Reconciliation in Hebbel's tragedies

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is only within the last few decades that the genius of Friedrich Hebbel has been appreciated. To most of his contemporaries he was an enigma, an incurable pessimist brooding over the problems of life and seeking to fathom the unfathomable, in a word, what the Germans call "ein Grübler".

A merely superficial study of Hebbel's works and of the stern, hard facts of his life would seem to bear out the testimony of his contemporaries. He who penetrates a little deeper, however, will find in Hebbel a very positive character and an original mind, a man who arrives at a definite philosophy of life after years of study and contemplation. We have an excellent means of studying Hebbel's development in his "Tagebücher", which he kept with great regularity from his twentieth year till his death. It is interesting to note how, in the contradictions of life and particularly in the discord of his own bitter experiences, he comes to see a higher harmony, and how the pessimism of his youth changes to a peculiar optimism.

"Die Aufzeichnungen der Tagebücher sind anfangs voll finsterer Stimmungen; allmählich mildert sich der Ernst, und die letzten sind sogar anmutig. Vor unsern Augen bildet
sich Hebbel in seinen Tagebüchern zu einer harmonischen Natur um.\(^1\)

This same change in tone is noticeable in his literary productions, particularly in his tragedies, for, according to his own statement, a poet can produce nothing of value which is not the result of his own inner experience. It is a peculiar characteristic of all of Hebbel's works that they are a part of himself, the organic product of his own inner life.

It is natural, therefore, to expect to see reflected in Hebbel's tragedies this peculiar form of optimism at which he arrived when a mature man. As a matter of fact, Hebbel sought consciously to incorporate in his tragedies this sense of a higher harmony, which he expresses by the word "Versöhnung" or reconciliation.

The following study is an attempt to set forth Hebbel's idea of reconciliation, or in other words, to present an analysis of his optimism, and to consider in how far he succeeded from an aesthetic point of view in incorporating this idea in his tragedies.

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II. SUMMARY OF HEBBEL’S DRAMATIC THEORY

Hebbel’s idea of reconciliation and its place in tragedy follows as a natural corollary from the other main points in his theory of the drama. It is impossible, therefore, to appreciate his conception of reconciliation without an understanding of the essential points in his dramatic theory.

In studying Hebbel’s diaries and critical works we are constantly impressed by his conception of the enormous mission of art and especially of the tragedy. To Hebbel art was a very earnest and serious matter. Few poets have been so sure of their artistic calling or so serious in their exercise of it as was Hebbel. His estimate of himself is interesting in this connection. "Deutschland hat ohne allen Zweifel bedeutendere Dichter gehabt, wie ich bin; aber in einem Punct bin ich den grössten meiner Vorgänger gleich; in dem heiligen Ernst und der sittlichen Strenge, womit ich meine Kunst ausübe, weiche ich keinem." ¹

According to Hebbel the tragedy does not fulfil its mission if it merely portrays the suffering and death of a great personality, who interests us merely as a personality.

The scope of tragedy is much broader. Its task is none other than to present life in all of its phases. It must show the relation of the individual to the whole and of finite man to the infinite reality, which he calls the world-idea. The tragedy must give a mighty picture of some stage in the development of the world-order and show how that stage of necessity must come into being.

"Das Drama stellt den Lebensprozesz an sich dar."

The tragedy, then, to fulfil its mission, must raise itself above the realm of the accidental or temporal into the realm of the eternal, the world-idea, which in Hebbel’s philosophy finds its expression in the history of mankind. To do this the tragedy must be symbolic of the law governing the development of human society.

Hebbel’s idea of historical development is almost identical with Hegel’s, although he arrived at his theory independently of the great philosopher. According to this

1. Mein Wort über das Drama. Werke XI, p. 3.
theory the vital force in the universe, which is the basis of all existence, is the Idea. This divine Idea finds expression in the deeds of men. The regular development of the Idea, as expressed by human history, is through contradiction, or as Hegel expresses it, through thesis, antithesis and synthesis. By this he means that any condition (thesis) will engender its opposite (antithesis) and from the necessary conflict of the two a third condition (synthesis) will result, which is a compromise between the first two. This new condition now forms a new thesis, which is opposed by a new antithesis, and thus it continues indefinitely.

This seems too simple a formula to explain a process so complicated as the development of civilization. Even if we do not accept it in its entirety a little further consideration will reveal at least its partial validity.

Any new movement, or in Hegelian phraseology, any antithesis, which threatens to destroy the existing order of things, thesis, meets opposition. This lies in the very essence of things and both sides are equally justified. The defenders of an old order do not like to exchange their old institutions, which have been tried for many generations, for untried and doubtful innovations. The leaders of new
movements on the other hand are right from their point of view, for they realize that the old institutions have outlived their usefulness. Thus the conservative and the radical are as old as mankind itself and both are necessary. Without the former there would be no stability; without the latter there would be no progress. The leaders of new movements are the champions of progress, for, even though from the very nature of things they must meet opposition and sometimes persecution and martyrdom, the fact of their having lived and labored prepares the way for the acceptance of the ideas for which they struggled. Thus they help bring about a new and better condition or synthesis.

It is this Hegelian theory that gives the key-note to Hebbel's tragedy. From this it necessarily follows that his conception of tragic guilt is unlike that of other dramatists. The representative of a new idea, the reformer, or the man who because of his superiority or originality is not understood by his contemporaries is to Hebbel the most tragic individual in the world. Such men and women are the tragic characters in his dramas. Their inherent guiltlessness in the ordinary sense of the word must be emphasized; their guilt lies in the fact that they are
exceptional characters and they must pay the penalty. "Die Schuld, die aus der Maszlosigkeit entspringt, ist eine uranfängliche, von dem Begriff des Menschen nicht zu trennende und kaum in sein Bewusstsein fallende, sie ist mit dem Leben selbst gesetzt." 

Hebbel's conception of tragic guilt was confirmed by his own unfortunate experiences. He was not understood by those with whom he came in contact and he realized that this was neither his fault nor that of his friends but was due to his own originality and superior insight. In a letter to Elise Lensing, Dec. 19, 1836, he writes: "Ahnst du, dass über mich am Ende etwas Höheres schwebt, so ahne auch das daraus Folgende, dass ich, ganz anders construiert, als Andere, selbst da Recht haben kann, wo die Welt nicht Unrecht hat." Again he says: "Was hilft es Dir, dass Deine Uhr richtig geht und die Staduhr geht verkehrt? Umsonst wirst du dich auf die Sonne berufen, wenn du zu

2. Tagebücher II, 2664.
früh oder zu spät kommst."

And in an epigram entitled "Der Practiker spricht" he expresses the same thought:

"Willst du menschlich mit Menschen in Städten der Menschen verkehren,
Stelle die Uhr nach dem Thurm, nicht nach der Sonne,
mein Freund."

Hebbel's tragic hero is usually some such personage, who does not blindly accept the existing state of affairs but is the exponent of new ideas which his own age cannot appreciate. Such tragic characters are found most frequently at great turning-points in the world's history, when new and unheard-of ideas are dawning on the world and must have representatives. We find, accordingly, that the events of Hebbel's great tragedies take place at such great crises in the history of humanity.

We have seen that the tragedy must be symbolic of the law governing human progress. It is therefore not sufficient for the tragedy to present merely the suffering and death of a great tragic character. It must at least intimate that despite the destruction of the single individual, mankind as a whole is moving on toward a higher plane. "Die Krankheit der Weltzustände ist also nicht der Krankheit

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1. Tagebücher II, 2815.

2. Werke VI, p. 370.
wegen aufzuzeigen, sondern des Übergangs wegen, der zur Gesundheit führt."¹ This thought brings us to the consideration of Hebbel's idea of reconciliation.

¹ Kummer "Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts", p. 385.
To Hebbel there can be no reconciliation between the opposing forces in tragedy. Any such reconciliation he considers puerile and inartistic and foreign to the very essence of tragedy. "Versöhnung in der Tragödie - darunter verstehen die Meisten, dass die kämpfenden Potenzen sich erst mit einander schlagen, dann aber mit einander tanzen sollen."¹

Hebbel cannot shut his eyes to the contradictions in the world and the suffering often resulting from them. He sees the lack of harmony between individuals and the clash between opposing ideas. In fact progress is based on contradictions; they are a part of life itself. Therefore he says: "Es ist thörigt, von dem Dichter das zu verlangen, was Gott selbst nich darbietet, Versöhnung und Ausgleichung der Dissonanzen."² Again he says: "Er (Oehlenschläger) will Versöhnung im Drama - wer will sie nicht? Ich kann sie nur darin nicht finden, dass der Held, oder der Dichter für ihn, seine gefalteten Hände über die Wunde legt und sie dadurch verdeckt."³

¹. Tagebücher II, 2972.
². Tagebücher II, 2776.
³. Tagebücher II, 2635.
Since these contradictions exist and must exist, they must be shown in tragedy as inevitable. "Aber allerdings kann man fordern, dass er die Dissonanzen selbst gebe und nicht in der Mitte zwischen dem Zufälligen und dem Nothwendigen stehen bleibe. So darf er jeden Character zu Grunde gehen lassen, aber er muss uns zugleich zeigen, dass der Untergang unvermeidlich, dass er, wie der Tod, mit der Geburt selbst gesetzt ist." "Unerbittliche Nothwendigkeit" is one of the fundamental characteristics of Hebbel's tragedies.

Where, then, does the reconciliation lie? If the contradictions of life are inevitable and the basis of progress, how can there be a reconciliation? Still it must be found somewhere, for Hebbel says: "Was wir im Drama bös werden sehen, das müssen wir auch wieder gut werden sehen."  

The answer is that the reconciliation must be in the interest of the whole rather than of the individual characters of the tragedy. Hebbel arrived at this conviction during his stay in Copenhagen (1842-1843). The entries in his diary during this period show how earnestly he was striving to become clear on this point. "Dasz die Tragödie

1. Tagebücher II, 2776.
2. Tagebücher II, 2996.
die Wunden auf eine andere Weise heilt, als die Chirurgie, wird und kann er (Oehlenschläger) nicht zugeben, aber Shakespeare und Aeschylus sagen Ja. Er will Versöhnung, die will ich auch; aber ich will nur die Versöhnung der Idee, er will die Versöhnung des Individuums, als ob das Tragische im Kreise der individuellen Ausgleichung möglich wäre.¹ "Das in der dramatischen Kunst die Versöhnung immer über den Kreis des speciellen Dramas hinausfällt, werden Wenige begreifen."² "Versöhnung im Drama; Heilung der Wunde durch den Nachweis, dass sie für die erhöhte Gesundheit nothwendig war."³

From the foregoing it is clear that Hebbel denies any reconciliation in tragedy in the ordinary interpretation of the word. The opposing forces cannot be reconciled; they must oppose one another from their very nature. Still Hebbel does not admit that the tragedy ends in discord. In all these conflicts and their tragic solutions he sees a higher harmony, which he calls "die Versöhnung der Idee". By this he means that in spite of the seeming defeat of the tragic hero and the cause for which he stood, the world-idea remains inviolate and the way has been prepared for the acceptance of the ideas for which he fought. The tragedy

¹. Tagebücher II, 2634.
². Tagebücher II, 3168.
³. Tagebücher II, 2845.
must afford a glimpse of the brighter future arising out of the struggle. The fact that we see a better condition resulting from the tragic conflict lends a feeling of reconciliation to the unhappy fate of the tragic hero.

Hebbel's idea of reconciliation as well as his entire philosophy was largely influenced if not entirely determined by his own temperament and experience. He arrived at a settled philosophy of life only after long years of study and contemplation on its problems, supplemented by his own experiences. The gradual change in his attitude toward life and its final crystallization has been well summed up by a Hebbel student in the following paragraph:

"His temperament, the natural product of heredity and environment, was at once harsh and passionate, tender and gentle as the Ditmarsh folk, sombre and severe as the Ditmarsh landscape. The depressing poverty and consequent isolation of his early life made him very pessimistic and entirely too self-conscious. At first he brooded over his outcast state and projected his own bitterness of soul into everything. The discord between his conscious personality, self, and what he then considered an unconscious, impersonal universe drove him to despair. To Uhland he attributed the revelation which completely changed his mental attitude, but which he would soon have seen himself; namely, that a
poet must not read a personal meaning into life, but seek to draw the universal significance out of it. So Hebbel now studied the outer, ephemeral facts of life with the utmost care to find its inner, eternal meaning. But closer contact with life gradually convinced him that the universe is the one great personal reality, the divine idea, into concord with which each individuality must come, and that where the individual self cannot or will not come into concord with the universal idea a tragedy must ensue. But the universal idea is the cosmos controlled by the inexorable moral laws of human existence; whosoever offends against the least of these incurs tragic guilt which must of an absolute necessity be expiated. This absolute necessity and the moral law are one and the same thing, the essence of human existence, which is the vital force in the universe. 'Man is the continuation of the creation, an eternally developing, never fully developed creature, which prevents the conclusion of the world.' He now sought to reveal this infinite reality and the relation of the finite individual to it. The best medium for him was the stage and the best means, the facts of life, both used symbolically.  

The idea of reconciliation does not play a very prominent part in Hebbel's philosophy until the Vienna period of his life (1845-1863). Though his philosophy was crystalizing through all the preceding years, it did not afford him the satisfaction or serenity of mind which he craved. We can accordingly expect to find no trace of reconciliation in his early dramas, for if he did not find it in his own life, he could not incorporate it in his dramas. "Ich weisz nicht, ob ich mich irre, aber mir däucht es eine Sünde wider den heiligen Geist der Wahrheit, wenn der Dichter seinem Kunstwerk eine Versöhnung mit der menschlichen Situation und den Weltzuständen überhaupt, einzuhauchen sucht, von der er selbst noch fern ist. Mir scheint, dass das Kunstwerk dann jeden werth verliert."¹

Only after Hebbel had found a home in Vienna and with it rest and contentment do his works bear traces of the reconciliation which he himself actually felt. Foremost among these works are his four great tragedies, "Herodes und Mariamne", "Agnes Bernauer", "Gyges und sein Ring", and "Die Nibelungen". It is in these masterpieces of the mature Hebbel that we are to find the most evident expression of reconciliation.

¹. Tagebücher III, 4150.
Having considered Hebbel's idea of reconciliation let us now attempt to place an estimate upon it. Is Hebbel an optimist and is his theory, provided we accept it, comforting? From the viewpoint of individual happiness we must answer that it is not. The tragic hero must suffer and meet destruction and this is not a pleasant fate. But on the other hand, if, while the individual must meet destruction, we are made to feel that mankind as a whole is moving forward toward a higher plane, we experience a sense of lofty sublimity and reconciliation with the facts of life.

But again, we ask, is the mere explanation of the tragic suffering and conflict on the above grounds sufficient? It evidently was for Hebbel, judging from his own statement.

"Menschliche Verhältnisse haben nur so lange Peinliches für mich, als ich sie nicht durch schaut, als ich nicht erkannt habe, dass sie auf der Natur basirt sind." ¹ At other times, however, his own idea did not satisfy him. "Ich denke viel über das nach, was die Recensenten das Versöhnende in der tragischen Kunst nennen. Es gibt keine Versöhnung. Die Helden stürzen weil sie sich überheben. Das mag den, der das Überheben nicht leiden kann, weil es ihm vielleicht selbst

¹. Tagebücher I, 50.
Gefahr bringt, oder weil er es nicht nachzumachen versteht, befriedigen. Ich frage: Wozu die Überhebung? Wozu dieser Fluch der Kraft? Nur wenn sie dadurch gesteigert, wahrhaft veredelt würde, würde ich mich damit ausgezehnt fühlen. Und doch könnte man selbst dann noch fragen: Wozu ist die Gradation nötig? Warum diese aufsteigende Linie, die jeden höheren Grad mit so unsäglichen Schmerzen erkaufen muss?"¹ Thus the eternal why obtrudes itself in all of Hebbel's thinking.

If we consider seriously Hebbel's explanation of human life and experience, we may say that in its last analysis it is a rationalization of the idea of fate. To be sure his tragedy arises from character and his dramatic personages seem to be attempting to carry out their own ideas. In reality however they are merely instruments in the hands of the world-idea. "Thus they are in reality subject to a force, which lies entirely outside their own volition and even consciousness, a force that may be roughly compared to the Greek Fate. This force presented itself to Hebbel's imagination as the law controlling the march of civilization."

¹. Tagebücher II, 2578.

It is generally admitted that an element of reconciliation should enter into all tragedy, to partially dispel the feeling of depression which naturally results from the sight of the destruction of a great tragic character. With few exceptions there are moments in all great tragedies when the feeling of reconciliation predominates.

The sources of this feeling are many and varied. The Greek tragedies often end with a reconciliation brought about by the appearance of a god from Olympus. The Greek dramatist wished to leave with the audience the impression of the sway of eternal justice. In the modern tragedy, where the interest in personality is supreme, we desire some sort of reconciliation of the tragic hero with his fate, which in turn makes his fate seem more bearable to us. He may, for example, recognize the justice of his fall and therefore willingly meet his death. He may meet his destruction with such greatness and nobleness that by this very fact we have a feeling of reconciliation. In the old religious drama the thought of the after life may lend the same impression. In the face of all difficulties the hero
may maintain untouched the freedom and strength of his will and show his complete moral independence of all outer forces. Many other means of arousing a feeling of reconciliation might be mentioned but the above may suffice.

All these means can be employed in tragedy with no great difficulty, for they have to do mainly with the subjective attitude of the tragic hero toward his destruction, which is carried over to the spectator and thus reconciles him to the fate of the tragic character. When we consider Hebbel's idea of reconciliation, however, we realize at once the difficulty of aesthetically incorporating it in tragedy. The fact that it lies beyond the range of the tragic characters concerned and is extended to include all mankind makes it an extremely difficult problem. A consideration of some of the chief difficulties involved may make Hebbel's achievement a little more appreciated.

One of the chief difficulties is the one which ever arises in introducing the metaphysical into tragedy, for from the foregoing it is clear that Hebbel's theory of tragedy is largely metaphysical. In fact he could conceive of no other. "Nur Narren wollen die Metaphysik aus dem Drama verbannen."¹

¹. Tagebucher II, 2605.
The role which metaphysics should play in tragedy is a matter of debate. That it must play some part is evident from the very serious nature of tragedy. No serious dramatist can present the destruction and death of a great character without meditating on the meaning of life and death and consciously or unconsciously revealing to us the philosophy at which he has arrived. The dramatist's attitude toward the great problems of existence may, however, be only indefinitely and vaguely suggested or serve merely as a background for the whole. In this case his attitude toward such questions may be entirely lost to the ordinary observer, who is interested primarily in the personal experiences of the suffering hero.

The question is: In how far should metaphysics consciously on the part of the dramatist enter into tragedy? According to Hebbel a tragedy does not fulfil its mission which interests us merely from the viewpoint of the personal fortunes of its characters. He had to trace everything back to the eternally significant. His great problem in art was to illustrate the infinite from the individual phenomenon. "Aufgabe aller Kunst ist Darstellung des Lebens, d. h. Veranschaulichung des Unendlichen an der singulären Erscheinung."¹ From such statements it is evi-

¹. Tagebücher I, 126.
dent that Hebbel's effort to bring metaphysics into tragedy was very conscious.

The difficulty of incorporating metaphysical ideas in tragedy without violating some of its essential laws is apparent. One of the prime laws of tragedy in danger of being violated is that its characters must interest us as human beings. We must feel that the tragic hero is akin to ourselves and his suffering must find sympathy with us. "Die Tragödie soll uns mit dem Eindruck entlassen: wir sind in dem Bewusstsein, was es heiße, ein Mensch zu sein, reifer geworden."¹ The conscious attempt of the dramatist to make his tragedy the expression of his philosophical thought often has the effect of making his characters mere ideas, coldly intellectual abstractions. They are in danger of becoming too exceptional and of having too little in common with living human beings. "Je mehr eine Tragödie uns Sonderbares, gänzlich vereinzelt Dastehendes, eigensinnig Ausgeklügeltes, kurz Vorgänge vorführt die nicht bezeichnend für menschliches Leben und Streben sind, um so mehr wird die tragische Wirkung nach einer wesentlichen Seite hin verkürzt."²

¹ Volkelt "Aesthetik des Tragischen", p. 34.
² Volkelt "Aesthetik des Tragischen", p. 34.
Another law of tragedy, similar to the first, which is in danger of being violated, is that the prevailing tone of tragedy must be one of sadness due to our sympathy with human suffering. The danger lies in the over-emphasis in some metaphysical theories of the thought that the individual exists merely to further the interests of the world-idea. If the thought is emphasized that this world-idea is ever moving toward a higher plane, the purely human element in tragedy may lose its interest. "Wie sehr sich uns auch weiterhin innerhalb des Tragischen beruhigende, erhebende, tröstende Seiten entwickeln und einer optimistischen Lebensstimmung eine berechtigte Stelle verschaffen mögen; als durchschlagende Grundlage des tragischen Eindrucks tritt allenthalben ein pessimistischer Grundzug des Menschen- schicksals hervor." ¹

We have stated some of the chief difficulties a dramatist must overcome in incorporating metaphysical ideas in tragedy. The question now arises: Did Hebbel succeed in embodying his philosophical ideas, particularly his idea of reconciliation, in his tragedies without violating any of its fundamental principles?

Before proceeding further it may be well to guard against a misconception which may have arisen from the fore-

¹ Volkelt "Aesthetik des Tragischen", p. 89.
going argument. So much emphasis has been laid on the purely metaphysical in Hebbel's dramatic theory that it may be concluded that it was his only purpose to make his tragedies the expression of his philosophical ideas. This, however, was not the case. Though he said that only fools wish to banish metaphysics from the drama, he added, "Aber es ist ein groszer Unterschied, ob sich die Metaphysik aus dem Leben entwickelt, oder ob umgekehrt sich das Leben aus der Metaphysik entwickeln soll."¹

Hebbel was interested in the purely human phase of his tragedies and would not admit that he was guilty of the fault of which he is sometimes justly accused, namely, that of making his characters abstractions. "Ich füge also noch ausdrücklich hinzu, dass man hier nicht an ein allegorisches Herausputzen der Idee, überhaupt nicht an die philosophische, sondern an die ins Leben selbst verlegte Dialektik denken muss, und dass, wenn in einem Prozesz, worin, wie in jedem schöpferischen, alle Elemente sich mit gleicher Notwendigkeit bedingen und voraussetzen, überall von einem Vor und Nach die Rede sein kann, der Dichter . . . . . . . . . . . . sich jedenfalls eher der Gestalten bewusst werden wird, als der Idee, oder vielmehr des Verhältnisses der Gestalten zur Idee."²

¹. Tagebücher II, 2605.
². Vorwort zur "Maria Magdalene". Werke XI, pp. 46-47.
Hebbel was, then, according to his own statement, primarily interested in his characters as such. One critic has said: "Der echte Künstler Hebbel sah zuerst den leidenden Menschen; und dann lieh ihm hegelische Dialektik, die Lehre von den notwendigen, die Menschheit vorwärts treibenden Widersprüchen, ein Heilmittel für Menschleid." In spite of this fact, Hebbel's love for philosophical speculation and the overweighting of his tragedies by ideas often have the natural result: his characters are often too intentional and their expression is at times stiff and unnatural.

Hebbel's attempt to give expression to his idea of reconciliation in tragedy has been criticized as being too external and not enough in organic connection with the tragic situation to warrant its introduction. A consideration of some of the means Hebbel employs to give expression to this idea will enable us to judge whether or not this criticism is justified.

V. HOW HEBBEL INCORPORATES THE IDEA OF RECONCILIATION IN HIS TRAGEDIES

We have seen that the reconciliation in Hebbel's philosophy lies in the idea that in spite of the destruction of the individual the world-idea and its expression, mankind, are ever moving onward and upward. To give expression to this idea in tragedy the poet must foreshadow the brighter future arising out of the tragic struggle. Hebbel usually does this by making one or more of the characters in the tragedy representatives of the new order which is dawning on the world.

Whether or not the idea of reconciliation is very evident depends on a number of circumstances. He is most successful where an element of personal reconciliation of the tragic hero with his fate is added to the reconciliation of the idea. This will be evident if we consider Hebbel's incorporation of the idea of reconciliation in tragedy under the following captions: 1. When some character other than the tragic hero is the representative of the new order; 2. When the tragic hero is the unconscious representative of the new order; 3. When the tragic hero is the conscious representative of the new order.
1. Reconciliation when some character other than the tragic hero is the representative of the new order. When some character other than the tragic hero represents the new condition that is dawning the element of reconciliation is not so closely bound up with the tragic conflict but seems more external. If we are interested primarily in the personal fortune or the tragic personage, as in "Maria Magdalene", the idea of reconciliation plays little part. If, on the other hand, we are interested primarily in the great change taking place in human history, of which the drama is a "Kulturbild", as in "Die Nibelungen", the element of reconciliation is prominent.

In "Maria Magdalene" Karl is the representative of a new order. He vigorously opposes the traditions and conventions of the middle-class society in which he lives and which by its narrowness has caused the suffering and death of his mother and sister. He does not base his opposition on any clearly formulated principles, as is often the case with innovators, but the very fact that he opposes the old order indicates that it is disintegrating and giving way to a new and better condition.

It must be admitted that the feeling of reconciliation is not marked in "Maria Magdalene". The suffering of Klara
is so vividly drawn that there is little room for anything else than sorrow and sympathy with the suffering heroine. Some critics even deny any element of reconciliation. "Viel ausschließlicher noch geht durch 'Maria Magdalene' eine bange, beängstigende Stimmung. Unter zwar engen und starren, aber doch tüchtigen und braven Menschen haust unbarmherzig ein wildes Schicksal. Weder ist hier etwas von einem hellen Ausblick in die Zukunft zu finden, noch auch gelangen die tragischen Personen zu innerer Befreiung, zu hoher Ergebenheit, zur Ablösung von dem Leben."¹

In Hebbel’s last tragedy, "Die Nibelungen", several characters serve as spokesmen for the new stage of civilization arising out of the conflict. The action takes place when the old Germanic paganism is yielding to Christianity. Hagan represents the old; he has remained untouched by Christian ideals. The chaplain and Dietrich von Bern represent the new. Between them stand the remaining characters, not having completely given up the old nor fully accepted the new.

In this story of murder and revenge the motif of the dawning Christianity is constantly recurring. For example, we find the chaplain telling of his conversion and preaching

¹ Volkelt "Aesthetik des Tragischen", pp. 251-252.
the Christian virtues of humility and abnegation to Ute and Kriemhild (Siegfrieds Tod, Act. IV, Scene 8). After Siegfried's death he tries to induce Kriemhild to exercise the Christian virtues of love and forgiveness toward her enemies (Act VI, Scene 9). In the last scene of "Siegfrieds Tod" his words "Gedenke dessen, der am Kreuz vergab" have a prophetic ring.

In the third part of the trilogy, "Kriemhilds Rache", Dietrich von Bern is the chief spokesman for Christian ideals. He is a heroic character but gentle and humane as becomes a Christian. He is constantly called upon to explain the ideals of Christianity to Etzel. The king of the Huns cannot understand him, nor can the Burgundians understand him fully, for to them Christianity is not yet a vital force. The gentle, forgiving nature of Dietrich von Bern is a mystery to them. In the last scene, when all the Nibelungs have been killed, Etzel, sick at the sight of carnage, gives his crown to Dietrich who accepts it with the words: "Im Namen dessen, der am Kreuz erblich". Thus at the very end of the trilogy we have this scene, which is prophetic of the victory of Christianity over paganism.

The new stage of culture arising out of the titanic struggle is clearly indicated in "Die Nibelungen". The
idea of reconciliation is very evident. This is in a large measure due to the subject matter. It is extremely difficult to produce a tragedy from epic material especially when the events are mythological. Though Hebbel succeeds wonderfully well, still we are interested in the epic rather than the tragic nature of the events portrayed. The intensity of the personal tragic situation is lacking. It is therefore easy to give ourselves up to the idea of reconciliation.

2. Reconciliation when the tragic hero is the unconscious representative of the new order. When the tragic hero is the exponent of a new stage of culture but does not realize that the ideas for which he stands will be accepted in the future, it is rather difficult to find any trace of reconciliation. In this case the words of the tragic hero cannot be interpreted to directly foreshadow the future. A consideration of "Herodes und Mariamne" will reveal Hebbel's means of introducing the idea of reconciliation under these circumstances.

The action of "Herodes und Mariamne" takes place about the time of the birth of Christ when Christian ideals are dawning on the world. Herod is the ruler of Judea. In many respects he is the representative of a new order. His social and political ideas are far in advance of his age and
consequently clash with the traditions of the Jews. In seeking to introduce a new era for his people he meets violent opposition. In one respect, however, he is the representative of the old order. He lacks respect for individuality and employs men merely as tools. He cannot understand the point of view of his wife, Mariamne, the unconscious representative of the dawning ideals of Christianity, which demand that every individual be entitled to respect and consideration.

The conflict between the old and the new idea of individuality is reflected throughout the tragedy. When Mariamne learns of Herod's commission to Joseph she exclaims "Ich war ihm nur ein Ding und weiter nichts." (l. 1382) When Herod returns from Alexandria she accuses him:

"Du hast in mir die Menschheit
Geschändet, meinen Schmerz muss jeder teilen,
Der Mensch ist - "

Soemus too is a representative of the new conception of the individual. In telling Mariamne that he refuses to carry out Herod's commission he says: "So grosz ist keiner, dass er mich als Werkzeug gebrauchen darf."

These indications of the struggle between an old and a new conception point rather vaguely to the new condition
arising out of the conflict. Perhaps we would not be so conscious of it did we not constantly bear in mind Hebbel's theory of tragedy. So desirous was Hebbel, however, of foreshadowing the coming Christianity, that in the very last scene he introduces the Magi, who appear before Herod and seek the new-born king of the Jews.

The incident of the Magi has been criticized as being too unmotivated to warrant its introduction. This criticism has been answered as follows: "Es ist klar, dass eine Dichtung, welche aus ihrer Handlung um die Zeit der Geburt Christi die Idee der Innerlichkeit widerstrahlt, so wie nun einmal diese Handlung beschaffen war, dieser Geburt (Christi) und einer ihrer hervorragendsten Begleiterscheinungen durch aus nicht entraten konnte, es hätte der letzte Strich an der Handlung gefehlt."

3. Reconciliation when the tragic hero is the conscious representative of the new order. When the tragic hero is the representative of the new order and realizes that the cause for which he stands will in the future be triumphant, the sense of reconciliation is most marked. The hero feels convinced that even if he must meet destruction he will be

given justice by posterity. His words become prophetic of this day and he meets death with calmness and submission. In this case there is added to the reconciliation of the idea a personal reconciliation of the hero to his fate, which is carried over to the spectator.

Perhaps in no other tragedy has Hebbel succeeded so well in incorporating his idea of reconciliation as in "Agnes Bernauer". The action takes place in the fifteenth century when feudalism is disintegrating and giving way to modern social ideals. Seeing the rise of the middle classes in power and prominence, Albrecht, the son of Herzog Ernst, ruler of Bavaria, thinks he can oppose social convention, and marries Agnes Bernauer, the beautiful daughter of an Augsburg barber. Herzog Ernst, however, realizes that a barber's daughter can never be queen of Bavaria and disinherits his son. Albrecht sides with his father's enemies and soon the country is on the verge of a civil war. Only when Herzog Ernst perceives that nothing else can save his people does he cause Agnes to be condemned to death. After a long inward struggle Albrecht now yields to his father's entreaties and accepts the throne which Ernst abdicates. He realizes that the time is not ready to accept his standards and that the conventions which he has opposed have a certain validity even if they are not eternally binding.
Herzog Ernst realizes as well as Albrecht that the conventions of his day are not eternal, but he is more firmly convinced than is his son of the absolute necessity of the existing state, which he calls "göttliche und menschliche Ordnung". The following words of Ernst are significant: "Wir Menschen in unserer Bedürftigkeit können keinen Stern vom Himmel herunterreißen, um ihn auf die Standarte zu nageln, und der Cherub mit dem Flammen­schwert, der uns aus dem Paradies in die Wüste hinaus­stiesz, ist nicht bei uns geblieben, um über uns zu richten. Wir müssen den Staub über den Staub erhöhen, bis wir wieder vor dem stehen, der nicht Könige und Bettler, nur Gute und Böse kennt, und der seine Stellvertreter am strengsten zur Rechenschaft zieht. Weh dem, der diese Übereinkunft der Völker nicht versteht, Fluch dem, der sie nicht ehrt."¹

This speech, which insists on the necessity and power of convention, persuades Albrecht that it is his duty to yield his own personal wishes for the good of his people.

The new condition resulting from the struggle is not definitely foreshadowed. No words spoken by the tragic characters can be interpreted to prophesy this new condition. Yet the general tone of the whole makes us feel that a

¹. Agnes Bernauer, Act V, Scene 10.
tragedy such as this prepares the world for broader views. This feeling is enhanced by the subjective attitude of the tragic characters toward their destruction. The calmness and submission with which Agnes meets her death and the unselfishness with which Ernæ and Albrecht yield their own personal interests for the good of their people have a reconciliating effect. In no other of Hebbel's tragedies has the feeling of the absolute necessity of the outcome been so successfully combined with the feeling of reconciliation.

"Gyges' und sein Ring" presents another instance where the tragic hero is the conscious representative of the new order. Kandaules, king of Lydia, is an enlightened, enterprising ruler who seeks to introduce a new era for his people. Like many reformers, however, he does not recognize the validity of existing conventions and tactlessly incurs the enmity of his people. By this same disregard of convention he grievously offends his sensitive wife and to pay the penalty must die at the hands of his friend Gyges.

Before Kandaules dies, however, he admits that under the circumstances the action of his opponents was justified. He admits that convention plays a necessary part in society and must be respected. But he does not retract the prin-
ciples for which he has struggled. He looks to the future when these principles will be accepted and finds consolation in the thought that he has violated merely ephemeral, not eternal laws. Kandaules' speech before his death is truly remarkable, for in it he is made to express Hebbel's own conception of a tragic hero.

"Man soll nicht immer fragen:
Was ist ein Ding? Zuweilen auch: was gilt's?
Ich weisz gewisz, die Zeit wird einmal kommen
Wo alles denkt, wie ich; was steckt denn auch
In Schleiern, Kronen oder rost'gen Schwertern,
Das ewig wäre? Doch die müde Welt
Ist über diesen Dingen eingeschlafen,
Die sie in ihren letzten Kampf errang
Und hält sie fest. Wer sie ihr nehmen will,
Der weckt sie auf. 'D'rum prüf' er sich vorher,
Ob er auch stark genug ist, sie zu binden,
Wenn sie, half wach gerüttelt, um sich schlägt,
Und reich genug, ihr Höheres zu bieten,
Wenn sie den Tand unwillig fahren lüszt."

As a parting piece of advice Kandaules warns Gyges:

"D'rump, Gyges, wie Dich auch die Lebenswoge
Noch heben mag, sie thut es ganz gewisz
Und höher als Du denkst: vertraue ihr
Und schaud're selbst vor Kronen nicht zurück,
Nur rühre nimmer an den Schlaf der Welt."

Thus in "Gyges und sein Ring" the future is directly foreshadowed by Kandaules' words. Here also, as in "Ages Bernauer", the personal reconciliation of the tragic hero to his fate is carried over to the spectator, making the feeling of reconciliation very evident.

1. Gyges und sein Ring, ll. 1851-1855.
VI. RESUME AND CONCLUSION

Hebbel's philosophy is based on the theory that all human action is the expression of the divine idea and that the basis of this expression is contradiction. The conflicts of life are therefore necessary and unavoidable. The reconciliation lies in the thought that, even if the life of the individual is shattered, the divine idea remains inviolate. Thus Hebbel discerns above the seeming discords of life a higher harmony.

Since to Hebbel all art, and especially tragedy, is realized philosophy and the idea of reconciliation plays a prominent part in his philosophy, he seeks to incorporate it in his tragedy. Owing to its metaphysical nature, however, it can be introduced only indirectly. In presenting the destruction of a great personality the tragedy must symbolically represent the onward march of civilization, which is the expression of the divine idea. The tragedy must show that out of every great conflict mankind emerges on a higher plane. It does this by foreshadowing the new condition arising out of the tragic struggle.

Hebbel makes us aware of this new stage in the development of the world by making some character in the tragedy
the representative of the new order. The idea of reconciliation is most evident when the tragic hero is the conscious representative of the new order, for in this case his words point directly toward a brighter future.

When the tragic hero is the unconscious representative of a future stage of culture, the idea of reconciliation is not so evident from his words and must often be incorporated in some other way. For this reason Hebbel introduces the Magi in the last scene of "Herodes und Mariamne". When one or more of the minor characters are the spokesmen of the new order, the element of reconciliation is in danger of being lost owing to our interest in the personal fate of the tragic hero.

Many students have criticized Hebbel on the score that his dramatic productions do not always carry out the principles set forth in his dramatic theory. This criticism, however, applies to every artist, for the artistic production never attains the ideal of the artist. When we consider Hebbel's conception of the enormous mission of art, we cannot but be impressed by his remarkable achievements. The least of these is by no means his incorporation of the idea of reconciliation in his tragedies.
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