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Professor Kluge's examination of the Baroque marginalization of tragedy takes off from an analysis of the crucial role played by allegory in central fields of seventeenth-century culture such as political theory, education, mythography, literary criticism, and dramatic theory. The emergence of the term comedia as the generic designation of the drama is presented as intricately intertwined with the allegorical outlook dominating these fields, and, especially, as an effect of the ambiguous re-moralization of aesthetics that is also observable in the period's famous literary feuds. The Baroque terminological development must consequently be seen as a central element in the highly equivocal contemporary revitalization of the Christian aesthetic tradition as a countermeasure to cultural decadence. As La vida es sueño shows, the serious comedia is eminently concerned with the transfiguration of the tragic in its various forms of historical pessimism and the `tragic view of life', the moral tragedy of `neopagan' secularism, and, not the least, ancient tragedy as an authoritative art form. However, although tragedy may be marginalized on a terminological level, it is by no means absent from the serious Baroque comedia, which is a tragicomic theatrum mundi rather than a comedy in the Aristotelian sense of the term.

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