long-term horizons in transindividual relations and for laws and regulations to prevent the more harmful aspects of capital accumulation. (99–101 and 108)

Stiegler is emblematic of a conservative French republicanism masquerading as radical theory: political questions, on his account, are subordinated to technological questions, and reformism replaces popular struggle. In sum, for Stiegler, the system carries risks, but these can be corrected if we just care enough, that is, if we create the proper institutions to handle our investments, libidinal and otherwise. When Stiegler argues that “new apparatuses of production of libidinal energy must be conceived and instituted” his examples are, embarrassingly enough, “the ecclesiastical institution and its care­ful [curieux] inhabitant, the curé [and] the school and its master, the teacher.” (108) If this is a new critique of political economy, then long live the ‘old’ critique! Combating capitalism today requires analysing how neoliberalism is a project of re­entrenching capitalist class power, as well as conceptualising how the techniques of this project (expropriation, privatisation, financialisation, accumulation by dispossession, and the uneven deployment of production across the global north and south) serve to reinforce that goal. For this task, there are more tools in Marx’s contributions than in Stiegler’s.


Review by Eva Buccioni, Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning.

The slim volume appears to stem from a talk that Vittorio Hösle gave in April 2009 in the Seminar for Classic Philology at the University of Basel in Switzerland. Its title may be translated as “The Ranking of the Three Greek Tragedians: A Problem from the History of Poetics as a Littmus Test for Aesthetic Theories” (subsequently abbreviated as Rangordnung; all translations from this text are mine). In the introduction, Hösle points out that the title may seem strange as one may wonder how a concrete problem could illuminate the deeper structure (Tiefenstruktur)
of aesthetic theories. (7) It is more common to believe that aesthetic theory is grounded in general principles and that concrete aesthetic experience is to be judged by the standards of the theory. By contrast Hösle proposes to examine the question of the ranking of the three Greek tragedians as a test for the most viable aesthetic theory.

The book sets out to determine who is first among the three generally accepted great Greek tragedians (here in chronological order): Aeschylus (525/4–456/5 B.C.E.), Sophocles (ca. 497–406 B.C.E.), or Euripides (ca. 480–406 B.C.E.). Hösle discusses from various sources views on tragedy, tragedians, and aesthetics, as well as different rankings. After the introductory section (7–14), he examines some ancient sources on tragedy, tragedians, and aesthetics. Schiller’s aesthetics that also mentions the Schlegels. (68–82) Finally, the aesthetic theories of Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer (82–95), and Nietzsche’s Birth of Tragedy (95–114) are discussed. In the concluding section (115–21), Hösle briefly gives his own position that turns out, for the most part, to be a reaffirmation of what he apparently said already in his 1984 publication, Die Vollendung der Tragödie im Spätwerk des Sophokles: Ästhetisch-historische Bemerkungen zur Struktur der attischen Tragödie. He ranks Sophocles highest among the tragedians and follows Hegel’s aesthetic, which he believes to be unsurpassed.

Well written in German academic style, Hösle’s Rangordnung is intended for those already well familiar with Greek tragedy and the works of the writers discussed. For this specialist audience there is much of interest in the slim volume. But ultimately the reader may well ask whether the so-called ranking problem is not merely a pseudo-problem. One may also ask whether several of the writers discussed would actually have agreed to the ranking attributed to them. Moreover, the “litmus test result” that Hösle believes emerges from the discussion is questionable because “the experiment” itself seems somewhat rigged.

If, as the title would already suggest, the primary aim of the book is to determine the ranking of the three tragedians, then it would seem expedient to develop already at the outset clear criteria for such a ranking. No clear criteria are provided. Instead Hösle mentions in his introduction (13–14) that Aristophanes and Nietzsche, for example, rank Aeschylus first, while Aristotle is said to allot that rank to Euripides.
Specific ranking criteria will emerge only later from a discussion of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. (As will be discussed below, Aristotle did not intend to rank tragedians but instead to develop, among other things, criteria by which to identify good tragedies.) Ultimately aesthetic judgment hinges on the primary divide among aesthetic approaches, that is, the divide between *Rezeptionsästhetik* (aesthetics that takes as its central focus the audience’s reception of a work) and *Kunstwerkästhetik* (aesthetics that place the aesthetic value of the work of art at the centre). Hösle considers Aristotle’s to be an aesthetic of reception that is completely passé. It is surpassed by the now predominant *Kunstwerkästhetik* that he believes has received its breakthrough with Schelling and Hegel. (82) Since the title suggests that the ranking problem is the litmus test for aesthetic theories, it seems crucial to have ranking criteria for the tragedians that are independent from the criteria by which we judge the aesthetic theories themselves. Only then does it make sense to judge the theories by the independent results of the litmus test. Even then, one would need two sets of criteria, one to judge the aesthetic quality of the tragedies, and another to judge the tragedians. The second could perhaps consist merely of a simple criterion: calculate the number of good tragedies minus the number of bad ones for each poet. This already seems rather absurd. But, given that only a fraction of the tragedies of the three prolific poets has come down to us, it is also an impossible task. Implied in this way of judging tragedians is already also a clear bias in favour of those ancient “judges” who still had access to the work of the poets. For, if one believes in the hierarchical ranking of poets in the first place, then one would need to consider the entire corpus of their creative production rather than attempt a ranking based on what we have today: a meagre seven of about 90 tragedies from Aeschylus, seven of over 120 from Sophocles, and seventeen of over 90 from Euripides. It would be hardly satisfying to assume that only the best tragedies were handed down to us. On these grounds, Euripides would be the best tragedians, since his tragedies have survived in highest proportion, and Sophocles the worst.

The most likely ancient source for a ranking of the tragedians is Aristophanes. His *Frogs*, as is well known, pitches Aeschylus against Euripides in a verbal wrestling match where resurrection is the prize for the winner. A somewhat bumbling Dionysus, accompanied by his shrewd slave Xanthias, is to judge the match and take the winner back with him from Hades to Athens to save the city from a tense political
situation towards the end of the Peloponnesian War. The play was first performed in winter of 405 B.C.E. Hösle is well aware that it is highly problematic to take comedy as evidence for any claims. Nevertheless he believes that the Frogs, together with other remarks made about Euripides in other of Aristophanes' comedies (15-16), warrant the conclusion that Aristophanes ranked Aeschylus first, Sophocles second, and Euripides last by a wide margin. Many of the details that Hösle discusses make for an interesting read. But his rendition of the Aristophanic depiction of the two tragedians seems somewhat skewed. According to Hösle, Euripides is characterized as democratic, talkative, fawning (Anhiederei), narcissistic, calculating and pompous, while Aeschylus is contrasted as aristocratic, reserved, severe, focussed on the subject-matter (Sachbezogenheit) and nobly passionate. (22) Although the first characteristic is clearly correct, the others seem biased in favour of Aeschylus. Readers may recall that it is Aeschylus who breaks out into rather base ad hominem invectives already at the outset of the agon with Euripides and continues his tirade despite Dionysus' attempt to calm him down (Frogs, 830-59). Ultimately Dionysus cannot decide whom to resurrect to save Athens so he asks them politically explosive questions, rather than poetic ones. He asks them what they think of Alcibiades (the political enfant terrible of Athens) and how to best serve the state (Frogs, 1414-59). As he still cannot decide, he follows his intuition and takes Aeschylus back. Aristophanes seems to make more of a political statement (which turned out to be rather risky in light of the oligarchic coup that overthrew democracy in 404 B.C.E.), rather than actually proposing a ranking of poets based on their poetic quality. Paul Roche provides a different explanation than Hösle for the absence of Sophocles as an active competitor: the poet was still alive when the Frogs were drafted so that Aristophanes only had time to insert some references to Sophocles after his death in 406 and prior to the first stage production in 405 (Aristophanes, The Complete Plays, trans. Paul Roche, p. 539). This may not be all that convincing, however, as Aristophanes would probably have written a play about the need to resurrect a poet while Sophocles was still alive. Be that as it may, if Aristophanes had intended to rank the three tragedians poetically, the political emphasis would have been merely a tangent. It does not look that way. If he had wanted to rank them based on audience reception, he could have simply had them brag about how often they actually scored
first place in the tragedy competitions. He presumably had access to the records.

Even if we were to agree with Hösle that Aristophanes is actually ranking the three tragedians in accordance with their poetic merits, the same cannot be said for Aristotle and the author of *On the Sublime*. (The section on Plato is framed in terms of a general condemnation of tragedy with Euripides as the loser.) *On the Sublime* is a teaching manual for the *techne* of rhetoric, and its author at times uses passages from tragedy as examples to illustrate a point. Similarly the *Poetics*, the primary Aristotelian source from which Hösle extracts a ranking is a *techne* manual that analyses the art of poetics and sets forth criteria to distinguish good poetic works from bad ones. Aristotle seems to have no intention of ranking poets but rather uses their work to illustrate his points. Nevertheless, Hösle believes that one can deduce that Aristotle is least impressed by Aeschylus, because he mentions him only four times in the *Poetics*. (42) Although both Sophocles and Euripides are mentioned more often, “quantitatively a preeminence (Vorrang) of Euripides is noticeable.” (43) Moreover, Aristotle regards Euripides to be “the most tragic of the poets (der tragischste der Dichter).” (46, *Poetics* 1453a26–30) Aristotle’s overall judgment emerges from his teleology and thus presupposes that tragedy develops over time. (43, *Poetics* 1449a10–30) Importantly, Hösle brings out some of the criteria offered by Aristotle. Aristotle regards plot and incidents (or events) as having the highest priority, rather than character, which comes second. (47, *Poetics* 1450a ff.) This means that for Aristotle, as Hösle reads him, protagonists may be neither thoroughly bad, nor perfectly virtuous. (48, *Poetics* 1452b27–1453a37) Hösle objects that “it is nothing short of absurd to believe that characters such as Antigone belong to the moral middle stratum (sittlichen Mittellage).” (57) Great tragedies are not possible without greatness of character, in Hösle’s opinion, no matter what (short-lived) popularity may be achieved by the tragic misfortune of protagonists that are as average as the average viewer. This seems then more a question of what one considers moral greatness. Aristotle explicitly uses Oedipus as one example of tragic character. (1454a11) As Hösle takes Sophocles to be the best of the tragedians, and as *Oedipus Rex* is usually considered among his best tragedies, one would expect Oedipus, if Hösle were right, to be a character of moral greatness. But recall how Oedipus actually gets himself into the trouble that brings about his downfall and that of
many others. We may refer to it in our terms as a case of ancient road rage. According to Sophocles’ rendition of the myth, Oedipus is on foot when he encounters a chariot led by a herald. \((Oed. 798–803)\) It remains unclear throughout how many people were actually accompanying King Laius. (Bulfinch’s account of the myth itself has Oedipus riding in a chariot as well, but Laius is accompanied only by one attendant [\textit{The Golden Age of Myth and Legend}, p. 151].) For tragic purposes there needs to be at least one in addition to the herald, namely the shepherd who survives to tell the tale. Sophocles has to include the shepherd for the sake of the plot and needs to leave open how many men were actually with the king. Jocasta speaks of five people. \((Oed. 753–54)\) Instead of politely yielding, as would seem sensible for a young man encountering, at a narrow rural junction, a chariot with a man old enough to be his father, Oedipus lets himself become embroiled in a scuffle. When the elderly man hits him with a goad (a horsewhip) while passing, Oedipus gets so enraged that he not only knocks him off the carriage with his stick but rages on to “kill them all,” as he admits to Jocasta later. \((Oed. 810–13)\) In short, he is guilty of aggravated assault and multiple cases of second degree homicide motivated by petty road rage. Someone might object that the Ancients would not have seen it that way, but would have said that Oedipus did what honour demanded when pushed around and horsewhipped. The problem, they might say, was only that Laius unfortunately turned out to be Oedipus’ father. But this objection would overlook the fact that the plague was brought on Thebes only because the King’s death was left unpurified due to the murderer not having been brought to justice. Oedipus was impure and should have known it. Anyone who doubts that accidental killing through negligence, “even” if the victim is a day labourer, requires purification only has to read Plato’s \textit{Euthyphro}. After all, Euthyphro indicts his own father on similar grounds. Hence, Aristotle’s judgment that the protagonist is neither a good man nor just, seems rather apt.

As is well known, for Aristotle, the task of tragedy is to bring about catharsis through pity and fear. \((48)\) According to Hösle, this shows that Aristotle’s is an aesthetic of reception or effect (Hölsle uses both \textit{Rezeptionsästhetik} and \textit{Wirkungästhetik}). \((48–49 \text{ and passim})\) He also objects to Aristotle’s postulate that the best tragedies should move from good fortune to ill fortune, on the grounds that some tragedies end in reconciliation (Hölsle refers to Euripides’ \textit{Iphigenia in Tauris}. Aeschy-
lus’ *Eumenides* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus on Colonus*). (54) It is because of his aesthetic of reception that Aristotle cannot rank such dramas of reconciliation among the best. By contrast, artwork aestheticians (*Kunstwerkästhetiker*) do not care that dramas that end in reconciliation do not stir the audience as much as a tragedy without happy ending. (54) In short, Hösle believes Aristotle to be too concerned with the effect the tragedy is to have on the viewer, an approach that *Kunstwerkästhetiker* disdain and believe to be outdated.

A review such as this one is not the place to engage in an in-depth defence of Aristotle or evaluate different approaches to aesthetics. The very fact that Hösle’s rendition of Aristotle tempts one to want to do so is a sign that it may engage scholars in further discussion. But one thing that ought to be taken into account is whether *Kunstwerkästhetik* does not tacitly include among its criteria an understanding that tragedy must affect someone in order to be tragic. Aristotle by no means assumes that performance is essential to tragedy. Performance is merely extraneous spectacle. Indeed, a tragedy’s organic unity, together with the very fact that a tragedy may simply be read just like an epic, tips the scales in favour tragedy and makes it the highest form of imitation. (*Poetics* 1462a6–b15) But the tragic has to be experienced, it has to affect someone, and whoever this is is a recipient. That tragedy must be tragic should be obvious and, although reconciliation satisfies our craving for happy endings and restores our hope that good can come out of the worst, it seems to me that Aristotle is right to hold that reconciliation is not a part of tragedy as such but remains extraneous to it. Happy, or conciliatory, endings also seem far more popular, if anything. Hence, if Aristotle were really concerned with audience ratings, so to speak, he ought to have opted for reconciliation dramas. Far from being merely concerned with reception, most of his criteria aim at the quality of the tragedy as such.

Hösele’s entire analysis, however, seems to be guided by his preferences for Hegelian *Kunstwerkästhetik*. This also becomes evident in his section on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The discussion of Nietzsche seems to go to unnecessary length into the controversy with Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. (96–106, about half of the section) Although the controversy is very intriguing, readers may like to see a deeper discussion of Nietzsche’s aesthetic instead. Hösle rejects Nietzsche’s degeneration aesthetics (*Verfallsästhetik*), which regards Aeschylus as the climax, Sopho-
cles as an intermediate stage, and Euripides as the degeneration of the tragic genre. (106) As Hösle considers Hegelian aesthetics to be unsurpassed, it may seem that Nietzsche’s aesthetics itself degenerates from that aesthetic climax. Ultimately Hösle’s Rangordnung does not seem so much to provide a litmus test for aesthetic theories; rather, the predetermined choice of aesthetic theory seems to guide the testing. One may well wonder whether the ranking is not a pseudo-problem and whether, pace Hösle, each of the three tragedians is not simply. Sure enough, if one regards superior morals (Sittlichkeit) as a prerequisite for becoming a protagonist in tragedy, then Euripides and his Medea do not stand a chance. But if one reads it as an attempt to make an ancient myth currently relevant, then its feminist undercurrent is astounding even now. (Although feminists should be loath to adopt a ruthless murdering sorceress such as Medea, there is much that amazes in how Euripides brings the mythical ideas and the conjugal drama down to earth and reflects on the exploitation of women.) Any ranking of tragedians, on the other hand, always brings up the questions: best for whom, in what era, and on what grounds? Answers will shift over time and always depend on aesthetic and moral presuppositions.

The final section looks back to Hösle’s early work mentioned above, Die Vollendung der Tragödie, intentionally or coincidentally in a manner similar to Nietzsche’s later preface to The Birth of Tragedy (“Versuch einer Selbstkritik”). The difference is that Hösle seems to speak far more affectionately and approvingly of his early self, the Grünschnabel (greenhorn) who composed that work in a mere three weeks. (115–16) Overall he seems quite satisfied with the position developed in his early twenties. He still advocates the main theses (Hauptthesen) and finds his textual interpretations in particular still convincing. (117) He reaffirms aesthetic progression (ästhetischen Fortschritt) in the Hegelian sense and still takes Sophocles as the climax of aesthetic development. (116) This might make one wonder if he does not tacitly agree with Nietzsche, then, that Euripides is the degeneration of the genre and so only disagrees as to where the height of tragic development should be located. One may also recall that belief in a progressive development (Fortschrittsgläube) was held against Aristotle, who sees tragedy as developing over time (43) and credits each tragic poet with introducing some novelties. This may seem to make Euripides the ultimate high point. Further, as I read him, Aristotle never claimed that
the development of tragedy had already come to an end. Be this as it may, unfortunately for the readers of his Rangordnung, Hösle seems to presuppose familiarity with his early 1984 work, because he gives few details regarding the reasoning behind his position, although he believes that he is explaining his view more clearly in the present text. Presumably, anyone really interested in further elucidation should try to locate Hösle’s Vollendung book.


_Review by Kristin Rodier, University of Alberta, and Emily Anne Parker, Santa Clara University_

A new translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s landmark feminist philosophical work of 1949, *Le deuxième sexe*, appeared in April of 2010. The 1949 two-volume Gallimard edition unprecedentedly raised the question of woman: what is the ethical status of this name? This dynamic question, Beauvoir notes, endures after centuries of changing political preoccupations, economic situations, religions and scientific revolutions. Beauvoir asks why women do not pose this question for themselves—in terms of their own lived singularity, as each woman exists for herself—but rather always according to ill-fitting and contradictory myths.

Retranslations of this philosophical text are inevitably important. After H.M. Parshley’s 1952 translation a series of errors came to light, but a lack of will on the part of Knopf and Random House publishing meant that they did not sign a deal to start a new translation until 2006. As translators Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier themselves point out, all translations become easily dated because of the inevitable traces of the translator’s own voice. If that is true, the Parshley translation is about as out of date as a bowler hat. On the other hand, new translations based on improvements in scholarship are always necessary to reintroduce a classic to new generations of readers who cannot read the text in its original language.

It has been argued that in 1929, in a car near Luxembourg Gardens, Simone de Beauvoir became convinced that she was not a philoso-