Nicholas Geoffrey Lemprière Hammond (1907-2001) was a giant among twentieth-century historians of ancient Greece and Macedonia and became the Nestor of his discipline. His vast output includes important topographical studies of e.g. Epirus as well as biographies of Philip II of Macedonia and of Alexander the Great. His work on ancient Macedonia, in particular, was monumental and inspired: he was the first to suggest that Vergina was in fact ancient Aigeai, the capital of the Macedonian kingdom, a theory which was sensationally confirmed by the subsequent discovery of the royal tombs there. *A History of Macedonia* I-III which he produced in collaboration with G.T. Griffith and F.W. Walbank remains a landmark study. The present 'rearranged' translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* is a testimony to another of his many interests, the ancient Greek theatre.

ARISTOTLE

Poetics

Rearranged, abridged and translated
for better understanding
by the general reader

by

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Contents

Foreword

In many fields of knowledge Aristotle was and is today an outstanding figure. He possessed the acutest powers of observation and analysis, and he applied the systematic method of definition and classification to the study of biology, physics, logic, ethics, metaphysics and literature. His writings, however, at least in the form in which they have come down to us, are far from systematic in arrangement and far from clear in exposition. The discrepancy between his scientific method and his literary manner is probably to be explained on the hypothesis that the notes, on which his lectures at the Academy were based, were published in the form in which they were found after his death.

The *Poetics* is a case in point. The arrangement of the argument is often haphazard. For example, a technical term is frequently used in one chapter and defined in a subsequent chapter; literary forms, such as tragedy and epic, are distinguished from one another, but the treatment of them is intermingled; and the summary of contents does not correspond in order to the unfolding of the argument. In consequence, the treatise is often confusing to the scholar and to the layman.

In this version the text has been so rearranged that it makes the argument clear. For example, the treatment of traditional stories by the playwright occurs in three separate places in the Greek text (1451 b 19 ff., 1453 b 22 ff., and 1455 a 34 ff.). In my version I have placed them together in my Section XI. I have omitted two passages of the original (1456 b 20 – 1458 a 17 and 1458 b 24 – 1459 a 2), because a knowledge of Greek is needed and I am writing for a general reader. The headings which I have added are printed in heavier type to distinguish them from the translation. When references are given, they

are to the Greek text of the Oxford Classical Text edited by
I. Bywater in 1911.[1]

The style of Aristotle is direct, concise and close to the
ordinary speech of his day. The style of the translation is
intended to be similar. Aristotle's method of exposition is
marked in detail by some idioms of connection and arrange-
ment which are alien to us; for example, he may omit a step
in the argument, recapitulate in an apparently redundant
manner (as Euclid does in concluding a theorem in geo-
metry), and, after making two statements, explain the latter
statement first and the former statement second. In the
translation these idioms of exposition have been abandoned,
and the normal practice of our day has been adopted.

The chapters and the sections of the translation are num-
bered for the rearranged text. The numbers do not corre-
spond to the numbers of the chapters and the sections of the
Oxford Classical Text, or to those of the edition in the Loeb
Classical Library. The key to the arrangement of the text is
given at the end of the translation.

Short Bibliography

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Poetics

Contents

I. Summary of contents

Our subject is the nature and the forms of poetry; the force and the function of each form of poetry; the parts of a poem, their number and their characteristics; the proper arrangement of the plot if the poem is to succeed, and all the other matters related to this enquiry. In expounding our subject let us follow the order of nature and begin with first principles.

II. The nature of poetry

On the whole poetry seems to have arisen from two causes, both inherent in man's nature. The first is that from childhood man has an instinct for representation (indeed man is *distinguished from the rest of the animal world in that he is* most given to representation and learns his first lessons through representation). The second is that all men take pleasure in representation.

The reason for their pleasure is that to learn something is most pleasurable not only to philosophers but also to all men alike (although the others' share in learning is small). The truth of this is obvious when we consider what happens in the case of works of art. Men take pleasure in looking at pictures, because, as they do so, they learn and ponder what each thing is – saying, for instance, "that is so and so" (of course, if one has never seen the subject, the picture will cause pleasure not as a representation but because of the treatment or the colour or some other aspect). Indeed, when the subject is one which is painful to see in real life – a corpse or a most foul beast –, the most accurate portrayal of it gives us pleasure.

We were then endowed from the beginning with the instinct of representation and with the sense of tune and rhythm (including, of course, metres as divisions of rhythm). These in particular were gradually developed by men until from their improvisations they brought poetry to birth.

III. The forms of poetry

Poetry split into different genres in accordance with the characters of the poets. The serious poets represented noble actions and the acts of noble persons, and the lighter poets represented the acts of inferior persons; while others wrote hymns and songs of praise, they wrote satires. Of satires we have no examples before Homer, but probably Homer had many predecessors. If we start with Homer, we have such poems as his *Margites*,[2] in which the iambic metre was used because it was suitable; it is still called "iambic" because it is the metre in which they used to revile (iambizon) one another. Satires, then, were written by some of the early poets and epic poetry by others. Homer was the master of both. Pre-eminent as a poet of noble themes – which he alone treated not only well but in dramatic form – he also indicated first the principles of comedy, representing in dramatic form not the satirical but the ridiculous. His *Margites* provides the analogy; it bears the same relation to our comedies as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* do to our tragedies.

In due course tragedy and comedy were clearly differentiated. Poets then turned to one or the other, writing comedy instead of satire and tragedy instead of epic; – their choice being determined by their own qualities of character; for epic and tragedy are higher and more honourable forms of art than lampoon and comedy.

IV. The quality common to the forms of poetry

The common factor in the forms of poetry – epic, tragedy, comedy and dithyrambic poetry – and most forms of flute-playing and lyre-playing[3] is that they are all, in a general manner of speaking, representational. The common factor is not metre, as men imply in associating a writer with his metre as an "elegiac poet" or an "epic poet". In so doing they give the title of poet indiscriminately to those who employ a par-

ticular metre, instead of confining the title to those whose art is representational.

They are in the habit of calling any writer of a medical or scientific treatise in metre a poet, but in fact Homer and Empedocles[4] have nothing in common except the metre, so that one should call Homer a poet and Empedocles a physicist rather than a poet. In the same way, even if a writer mixes all the metres, as Chaeremon[5] did in his poem "The Centaur", which was a medley of all metres, one should still call him a poet.

It is true that there is as yet no comprehensive term for the representational arts which employ words whether in verse or prose or both intermingled or one kind of verse only. There is, for example, no general name for the mimes of Sophron[6] and Xenarchus[7], the Platonic dialogues and poems in iambics or elegiacs or any other metre. Nevertheless, my definition in this matter is to be accepted.

V. The differences between the forms of poetry

The forms of poetry differ in three respects, namely the means of representation, the subject of representation and the manner of representation (for these are generically different).

Colour and form are the means by which painters represent a variety of subjects, achieving likenesses through artistic skill and sometimes through long practice, and voice is the instrument of other artists. Rhythm, speech and music are the means which all the arts we are discussing employ in order to make their representations. These means are employed either singly or together. Rhythm and music alone are employed in the playing of the flute and the lyre and in any other arts of the same sort, such as the playing of the pipes. Rhythm itself without music constitutes the means of representation in the arts of dancing, where pattern of rhythmical movements enables dancers to represent characters, calamities and actions. All three – in the form for instance of

movement, song and verse – are used by some arts, such as dithyrambic poetry,[8] nomic poetry,[9] tragedy and comedy – the difference between them being that movement, song and verse are used together by some and one at a time by others. These then are the differences between the arts, I say, as regards the means of representation.

However, so long as men in action enact the representation, spectacle and staging are necessarily a part of any tragedy, just as diction and song are, since they are the means of representation.

The subjects of representation are men in action. Now these men must be either good or bad (for character nearly always falls into these two categories alone, since all men's characters vary in degree of goodness and badness), they must be either better than we are or worse than we are or such as we are. Compare the painters. Polygnotus[10] depicted men better than we are, Pauson[11] worse than we are, and Dionysius[12] such as we are. This distinction will apply to each of the representational arts which we have mentioned; one will accordingly differ from another in representing different subjects. It is possible for these distinctions to be made also in dancing, flute-playing and lyre-playing; and again in oratory and in prose. To give examples from verse writers, Homer represents men better than we are, and Cleophon[13] men like ourselves, while Hegemon[14] of Thasos, the pioneer of parody, and Nicochares,[15] author of *The Poltrooniad*, represented men worse than we are. And the same distinction applies to dithyrambic and nomic poets, for one might represent Cyclopes as Timotheus[16] and Philoxenus[17] did. This is the point of distinction which separates tragedy from comedy. For the aim of tragedy is to represent men better than we are today, and the aim of comedy is to represent men worse than we are today – worse, yes, but not utterly bad. For the laughable is only one aspect of badness, consisting as it does in some ridiculous error or ugliness which is neither

harmful nor fatal. The example which springs to mind is the comic mask, somewhat ugly and distorted but not painful. Since tragedy represents men better than we are, the good portrait painters should be our model. They render the individual traits of the sitter and they make a likeness, yet they paint him better than he is. The poet should do likewise; in representing men of passion and of phlegm or of such qualities of character, he should give them such traits but at the same time make them men of worth. For example, take Agathon's[18] and Homer's representation of Achilles as a study in harshness of character.

A third point of distinction is the manner in which each subject may be represented. For, even when the means and the subjects of representation are the same, the manner may be different; for one may speak in the first person throughout, or one may report partly in narrative and partly through the speech of a character, as Homer does, or one may make the characters act and initiate throughout.

As we said at the outset, the art of representation comprises these three points of difference – the means of representation, the subjects of representation and the manner of representation. As representational artists, therefore, Sophocles[19] is in the same category as Homer, because they both represent good men, and in the same category as Aristophanes[20], because they both represent men in action on the stage.

VI. The origin and the growth of tragedy and comedy
The Dorians lay claim to tragedy and comedy on the ground that they are called by some "dramas" because they represent men in action (drontas). The Dorian word for action they point out is dran, while the Athenian word is prattein. The birth of tragedy is claimed by several Dorian communities in the Peloponnese. In regard to comedy, the comic actors were named komodoi, they claim, not from the revelling (ko-

mazein) but from the villages (komai), where the wandering players performed, being rejected by the towns. For the Dorians call the villages komai, whereas the Athenians call them demoi. Among the Dorians the strongest claim is made by the Megarians both of Greece proper and of Sicily; comedy, they say, originated in Megara when a democracy was established, and Megara Hyblaea was the birthplace of Epicharmus[21] the poet who was much earlier than Chionides[22] and Magnes.[23]

Both tragedy and comedy were originally improvised – tragedy from the utterances of those who initiate the dithyramb, and comedy from the utterances of those who initiate the phallic song[24] (still practised today in many states). As men gradually developed those parts of which the form became clear, tragedy itself grew to full stature. Tragedy then underwent many changes until it found its natural form and then it changed no more. For example, it changed quite late from the "Satyr" chorus;[25] short plots and comic fiction were then discarded; longer plots and dignified diction took their place; and the tetrameter metre was replaced by the iambic metre. Of the metres the tetrameter was employed because poetry in such a metre was better fitted to the Satyr theme and dancing. On the other hand, when the spoken word was introduced, nature herself found the appropriate metre. For the iambus, being the most conversational of all metres, is best fitted to dialogue (for instance, in ordinary conversation we speak mainly in iambics but rarely in hexameters, indeed only if we depart from the conversational level). To take another example, the number of actors was raised from one to two by Aeschylus[26] first (for he diminished the part of the chorus and made the dialogue carry the action as the protagonist); and from two to three by Sophocles who also developed scene-painting.[27] Similar changes took place in the number of acts, indeed we may pass over the traditional development of the other aspects of tragedy to their present

pitch of elaboration, since it would perhaps take a long time to describe them all individually. It is also outside our scope to consider whether tragedy has reached full maturity in its forms, both as literature and as drama.

Whereas we know the stages of tragedy's growth and the names of those responsible for them, this is not so in comedy. Comedy was not originally an art form. It received recognition from the state quite late,[28] when the magistrates provided a chorus for the poet; but even then members of the chorus were volunteers. Thus we do not know who introduced masks or who introduced prologues, who increased the number of actors and so forth. When the poets of comedy are first mentioned, comedy already had certain conventions. Plot-making came in first from Sicily (through the work of Epicharmus[29] and Phormis[30]), and the general change from the lampooning form to dialogue and plot was made by Crates[31] first among the poets of Athens.

VII. The nature and the parts of tragedy
We turn now to tragedy. Let us first draw off from what we have already said in definition of its essence. A tragedy is a representation of an action which is noble and complete and of a certain magnitude; a tragedy uses ornate speech (each style of speech being used separately in the various parts of the play). A tragedy is presented by men in action and not by narrative. A tragedy arouses pity and fear and thereby effects a purgation of these and similar emotions.

Every tragedy must have six parts. Its quality depends on the quality of these parts, namely plot, character, thought (these three being the subjects represented), diction (this being the manner of representation), song and spectacle (these being means of representation). By "plot" I mean in this case the arrangement of the incidents; by "character" I mean that which determines for us the quality of those who are acting; and by "thought" I mean passages where men

prove and point the argument or pronounce an opinion. Of these three "plot" is the part which represents the action. For, while tragedy is itself a representation of an action and is enacted by men in action, "character" and "thought" are the parts which determine the qualities of the men in action. For when we refer to actions being of a certain quality, we really mean the "character" and the "thought" which prompt it, since these two are the causes of every action and it is men's actions which lead to success or failure.

The arrangement of the incidents then is the most important of the six parts. For it must be emphasised that a tragedy is a representation not of men but of action, of life, of faring well or ill (which turns on action); and that the object of tragedy is to represent a piece of action and not a quality. For, while men's qualities correspond to their characters, their faring well or ill corresponds to their actions. To put it another way, men do not act in order to represent character, but qualities of character emerge as a result of their actions. In short the aim of tragedy is the expression of the incidents and plot, and the aim is always the most important of all. The plot then is the beginning and, as it were, the soul of tragedy.

Character is secondary. Compare painting, wherein the smearing of the most beautiful colours at random gives less pleasure than a likeness drawn in black and white. Further, a tragedy cannot dispense with action but it can dispense with character; for a tragedy is a representation of action and it is for that reason mainly that it represents men in action. Indeed most of our younger tragedians write tragedies devoid of character, and this is a general feature of many creative artists[32] – among painters, for instance, Zeuxis[33] as compared with Polygnotus;[34] for Zeuxis' painting has no character, while Polygnotus is a good portrayer of character. Again, suppose someone writes a string of speeches which illustrate qualities of character with excellent diction and thought. He will not achieve the function of tragedy as well as a play

which has a plot and an arrangement of episodes although it may be inferior in diction and in thought. A further proof is that the would-be tragedian masters diction and character before he masters the arrangement of the incidents; this was indeed the case of almost all the earliest poets.

Character (as we have said) comes second. Character is that which portrays choice, indicating what sort of thing a man chooses or rejects in a situation where the course is not obvious. There is thus no "character" in speeches which are entirely devoid of any issue involving choice or rejection on the part of the speaker.

Third is "thought". It occurs in speeches which demonstrate that something is or is not so or which pronounce a belief of general validity. It consists in the ability to express the points at issue and the appropriate course in any situation. This is indeed the aim of the statesman's or the orator's art in speech-making, and that is why the ancient poets made their speakers speak like statesmen and the modern poets make them speak like orators.

Fourth is "diction", that is the expression of meaning in words and the setting of words to metre; the former is common to verse and prose.

Of the rest "song" is the greatest of the sweeteners. To song I attach its general and obvious meaning.

Lastly "spectacle". Fear and pity may be aroused by the setting of the stage, but it may also be aroused by the actual arrangement of the incidents and this is to be preferred as the mark of the better poet. Indeed the plot should be so constructed that even without seeing the play a man who hears of the sequence of events will shudder with fear and pity at what happens. This would be the experience of anyone who heard the plot of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. But to obtain this effect by means of spectacle is less artistic and depends upon the help of the producer. Those who use spectacle to obtain an effect which is not terrifying but monstrous have nothing

to do with tragedy; for one must not look for every form of pleasure from tragedy but only the pleasure appropriate to tragedy. The poet then should afford the pleasure which results from pity and fear, and he should do so by means of the representation. Therefore it is obvious that this quality should be inherent in the incidents themselves.

Finally "spectacle" may transport the imagination but it is the least artistic and the least relevant of the poet's art – the least artistic because the skill of the carpenter matters more than the art of the poet in gaining spectacular effects, and the least relevant because the power of a tragedy is not dependent on staging and production.

VIII. The plot

Having made these definitions, we may next discuss the question, how to make a proper arrangement of the incidents, since this is the first and the most important element in a tragedy.

We have already defined tragedy as the representation of an action which is complete and whole and which has also a certain magnitude, for a thing may be whole and yet have no magnitude. Now to be whole is to have a beginning, a middle and an end. A beginning is that which of necessity does not follow something else and of its very nature must be followed by some event or happening. An end is just the opposite; of its very nature it must follow something else either inevitably or generally so, and it must not be followed by anything else. A middle is that which follows something and is succeeded by something. Well-constructed plots should then not begin casually nor end casually. They should follow the principle we have stated.

Our next point is that in every case a beautiful object, whether it be animate or inanimate, which consists of certain parts, must not only have its parts duly arranged but must also be of a certain magnitude. For beauty consists of size and arrangement, so that a very tiny animal cannot be beautiful to us, since our sight becomes blurred as we approach something hardly perceptible, and a very large animal – say one 400 miles long – cannot be beautiful to us, since our sight of it is not complete but, even as we look at it, the animal in its entirety escapes our sight. Animals, then, and structures, to be beautiful, must have a certain size and that size must be well within the scope of the eye. Likewise a plot, to be beautiful, must have a certain length and that length must be well within the scope of the memory.

One limit for the length of a tragedy is alien to our treatise, for it is fixed by the conditions of production and competition in the dramatic festival. For example, if a hundred tragedies had to be played during the competition, they would be regulated by the clock[35] as indeed they are said to have been at one time. On the other hand, there is a natural limit for the length of the action; provided that it is comprehensible as a whole, the longer the action the more beautiful it is. As a general definition we may say that the proper limit is one which permits a change from bad fortune to good fortune, or from good fortune to bad fortune through a sequence of events which occur in accordance with necessity or with probability.

A plot does not, as some suppose, have unity when it concerns one person. For many, indeed innumerable things happen to an individual and yet some of them do not constitute any unity at all; and an individual makes many acts, but they do not constitute any single action. In the other representational arts unity of representation lies in the unity of the subject. So too in tragedy, which represents an action, the unity lies in the unity and the completeness of the action, of which the component incidents must be so arranged that the alteration or the withdrawal of one incident distorts and destroys the whole. For, if its presence or absence makes no visible difference, it is not a part of the whole.

It follows then that the dramatic poet should be rather the creator of plots than the creator of verses, inasmuch as representation is his form of creative art and what he represents is actions. Further, it follows from our statements that his task is not to relate actual events but to write the sort of things which may happen and are possible in accordance with probability or necessity. (Of course, if a poet happens to write of historical events, he is not thereby less of a poet; for nothing prevents some historical events from being such as may probably occur and so what can occur, and it is in bringing out this aspect of them that he is a creative artist). The distinction is clear if we compare the historian with the poet. The difference between them is not that one writes prose and the other verse (for turn the prose of Herodotus[36] into verse and it would none the less be a history whether in prose or verse), but that one relates actual events and the other the sort of things which may happen. History in short tells us of individual facts and poetry tells us rather of general truths. By individual facts I mean what Alcibiades did or what Alcibiades suffered. By general truths I mean the sort of thing a particular sort of person in certain circumstances says or does in accordance with probability or necessity. It is just because of this difference that poetry is more intellectual and more excellent than history.

Again, the actions with which history generally is concerned are those which, of their very nature, illustrate not a single action but the happenings of a single period. Between these happenings to one or more individuals there is a purely fortuitous relationship. For example, the battle of Salamis and the battle against Carthage in Sicily took place at the same time but did not conduce to the same result; and this is sometimes true of events in a continuum of time, namely that they occur one after another but do not lead to any single result. In poetry, however, and especially in dramatic poetry the plot should be concerned with a single action, whole and complete in itself, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and designed, like a single and complete living organism, to create its own form of pleasure.

IX. The naming of characters

In assigning names to characters poetry aims at expressing a general truth, that is at expressing the sort of things a particular sort of person in certain circumstances says or does in accordance with probability or necessity. This is obviously the case in comedy; for the plot is constructed out of probable incidents and the names of the characters are fortuitous, whereas satirists write about the particular individual. On the other hand tragedy clings to historical names. The reason is that historical events are obviously possible (for they would not have happened, had they been impossible) and it is the possible which is probable and therefore convincing; whereas in the case of events which have not happened we are not convinced that they can happen.

X. Illogicalities

If an author has to choose, he should prefer an impossible probability to an improbable possibility. His plot should not be composed of illogical elements. Ideally, it should contain nothing illogical. Failing that, anything illogical should be outside the story as related in the play (for example in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the fact that Oedipus does not know the manner of Laius' death). It should not be in the play itself (for example, in the *Electra*[37] the messenger's report of the Pythian Games, or in the *Mysians*[38] the man who came from Tegea to Mysia without speaking). In such a situation it is laughable to say "if the illogical element is removed, the plot will be destroyed". Plots of such a kind should not be constructed in the first place. It is quite absurd if, when such a plot is constructed, a more logical development appears possible.

XI. Traditional stories

Traditional stories such as the murder of Clytemnestra by Orestes or of Eriphyle by Alcmaeon[39] should not be distorted but should be used artistically by the poet, so that he deploys his inventive talent. At the same time, one should not seek at all costs to cling to the traditional stories, with which tragedies in general are concerned. It would indeed be absurd to do so, since the "well-known" is known to few and yet delights one and all. In some tragedies the well-known names are only one or two, the remainder being fictitious. In other tragedies there is no well-known name. An example is Agathon's *Antheus*, in which names and incidents are alike fictitious, but it is none the less a delightful play.[40]

Whether a playwright has chosen a traditional story or one of his own making, his first task is to set it down in general outline. As an example I take the story of Iphigeneia and suggest the following general outline. "A girl is sacrificed, and disappears from the sight of the sacrificers, and she is set in another land where it is customary to sacrifice strangers to the Goddess. Of this Goddess she becomes the priestess. Sometime later her brother happens to come there (the fact that he came in obedience to an order issued by the God Apollo for a certain reason, and the object of his coming are not integral to the general outline). On his coming he is arrested. As he is about to be sacrificed, he brings about the recognition as in the plays of Euripides[41] and Polyidus[42] in accordance with probability by remarking "It seems that I, as well as my sister, am destined to be sacrificed". And so he is saved. When the general outline is completed and not before, one should add the names, expand the story and insert the episodes, taking care that the episodes are appropriate such as the madness which leads to Orestes' arrest and the purification which enables him to escape.

XII. Plots

Plots divide into two classes, the "simple" and the "complex", just as the actions which the plots represent are immediately divisible into two such classes. By a "simple" action I mean an action which, being single and continuous in the sense of our definition, undergoes the transition without a "reversal of fortune" or a "discovery"; and by a "complex" action I mean an action in which the transition coincides with a "discovery" or with a "reversal of fortune" or with both.

Of the simple plots and actions the "episodic" ones are worst. By an "episodic" plot I mean a plot in which the sequence of the episodes is not in accordance with probability or necessity. Episodic plays are made by bad poets because they are bad, and by good poets to please the actors; for, writing as they do for a dramatic competition, they expand the plot beyond its capacity and often yield to the necessity of distorting its continuity. Since tragedy is a representation not only of a complete action but also of events which inspire fear and pity, the best arrangement of the incidents is an arrangement in which the incidents occur one in consequence of another and yet are contrary to expectation. In this way the amazement of the spectators will be greater than if the incidents occur fortuitously and spontaneously. As a matter of fact, of the events which do occur fortuitously those cases cause most amazement which appear to have happened, as it were, of set purpose. For instance, during a festival at Argos the statue of Mitys fell on the man responsible for Mitys' death and killed him. Such events seem not to be random accidents. The better plots, then, of the simple type should be constructed on such lines.

In the "complex" plots the transition, reversal and discovery should arise from the actual structure of the plot, so that they ensue either of necessity or in accordance with probability from what has already occurred. There is a world

of difference between what happens *propter hoc* and what happens *post hoc*.

XIII. Reversals and discoveries

A "reversal" is a change of the situation into the opposite, as we have defined it, and this too should accord, as we say, with necessity or with probability. The *Oedipus Tyrannus* gives us an example. A man comes to cheer Oedipus and to allay his fears about his mother; but he shows Oedipus who he is, and thereby reverses the situation. In the *Lynceus*,[43] too, one man is led off to execution and Danaus follows as executioner, but the antecedent events lead to the result that he escapes and Danaus is killed.

A "discovery", as the word implies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge. It may be made between persons who are set for prosperity or adversity, and lead to friendship or hatred. As a discovery in this sense is a recognition between persons, it may be one-sided only, A recognising B when A's identity is obvious, or it may be mutual, each having to recognise the other. For example, Iphigeneia was recognised by Orestes through the sending of the letter and Orestes by Iphigeneia through a separate process. There are also other kinds of discovery. The change from ignorance to knowledge, as we have said, may be in relation to inanimate objects and in relation to circumstances. Then too one may discover that someone has done or not done something.

Of "discovery" the best are those which coincide with reversal, as for example in the discovery in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. It is most integral to the plot and most integral to the action. Such a discovery linked with a reversal will move pity and fear, and such actions are by our definition the very subject which tragedy sets out to represent. Moreover, such actions as these will result in adversity and in prosperity.

Reversal and discovery are the two parts of the plot which serve this purpose, and they constitute the best means of transporting the audience. "Calamity" is a third. Of the three reversal and discovery have been defined. "Calamity" is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, acute suffering, wounding and so on.

XIV. Character

In regard to character the playwright should have four aims. The first and most important is that the characters should be good. Now, since character is revealed, as we have said, by a choice which is made manifest in the dialogue or in the action, a good character will be revealed by a good choice. Goodness, however, is relative to each class of person. A woman and a slave may both be good in this sense, although perhaps a woman is an inferior and a slave is entirely worthless. The second is that the characters should be appropriate. There is, for example, a manly character, which is appropriate, but for a womanly character to be manly or forceful is inappropriate. The third is that the characters should be like to those which tradition portrays, and this is different from making the character good and appropriate in our sense of the words. The fourth is that the characters should be consistent. Even when the subject of the representation is inconsistent and affords an inconsistency of character, he should still be consistently inconsistent.

An example of unnecessary badness of character is Menelaus in *Orestes;* of unseemliness and inappropriateness Odysseus lamenting in *Scylla* and Melanippe declaiming; of inconsistency Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, for the suppliant Iphigeneia is not at all like the Iphigeneia of the latter part of the play.[44]

In the drawing of character, as in the arrangement of the incidents, one should always aim at a necessary or probable sequence, so that for such and such a man to do so and so is necessary or probable and for this to follow that is necessary or probable.

XV. Thought

"Thought" and "speech" still remain to be discussed. The definition of thought and its aspects, which I have given in my treatise on Rhetoric, should be accepted; for this subject is more appropriate to the scope of that enquiry. "Thought" comprises all the effects which are to be aroused by the spoken word. These effects may be subdivided into exposition, refutation, exaggeration, depreciation and, above all, the stirring of emotions such as pity, fear, anger and the like. Whenever one has to gain the effect of pity or horror or exaggeration or probability, one should make use of thought on the same principles as one applies to the arrangement of the incidents. There is, however, this difference that some effects should be made manifest without any exposition at all, while other effects are aroused in the course of the speeches by the speaker and these are due to the speech itself. This is correct, for a speaker has no function, if his character is made manifest in the appropriate manner even without a speech. But on the subject of thought reference should be made to my definitions in the treatise on Rhetoric, to which this matter is more relevant than to the subject of Poetry.

XVI. Diction

The subject of diction includes the study of the modes of speech – what is, for instance, a question, an answer, a command, a prayer, a narration, a threat, a question, an answer and so forth. To know these forms of speech is an essential part of the actor's skill; it concerns the man who possesses the master art in such a field, namely the art of rhetoric. But, so far as the art of the poet is concerned, to know them or not to know them is hardly any reflection on the poet and certainly not any reflection worthy of serious consideration. No one would suppose that the passage which Protagoras[45] censured to be faulty, simply because, when Homer had a prayer in mind, he uttered a command in the

words "Sing of the wrath, O Goddess". For Protagoras' objection was that to order someone to do or not to do a thing is a command. This part, therefore of the study of diction may be omitted as it belongs properly to another art and not to the art of Poetry.

XVII. Forms of tragedy

There are four forms of tragedy, corresponding to the number of parts we have mentioned, namely the complex play of which the sum and centre is reversal and discovery; the calamity play, of which we have examples in the plays entitled *Ajax*[46] and *Ixion*[47] by various authors; the character play, of which we have examples in *The Women of Phthiotis*[48] and in *Peleus;*[49] and fourth the spectacle play, of which we have examples in the *Phorcides*[50] and in *Prometheus*[51] and in all plays which contain scenes of the underworld. Ideally, one should try to include all the forms; failing that, one should try to include as many forms as one can and those the best. This is the more necessary nowadays as poets are unfairly criticised. For, since past poets have each excelled at one form, the critics now demand that a single playwright should surpass the special merit of each of his predecessors.

In every tragedy there is a "complication" and an "unravelling". The complication is often formed by incidents which are outside the play and by some of the incidents inside the play, and the unravelling is formed by the remainder of the play. To explain what I mean, the complication is that part of the play which extends from the beginning to the point where the transition from adversity to prosperity or from prosperity to adversity commences; and the unravelling is that part which extends from the beginning of the transition to the end of the play. The *Lynceus*[52] of Theodectes affords an illustration. The antecedents, the arrest of the boy and again the arrest of the protagonists form the complica-

tion, and the rest of the play from the demand for the death-sentence to the end is the unravelling.

Now the unravelling of the plot should obviously result from the plot itself. It should not be brought about by divine intervention, as for instance by the *deus ex machina*[53] in *Medea* or by the goddess in the embarkation scene in the *Iliad*. The *deus ex machina* has indeed its uses; but it should be employed only for events outside the play, that is to say either for antecedent events, which a human being could not know, or for subsequent events, which need a prophetic view and utterance. This is logical, for we grant that the gods see all things. On the other hand, in the incidents there should be nothing illogical; and should anything illogical be necessary, it should be outside the play, as for instance in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*.[54]

Tragedies which have the same complication and un-ravelling should be classed together. For no classification perhaps is as just as the classification by plot. Many play-wrights complicate well but unravel badly. One should al-ways master both.

XVIII. Formal divisions of a tragedy

We have now spoken of the parts of a tragedy, describing the forms they should employ. The separable parts, into which tragedy may be divided on a quantitative basis, are the following: prologue, episode, exode and lyric, the last being divided into parode and stasimon. The prologue is all that precedes the entry of the chorus; the episode all that comes between the entirely choral songs; the exode that which is not followed by a choral song; of the lyric the parodos is the first utterance of the whole chorus, and the stasimon a choral song in which there are no anapaests or trochees. These are common to all plays, whereas songs sung from the stage and "commoi" are peculiar to individual plays. A commos is a lament from the stage and also by the chorus. These, then, are the separable sections into which tragedy may be divided on a quantitative basis, and we have described above the parts of a tragedy which must be employed by the playwright.

XIX. The tragic hero

The next stage is to say what the playwright should aim at and what he should avoid in constructing the plot of his play and upon what sources he should draw to achieve the function of tragedy.

The structure of the best tragedy should be not simple but complex,[55] and in addition it should represent events which arouse pity and fear, this being a peculiar feature of such representative art. It clearly follows from this that one should not show men of excellence passing from prosperity to adversity, since that does not excite fear and pity but disgust; nor villainous men passing from adversity to prosperity, which is the least tragical of all, since it has none of the appropriate effects, exciting neither sympathy nor pity nor fear; nor again a thoroughly bad man passing from prosperity to adversity, for although such an arrangement might satisfy our feelings, yet it would not excite pity or fear. For we feel pity when a man does not deserve adversity, and we feel fear when a man is like us. The fate, then, of the utterly bad man will not excite pity or fear.

We are left with the man who is intermediate between those we have mentioned. He is such a one as is not pre-eminent in virtue and righteousness; who falls into adversity not because of vice and villainy but because of some fault in character or judgement; and who is one of those who are in high repute and in great prosperity, such as Oedipus and Thyestes[56] and the leading men of such families. The good plot should, of course, have a single rather than a double issue, as some say, meaning that the play ends in opposite ways for the good and the bad characters. A single issue should be a change not from adversity to prosperity but from

prosperity to adversity, brought on not by villainy but by a great fault in a man who is such as we have described or who is rather superior to us than inferior. This theory is supported by our experience. At first the poets ran through the plots which came their way. Nowadays the best tragedies are written about members of a few families, such as Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager,[57] Thyestes, Telephus[58] and all those others who happened to suffer or commit terrible things. The best tragedy by artistic standards being of this construction, the critics are mistaken in accusing Euripides of writing about a few families and ending most of his plays in adversity. His procedure is indeed correct, as we have said, and there is a signal proof that it is so. Successful plays of this construction, when produced on the stage at a competitive festival, prove to be the most tragical, and among the tragedians Euripides proves to be the master of tragical effects although his handling of the other aspects of a play is not good.

We accord the second place to plays constructed with a double issue, which end in opposite ways for good and bad characters. Some accord the first place to such plays. They do so in deference to the weakness of the audience, and the playwrights in writing wishful plays of this kind pander to the sentimentality of the spectators. But the happy ending affords the pleasure appropriate to comedy rather to tragedy. For in a comedy the direct enemies in the story, such as Orestes and Aegisthus,[59] become friends and go off at the end without anyone being killed by anybody.

There is also the case where the wise but wicked character, like Sisyphus,[60] is outwitted and the brave but unjust character is defeated. This is tragical in effect and satisfies our feelings, so that those who write this type of play, whether it be complex or simple in plot, achieve their aims surprisingly well. It is natural too, as Agathon[61] says, for it is natural that many things should turn out contrary to one's natural expectations.

XX. Tragic acts

Although it is possible to arouse pity and fear by the spectacular effects of the stage, the superior method and the mark of the better poet is to do so by the arrangement of the incidents. Indeed the plot should be so constructed that even a man who does not see the play but is only told that the incidents have occurred will be shaken with fear and will be moved to pity by the events. Anyone who is told the story of Oedipus will react in this way. On the other hand, to contrive this by spectacular effects is inartistic in the playwright, and its success depends upon the producer's resources; and to produce by these means a scene which does not excite fear but is simply prodigious is completely alien to tragedy. For we should not expect to derive all sorts of pleasure but only the sort appropriate to tragedy from tragedy.

As the poet should use the art of representation to provide the pleasure which results from feeling pity and fear, and as the incidents should obviously contain the qualities which inspire pity and fear, let us now take up the question: what sort of occurrences seem to be fearful, or what sort of occurrences seem to be pitiable? Such acts must take place either between persons related by blood or friendship, or between enemies, or between persons who are neither related nor enemies. Suppose an enemy acts so towards an enemy, there is nothing pitiable either in the act or in the intention, apart from the actual calamity. Nor is there, if the parties are neither enemies nor related. But when calamities occur between related persons, for instance if brother kills brother, or son father, or mother son, or son mother in fact or in intention or commits some comparable act – that is the situation which we want.

We must now state more clearly what we mean by a "skilful" treatment of the incidents in a situation of this kind. The action may be developed in the manner of the early dramatists, the participants acting consciously and deliberate-

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ly just as in Euripides' play Medea kills her children. Or they may act without realising the horror of the act and then discover the relationship afterwards, as Oedipus does in Sophocles' play. In this case, it is true, the act lies outside the play, but the act may occur in the course of the tragedy, as it does with Alcmaeon[62] son of Astydamas or with Telegonus[63] in *The Wounded Odysseus*. Or – and this is the third possibility – one may intend to perpetrate some irreparable act in ignorance and discover the truth before one acts. There is no other possibility; for they must either act or not act, either knowing or not knowing. Of these possibilities the least effective is to intend in knowledge and not to act; this is shocking and not tragical, since there is no calamity, and that is why no one does it consistently, though one may occasionally, as for example in the case of Haemon and Creon in *Antigone*. Next worst is to intend in knowledge and to act. It is more effective to act in ignorance and after the act to discover the truth; for the shocking quality is absent, and the discovery is striking. The last course is best. I mean as it is in *Cresphontes*,[64] when Merope intends to kill her son, and does not kill him but discovers the truth, and in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, when the same happens between sister and brother, and in *Helle*,[65] when the son intends to hand over his mother and then discovers the truth.

For this reason, as we said above, tragedies are written about only a few families. Proceeding not from artistic canons but from random experience, playwrights found the means to achieve such an effect in their plots and so are obliged to turn to those families in which such calamities have occurred.

We have now said enough about the proper type of plot and about the arrangement of the incidents within the plot.

XXI. Discoveries

A "discovery" has already been defined as a change from ignorance to knowledge. There are several kinds of discovery. The least artistic, which is largely employed by incompetent playwrights, is brought about by means of tokens. Some tokens are congenital, for instance birthmarks in the shape of "the spear imprinted on the sons of Earth" or such "stars" as Carcinus[66] uses in *Thyestes;* others are acquired, being either physical such as scars, or accessory such as a necklace and in *Tyro*,[67] the ark. One may use tokens in a better or in a worse manner. Odysseus, for instance, is discovered through the scar in one way by the nurse and in another way by the swineherds. The discovery by the nurse in the washing scene is the better, since it arises from a reversal, but the discovery by the swineherds is less artistic because the scar is shown to prove the point.[68] This distinction applies to all other scenes similar to these two.

Next in order are discoveries precipitated by the poet himself, and these are therefore inartistic. So in the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* Orestes brings about the discovery that he is Orestes; for whereas the discovery of Iphigeneia is brought about by the letter, Orestes reveals his own identity in words, which the poet and not the plot demands. This example comes close to the fault which we observed in the first group, for Orestes might as well have brought some tokens. Again in Sophocles' *Tereus*[69] there is "the voice of the shuttle".

Third are discoveries brought about by inference. In the *Choephoroe*,[70] for instance, the inference is that someone like Electra has come, no one is like Electra save Orestes, and therefore Orestes has come. Note too the comment of the critical writer Polyidus[71] that in the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* it is natural for Orestes to make the inference that his sister was sacrificed and now it happens that he is sacrificed. And in Theodectes' *Tydeus*[72] the inference based on the remark that he has come to find a son and is lost himself, and in the

Phineidae[73] the inference of the women, when they saw the place, that their fate was to die there as they had been exposed there.

There is also a fictitious kind of discovery which is based on a false inference by the audience. For instance, in *Odysseus the False Messenger* Odysseus says he will recognise the bow, which he has not seen; to bring about a discovery by these means, on the assumption indeed that he will reveal himself, is an example of a false inference.

The best discovery of all is that which develops from the incidents themselves and leads up to the surprise by a natural sequence of events. Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* provide examples; for it is natural that Iphigeneia should want to send a letter. Such discoveries are the best, since they alone have no need of tokens and necklaces introduced by the poet. Next best are those which result from inference.

XXII. Visualising the scene

While you are composing the plot and enhancing the effect by artistic language, you should visualise the scene. For it is only when you see the scene as clearly as if you were an eyewitness of actual events that you will find the right treatment and avoid any oversights. The censure passed on Carcinus[75] illustrates my point. He made Amphiaraus[76] rise from a temple, but on the stage the scene was booed by the disgusted audience. Carcinus fell into this error unwittingly, for he had failed to visualise the scene. The poet should also enhance the effect as far as possible by posturing and gesturing. Where poets have the same natural talent, those who are possessed by the actual emotions are the most convincing, the angry man raging in very truth and the distraught raving. That is why the poetic temperament is found either in a malleable genius or in an ecstatic madman.

XXIII. Avoiding too many stories

You must remember, as we have often said, not to make a tragedy from an epic unit, by which I mean a unit composed of many stories; one should not, for instance, make a tragedy from the whole story of the *Iliad*. Within the length of an epic the parts receive their proper proportion, but in a play they far exceed our powers of comprehension. It is an indication of this that all who dramatised the sack of Troy in its entirety and not part by part as Euripides did, or the story of Niobe[77] as a whole and not as Aeschylus did, either fail or come off badly in the competitive festival. In this respect alone even Agathon[78] failed.

XXIV. The chorus

You should assume that the chorus is one of the actors, making it an integral part of the whole and a participant in the action, as Sophocles does and as Euripides fails to do. In the other dramatists the lyrics have no more connection with the plot of the play than with any other play, and that is why they sing interludes now, a practice begun by Agathon. Yet the singing of interludes is just like transferring a speech or an entire episode from one play to another.

XXV. Plot in epic poetry

Having concluded our observations on tragedy and the representation of life in action, let us consider the representation of life in a metrical narrative.

Epic poetry resembled tragedy in its growth up to the point of representing fine actions in a stately metre. Thereafter they differ in the following respects: epic uses only one metre, is in narrative form and is unlimited in the time of which it treats. This last point was at first common to tragedy, but nowadays tragedians attempt as far as possible to keep their subject within a single revolution of the sun or a little more.

Some constituent parts are common to epic and tragedy, others are peculiar to tragedy. Since tragedy has all the parts of epic (whereas epic does not have all the parts of tragedy), anyone who understands the good and the bad qualities of tragedy understands those of epic also.

In epic, as in tragedy, the plot must be constructed in dramatic form. The plot should be concerned with a single action, whole and complete in itself, with a beginning, a middle and an end, designed like a single and complete living organism to create its own form of pleasure. Now a plot does not, as some suppose, have unity when it concerns one person. For many, indeed innumerable things happen to an individual, and yet some of them do not constitute any unity at all; and an individual makes many acts, but they do not constitute any single action. Consequently, all those poets seem to be at fault who have written a *Heracleid* or a *Theseid* or any such poem, thinking that, because Heracles was one man, the plot too should have unity. Pre-eminent in all respects, Homer seems to have seen this point clearly in the light of his genius or of his artistic skill; for in writing the *Odyssey* he did not write everything that happened to Odysseus, the wounding on Parnassus, for instance, and the feigned madness during the gathering of the expedition (neither being a necessary or probable consequence of the other), but he constructed the *Odyssey* round a single action in our sense of the term, and likewise the *Iliad*.

Again Homer seems have been inspired beyond all others in that he did not attempt to write one epic of the whole Trojan War, though it has a beginning and an end. Such an epic would have been too large to take in at one view, or, if abbreviated in length, it would have been complicated by the richness of the themes. Instead, he has selected one part of the War and used many episodes from the other parts, such as the Catalogue of Ships and other episodes with which he diversifies his writing. The other poets, for instance the

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author of the *Cypria*[79] and the *Little Iliad*,[80] write epics about one man, and one period, and one action of many parts. The result is that the *Cypria* has provided material for several tragedies and the *Little Iliad* material for more than eight tragedies – *Judgment of Arms, Philoctetes, Neoptolemus, Eurypylus, The Begging, Laconian Women, Sack of Troy, Departure from Troy, Sinon*, and *The Trojan Women*. But the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have each provided material for one or at most two tragedies.

XXVI. Episodes and length in epic poetry

Epic differs from tragedy in the scale of composition. For, while the episodes in tragedy are short, those of epic add length to the poems. This is shown by the *Odyssey* of which the story is short: after many years of absence, persecuted by Poseidon and alone, while the situation at home is such that the suitors squander his property and plot against his son, Odysseus arrives harrowed by suffering, reveals his identity, attacks the suitors, is saved himself and destroys his enemies. So much is essential, the rest is episode.

The limit of length, which we have mentioned above, is sufficient. It should be possible to see the beginning and the end in one view; and this will be so, if the compositions are shorter than the ancient epics but reach the total length of the tragedies which are presented for a single hearing at the competitive festival.

A marked characteristic of epic is the ability to increase its length. Being in narrative form, epic can present concurrently the development of a number of themes, which are relevant and add mass to the poem. Tragedy, on the other hand, is unable to present a number of themes concurrently; for it is confined to the scene on the stage and to the impersonation by the actors. In this respect, then, epic has the advantage. It flows majestically, its transitions are easy and its episodes add

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variety. In tragedy monotony quickly satiates the audience and makes plays fail.

The parts of epic are four, namely plot, character, thought and diction, while tragedy has spectacle and song as well. The forms of epic should be the same as those of tragedy, the plot being simple or complex or turning on character or on calamity. Epic too has need of reversals, discoveries and calamities. Thought and diction too should be good. These parts and forms were used first and used well by Homer. Indeed each of his poems has a close-knit plot; the *Iliad* has a simple plot which turns on a calamity, and the *Odyssey* has a complex plot (with recognitions throughout) and turns on character. In addition they surpass all epic poems in diction and thought.

XXVII. The poet's role
Among Homer's many claims to praise the chief is this: he is unique among poets in realising his own role. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, because his idiom of representation is not direct speech. While other poets play a part in person, as it were, throughout the poem and present in dramatic form only a fraction of the poem, Homer makes a brief prelude and at once introduces a man or a woman or some other character, and they, one and all, have character of their own.

XXVIII. The illogical and the untrue in epic poetry
While the marvellous should be portrayed in tragedy, there is more room in epic for the illogical, which is generally the source of the marvellous. This is because we do not see the actor in an epic poem. For example, the pursuit of Hector would prove ridiculous on the stage, with the warriors standing still and nor pursuing and Achilles shaking his head to dissuade them from pursuing, but in the epic poem it escapes notice. Indeed the marvellous gives pleasure; this is

illustrated by the fact that in reporting an incident everyone exaggerates to delight his hearer.

In the *Odyssey* the landing of Odysseus in Ithaca[81] is illogical. If an inferior poet wrote thus, it would be clearly intolerable. As it is, Homer makes the absurdity disappear in the charm of all his other graces.

In the art of telling an untruth Homer is the best instructor of other poets. For he makes use of false reasoning. Men suppose that, if, when A is so or happens so, B is so or happens so, then if B is so, A is so or happens so. But this is untrue. Accordingly, if A is not so but B is so provided A is so, men are wont to jump to a conclusion, our mind reasoning falsely that, because we know B is so, A is so. There is an example of this in the Washing-scene.

XXIX. The epic metre
The hexameter has been shown by experience to be appropriate for heroic poetry. If anyone were to use any other metre or a medley of metres for a representation in narrative form, it would appear unseemly. For the hexameter of heroic poetry is the most serene and dignified of metres; on that account the hexameter is most capable of admitting rare words and metaphors, narrative poetry being more extravagant in this respect than the other forms of representational poetry. Of the other metres iambics and tetrameters are stirring, the former being appropriate to real life and the latter to dancing. Still more absurd for heroic poetry is a medley of metres, such as Chaeremon[82] employed. Therefore no one has adopted any metre except the heroic hexameter for a long composition. Nature herself, as we said above, teaches man to select the appropriate metre for it.

XXX. Tragedy and epic compared
The question may be raised, whether epic is a better form of representational art than tragedy.

The advocates of epic will argue on the following lines. "The art which appeals to the better audience is always a less vulgar art, and the art which over-represents everything is a vulgar art. Of these the less vulgar is the better form of art. Now epic appeals to a superior audience which has no need of an actor's gestures, and tragedy appeals to an inferior audience. Therefore tragedy is a vulgar art and obviously inferior to epic. On the tragic stage, the actor makes much use of gesture, because, without this adventitious aid, the audience do not understand, just as bad flute-players whirl around, if they have to represent discus-throwing, and pluck at the chorus-leader if they are playing Scylla. It was because the young actor Callippides overacted that the old actor Mynniscus[83] used to call him "the monkey"; and the same view was held of Pindarus. The comparison between the two schools of actors can be applied equally to the art of tragedy as a whole and to the art of epic; for tragedy over-represents.

This attack hits the art of acting and not the art of poetry. Indeed even a minstrel reciting epic, such as Sosistratus, and a singer in a competition, such as Mnasitheus of Opus,[84] may overdo it in his gestures. Besides, it is not gesture in general which should be condemned, any more than dancing in general, but only the gesturing of inferior persons; wherefore Callippides was criticised, and other actors are criticised today, on the ground that women of servile birth were being represented on the stage. Moreover, tragedy as much as epic achieves its effect even without acting, since its quality is apparent from a reading. If, then, tragedy is superior in all other respects, this accusation against tragedy need not stand.

In addition, tragedy has all the potentialities of epic (it can even use the hexameter) and in addition the potentialities of music and spectacle; and these are no small factor, for they add a vividness to our pleasure. Moreover, tragedy has the quality of vividness not only on the stage but also in a reading. It achieves its aim in a shorter compass. This is an advantage, for compactness is more effective than diffuseness (imagine for instance an *Oedipus Tyrannus* in as many lines as the *Iliad*).

Again, epic is the less unified form of representation. I refer to the sort of epic which is composed of several actions. Such are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, wherein each of the individual parts has a considerable size; yet these poems come as artistically and as close as an epic can to representing a single action. Even so, any epic poem, however good or bad, provides material for several tragedies, whereas, if the plot of a single tragedy were treated in an epic, it would be briefly told and seem stunted, or else it would be spun out to suit the long metre and seem flabby.

If, then, tragedy has all these advantages and also the function peculiar to its own art-form (for an artistic representation should not afford any form of pleasure but the form of pleasure we have stated), it is clear that tragedy is superior to epic inasmuch as tragedy achieves its aim more effectively than epic does.

XXXI. Critics' objections

In dealing with critics' objections and the playwright's refutation of them, we shall be more enlightened if we classify the objections and define the nature of each class.

The playwright, like the painter or any other maker of likenesses, inevitably and always represents things in one of three ways: either as they are or were, or as they are said and thought to be, or as they should be. His representation is conveyed by diction or by rare words and metaphors, there being many modes of diction which are available to the poet. Moreover, the standard of correctness in most poetry is not the same as the standard of correctness in the art of statesmanship or indeed in any other art.

Poetry admits of two types of error, the inherent error and the incidental error. If poetry set out to represent a sheer

impossibility, it would be a case of inherent error. If a poet set out to represent a horse incorrectly with both right legs thrown forward, or if he committed a technical error in the province of medicine, or some special skill, or if he portrayed impossible things of any such kind at all, his error would not be inherent but incidental.

We should bear these points in mind in refuting criticisms and objections. Let us take first the objections made against the art of poetry itself. "An impossible object has been portrayed, and that is an error". "No", we reply, "it is in order if the aim of poetry – and we have defined the aim – is thereby achieved, if the object itself is made more startling or if another part of the poem is enhanced." A case in point is the pursuit of Hector. On the other hand the error is not in order, we may admit, if the aim could have been achieved just as well or better by observing the technical truth; for whenever that is possible, one should avoid error entirely. Another reply we can make is this. "What class of error is involved? Is it an artistic error or an incidental error? For it is less of an error in an artist to fail to know that a female deer has no horns than to draw a completely unrecognisable picture."

"That is not true" the critic may say. "But perhaps it should be true", we shall reply in refutation, just as Sophocles once said "I represent people as they ought to be, whereas Euripides represents them as they are."

If neither of these refutations succeeds, we may retort "They say it is so". For instance suppose someone questions a statement concerning the gods. "Perhaps it is better not to retail such matters," we may reply, "perhaps they are not real but only such as Xenophanes[85] judged them; yet they say they are so." In other cases it may be better not to make the statement at all, but nevertheless the statement is correct. It was so with the spears in the line "their spears were set upright upon the ferrules"; for such was the custom at the time and is still in Illyria today.

If we have to consider the question whether a speech or a deed is good or not good, we should take into account not only the absolute merits and defects of the speech or deed but also the circumstances of the speaker or doer – whom he addressed and when, and in whose interest and with what purpose, e.g. to secure a greater good or avert a greater evil.

In general the critics charge that a thing is impossible may be refuted by saying that it is poetic or better so or said to be so. For instance "a probable impossibility" we may say "is preferable in poetry to an improbable possibility." Or "men such as Zeuxis[86] used to paint may be impossibilities, but they are better so; for the model should be finer than the actual."

If objection is made to a point of diction, one should refute the objection by saying, for instance, that it is a rare word or a metaphor or a matter of accentuation or of punctuation or of ambiguity or of accepted abbreviation. When a meaning of a word is thought to involve a contradiction, one should consider how many meanings are possible in the context. Alternatively one may reply as Glaucon[87] does, that the critics themselves make some illogical presupposition, draw their own deduction and condemn the poet, accusing him of having said whatever they think he said, if that is contrary to their own conception. This happened in the case of Penelope's father, Icarius. They presuppose Icarius to be a Spartan. It is, then, ridiculous, they argue, that Penelope's son, Telemachus, visits Sparta and does not meet Icarius. But the truth may be with the Cephallenians' account; for they say that Odysseus took a Cephallenian wife and the name of her father was Icadius and not Icarius. The criticism therefore is probably due to the critics' mistake.

If the charge is that the poet has uttered a contradiction, one should consider, as one does during a cross-examination in court, whether he describes the same thing in the same context and in the same way, so that he may be acquitted by

reference to what he says himself or what an intelligent person would suppose him to have said.

On the other hand, it is correct to censure both illogicality and depravity, when one neither needs nor uses the illogicality, as in the case of Euripides' Aegeus[88], nor the depravity as in the case of Menelaus in the *Orestes*.[89]

To sum up, five classes of criticism are raised against the poet: that what he says is impossible, or illogical, or harmful, or contradictory, or by the standards of art incorrect. The refutations should be considered under the twelve points which we have stated.

XXXII. Summary

Let us now conclude our section on tragedy and epic. For we have discussed the nature of tragedy and epic; the forms of each (stating the number of the forms and the differences between the forms); and the parts of each likewise; the reasons for success or failure in each; the criticisms made against them; and the refutations of those criticisms.

XXXIII. Diction

In diction it is a virtue to be clear and not commonplace. The clearest diction, indeed, is made up of ordinary words but it is commonplace, as for instance in the poetry of Cleophon[90] and Sthenelus.[91] Dignified diction, which varies the common usage, is a diction employing unfamiliar idioms, by which I mean rare words, metaphors, lengthened forms and everything alien to ordinary diction. Yet, if a poet uses all such unfamiliar idioms, the result is a riddle or a barbarism – a riddle, if he composes in metaphors, and a barbarism, if he composes in rare words. For a riddle is essentially a description of a thing or fact by an incomprehensible juxtaposition of words. This cannot be done by juxtaposing nouns, but it can be done by juxtaposing metaphors, as in the riddle "I saw a man weld bronze with fire upon a man"[92] and

so forth. And a barbarism is a description of such things by an incomprehensible juxtaposition of rare words. The proper course therefore is to blend one's diction somehow with these idioms. For the ordinary words will give clarity, and the other elements, such as rare words, will raise it above the ordinary and commonplace.

The lengthening, the abbreviating and the altering of words play an important part in developing a diction which is clear and not commonplace. For novel and unaccustomed forms avoid common usage, and kinship with normal words gives clarity. This style of diction is wrongly criticised by men like the elder Eucleides,[93] who claimed it was easy to write poetry, if one was permitted to lengthen syllables at will; indeed he wrote satirical parodies of the style. To make use of this licence is ridiculous, but then moderation is a requirement common to every sort of style. An improper use of metaphors, rare words, and other forms of speech could equally well be devised to raise a laugh. But the appropriate use of these idioms in epic poetry is most valuable, as we may see if we substitute common words to fit the metre in the place of rare or metaphorical or other such words. For example, Aeschylus and Euripides wrote the same iambic line except that Euripides replaced an ordinary word with a rare word, so that a trivial line seems beautiful. Aeschylus wrote in *Philoctetes* "the ulcer eats at my foot's flesh", and Euripides substituted "feasts on" for "eats on".

By "ornate speech" I mean speech which has rhythm and form and is suitable for setting to song, and by "each style of speech being used separately" I refer to the fact that some effects are achieved by verse alone and others again by song.

The proper use of each of the idioms which we have mentioned and of double words and rare words is important, but the employment of metaphor is the most important of all. Double words which are substantives are most appropriate to dithyrambic poetry, rare words to heroic poetry, and meta-

phors to iambic verse. Indeed in heroic verse all the idioms we have mentioned are useful. But in iambic verse, which is mainly a representation of ordinary speech, the appropriate language is that of conversation, comprising the use of ordinary diction, metaphor and embellishment. Of all these idioms the use of metaphor is unique in one respect: it cannot be acquired, but is the mark of genius. To use metaphor well is to see points of likeness.

Elaborate diction should be confined to the idle parts of a play, by which I mean those not illustrative of character or thought. For too brilliant language has the defect of obscuring points of character and subtleties of thought.

The Arrangement of the Text

The corresponding passages in the Oxford Classical Text of 1911 are as follows:

For I	1447 a 8-13.
For II	1448 b 4-24.
For III	1448 b 24 - 1449 a 6.
For IV	1447 a 13-16; 1447 b 13-23; 1447 a 28 - b 13; 1447 b 23-24
For V	1447 a 16-18; (a) 1447 a 18-28, 1447 b 24-29, 1449 b 31-34; (b) 1448 a 1-18, 1449 a 32-37, 1454 b 8-15; (c) 1448 a 19-28.
For VI	1448 a 28 - b 3 rearranged; 1449 a 9-15; 1449 a 19-28; 1449 a 15-19; 1449 a 28-31; 1449 a 7-9; 1449 a 37 - b 9.
For VII	1449 b 21-28; 1450 a 1-38; 1450 b 8-12; 1450 b 1-8; 1450 b 12-20; 1449 b 35-36; 1453 b 1-14; 1450 b 16-20.
For VIII	1450 b 21 - 1451 a 19; 1451 a 30-35; 1451 b 27-29; 1451 a 36-38; 1451 b 29-32; 1451 a 38 - b 11; 1459 a 21-29; 1459 a 16-21.
For IX	1451 b 8-18; 1455 b 12-15.
For X	1460 a 26-35
For XI	1453 b 22-26; 1451 b 19-26; 1455 a 34 - b 15.
For XII	1452 a 12-18; 1451 b 33 - 1452 a 11; 1452 a 18-21.
For XIII	1452 a 22 - b 28; 1452 a 32 - b 2; 1452 b 9-13.
For XIV	1454 a 16-36.
For XV	1456 a 33 - b 8; 1456 a 33-36.
For XVI	1456 b 8-19; 1458 a 18 - b 24; 1449 b 28-30; 1459 a 4-8; 1460 b 1-5.
For XVII	1455 b 32 - 1456 a 7; 1455 b 24-32; 1454 a 37 - b 10.
For XVIII	1452 b 14-24.
For XIX	1452 b 28 -1453 a 39; 1456 a 21-25.
For XX	1453 b 22; 1453 b 25 - 1454 a 15.
For XXI	1454 b 19 - 1455 a 21.
For XXII	1455 a 22-34.
For XXIII	1456 a 10-19.

For XXIV	1456 a 25-32.
For XXV	1449 b 9-20; 1459 a 17-21; 1451 a 16-29; 1459 a 29 - b 7.
For XXVI	1455 b 15-23; 1459 b 19-31; 1459 b 7-16.
For XXVII	1460 a 5-11.
For XXVIII	1460 a 11-18; 1460 a 34 - b 2; 1460 a 18-26.
For XXIX	1459 b 31 - 1460 a 5.
For XXX	1461 b 26 - 1462 a 4 - b 15.
For XXXI	1460 b 6 - 1461 a 9; 1461 b 9-14; 1461 a 9 - b 9; 1461 b 14-25.
For XXXII	1462 b 16-19.
For XXXIII	1458 a 18 - b 24; 1459 a 3-14; 1460 b 2-5.

Explanatory Notes

1. I have followed OCT and the Loeb edition of 1927 in removing 1456 a 7- a 10. On the other hand this passage is retained by R. Kassel, *Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Liber* (Oxford 1965 and 1968) and by S. Halliwell in the Loeb edition of 1995.
2. The *Margites* was a humorous narrative poem in verse, of which the moronic hero was appropriately named Margites ("Madman"). Because it was composed in Ionia in the 7th or 6th century B.C., it was ascribed to "Homer". A few fragments survive.
3. To Aristotle's adjectival title περὶ ποιητικῆς we have to supply a noun such as τέχνης, and we should therefore translate it as "concerning creative (composition)". Thus the title was suitable both for music and for poetry.
4. An early fifth century philosopher whose writings were in verse.
5. A tragedian writing in the fourth century B.C.
6. A Syracusan writer of mimes in prose during the fifth century B.C.
7. A son of Sophron, writing mimes at the end of the fifth century B.C.
8. Choral song in honour of Dionysus.
9. Solo song in honour of Apollo, accompanied on the harp.
10. The first famous painter, active in the mid-fifth century. He came from Thasos.
11. A fifth century caricaturist (Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* 949).
12. Probably the citizen of Colophon who painted portraits of men.
13. He wrote tragedy in a homely diction.
14. A citizen of Thasos, he wrote parodies of the epic style, probably in the fifth century B.C.
15. Not mentioned elsewhere.
16. A citizen of Miletus was a famous lyre-player and innovator in dithyrambic poetry, in the late fifth century B.C.
17. A citizen of Cythera who portrayed the Cyclops singing a solo, accompanied by the lyre. Flourished circa 400 B.C.

18. An Athenian writer of tragedy in the late fifth century B.C.
19. An Athenian writer of tragedies of which some seven survive. He lived circa 493-407 B.C.
20. Athenian writer of comedies of which eleven survive. Lived circa 455-386 B.C.
21. A Sicilian writer of comedy before and after 500 B.C.
22. An Athenian, he was the first recorded victor in the City Dionysia of 486 B.C.
23. An Athenian writer who won eleven victories in the City Dionysia. One was in 472 B.C.
24. It was part of a ritual for fertility.
25. The actors were dressed to look like goats (τράγοι) as worshippers of Dionysus in whose honour tragedies (τραγῳδίαι) were performed.
26. The Athenian writer of tragedies, of which six or seven survive. He lived circa 525-456 B.C.
27. Scene-painting (σκηνογραφία) was executed on the front of the stage-building (σκηνή).
28. At Athens the date was circa 457 B.C.
29. See n. 21 above.
30. A Syracusan contemporary of Epicharmus, he introduced cloaks for his actors.
31. An actor as well as a poet, he won three victories at the City Dionysia in the mid-fifth century B.C. He was an Athenian.
32. The Greek word ποιηταί means "creators". It was applied to artists in general and not to poets only. See n. 3 above.
33. A citizen of Heraclea in South Italy, he came to Athens and painted there in the last quarter of the fifth century B.C. His paintings were very realistic and portrayed strong emotions.
34. See n. 10 above.
35. Time was measured in sunlight by sun-dial with twelve divisions and in the dark by a water-clock (*klepsydra*) which measured the flow of water from a vessel.
36. A citizen of Halicarnassus, Herodotus wrote a wide-ranging history of the Persian wars in the fifth century B.C.
37. A play of that name by Sophocles.
38. The man in the play was Telephus.
39. Cases of matricide committed by a son.

40. See n. 18 above.
41. An Athenian writer of whom nineteen tragedies are extant. He lived circa 485-407 B.C.
42. Better known as "the sophist" than as the tragedian. His plays have not survived.
43. A play by Theodectes, for whom see n. 52 below.
44. The *Orestes* and the *Iphigeneia at Aulis* by Euripides survive, whereas the *Scylla*, a dithyramb by Timotheus of Miletus, does not. A fragment of the speech by Melanippe survives in Euripides' play of that name.
45. Protagoras, a citizen of Abdera, was the leading philosopher of the fifth century B.C. He stated that "man is the measure of all things".
46. The play *Ajax* by Sophocles is extant. Plays of the same title by Theodectes and by Carcinus do not.
47. Aeschylus wrote a play of this title.
48. A play of this name by Sophocles has not survived.
49. Plays of this title by Sophocles and by Euripides have not survived.
50. A play by Aeschylus, which has not survived.
51. The surviving play *Prometheus Vinctus* is of uncertain authorship. On the theme of Prometheus Aeschylus wrote a tetralogy; see the fragments in the OCT of Aeschylus.
52. A citizen of Phaselis he won seven victories at the City Dionysia from 372 B.C. onwards. He was famous also as an orator.
53. "The god from the machine" was an actor appearing as a god in the air above the platform of the stage. He was conveyed on a stand which was suspended from a crane swinging forward from behind the stage-building. In the *Medea* of Euripides Medea escaped on a winged chariot in this way.
54. It is illogical that Oedipus did not know the manner of Laius' death.
55. See Section XII.
56. Brother of Atreus and father of Aegisthus.
57. Son of either Ares or of Oeneus, he killed the Calydonian boar.
58. Son of Heracles by an Arcadian princess.
59. Son of Thyestes, he killed Agamemnon, the father of Orestes.

60. Son of Aeolus and founder of Corinth, he cheated death but was punished by having to push a stone uphill eternally.
61. See n. 18 above.
62. See n. 39 above.
63. Son of Odysseus and Circe he killed Odysseus unwittingly.
64. A descendant of Heracles, he became king of Messenia.
65. A play not mentioned elsewhere.
66. An Athenian tragic poet who won the first of eleven victories in the 370s B.C.
67. A lost play by Sophocles in which Tyro's twin sons by Poseidon were exposed in an ark.
68. Aristotle refers to the *Odyssey* 19.386 and 21.205 ff.
69. Tereus raped his niece Philomela and cut out her tongue; but she revealed the truth on a piece of weaving. The play does not survive.
70. The second play of Aeschylus, *Oresteia*.
71. Not mentioned anywhere else.
72. See n. 52 above.
73. A lost play by Sophocles.
74. Nothing is known about this lost play.
75. See n. 66 above.
76. In one version of the legend he was buried alive, and his sanctuary in Boeotia was said to be oracular.
77. A daughter of Tantalus and the mother of many children who were all killed by Apollo. She was turned into a rock which weeps eternally.
78. See n. 18 above.
79. A lost poem in eleven books concerning events before the Trojan War.
80. A lost poem in four books concerning some events of the Trojan War.
81. It seemed illogical that Odysseus should be sleeping as he was landed on Ithaca (*Odyssey* 13.116 ff.).
82. See n. 5 above.
83. Acted in the plays of Aeschylus. Callippides acted a generation later. Nothing is known of Pindarus.
84. The two are otherwise unknown.
85. An early philosopher, born in Colophon, led a nomadic life *after the Persian conquest of his homeland. He criticised the* traditional accounts of the gods, and he believed in a single cosmic deity.
86. See n. 33 above.
87. He was an authority on the Homeric poems, if he is the same man of that name in Plato, *Ion* 530 D.
88. His part in Euripides, *Medea* 663-759 was judged by Aristotle to be illogical.
89. See n. 44 above.
90. See n. 13 above.
91. A tragedian of the late fifth centuty whom Aristotle ridiculed.
92. The answer was a cupping-bowl.
93. Otherwise unknown.