

Books of The Times

End Papers

TRAGEDY & PHILOSOPHY. By Walter Kaufmann. 388 pages. Doubleday. \$6.95.

Walter Kaufmann, who teaches at Princeton is a philosopher with a penchant for the kind of fresh thinking that philosophers rarely do. Here he has attempted a searching analysis of the essence of tragedy. He offers a new definition and, without raising his voice, his version of poetics as against that of Aristotle. To quote his definition, which is constructed with meticulous logic, would be to take up all the space available for this notice. It is sufficient to convey the stimulating nature of Mr. Kaufmann's reflections to cite his comment that "what distinguishes tragedy from comedy is neither the story nor the type of human being that is introduced, but the treatment, the response it elicits."

Is tragedy on the level of the ancient classics no longer possible today? Mr. Kaufmann doesn't think so. He proposes that Rolf Hochhuth's "The Deputy" is a "modern Christian tragedy—perhaps even the only Christian tragedy." One is often tempted to differ with Mr. Kaufmann's ideas, which is an indication of their provocative power.

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