A R I S T O T L E ‘ S P O E T I C S

https://youtu.be/b2dArV3dwu0

Tragedy consists of six parts which Aristotle enumerates in order of importance, beginning with the most essential and ending with the least: Aristotle considers Tragedy superior to Epics and considers them higher forms of art. Tragedies are said to be an "imitation of an action that is serious." Tragedies are written in a dramatic form with dialogue between multiple character, and not in traditional narrative form. Tragedy should make the viewer feel fear and pity. Tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear in order to purge away their excess, to reduce these passions to a healthy. Aristotle also talks about “pleasure” that is proper to tragedy, apparently meaning the aesthetic pleasure one gets from contemplating the pity and fear that are aroused through the play. Tragedy is rooted in the fundamental order of the universe; it creates a causeand-effect chain that clearly reveals what may happen at any time or place because that is the way the world operates.

PLOT (mythos)

Refers to the "structure of incidents" (actions). Key elements of the plot are reversals, recognition, and suffering. The best plot should be "complex" (i.e. involve a change of fortune). It should imitate actions arousing fear and pity. Thus it should proceed from good fortune to bad and involve a high degree of suffering for the protagonist, usually involving physical harm or death.

Actions should be logical and follow naturally from actions that precede them. They will be more satisfying to the audience if they come about by surprise or seeming coincidence and are only afterward seen as plausible, even necessary.

When a character is unfortunate by reversal(s) of fortune (peripeteia) known today in pop culture as a plot twist), at first he suffers (pathos) and then he can realize (anagnorisis) the cause of his misery or a way to be released from the misery.

CHARACTER (ethos)

It is much better if a tragical accident happens to a hero because of a mistake he makes (hamartia) instead of things that might happen anyway. That is because the audience is more likely to be "moved" by it. A hero may have made it knowingly (in “Medea”) or unknowingly (“Oedipus”). A hero may leave a deed undone (due to timely discovery, knowledge present at the point of doing deed). Character is the moral or ethical character in tragic play. In a perfect tragedy, the character will support the plot, which means personal motivations will somehow connect parts of the cause-and-effect chain of actions producing pity and fear. Main character should be:

 • GOOD - Aristotle explains that audiences do not like, for example, villains "making fortune from misery" in the end. It might happen though, and might make the play interesting. Nevertheless, the moral is at stake here and morals are important to make people happy (people can, for example, see tragedy because they want to release their anger)

 • APPROPRIATE – if a character is supposed to be wise, it is unlikely he is young (supposing wisdom is gained with age)

 • CONSISTENT - if a person is a soldier, he is unlikely to be scared of blood (if this soldier is scared of blood it must be explained and play some role in the story to avoid confusing the audience); it is also "good" if a character doesn't change opinion "that much" if the play is not "driven" by who characters are, but by what they do (audience is confused in case of unexpected shifts in behavior [and its reasons and morals] of characters)

 • “CONSISTENTLY INCONSISTENT” - if a character always behaves foolishly it is strange if he suddenly becomes smart. In this case it would be good to explain such change, otherwise the audience may be confused. If character changes opinion a lot it should be clear he is a character who has this trait, not a real life person - this is also to avoid confusion.

THOUGHT (dianoia)

Spoken (usually) reasoning of human characters can explain the characters or story background.

DICTION (lexis)

Refers to the quality of speech in tragedy. Speeches should reflect character, the moral qualities of those on the stage. The expression of the meaning of the words.

MELODY (melos)

The Chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors. It should be an integral part of the whole, and share in the action. Should be contributed to the unity of the plot. It is a very real factor in the pleasure of the drama.

SPECTACLE (opsis)

Refers to the visual apparatus of the play, including set, costumes and props (anything you can see). Aristotle calls spectacle the "least artistic" element of tragedy, and the "least connected with the work of the poet (playwright). For example: if the play has "beautiful" costumes and “bad" acting and "bad" story, there is "something wrong" with it. Even though that "beauty" may save the play it is "not a nice thing”. Spectacle is like a suspenseful horror film.