

THE STATE OF DRAMA

by

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Space is limited and I must cut corners to arrive anywhere. A new drama requires a new kind of acting and directing. Increasingly staging is based on emotion and effect and each inflates the other to the point of obesity. The discrimination and discernment of the reasoning mind is absent. Its precisely to engage that mind that the Greeks invented drama. The human mind seeks to inscribe the intellectual on the lyrical. I think this is the source – and actually the nature – of self-consciousness. (It is why the *self* is not susceptible/amenable/ to science.) In isolation both intellect and lyric are inhuman. Without the relation between them we would not only not be human, we could not even walk down the street. And there is a logic in the relation which only drama can en-act. Truth is not instantiated by facts because values are astonishing mutable, and so the meaning not just of ideology but even of use constantly changes. That's why we have to talk of human truth – but human truth is in fact reality, its what enables the self to be conscious of itself. This is how the objective and the subjective are bound together in history. Later I'll call this the glove inside the hand.

The theoretical structures of Brecht and Stanislavsky are not drama but theatre. They have become ideological properties and no longer create the reality of our lives. This is what I mean when I say reality has lost its voice. The self can no longer talk to its own existence. Instead there is a bone-yard of facts and a market of consumer products. Beckett created a third form of theatre, the survivor's irony of the long-oppressed. The problem of all Beckett's characters is that they have a stone in their shoe and no longer know how to remove it.

Intellectual discrimination will return when language touches the world and ricochets back to the mind. (The problem of the self is that it is so near but cannot see its self.) To achieve this *touching* the situations in my plays depend on objects and movement. Drama achieves what Brecht cant when he tries to describe, influence or change reality in terms of reason. Drama changes it in its *own* terms, it en-acts reality. This is the logic of humanness which drama expresses. The collapse of Brechism does not mean the end of history but only that history has temporarily mislaid its ghosts. And Stanislavsky is embalmed in the musical.

I'll try to illustrate drama with an image. Prison bars have two sides. One faces the prisoner and one the gaoler. One keeps the prisoner in and the other keeps him out. When the prisoner touches the bars a gap is created between

the two sides. And since drama (but not theatre) *touches*, the gap is in the bar and this is the iron-field in which ideology lays its fragile seeds and against which drama contends. If it were not for drama there would be no “*why?*” not only in Primo Levi’s death camp but not even in the world. Emotion looks only one way, the intellect looks both ways – but gains nothing by this. Emotion and intellect must *meet* in the gap or each will justify itself in its own terms and produce contrivance, sentiment and revenge. The meeting in the gap creates imagination in the self’s raw reality.

Imagination may be trivial. But drama drives its situations to the extreme and this enacts the logic of humanness. The final proof of that logic is the dead of history, not merely the slaughtered but also those who die peacefully in their bed – because the objective is part of the subjective and so all reality is political. We are both the masters and victims of this logic. This is the origin of the Tragic and the ultimate seriousness of being human. Drama begins with and in the fiction-in-reality but uses and is the reality-in-fiction. The latter is “more real” than the former in that the fiction-in-reality that is history finally (at least hitherto) catches up with the reality-in-fiction. And “more real” in the sense that it happens in the instant, whereas history is always in the lag of time.

Theatre (and in modern times the “screens”) has two taps: hot and cold. These are facts but not dimensions of reality. There is no large hot or small cold (or to put it another way, facts have no values). A volcano is big and a snowflake small but paradoxically for drama this creates a map without scale – but the paradoxes of drama are the logic of humanness. Theatre (and the screens) cannot enter the gap and only stand us at its edge in anomie or bewilderment. Theatre’s business is money. Voltaire might have said that as cash didn’t exist God had to invent it. It is the modern form of prayer – and in saying this I in no way detract from its morality. The European stage has become a waste land haunted by failed ideas and invaded by cultural looters, the army that profits from its own defeat.

European culture is in a historical crisis -- but it is not in demise. The world is surrendering to it and, in either its destructive or creative forms, it will dominate reality. It was based on Greek drama. Christianity reified that drama’s paradoxes and called them historical fact. It put fiction-in-reality in the place of reality-in-fiction. This was an iron grip that in time crushed itself. We can imagine that God exists but we cannot *imagine* Man exists – the human self is forced to create itself, it is the act of consciousness itself, and so we are trapped in the logic of drama. This logic – and even what we may call “the psyche” of drama – created Christianity in the face of Roman discipline and barbarity. This gave Christianity its profound psychological insight and

enabled it to penetrate society, not just its churches but in time its factories. But it also burdened it with its ontological rigidity. The state, religion and ideology lead by the glove on the hand. Drama is the glove inside the hand – it gives each of us our particularity but also our shared ontology and so guides us to democracy. This makes drama the logic of humanness.

The Enlightenment attacked the rigid ontology of church-and-state but, for the reasons Ive given above, surrendered itself to the *virtue* of science. Now instead of creating humanness in the gap we fill it with rationalisations and panic. The trivial violence of theatre and screens is replacing the logic of drama. So we have to create a new culture but as that is also a new reality only drama can create it. The mind may be brain-washed but the imagination cannot be -- in whatever vicissitudes and dilemmas, it always creates the ghosts that bring it back to life. It is the strange but affirmative human truth that the glove in the hand guides us towards democracy. And so sooner or later, here or somewhere, we have to create this new drama – our Tragedy will demand it of us.

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