REVIEW ARTICLE

SHAKESPEARE'S WONDERFUL VISION OF EVIL SURPASSES THE GREAT GREEK AND ROMAN ANCIENTS

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Tragedy deals with the serious aspects of life as comedy deals with the cheerful and lighter mood. It is essentially a tale of suffering ending in death (Tragic end) of the main characters of the play according to Aristotle. Tragedy is the representation of an action, which is serious complete in itself, and of a certain length. It is expressed in speech made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted not narrated; and by exciting pity and fear gives a healthy relief to such emotions". Shakespearean Tragedy conforms with this definition of Aristotle but it violates the principle of Greek philosopher in one important respect; its action is not all serious; its seriousness is often relieved by the comic. In this respect Shakespeare was but holding a 'mirror to life' in which joy and serious, tears and smiles, frequently alternate. He was thus a greater artist than the other dramatists who blindly followed Aristotle.

INTRODUCTION

Tragedy deals with the serious aspects of life as comedy deals with the cheerful and lighter mood. It is essentially a tale of suffering ending in death (Tragic end) of the main characters of the play according to Aristotle. Tragedy is the representation of an action, which is serious complete in itself, and of a certain length. It is expressed in speech made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted not narrated; and by exciting pity and fear gives a healthy relief to such emotions". Shakespearean Tragedy conforms with this definition of Aristotle but it violates the principle of Greek philosopher in one important respect; its action is not all serious; its seriousness is often relieved by the comic. In this respect Shakespeare was but holding a 'mirror to life' in which joy and serous, tears and smiles, frequently alternate. He was thus a greater artist than the other dramatists who blindly followed Aristotle. Shakespeare wrote a number of great Tragedies viz Richard II & III, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Cover.

**Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet
Othello, Macbeth and King Lear.**

The theme of a Shakespearean Tragedy is the struggle between good and evil resulting in serious convulsions and disturbances, sorrows, sufferings and death, Its subject is the struggle of good and Evil which permeate in the world simultaneously in all ages and times. It depicts men and women struggling with evil and finally succumbing to it with resultant deaths of innocent characters and harmless creatures. Through their heroic struggle we relies the immense spiritual potentiality of man, Shakespearean tragedy never lives behind. Addressing effect, it soothes consoles and strengthens. In his tragedies he presents a rich series of excitements, which rouses pity and sympathy in the audience. The themes of all the four great Tragedies are sensational, For example Macbeth has its witches, its ghosts and apparitions, its murder in a darkened castle its drunken partner, and its thrilling sight of lady Macbeth walking in her sleep. In Hamlet we have the ghost and the grave diggers, and in Othello night alarms and sword fights. Every one of his tragedies is an expression of some human passion of failing and its disastrous consequences.

In a figurative sense a tragedy (from classical Greek, "song for the goat) is any event with a sad and unfortunate outcome, but the term also applies specially in Western culture to a form of drama defined by Aristotle characterized by seriousness and dignity and involving a great person who experiences a reversal of fortune (Peripetia). (Aristotle's definition can include a change of fortune from bad to good as in Eumenides, but he says that the change from good to bad as in Oedipus Rex is preferable because this effects pity and fear within the

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spectators) According to Aristotle, the structure of the best tragedy should not be simple but complex and one that represents incidents arousing fear and pity- for that is peculiar to this form of art"(Aristotle, Poetics, Trans, W.H. Fyfe. Cambridge Harvard UP, 1932, Section 1452 b) This reversal of fortune must be caused by the tragic hero's hamartia, which is after mistranslated as a character flame, but is more correctly translated as a mistake (since the original Geek etymology traces back to "hamartanein, a sporting term that refers to an archer or spear-thrower missing his target (Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg. Essays on Aristotle's Poeties, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992, Page 178). According to Aristotle, "The change to bad fortune which he undergoes is not due to any moral defect or flame, but a mistake of some kind. It is also a misconception that this reversal can be brought about by a higher power (e.g. the law, the gods, fate, or society) but if a character's downfall is brought about by an external cause, Aristotle describes this as a "misadventure" and not a tragedy. [Aristotle, Poetics, Section 11356].

The origins of tragedy in the west are obscure, but the art from certainly developed out of the poetic and religious traditions of ancient Greece. Its roots may be traced more specifically to the dithyrambs, the charts and dances honoring the greed god Dionysus, later known to the Romans as Bacchus. These drunken ecstatic performances were said to have been created by the satyrs, half goat beings who surrounded Dionysus in his revelry.

Phrynichus, son of Polyphradmon and pupil of Thespis, was one of the earliest of the Greek tragedians, "The honour introducing tragedy in its later acceptation was reserved of a scholar of Thespis in 511 BC, Polyphradmon's son, Phrynichus; he dropped the light and ludicrous cast of the original drama and dismissing Bacchus and the satyrs formed his plays from the more grave and elevated events recorded in mythology and history of his country" [P.W. Buckham, Theatre of the Greeks, p.108] and some of the ancients regarded him as the real founder of tragedy. However, P.W. Buckham asserts (quoting August Wilhelm von Schlegel) that Aeschylus was the inventor of tragedy. "Aeschylus is to be considered as the creator of Tragedy: in full panoply she sprung from his head, like Pallas from the head of Jupiter. He clad her with dignity, and gave her an appropriate stage; he was the inventor of scenic pomp, and not only instructed the chorus in singing and dancing but appeared himself as an actor. He was the first that expended the dialogue, and set limits to the lyrical part of tragedy, which, however, still occupies too much space in his pieces"[P.W.Buckham, ibid, p 121, quoting from Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature by August Wilhelm von Schlegel].

Tragedy depicts the downfall of a noble hero or heroine, usually through some combination of hubris, fate, and the will of the gods. The tragic hero's powerful wish to achieve some goal inevitably encounters limits, usually those of human frailty (flaws in reason, hubris, society), the gods (through oracles prophets, fate), or nature. Aristotle says that the tragic hero should have a flaw and/or make some mistake hamartia. The hero need not die at the end, but he or she must undergo a charge in fortune. In additio0n, the tragic hero may achieve some revelation or recognition (anagnorisis" knowing again" or "knowing back" about human fate, destiny, and the will of the gods. Aristotle terms this sort of recognition "a charge from ignorance to awareness of a bond of love or hate".

Greek literature boasts three great writers of tragedy whose works are extant: Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus. The largest festival for Greek tragedy was the Dionysia held for five days in March, for which competition prominent playwrights usually submitted three tragedies one satyr play each. The Roman theater does not appear to have followed the some practice Seneca adapted Greek stories, such as Phaedra, into Latin plays; however, Senecan tragedy has long been regarded as closet drama, meant to be read rather than played.

A favorite theatrical device of many ancient Greek tragedians was the ekkyklema, a cart hidden behind the scenery which could be rolled out to display the aftermath of some event which had happened out of sight of the audience. This event was frequently a brutal murder of some sort, an act of violence which could not be effectively portrayed visually, but an action of which the other characters must see the effects in order for it to have meaning and emotional resonance. Another reason that the violence happened off stage was that the theatre was considered a holy place, so to kill someone on stage is to kill them in the arranged chronically and the word is made to suit the action and is simply meant for a real representation of nature (man). The evil is thus made manifest on a place closer to human perception rather than in the mirage of imaginative fantasy. In Aeschylus Oresteia, When the king's butchered body (After the murder of Agamemnon) is wheeled out in a grand display for all to see. Variation on the ekkyklima are used in tragedies and other forms to this day, as writers still find it a useful and often powerful device for showing the consequences of extreme human actions. Another such device was a crane, the machine, which served to hoist a god or goddesses on stage where they were supposed to arrive flying. This device gave origin to the phrase " does ex machina" ("god out of a machine"), that is the surprise intervention of an unforeseen external factor that changes the outcome of an event Greek tragedies also sometime included a chorus composed of singers to advance and fill in detail of the plot.

Nietzsche in his famous book, 'The Birth of Tragedy' traced the evolution of tragedy from early rituals, through the joining of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, until its early "death" in the hands of secretes. In opposition to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche viewed tragedy as the art from of sensual acceptance of the terrors of reality and rejoicing in these terrors in love of fate (amor fati) and therefore as the antithesis to the Socratic Method, or the belief in the power of reason to unveil any and all of the mysteries of existence. Ironically, Socrates was found of quoting from tragedies.

G.W.F. Hegel, the German philosopher most famous for his dialectical approach to epistemology and history, also applicant such a methodology to his theory of tragedy. In his essay "Hegel's theory of Tragedy," A.C. Bradley first introduced the English speaking world to Hegel's theory which Bradley called the "tragic collision", and contrasted against the Aristotelian notions of the "tragic hero" and his or her "hamartia" in subsequent analyses of the Aeschylus Oresteia trilogy and of Sophocles Antigone. (Bradley,114-156). Hegel himself, however, in his seminal "The Phenomenology of spirit" argues for a more complicated theory of tragedy, with two complementary branches which, though driven by a single dialectical principle, differentiate Greek tragedy from that which follows Shakespeare. His later lectures formulate such a theory of tragedy as a conflict of ethical forces, represented by character, in ancient Greek tragedy, but in Shakespearean

tragedy the conflict is rendered as one of subject and object of individual personality which must manifest self destructive passions because only such passions are strong enough to defend the individual from a hostile and capricious external world. Thus in ancient Greek tragedy, the evil is more embedded as character types, whereas in Shakespearean tragedy the evil is largely permeated by the weaknesses inherent in man. A character is largely the epitome of a fixed virtue or vice in Greek tragedy & circumstances are a mere agent of the ultimate destruction. In Shakespeare the evil is more dynamic & flexible, and the same character may act both evil & virtue placed in situations different. Thus the high spirited noble Hamlet can kill Polonius in a frenzy of madness, and as well spare Claudius at his prayers.

Common usage of tragedy refers to any story with a sad ending, whereas to be an Aristotelian tragedy the story must fit the set of requirements as laid out by Poetics. But this definition social drama cannot be tragic because the hero in it is a victim of circumstance and incidents which depend up on the society in which he lives and not upon the inner compulsions psychological or religious – which determine his progress towards self knowledge and death. [Chiari, J. Landmarks of Contemporary Drama, Hondon, Jeakins, 1965].

Edmund in king Lear might have grown into a noble & generous prince is allowed proper legitimacy. Macbeth might not be a villain dallying with evil through the whole of the play, had he not fallen a prey to the temptation of power. Evil in Greek tragedy is thus pro-ordained (as a natural course) by the gods, while in Shakespeare's tragic world it is the fruit of man's circumstances and weakness of character.

Thus the heroes of ancient classical tragedy encounter situations in which, if they firmly decide in favor of the one ethical pathos that alone suits their finished character, they must necessarily come into conflict with the equally [gleichberechtigt] justified ethical power that confronts them. Modern characters, on the other hand, stand in a wealth of more accidental circumstances, within one could act this way or that, so that the conflict which is, though occasioned by external preconditions, still essentially grounded in the character. The new individuals, in their passions, obey this own nature. Simply because they are what they are Greek heroes also act in accordance with individuality, but in ancient tragedy such individuality is necessarily.. a self contained ethical pathos.. In modern tragedy, however, the character in its peculiarity decides in accordance with subjective desires. such that congruity of character with outward ethical aim no longer constitutes an essential basis of tragic beauty…
(Hegel, ed. Glockner, vol. XIV, pp. 567-8)

Hegel's comments on a particular play may better elucidate his theory: "Viewed externally, Hamlet's death may be seen to have been brought about accidentally but in Hamlet's soul, we understand that death has lurked from the beginning: the sandbank of finitude cannot suffice his sorrow and tenderness, such grief and nausea at all conditions of life. We feel he is a man whom inner disgust has almost consumed well before death comes upon him from outside." (Hegel, ed. Glockner, XIV, p 572). Nietzsche in Twilight of the Idols, what I Owe to the Ancients, 5: had this to say: "The psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, where even pain still has the effect of a stimulus, gave me the key to the concept of tragic feeling, which had been mis-understood

both by Aristotle and even more by modern pessimists. Tragedy is so far from being a proof of the pessimism (in Schopenhauer's sense) of the Greeks that it may on the contrary, be considered a decisive rebuttal and counterexample. Saying yes to life even in its strangest and most painful episodes, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustible vitality even as it witnesses the destruction of its greatest heroes- that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I guessed to be the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not in order to be liberated from terror and pity, not in order to purge oneself of a dangerous affect by it vehement discharge – which is how Aristotle understood tragedy – but in order to celebrate oneself the eternal joy of becoming, beyond all terror and pity-that tragic joy included even joy in destruction".

The classical Greek and Roman tragedy was largely forgotten in Western Europe from the Middle. Ages to the beginning of the 16th century, and public theater in this period was dominated by mystery play, morality plays, forces and miracle plays, etc. As early as 1503 however, original language versions of Sophocles, Seneca, Euripides, Aristophanes, Terence and Platus were all available in Europe and the next forty years would see humanists and poets both translating these classics and adapting them. In the 1540s the continental university settling (and especially-from 1553 on – the Jesuit colleges became host to a Neo-Latin theater (in Latin) written by professions. The influence of Seneca was particularly strong in humanist tragedy. His plays with their ghosts, lyrical passages and rhetorical oratory brought to many humanist tragedies a concentration on rhetoric and language over dramatic action.

Humanist writers recommended that tragedy should be in five acts and have three main characters of noble rank the play should begin in the middle of the action (in medias res), use noble language and not show scenes of horror on the stage some writers attempted to link the medieval tradition of morality plays and farces to classical theater, but others rejected this claim and elevated classical tragedy and comedy to higher dignity. Of greater difficulty for the theorists was the incorporation of Aristotle's notion of "catharsis" or the purgation of emotions with Renaissances theater, which remained profoundly attached to both pleasing the audience and to the rhetorical aim of showing moral examples (exemplum). The precepts of the "three unities" and theatrical decorum would eventually come to dominate French tragedy in 17th century, while English Renaissance tragedy followed a path for less behooving to classical theory and more open to dramatic action and the portrayal of tragic events on stage.

In the De finibus (1.2.4) Cicero claims that Roman dramatists copied their Greek original word for word Cicero was booking for a Roman exemplum to follow in order to justify his translation of Greek philosophy into Latin. He appeals, therefore; to the precedence of tragedians at Rome, who have already "copied" Greek literature in the form of plays. Roman tragedy needs to be understood in its cultural context from a performance-criticism perspective: Roman tragedians adapted rather than translated their Greek originals, unless they were comparing original Roman plays. A Latin play for a Roman audience required the inclusion of Roman culture onstage to make a connection with the audience. From Livius' first plays, which influenced Navius and Ennius. Roman dramatists altered Greek originals for a Roman audience-indeed, there could have been no success in either tragedy or comedy, if there were no connection with the audience. The Roman

context of performance, which differed significantly from Greek practice, gave greater access to the stage, to more people on more occasions for a variety of purposes, in particular political exposure. In Athens, an annual lottery determined who would be chor-gos to provide the financial backing for the plays presented at the great Dionysia. Plays were selected by the audience or 'praetor urbonus', and it was his prerogative to choose which plays made it onto the stage. Individual Romans could also stage scenic entertainment at occasions such as triumphs and votive and funeral games. Without the original performance dates for most plays from the early to mid-Republic, it is difficult to construct an ideal or a private individual's motivation in selecting a specific play or dramatic theme, but ample evidence survives from the late Republic and early Empire to illustrate the importance of his and the actor's role in incorporating offstage allusions into the theatre and into the plays themselves in order to shape the reception of either the plays as a whole or particular passages from them.

The theatricality of the late Republic and early Empire is only understandable as a development of the earlier tragic tradition, which made theatrical allusion sensible outside the theatre (versus the staged reality of practice, which made outside reality sensible inside the theatre). When earlier "texts" and performances were combined with contemporary productions under the late Republic, the result was the reciprocal mixing of theater and reality. At variance with literary allusion, which depends upon a verbal or thematic echo of an earlier "test", theatrical allusion depends both upon a relationship with earlier tests and plays with similar subjects and upon allusions arising out of previous or contemporary performances that are recognized as having significance to current production/ restaging or to events offstage. How else, could the earlier plays of Shakespeare, remain popular and relevant to later audiences and culture in general? Restaged plays with performance traditions were "use" for specific occasions to produce a correspondence between real people and mythological characters, between current events and mythological events, and between the current stage production (dramatic test) and a previous stage production (dramatic test). The numerous productions (new and restaged) of the Thyestes for his triple triumph in 29 B.C.E., and the cultural content(s) of Accius Brutus, especially the plays later role as an inspiration to Ceaser's assassins, point to the important role previous production played in interpretations of contemporary staging's. The term "meta-theatre" has been understood differently by classicists: Gentili used the term to signify "plays" constructed from previously existing play Slater, however, broadens the definition of meta-theatre to account for the performance contexts of plays: "theatrically self-conscious theatre, i.e. theatre that demonstrates an awareness of its own theatricality. Here, performance criticism helps us to supplement a philological analysis of Roman drama. Meta-theatre may emerge from the play itself: allusions to personalities or events outside of the theatre or to the dramatic action of the play are needed to understood the play. If the relevance of the allusion was not inherent to the text or theme of play, it could be supplied by an actor who interpolated or emphasized a line through gestures or by the audience, which understood relevance whether intended or not. Cicero provides a ready example of comic actor's incorporation of the audience's reality into their own: "For when the comedy pretender was being performed, so I recall, the whole actor's troupe shouted in unison, staring at the face of the foul man: 'This, Titus, is the limit and end of a vicious life'. He sat

lifeless, and he a man who earlier was accustomed to filling his own assemblies with the music of singers, was himself thrown out by the voices of singers themselves. And since mention was made of spectacles, lest I should omit anything, in the great variety of opinions there was not a single place in which what the poet wrote did not seen to have relevance to our own time, because it did not escape the audience altogether or the actor himself gave emphasis.

In the English language, the most famous and most successful tragedies are those of William Shakespeare and his Elizabethan contemporaries like C. Marlowe & John Webster. Christopher Marlowe was the most significant of Shakespeare's contemporaries. He possessed a supreme quality which enabled him at one to lift drama into the sphere of high literature. His exclusiveness produced intensity, and the English stage was in great need of intensity. Grace, wit, and fancy had been scattered on it, mingled indeed with faults of every kind, but never hitherto had it known this dash, this vehemence animating a whole play, this rapid march, as to victory, by which drama inspires the conviction that thus to move is to be alive. Marlowe's plays, with a new national pride. His characters, out of scale and unnatural as they are, can dispense with probability because they have the breath of life. The subjects Marlowe borrowed, the heroes he moulded, were no more than his mouthpieces, voicing his exorbitant dreams, Like him they sought the infinite and like him were never sated. In 'The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus (1588), his forceful egoism is projected into the character of the necromancer (Dr. Faustus) who vows himself to the devil in return for sovereign knowledge and sovereign power, and who is thus able for twenty-four years to satisfy his appetites. Faustus has to keep his bargain with Lucifer, and tremblingly awaits death and hell. Marlowe, the atheist, alone in a Christian world at times felt to the full the horror of his denials and his blasphemies. The last scenes of Faustus are among the most pathetic and most grandiose in Renascence drama. They are unsurpassable even by Shakespeare. Even Geothe took the same legend for the basis of one of the chief accomplishments of modern poetry, he could not eclipse the poignant greatness of his fore runner's scenes. He, who did not know how the impious tremble, could not recapture that anguish of horror.

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