

On the Aporia of the Pleasure of Tragedy

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1. The Dubossian Problem

In the 17th through 18th century when reflection upon and criticism of the theater became a common concern, one enigma attracted public attention. It was a peculiar experience which is called ‘the pleasure of tragedy’ today. Tragedy evokes in us the intensive feeling of pain and anguish by means of fearful incidents and sufferings of a hero. Yet, we are willing to go to see such a play. Why?

This enigma was already hinted at by Descartes¹, and Fontenelle² took it up as a subject for his own consideration. Moritz Geiger called it the “Dubossian Problem”³, the basic formula of explaining this paradoxical experience being set up by Jean-Baptiste Dubos. Thus, Hume referred first of all to Du Bos when he talked about “an unaccountable pleasure”⁴.

The formula of Du Bos⁵ consists of the following three points.

(1) Since the boredom of having nothing to do is the most painful tribulation for human beings, the agitation of passion in itself, whatever it may be, is a fundamental pleasure which relieves them of boredom.

(2) The pleasure of tragedy is reduced to artistic mimesis in general. That is, the imitated ‘artificial passions’ give us pure pleasure because we enjoy them without concern for their reality.

(3) The imitations of passions are qualitatively identical with real ones, but quantitatively weaker. The pain tragedy evokes lies, we can say, only on the surface of our soul, and therefore we can control it. So playwrights torment us insofar as we want them to. We shed tears without real serious sorrow, have compassion for the hero, and enjoy the agitation itself.

The Dubossian Problem became a favorite topic of German critics and philosophers of those days. For example, Moses Mendelssohn also recognizes that the “movement and agitation” of those activities of perception and representation which uncomfortable objects stimulate is in itself pleasant. The point at issue here is the paradoxical situation that pleasure and displeasure lie

¹ Descartes, R., *Les passions de l’âme* (1649), in: *Œuvres philosophiques de Descartes*, éditions Garnier Frères, Paris, 1973, Tome III, p. 1063f.

² Fontenelle, B., *Réflexions sur la poétique* (1724), in: *Œuvres complètes*, éd. par G.-B. Depping, Genève, 1968, tome 3, p. 14-15. Fontenelle thinks that there is only the difference of intensity between pleasure and displeasure and suggests the same argument as the theory of copies of emotions or Scheinlehre.

³ Geiger, Moritz, *Das Problem der ästhetischen Scheingefühle* (1914), in: *Die Bedeutung der Kunst*, München, 1976, S. 192.

⁴ Hume, David, *Of Tragedy* (1742), in: *The Philosophical Works*, ed. by Th. H. Green and Th. H. Grose, Darmstadt, 1964, vol. 3, p. 258. Hume emphasizes the pleasure of admiring the artistry of “eloquence” and aesthetic mimesis. In this regard, he is of the same opinion with Nicolai (Nicolai, Ch. F., *Abhandlung vom Trauerspiele*, 1757, in: *Kurschners Deutsche Nationalliteratur*, Bd., 72).

⁵ Du Bos, Jean-Baptiste, *Réflexion critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719), Slatkine Reprints, Genève, 1967, p. 25ff.

somehow simultaneously in one and the same soul. As an example for it Mendelssohn takes compassion and the sublime in particular. Compassion is “a mixed feeling which is compounded of love for an object and displeasure at its misfortune”⁶. And the compassion artistic imitation stimulates is nothing but the core of the pleasure of tragedy. With compassion we share and feel the same pain, therefore the same displeasure as the hero who suffers. Yet with the consciousness of distance that the displeasure is just an imitation and not a real one, it is eased. On the other hand, the intensive agitation of love in compassion is in itself a pleasure which quantitatively overcomes the displeasure. Lessing found “the true theory”⁷ of mixed feelings only in Mendelssohn and admired him. Lessing himself, however, was trying to interpret Aristotelian ‘catharsis’. But the mixture of feelings and the purification of emotions are not the same.

The sublime was also considered as a mixed feeling, seen in Burke’s phrasing: “a sort of delightful horror”⁸. And for him the pleasure of tragedy and the delight of the sublime are commensurable with each other insofar as both are negative pleasures which arise from some pain. It was in this context that Schiller claimed that in tragedy “the sublime associates itself with what moves us”⁹. Kant’s analysis of the sublime, which is based on the coexistence of the displeasure of sensuousness with the pleasure of reason, lies halfway between Burke and Mendelssohn on the one hand and Schiller on the other.

2. The Aporia of Mixed Feeling

The Dubossian Problem attracted theorists once more a century later. What the psychology of feeling at the end of the 19th century elaborated by its subtle analysis was actually nothing more than that basic formula we have already found in Dubos. For Eduard von Hartmann, for example, the copying of a passion is a ‘pseudo-feeling (Scheingefühl)’ as the image of a real feeling. I have another person’s feeling as a pseudo-feeling, and so I live his life as a ‘pseudo-I (Schein-Ich)’ which identifies itself with him. Yet the consciousness of my ‘real I (reales Ich)’ always accompanies it. Under this split, the real pleasure at the beautiful or the aesthetic imitation which my ‘real I’ has in the world of tragedy penetrates a chain of unpleasant pseudo-feelings of pain, sorrow, fear or whatever as a persistent keynote, and exceeds in energy the displeasure of those pseudo-feelings. The real pleasure is, as it were, a thread which holds each pearl of the unpleasant pseudo-feelings together and makes the whole a beautiful necklace¹⁰.

This Self-projection, Self-transference into others, or sympathy, is usually called ‘empathy (Einfühlung)’. In Theodor Lipps’ theory of empathy the mix of contradictory feelings is also based

⁶ Mendelssohn, M., ‘Über die Empfindungen’ (1775) and ‘Rhapsodie, oder Zusätze zu den Briefen über die Empfindungen’ (1771), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Jubiläumsausgabe, Bd. I, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1971, S. 107ff., S. 383ff.

⁷ Lessing, G. E., *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, in: *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing Werke und Briefe*, Bd. 6, hrsg. v. Klaus Bohnen, Deutscher Klassiker, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, S. 556.

⁸ Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), ed. by J. T. Boulton, 1958, rev. edition, Oxford, 1987, p. 136.

⁹ Schiller, F., ‘Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen’ (1791), in: *Schillers Werke*, Nationalausgabe, Bd. 20, hrsg. v. Benno von Wiese, Weimar, 1962, S. 137.

¹⁰ Hartmann, Eduard von, *Ästhetik—Philosophie des Schönen*, Leipzig, 1887, S. 39ff.

on a sort of I-split between on the one hand the partial I which is in empathy with the unpleasant pain or sorrow of the hero, and, on the other, the apperceptive I which embraces these parts into a unity. So I feel myself each time agitated in a partial and different way on the one hand, but at the same time in a unifying way overall. It is just like when I hear different musical tones successively and yet recognize only their one combined melody as a whole¹¹. The whole melody makes the value of human life all the more prominent because of its contrast with each individual unpleasant tone, and evokes respect and love for it. These feelings of that value are, according to Lipps, the beautiful and pleasure¹², and the mixed feeling of pleasure and displeasure is similar to a mixed color of red and yellow, or to a mixed taste of a sweet and a sour flavor. Thus, the empathy of Lipps is reduced to Mendelssohn's pleasure of love and sympathy.

Every theory of compassion or empathy is fundamentally based on the Self-identification with others. Here, the feeling of others and the sympathy or compassion I have would be qualitatively identical. But what is, indeed, sympathy or empathy with another person's pain and sorrow? Is it really possible that we have a feeling which in fact does not belong to us? Is the pseudo-feeling, the imitation of a passion, actually a feeling? Is it not rather just a concept of a type of feeling? How can we have such discrete, such contradictory feelings of pleasure and displeasure at the same time in our personal identity?

As opposed to the above, Volkelt rightly distinguishes "objective feelings" which belong to others and "participant feelings (die teilnehmenden Gefühle)" which belong to us spectators. The participant feelings are our responses to the pain and sufferings of the characters of a tragedy. For Volkelt it remains indispensable to grasp objective feelings through empathy for an understanding of the hero. But it is noteworthy that he finds the displeasure aroused by tragedy not in the shared pain of the hero but in the participant feelings of anxiety, uneasiness or gloominess we properly have while worrying about him, and in the oppression resulting from them. Yet, here too, the pleasure of tragedy as "an integrated feeling (Gesamtgefühl)" lies in the alternation and oscillation between exaltation and oppression, thus between pleasure and displeasure, and in their mixture¹³.

Let us, now, look into the phenomenology of feeling. Odebrecht is more radical than Volkelt in that he eliminates any empathy and objective feelings and accepts only our participant feelings towards the characters. As to the mechanism of mixing feelings, however, he does not go further than Volkelt, despite his new device of phenomenology. He calls a feeling integrating each participant feeling of ours "a mood (Stimmung)", which wafts around these individual feelings and envelopes them like in mist. But in explaining the mechanism of enveloping each displeasure in the whole aesthetic mood, the aesthetic pleasure he suggests again lies in the oscillation and alternation between pleasure and displeasure. Odebrecht talks not about the joining up of a pearl necklace by means of a thread but about a pearl nucleus and the secretory growth of a whole pearl¹⁴. Then the displeasure of fear and pain as nuclei comes to be neutralized or to lose its

¹¹ Lipps, Th., *Ästhetik*, I, 1903, 2. Aufl., Leipzig und Hamburg, 1914, S. 551ff.

¹² Lipps, Th., *Der Streit über die Tragödie*, Leipzig, 1915, S. 41ff.

¹³ Volkelt, J., *Ästhetik des Tragischen*, München, 1923, S. 254.

¹⁴ Odebrecht, R., *Grundlegung einer ästhetischen Werttheorie*, Bd. I, Berlin, 1927, S. 149.

intensity, and to be absorbed into the beautiful gleam of the pearl.

In passing, it will be useful to give a brief account of recent studies on this topic. M. Packer, for example, distinguishes a displeasure as “a passive and receptive attitude toward the specific events and characters presented by the piece” from a pleasure as “an active engagement in interpretation and generalization about its themes and ideas”¹⁵. This conception is, as Packer himself mentions, based on the Aristotelian claim of the universality of tragedy compared with history, but in terms of its psychological implication it is similar to Descartes’ consideration. Descartes tries to resolve the antinomy of the coexistence of contradictory feelings, though not in the case of tragedy, by pointing out the different sources of these feelings. When his wife passed away, the husband could shed tears of true grief while secretly rejoicing. Then, Descartes says, he has the passions of grief and fear aroused by objects or incidents at the physiological or psychological level, but “innermost part of his soul” has a sort of pleasure, “an intellectual joy” as “*émotions interieures*”¹⁶ different from those physio-psychological passions. Yet, the concurrency of intellectual pleasure and physio-psychological displeasure remains here unsolved. Nelson Goodman also makes a somewhat similar claim. He finds feeling or emotion to be a condition for the “cognitive functioning”¹⁷ of understanding a work, and thus reduces feelings to intellectual understanding, so that the fear we feel in watching *Macbeth* is a measure by which we come to find the scene as a fearsome situation. If so, however, we spectators would have to actually endure the displeasure of our fear in order to understand the play. Goodman’s claim might be applicable to Brecht’s theory of ‘alienation’ or to some conceptual art, but cannot explain the paradox of the pleasure with which a traditional tragedy like *Macbeth* provides us. Kendall Walton talks about “quasi-fear”¹⁸ or “make-believe fear” in “a make-believe world” of fiction, which is very close to Du Bos’ concept of ‘artificial passions’ or ‘the imitations of passions’. Peter Lamarque criticizes Walton’s concept of ‘quasi-fear’ and claims that our fear associated with something in a fictional world is “a genuine, not a ‘quasi’ or fictional fear”, but that “the real objects of our fear in fictional cases are thoughts”¹⁹ of it, not the thing itself. In any case, however, we still confront the aporia of the concurrence of contradictory feelings and an odd split of our personal identity. Stephen Davies criticizes Walton’s claim very persuasively that the experience of fiction lies in the play of make-believe which uses a fictional work as a prop, by distinguishing between interactive fictions like interactive video games and noninteractive fictions like usual novels and films. He also recognizes very rightly that ‘pity’ a reader feels for Anna Karenina or “horror, suspense, shock, or startle” a spectator of a horror movie feels are not ‘fear’. Yet, he still thinks that this typical and appropriate response of a spectator “is shock and horror, along with fear for the fiction’s inhabitants”²⁰ although she does not feel “fear for oneself”

¹⁵ Packer, M., Dissolving the Paradox of Tragedy, in: *JAAC*, vol. 47, No. 3, 1989, p. 218.

¹⁶ Descartes, op. cit., p. 1063.

¹⁷ Goodmann, N., *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis, 1976, p. 250.

¹⁸ Walton, Kendall, Fearing Fictions, in: *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 75, No. 1, January 1978, p. 6.

¹⁹ Lamarque, Peter, How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions?, in: *BJA*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1981, p. 294.

²⁰ Davies, Stephen, Responding Emotionally to Fictions, in: *JAAC*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 2009, p. 281.

that can be harmed by the slime, and then remains unable to explain the aesthetic 'pleasure' of tragedy or horror movies.

3. The Ontology of Feeling

Now it is clear that a complex of problems is tangled in this inherited aporia of the pleasure of tragedy. One of those problems, i.e., the paradox concerning artistic mimesis or aesthetic appearance which so-called 'Scheinlehre' brings up, I have already discussed in another place²¹. Here I would like to restrict myself to focusing on the aporia of mixed feeling, which has been thought of as essential to sympathy or empathy as the copying of another person's passion.

If the coexistence of pleasure and displeasure is an unanswerable aporia, should we not rather recognize that this entanglement is originally caused purely by the very idea of mixing feelings itself? Do we not confound our aesthetic reaction and response to tragic incidents on the stage with the painful or sorrowful situation of the hero? Should we not ask anew what kind of feeling we have by reacting and responding to the incidents and situations others undergo?

In order to get to the heart of the matter in one go, we must first undermine an assumption of the psychology of feeling. It seems to me to be certain that a feeling is not a thing like a pearl, a musical tone or a color which traditional psychology isolates as an object of observation or description and sometimes mixes. For contrast to the psychology of feeling, I here suggest a general view of the ontology of feeling based on Heidegger's concept of 'Befindlichkeit' derived from a German expression 'sich befinden in' (find oneself in).

What we are used to naming 'pain' or 'sorrow' is not a piece of feeling which is caused in our mind by the stimuli of outer objects and then perceived. In fact, a feeling can only be that sense of the situation in which we are presently cast (: *geworfen*), and therefore a fundamental self-understanding of the fact that we find (: *befinden*) ourselves in that particular situation. If we want to know the substance of each *Befindlichkeit*, then we would have to grasp the subtle details of each particular situation. I am sad because of losing love, failing the exam, or the death of my son. And I might be sad, as people usually say, because of watching a tragedy. But if we think that these 'kinds of sadness' are of qualitatively the same class of a particular 'feeling' and different from each other only in terms of the intensity or nuance, we still remain within the realms of traditional psychology. In fact, these situations that are usually called by the same, imprecise word 'sad' are so different from each other that the substances of their various *Befindlichkeiten* have nothing in common.

If this is indeed so, we can not share the hero's 'Befindlichkeit' as the situation of his existence in which we can in principle never be cast. As Merleau-Ponty claims, we can never live the same situation another person lives. "The grief and the anger of another have never quite the same significance for him as they have for me. For him these situations are lived through, for me they are displayed. Or in so far as I can, by some friendly gesture, become part of that grief or that anger, they still remain the grief and anger of my friend Paul: Paul suffers because he has lost his

²¹ Cf. Nishimura, K., *Die Scheinhaftigkeit der ästhetischen Scheinlehre*, in: *Acta institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae*, hrsg v. T. Imamichi, vol. 3, Tokyo, 1985.

wife, or is angry because his watch has been stolen, whereas I suffer because Paul is grieved, or I am angry because he is angry, and our situations cannot be superimposed on each other".²² Thus, insofar as the term 'compassion' means sharing the pain, sorrow or fear of another person, the aporia of the coexistence of pleasure and displeasure is due to this area of philosophical confusion in the understanding of the mind of others. It was already a central issue of Hume's ethics. For him, sympathy as the basis of humanity lies in the process whereby we suppose what is in another person's mind from his outward appearance, bring such an 'idea of feeling' to the state of 'lively idea' by imagination and make it our own²³, which, in fact, cannot ever be our own real feeling. In this regard, the hermeneutics from Herder through Schleiermacher to Dilthey, which is based on 'Nacherleben (sharing experience)' and 'Verstehen (understanding)' by self-transference (to put oneself into another person's shoes: *sich-versetzen-in*) into another person's situation, made the same mistake as the classic theory of sympathy, or that of psychological empathy, did. So-called 'Nacherleben' might be a method of recognition, an attempt to infer and reconstruct the historical facts and situations of the lives of others from our own viewpoint but one which can never be superposed on theirs. It is not 'Mitleben (sharing life)' or 'Mitfühlen (sharing feeling)' in the strict sense of the words. Then, it is also an unthinkable absurdity that I could have at the same time contradictory feelings and therefore be put into some abnormal I-split. Actually, it is not I that have a tangle and mix of different feelings simultaneously in my inner mind, but simply the situation that I stand and find myself in each time that is in a tangle.

Neither is the 'pleasure' of tragedy a piece of feeling which is effected by an outer cause. If pleasure is understood as a sensation, i.e., a psychological and physiological state in us engendered by actions or happenings, then it is the precise counterpart of physical pain. But we fight shy of saying, Gilbert Ryle says, that "while my headache was the effect of eye-strain, my pleasure was the effect of a joke". When I am pleased at a game, I cannot imagine anything as cause apart from just the act of enjoying the game. So, "pleasure is not a sensation at all", but "the special quality of those activities themselves"²⁴. As Coleman analyzed correctly²⁵, saying that I listen to a piece of music and enjoy it, and saying that I get pleasure from it are not two different things, but one and the same affair. That a tragedy is pleasant means nothing other than that I enjoy the tragedy. The predicate 'pleasant' does not designate any psychological state, but the act of aesthetic enjoyment itself. But to say 'the experience of tragedy is painful, but we enjoy it', that, indeed, is a paradox. Nonetheless, we often say that this tragedy is painful or sad. Here we seem to have, eventually, put our finger on a linguistic habit or economy in naming a sort of aesthetic effect or aesthetic quality. The paradox of the mixed feeling of pleasure and displeasure derives from this ambiguous linguistic habit, i.e., a sort of category mistake, and thus from that so-called Affective Fallacy which confounds the description of the sorrowful incidents on the stage with our responses

²² Merleau-Ponty, M., *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. by Colin Smith, Routledge & Kegan, London and Henley, 1962, p. 356.

²³ Hume, D., *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Everyman's Library, vol. 2, London, 1923, p. 42.

²⁴ Ryle, G., *Dilemmas*, Cambridge at the U. P., 1960, p. 60.

²⁵ Coleman, F., Is Aesthetic Pleasure a Myth?, in: *JAAC*, vol. 29, No. 3, 1971, p. 321.

to them.

4. The Phenomenology of the Aesthetic Act

What is the response like which we have to each sorrowful incident and to the suffering of the hero while we are enjoying the tragedy? First of all, we have to make sure of the fact that we are spectators here. To enjoy the tragedy while sitting in the theater is my act as a spectator, my *Befindlichkeit* in the aesthetic situation in which I, being a spectator, find myself. So we must say that in the theater we spectators are from the beginning situated in unique circumstances qualitatively different from other situations of our life. What we need is, therefore, not the psychology of feeling, nor the phenomenology of aesthetic consciousness, but the phenomenology of the aesthetic act, or that of being spectator.

At the moment, I am treating watching plays and reading fictions as homologous. Understanding others in real life can usually be performed under the 'dialog-situation' in face-to-face relationship. By contrast, understanding a fictive text is, as Paul Ricœur pointed out clearly, not a special case of this dialog-model. That the text is a completed whole, a "silent text" means that it is in principle impossible for us to participate in the situation of the in itself closed story-world. Between the 'silent text' and spectators or readers lies a peculiar asymmetry. Reading a fictive text is "obeying the injunctions of the text"²⁶. But suddenly here, Ricœur falls into the trap of traditional *Scheinlehre*, saying that a reader attempts to project himself into a new possible mode of being-in-the-world beyond his own real situation which a text shows. A reader does come, Ricœur claims, to understand the possible and fictive "self (soi)" in the world of the text by way of abandoning the real "me (moi)". But with this "ludic metamorphosis of the ego"²⁷ we would be lost again in the aporia of the disruption of our self-consciousness.

Obeying the text, that is the ethos of the aesthetic act of fiction. We must never cease to be readers or spectators so long as we are in the aesthetic situation of experiencing a fiction. Relevant is the fact that a specific position for the reader is already designated by the text itself. This position is, as Wolfgang Iser says, "the vantage point for visualizing the world represented and so cannot be part of that world". It is different from the viewpoint of a narrator or characters, and rather "a transcendental vantage point from which he [: reader] can see through all the positions that have been formulated"²⁸.

Insofar as we are concerned with the fictive world on the theatre stage, even as spectators, our *Befindlichkeit* is the aesthetic mode of being which is always already "planted in the structure of the text" and always "situated in such a position"²⁹ as the text designates to us. This being situated in the text means having a seat designated by it. We do not have any freedom to choose

²⁶ Ricœur, P., Événement et sens dans le discours, in: *Paul Ricœur ou la liberté selon l'espérance*, ed. par M. Philibert, Paris, 1971, p. 184.

²⁷ Ricœur, P., La fonction herméneutique de la distanciation, in: *Du texte à l'action*, Seuil, 1986, p. 117.

²⁸ Iser, W., *The Act of Reading*, London, 1978, p. 99. Cf. Nishimura, K., Wer ist das, der Leser? — Ein Beitrag zum Problemkreis 'Fiktion und Wahrheit', in: *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae*, ed. by T. Imamichi, vol. 9, 1991.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

our own position or viewpoint in our own right, to live ourselves in the fictive world, and to stand against the characters face to face, not like we do in real life. We have to grasp what kind of relationship and response we have to the fictive world as spectators in that unique aesthetic situation, by contrast with the dialog situation in real life. Then, who is this spectator or reader? To whom does the aesthetic mode of being belong? Here, Iser also repeats the same failure as Ricœur, because he finally comes to talk about “a kind of division” between the real subject of the reader and that same reader present ‘in’ the text and thus occupied with alien thoughts by way of “forgetting himself”, “which results in a contrapuntally structured personality in reading”³⁰.

5. The *Befindlichkeit* of Spectators

We should rather ascertain the unique relationship between readers situated in the text and the fictive world of the text by contrast to the dialogical situation between us as beings in the real world. The other person is a transcendence I can never reach, and therefore absolutely on the outside. He has manifold aspects which transcend my understanding or insight. Sometimes I would hate my real life uncle insofar as I doubted, under pretension of goodwill, his ominous ambition to kill my father, to usurp the throne, and moreover to appropriate my mother. And at other times, I would feel at ease insofar as I found it just an illusion and was willing to accept his kindness. This vacillation of my mind reflects both the entanglement and ambiguity of the situation I cannot help but undertake so long as I confront others, and therefore also the instability of the *Befindlichkeit* in which I find myself each time. But for me as a theatre spectator who is instructed by the text to see a particular aspect of the situation of antagonism between uncle Clodius and Hamlet only from a particular viewpoint, the meaning of the situation is as a whole very clear, and that is tragic. Hamlet shows up as nobody else than a contemplative hesitant hero of tragedy, and Clodius only as a fatal great evil suppressing Hamlet. Even if I see so hideous a character or a purely sinister incident in each scene, I could not feel anguish, pain or fear in the strict sense of the words, in which they really mean my urgent *Befindlichkeit* under an inescapable confrontation with others. Rather, it is my business as a spectator to understand the meaning of each scene where various characters and their intentions are complicatedly woven, and to put it together into a coherent perspective. And what I feel is nothing more than an aesthetic *Befindlichkeit* assigned by the text of a play to the theater spectator in that aesthetic act of experiencing a fiction.

Facing the ghost which at the opening of the play appears from the depth of the darkness, Horatio and Hamlet are put at one stroke in anxiety, fear and doubt as to a yet undetermined evil. But if we say that we similarly feel, as spectators, such anguish and fear, it is a wrong use of words. Our response to the ghost is rather like a scream of those who are riding a roller coaster or watching a horror movie and crying ‘scary!’. Roger Caillois describes the experience of a roller coaster with a paradoxical term “voluptuous panic (*panique voluptueuse*)”³¹ and explains it with an argument homologous to the mixed feeling of the pleasure of tragedy. A. Eaton admits that the

³⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

³¹ Caillois, R., *Les jeux et les hommes*, Gallimard, 1967, p. 67.

experience of a roller coaster or a horror movie is a fearsome one which “enjoys being afraid”³² while in tragedy people do not demand positively to enjoy sadness and fear, so that the two are different from each other. In truth, Caillois as well as Eaton are mistaken. Indeed, it is easy to realize that it is not actually the case (however much they might appear to do so) that they get into panic and are scared, because they are laughing and cheering each other while screaming. What they feel and enjoy is breathtaking suspense, fascinating thrill or something like that. And suspense or thrill is originally the name given to a sort of pleasure.

What I experience and feel while facing the ghost on the stage is, accurately speaking, thrilling excitement evoked by the suggestive opening of the narrative and an irresistible interest in the future of the hero. As the drama unrolls the conflicts of vicious conspiracy, hatred and revenge, I respond to each scene with expectation, premonition, suspense, surprise of unexpected discovery, tension of peripeteia and overwhelming exaltation of catastrophe. And these dramatic experiences are originally the aesthetic *Befindlichkeit* of being a spectator enjoying the tragedy, that is the aesthetic pleasure of watching the tragedy.

We say that tragedy is sad. Yet I do not feel sad for the death of Hamlet in the same way that I find myself in sadness for the death of my son. Even if spectators shed tears while watching the scene where Hamlet cries from suffering or is dying, it might be the tears moved by a sort of aesthetic qualities the tragic scene has, such as the heroic, the pathetic, the sublime, the dignity, the noble or the brave, and therefore by the unique effects a fiction of tragedy can produce. Certainly, sympathy with a hero is indispensable for tragedy. Yet the sympathy is not empathetic identification with him, nor the substance or purpose of the aesthetic experience of tragedy. It is rather a condition for understanding the whole dramatic situation from the viewpoint which is prescribed by the text in order to let us stand by the hero. To put us in an aesthetic *Befindlichkeit* of tragic exaltation under such conditions of sympathy with a hero, that is the strategy and dramaturgy of tragedy as a fiction, i.e., an artificial manipulative contrivance. Not tragic incidents or accidents in real life, but only this tragedy as a fiction promises its proper pleasure, its peculiar enjoyment to us, and predisposes us to be willing to go to the theater.

Strictly speaking, it might even be unique emotional effects and aesthetic pleasures which can be experienced just in watching a tragedy on the stage, but never in ordinary life. And these practices and experiences belong no doubt to my reality as a reader or a spectator aesthetically situated in reading or watching a fiction of tragedy, but never belong to the suspicious ‘*Schein-Ich*’ or to a quasi-reality. To watch a play or to be a spectator, is one particular practice among everyday practices like working, talking, discussing with others, but certainly in a unique relationship with the persons and incidents on the stage. It is a relationship totally different from that with persons and incidents in real life, and therefore a unique mode of my being in the real world.

*This paper is a reworked version of the original written in German (‘*Die Aporien um die*

³² Eaton, A., *A Strange Kind of Sadness*, in: *JAAC*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1982, p. 54.

“Lust am Tragischen”) and published in *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae* (ed. by T. Imamichi, vol. 8, 1990, Tokyo).