

makes this *Festschrift* especially valuable for philosophy department libraries.

There is no index. The book ends with "Notes on the Contributors," of whom there are twenty-three.

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*Tragedy and Philosophy*. WALTER KAUFMANN. Doubleday and Co. Inc., New York, 1968. Pp. 388.

We all know that Walter Kaufmann is an exceptionally scholarly and well-read man, but this book is not up to his usual standard. "It should be apparent," says the author, "that the approach to literature developed in these pages can readily be applied to the novel, and to works of our own century no less than to Greek tragedy." (P. 348) Unfortunately what *is* apparent in this volume is precisely the lack of "*approach*." For example, Kaufmann quotes from a footnote of Freud's to the effect that works of art are subject to varying interpretations, and opines of this commonplace observation that "even if Freud's footnote consisted solely of this remark it would still be one of the most profound, suggestive and enlightening footnotes of all time." (P. 104) He argues that "if we consider his comments merely as a contribution to literary criticism" Freud's importance cannot be overlooked (P. 105), in spite of the fact that three pages later he is maintaining that "Freud offers a thoroughly inadequate interpretation that scarcely touches the play. Its importance lies in the field of psychology." Again, according to Kaufmann, it is in the Old Testament that we encounter "individuals who can be known only through their history. There is no close parallel to that in Homer or in Greek tragedy." (P. 185). But he is shortly discussing Euripides' "intense concern with character and with psychology." (P. 190) With regard to Sartre: "Surely the ethic of *The Flies* is . . . Nietzschean. Nor do we find the ethic of *The Flies* in *Being and Nothingness* or *No Exit*." But on the next page Kaufmann is already arguing that "Hell is — *other men* — the most famous line in *No Exit* — is an unconscious echo of Nietzsche." (P. 263)

In view of all this — and more — it seems something in the nature of temerity for Kaufmann to group "Oswald Spengler or a parlour game" together (p. 80), and to assert that "when Brecht insisted that *he* tried to make other people *think* he only showed that he did not know what thinking means" (p. 344), whereas Kaufmann thinks that "what makes Brecht interesting is that he is different." (P. 356) He also "thinks" that

"the response of those who do not understand a play — at the crudest level, because they do not know the language — matters incomparably less than the response of those who comprehend it." (P. 348) I assume that most readers of this journal are prepared to take platitudes of that order for granted.

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*The Existentialist Prolegomena.* FREDERICK SONTAG. University of Chicago Press, 1969. Pp. 218.

"Love vaunteth not itself," is the motto Sontag chooses for this book, which is full of intimate information regarding the nature of God, based upon the speculations of atheistic existentialism. "On such a basis," says Sontag hopefully, "perhaps God can be made to 'come alive' again." (p. 216) "God observes change directly but is not himself directly changed" we are told. (p. 158) "God is able to absorb without essential change. What is presented to him as actual he eternally knows as possible" (p. 159), and "we will know man's limit better when we understand and compare it with what God can and cannot do." (p. 194) Yet although Sontag displays this "horrible chumminess," as Nietzsche calls it, he denies the possibility of direct encounter with God. He hopes to construct a modern metaphysics based upon the "philosophical psychology" of Heidegger and Sartre. One might have expected Kierkegaard to have provided more promising material for this venture, but Sontag has grave reservations about Kierkegaard. "Heidegger and others move toward metaphysics in ways which Kierkegaard, in his reaction to Hegel, could never have seen as possible" (p. 36), and "the structure and insight which we have discovered as necessary in its construction adds a depth of meaning to literature which never occurred to Kierkegaard — that to be an author of significance requires metaphysical depth as well as artistic agility." (p. 94) That's ludicrous . . . But what is clear is that if one does not accept Heidegger's "philosophical psychology" with its arbitrary emphasis upon "dread" (and I don't), neither is one going to accept Sontag's extremely vague "metaphysics." The point of Kierkegaard's "dread" was to serve as the preliminary to "the leap of faith." Heidegger's "dread" is similar, except that the point is missed out. But in that case why "dread?" Why not — for example — joy? The latter seems just as likely to disclose the nature of "Being" as the former. Sontag is worried about anti-God "theologians" and the like, but I hope I am not alone in