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# ARISTOTELIAN CONCEPTS: A STUDY OF TRAGIC VISION

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**ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY:** At first, Aristotle defined tragedy in Poetics around 330 BC. All other decisions related to tragedy followed by Aristotelian concept. Aristotle says, "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of a noble and complete action, having the proper magnitude; it employs language that has been artistically enhanced …; it is presented in dramatic, not narrative form, and achieves, through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such incidents." Several of these terms require explanation. "Imitation" (*mimesis*) does not refer wholly to acting out something on stage. Aristotle recognizes many forms of imitation including epic poetry (Homer), painting, song, and dance. "Noble, does not mean that the characters are necessarily of high moral standing or that they must always be kings, heroes, or gods: the title character of Euripides' *Medea* is a wicked sorceress who kills her own children. According to Hardison, the term could be translated as larger than life, majestic, or serious". [4]

Similarly, Leon Golden also views "Magnitude refers not to the greatness of the subject matter, as some have suggested, but to the appropriate length of a production." [5] Aristotle makes contrast the important deed of a play to an epic poem such as the *Iliad*. A story with the proper scale for drama can offer within two or three hours' performance time. As Steiner explains, "There is nothing self-ruled in the vision of tragedy. The royal and heroic characters that the gods, honor with their retribution are set higher than we are in the chain of being, and their style of expression must reflect this attitude." [6]

Aristotle describes the unusually tragedy in conditions of audience psychology; throughout the *Poetics,* he focuses on dramatic form, not its belongings on spectators. So, commentators like Else and Hardison think better of catharsis, not as the effect of tragedy on the spectator, but as the decree of dramatic worry within the plot. The dramatists talk incident, which arouse pity and fear for the protagonist, and course of the action.

**THE TRAGIC HERO:** "Aristotle makes the difference between tragedy which portrays people of high or noble character, and comedy, which imitates of low character."[7] Renaissance scholars unspoken this passage to mean that tragic characters must always be kings or princes. While comedy occupied with the working classes, but Aristotle was not talking about social or political distinctions. For him "character is strong-minded not by birth but by moral choice. A noble person is one who chooses to act nobly. Tragic


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characters are those who take life seriously and seek worthwhile goals, while comic characters are "good-for-nothings" who waste their lives in trivial pursuits". [8]

While Arthur Miller viewed, the common person is a potential subject for tragedy. It represented by the Greek chorus that normal humanity belongs on the sidelines in tragedy. The protagonist of tragedy always found larger than life. He is a person of action who determines to shake the world itself. The protagonist of tragedy is not a perfect; however, he witnesses a completely worthy person. His fall from fortune to disaster provokes moral indignation at an injustice. On the other hand, the downfall of a real villain cannot create pity. "The tragic hero, Aristotle says "between these extremes a person who is neither perfect in virtue and justice, nor one who falls into misfortune through vice and depravity, but one who succumbs through some miscalculation". [9]

**ARISTOTLE' S TRAGIC VISION:** "A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions." [10]

"Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action of high importance, complete and of some amplitude; in language better by diverse and varying beauties; acted not narrated; by means of pity and fear effectuating its purgation of these emotions." Excepting the famous concepts of "unit of time" (or length of tragedy) and "character's flaw" (or *hamartia*), probably there's not an extra concept or part in Aristotle's *Poetics* as puzzling and celebrated as the famous definition of tragedy. Gilbert Murray writes in his introduction to Bywater's Version of the Poetics, that the English language does not "work with a common store of ideas" and does not "relate to the same period of civilization" as it is found in the Greek". [11]

Really, it shows a problem in the definition of Aristotle regarding how to translate it, but how to read it. But, the most England, and American Aristotelians consent in the translation and even use the same translation. Consequences, Gerald F. Else, for exp, translate mimesis as imitation and spoudaios as "an action which is serious and complete." [12] (Argument: 221), as does L. J. Potts ("imitation," "an action of high value." and as does Lane Cooper, "An artistic imitation," "An action that is serious, complete in itself." [13]

Imitation in Aristotle's *Poetics* becomes "creation" (Plato and Aristotle: 75; Argument: 13) according to Prof. Else; "creative imagination" and "source of power" (Potts: 10) according to Prof. Potts; and "the copying by the poet or artist of the thing he has imagined." [14]

**IMITATION:** Many critics view that Plato used at first mimesis. However, the word *mimesis* does not have the same meaning, in Plato's *Republic* and in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Prof. Else takes the three categories of mimesis(a) "enacting a mime-like plot a mime-like character"; (b) "copying another person's action, or

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way of doing something"; and (c) "making a replica of something in an inanimate material (wood, etc.)," or copying (Plato and Aristotle: 26). ("Impersonation") and another in chapter 10 (10.595a-608d [Grube: XVIII, and Eden: 64]), Plato's general idea of imitation was "copying" [15] (Plato and Aristotle: 27; O. B. Hardison Jr: 93).

However, Aristotle did not use imitation as "copying". Somewhat he used it as (a) the "presence of the universal in the particular" (b) "creative imagination" (c) "recreation of life" and (d) "the artist's tool, alike a carpenter constructs who his objects" (Eden: 69). As differentiates Hardison, when we say, "That photograph is a fine likeness of John; it catches his character beautifully; and he should use it in the application form," "we are echoing the *Poetics*" (Hardison: 93). "Imitative works," adds Hardison, "if they are well done, reveal generic qualities—the presence of the universal in the particular." "Imitation," writes Potts, "means producing as accurately as possible the effect that a situation, or an experience, or a person, would produce in its true natural form, without the intrusion of extraneous or irrelevant accidents".[16]

ACTION: Other word in the famous definition that has puzzled scholars and critics is action. According to Aristotelians, action is (a) "a unit of life," "a unit of happening" (Potts: 71); (b) a "piece of life of serious interest" [17] (Fyfe: 14); "the process that takes place between the beginning and the end of the play" (Hardison: 114); and "purposeful action, striving toward a goal or a destination" (Plato and Aristotle: 104). " 'action' in Aristotle's sense is not 'activity'," Hardison notes, "or what the performers do on the stage, but something closer to 'process".[18]

**CATHARSIS:** After "interpreting" imitation and action, we are left to clause that refers to the function of tragedy "...carrying to completion, through a course of events involving pity and fear, the purification of those painful or fatal acts..." "...with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions" [19] (Bywater: 35); "...and archives, through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such pitiable and fearful incidents" (Hardison [Leon Golden's translation]"...through pity and fear it archives the purgation (catharsis) of such emotions".[20]

In translating Aristotle's definition, those four Aristotelian took two different directions in the translation of the famous word. On one hand, Professors Bywater and Else translated it as *purification*, and on the other hand, Professors Golden and Grube as *purgation* or *clarification*. In other words, to use Prof. Hardison's interpretation, Professors Bywater and Else "relate catharsis to the psychology of the spectator" rather than to Professors Golden and Grube's, who relate it to "what happens in tragedy itself"—that is, they relate "catharsis to incidents rather than to emotions".[21]

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