tragödiensatzes nach 1800' in *Die Tragödie der Moderne: Gattungsgeschichte – Kulturtheorie – Epochendiagnose*, ed. Daniel Fulda and Thorsten Valk, 85-105. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Wilmer, S.E. and Audronė Žukauskaitė, eds. (2010). *Interrogating Antigone in postmodern criticism and philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim (1756). *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst*, 2nd ed. Dresden and Leipzig: Walther.
- Witte, William (1975). 'Der Einfluß der britischen Ästhetik auf Schiller' in *Friedrich Schiller: zur Geschichtlichkeit seines Werkes*, ed. Klaus L. Berghahn, 309-320. Kronberg: Scriptor.
- Wolf, Friedrich August (1869). *Kleine Schriften in lateinischer und deutscher Sprache*, ed. G. Bernhardt. Halle: Waisenhaus.
- Wolff, Eugen (1889). *Johann Elias Schlegel*. Berlin: Oppenheim.
- Wood, Allen W. (2010). 'The antinomies of pure reason' in *The Cambridge companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer, 245-65. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Yilmaz, Levent (2004). *Le temps moderne: variations sur les anciens et les contemporains*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Young, Edward (1759). *Conjectures on original composition, in a letter to the author of Sir Charles Grandison*. London: Millar.
- Zammito, John H. (2002). *Kant, Herder, and the birth of anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zanucchi, Mario (2006). 'Die "Inokulation des unvermeidlichen Schicksals": Schicksal und Tragik in Schillers *Wallenstein*', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 50, 150-75.
- Zelle, Carsten (1987). *Angenehmes Grauen: literaturhistorische Beiträge zur Ästhetik des Schrecklichen im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Zelle, Carsten (1995). *Die doppelte Ästhetik der Moderne: Revisionen des Schönen von Boileau bis Nietzsche*. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Zhai, Can (2007). *F.W.J. Schelling ontologische Mythologie in seiner Philosophie der Kunst (1802-05)*. Frankfurt: Lang.

Modern editions cited and translations consulted:

Diderot:

Oeuvres. 5 vols. Paris: Laffont, 1994-7. (*Oeuvres*)

Goethe:

Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche in vierzig Bänden. 40 vols. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-1999. (*FA*)

Hegel:

Werke in zwanzig Bänden (Theorie Werkausgabe). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970. (*WZB*)

Briefe von und an Hegel. 4 vols. Hamburg: Meiner, 1969-81. (*Briefe*)

Aesthetics: lectures on fine art, trans. T.M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon, 1975.

Early theological writings, trans. T.M. Knox. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

Natural law, trans. T.M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.

Phenomenology of spirit, trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

Hölderlin:

Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. 20 vols. Frankfurt: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1975-2008. (*FHA*)

Essays and letters, trans. Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth. London: Penguin, 2008.

The death of Empedocles, trans David Farrell Krell. Albany: SUNY Press, 2008.

Hyperion, trans. Ross Benjamin. Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, 2008.

Herder:

Werke in zehn Bänden. 10 vols. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-2000. (*HW*)

Selected writings on aesthetics, trans. Gregory Moore. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006.

Kant:

Gesammelte Schriften (Akademie-Ausgabe). Berlin: Preussische Akademie der

Wissenschaften (et seq.), 1900-. (AA)

Critique of the power of judgment, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge:
Cambridge UP, 2000.

Lessing:

Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden. 12 vols. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-
2003. (WBZB)

Nietzsche:

Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-. (KGA)

Schelling:

Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976-. (AA)

Sämtliche Werke. 14 vols. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61. (SW)

‘Philosophical letters on dogmatism and criticism’ in *The unconditional in human
knowledge: four early essays*, trans. Fritz Marti, 156-196. London: Associated
University Presses, 1980.

System of transcendental idealism (1800), trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville:
University Press of Virginia, 1978.

Philosophy of art, trans Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1989.

Schiller:

Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden. 12 vols. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992-
2004. (FA)

Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe. Weimar: Böhlhaus, 1943-. (NA)

Essays, ed. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom. New York: Continuum, 1993.

August Wilhelm Schlegel:

Kritische Ausgabe der Vorlesungen. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989-. (KAV)

Kritische Schriften und Briefe. 7 vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer. (KSB)

Friedrich Schlegel:

Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958-. (KFSA)

On the study of Greek poetry, trans. Stuart Barnett. Albany: SUNY Press, 2001.

Voltaire:

Les oeuvres complètes de Voltaire. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1968-. (Oeuvres)