

Jonathan Barnes's *Aristotle* (1982) is a brief, accessible overview of Aristotle's life and works. In a crowded field, Abraham Edel's *Aristotle and His Philosophy* (1982) and John M. Rist's *Mind of Aristotle* (1989) stand out as good basic introductions to Aristotle's biography and works. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, edited by Barnes (1995), contains chapters on important phases of Aristotle's philosophical project, including a survey of his life and work by Barnes.

On the *Poetics*, Stephen Halliwell's *Aristotle's "Poetics"* (1986) is the authoritative contemporary interpretation. Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's "Poetics": The Argument* (1957), provides a detailed commentary on the text, and his *Plato and Aristotle on Poetry* (1966) is a useful comparative study. D. W. Lucas's *Aristotle—"Poetics"* (1968) offers significant commentary as well as the Kassel edition of the Greek text. Martha Nussbaum's *Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Philosophy* (1986) contains an influential modification of the argument about catharsis. *Aristotle's "Poetics" and English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Elder Olson (1965), gathers views from the eighteenth century through the 1960s, highlighting the work of the Chicago Critics, or "Neo-Aristotelians," who promoted a formal method in literary study during the mid-twentieth century. Its last chapter, "Rhetoric and Poetic in the Philosophy of Aristotle," by Richard McKeon, a Chicago Critic, offers an illuminating discrimination of poetic and rhetorical approaches. McKeon's "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity," in *Critics and Criticism: Essays in Method* (ed. R. S. Crane, 1952), is an important text on imitation. *Essays on Aristotle's "Poetics"*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (1992), is an excellent contemporary collection by philosophers and scholars of Aristotle, clarifying concepts such as mimesis, catharsis, and comedy.

On the *Rhetoric*, W. M. A. Grimaldi's *Aristotle, "Rhetoric": A Commentary* (1980) is a useful exposition. *Essays on Aristotle's "Rhetoric"* (1996), edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty as a companion to her volume on the *Poetics*, provides an excellent range of contemporary interpretations and reevaluations of the text. Alexander Nehamas's "Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*," in *Aristotle's "Rhetoric": Philosophical Essays* (ed. David J. Furley and Nehamas, 1994), cogently compares Aristotle's treatment of emotion in both texts and, in a provocative argument, claims that catharsis refers to the internal resolution of a tragic plot itself rather than to the response of the audience.

The "Poetics" of Aristotle and the "Tractatus Coislinianus": A Bibliography from about 900 till 1996, compiled by Omert J. Schrier (1998), testifies to the massive literature relating to the *Poetics*. Aristotle's "Rhetoric": *Five Centuries of Philological Research*, compiled by Keith V. Erickson (1975), covers the many studies of the *Rhetoric*. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* contains an excellent bibliography on all of Aristotle's work, with individual sections on the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. Both Janko's edition of the *Poetics* and Kennedy's of the *Rhetoric* include selective bibliographies on their respective texts. The Rorty collections on the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* also include good selective bibliographies.

Poetics¹

[1, 147a] Our topic is poetry in itself and its kinds, and what potential each has; how plots should be constructed if the composition is to turn out well;

1. Translated by Richard Janko, who sometimes adds clarifying words or phrases in square brackets and includes the Greek in parentheses. Also in square brackets in the text are the traditional chapter divisions inserted by Renaissance editors and the Bekker numbers used almost universally in citing Aristotle's works; they refer to the page numbers and columns of an 1831 edition by Immanuel Bekker.

also, from how many parts it is [constituted], and of what sort they are; and likewise all other aspects of the same enquiry. Let us first begin, following the natural [order], from first [principles].

Epic and tragic composition, and indeed comedy, dithyrambic composition,² and most sorts of music for wind and stringed instruments are all, [considered] as a whole, representations.³ They differ from one another in three ways, by using for the representation (i) different media, (ii) different objects, or (iii) a manner that is different and not the same.

Some people use colours and forms for representations, making images of many objects (some by art, and some by practice), and others do so with sound; so too all the arts we mentioned produce a representation using rhythm, speech and melody, but use these either separately or mixed. E.g., the art of [playing] the oboe and lyre, and any other arts that have the same potential (e.g. that of [playing] the pan-pipes), use melody and rhythm alone, but the art of dancers [uses] rhythm by itself without melody; for they too can represent characters, sufferings and actions, by means of rhythms given form.

But the art of representation that uses unaccompanied words or verses [1447b] (whether it mixes these together or uses one single class of verse-form) has to the present day no name. For we have no common name for the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues,⁴ and would not have one even if someone were to compose the representation in [iambic] trimeters, elegiacs⁵ or some other such verse. But people attach the word "poet" to the verse-form, and name some "elegiac poets" and other "epic poets," terming them poets not according to [whether they compose a] representation but indiscriminately, according to [their use of] verse. Thus if someone brings out a work of medicine or natural science in verse, they normally call him a poet; but there is nothing in common between Homer and Empedocles⁶ except the verse-form. For this reason it is right to call the former a poet, but the latter a natural scientist rather than a poet. Likewise, if someone produced a representation by intermingling all the verse-forms, just as Chaerephon⁷ composed his *Centaure* (a recitation which mixes all the verse-forms), he must still be termed a poet. This, then, is how we should define these matters.

Some arts use all the media we have mentioned (i.e. rhythm, song and verse), like the composition of dithyrambic poems, that of nomes,⁸ and tragedy and comedy; they differ because the former use all the media at the same time, the latter [use them only] in certain parts. So these are what I mean

2. Greek choral poetry originally sung in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine worshipped in an ecstatic cult.

3. From the Greek *mimēsis*, translated as "representation" or "imitation."

4. The philosophical works of PLATO (ca. 427–ca. 327 B.C.E.), which are written as dialogues featuring his teacher, Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.), and one or more interlocutors. "Mimes": imitative performances usually featuring short scenes from daily life. Sophron of Syracuse (5th c. B.C.E.) wrote mimes in rhythmic prose; his son Xenarchus also wrote mimes.

5. A verse form consisting of couplets whose first line is in dactylic hexameter (i.e., a 6-foot line based on the syllabic pattern long-short-short), the

meter of epic, and whose second line replaces the 3d and 6th foot with one long syllable. "Iambic trimeters": the verse form of most dialogue and set speeches in tragedies (a 3-foot line based on the pattern short-long).

6. Pre-Socratic Greek natural philosopher (ca. 493–433 B.C.E.), who wrote in epic meter (dactylic hexameter). Homer (ca. 8th c. B.C.E.), Greek epic poet to whom is attributed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; the ancient Greeks also credited him with a number of lost shorter epics, including the comic *Magistes*.

7. Greek tragedian (mid-4th c. B.C.E.).

8. Originally, melodies (for lyre or flute) created to accompany epic texts; later, choral compositions.

by the differences between the arts in the media by which they produce the representation.

[2, 1448a] Since those who represent people in action, these people are necessarily either good or inferior. For characters almost always follow from these [qualities] alone; everyone differs in character because of vice and virtue. So they are either (i) better than we are, or (ii) worse, or (iii) such [as we are], just as the painters [represent them]; for Polygnotus used to make images of superior persons, Pauson of worse ones, and Dionysius⁹ of those like [us].

Clearly each of the [kinds of] representation we mentioned will contain these differences, and will vary by representing objects which vary in this manner. For these divergences can arise in dancing and in playing the oboe and lyre. They can also arise in speeches and unaccompanied verse: e.g. (i) Homer [represents] better persons, (ii) Cleophon [represents] ones like [us], and (iii) Hegemon of Thasos, who was the first to compose parodies, and Nicarchus¹ who composed the *Deiliad*, [represent] worse ones. [They can arise] likewise in dithyrambs and nomes: for just as Timotheus and Philoxenus [represented] Cyclopes,² [so] one may represent [people in different ways]. Tragedy too is distinguished from comedy by precisely this difference; comedy prefers to represent people who are worse than those who exist, tragedy people who are better.

[3] Again, a third difference among these [kinds] is the manner in which one can represent each of these things. For one can use the same media to represent the very same things, sometimes (a) by narrating (either (i) becoming another [person], as Homer does, or (ii) remaining the same person and not changing), or (b) by representing everyone as in action and activity.

Representation, then, has these three points of difference, as we said at the beginning, its media, its objects and its manner. Consequently, in one respect Sophocles is the same sort of representational artist as Homer, in that both represent good people, but in another he is like Aristophanes,³ since both represent men in action and doing [things].

This is why, some say, their works are called "dramas," because they represent men "doing" (*drōntas*). For this reason too the Dorians⁴ lay claim to both tragedy and comedy. The Megarians⁵ here allege that comedy arose during the time of their democracy, and the Megarians in Sicily claim it; for Ephicharmus was from there, though he was not much prior to Chionides and Magnes.⁶ Some of the Dorians in the Peloponnese lay claim to tragedy. They produce the names [of comedy and drama] as an indication [of their origins]: they say that they call villages *kōmai* but the Athenians call them *dēmoi*, on the assumption that comedians were so called not from their rev-

elling (*kōmazein*), but because they wandered around the villages, ejected in disgrace from the town. [1448b] They also say that they term "doing" *dran*, but that the Athenians term it *prattein*.

Anyway, as for the points of difference in representation, and how many and what they are, let this account suffice.

[4] Two causes seem to have generated the art of poetry as a whole, and these are natural ones.

(i) Representation is natural to human beings from childhood. They differ from the other animals in this: man tends most towards representation and learns his first lessons through representation.

Also (ii) everyone delights in representations. An indication of this is what happens in fact: we delight in looking at the most detailed images of things which in themselves we see with pain, e.g. the shapes of the most despised wild animals even when dead. The cause of this is that learning is most pleasant, not only for philosophers but for others likewise (but they share in it to a small extent). For this reason they delight in seeing images, because it comes about that they learn as they observe, and infer what each thing is, e.g. that this person [represents] that one. For if one has not seen the thing [that is represented] before, [its image] will not produce pleasure as a representation, but because of its accomplishment, colour, or some other such cause.

Since by nature we are given to representation, melody and rhythm (that verses are parts of rhythms is obvious), from the beginning those by nature most disposed towards these generated poetry from their improvisations, developing it little by little. Poetry was split up according to their particular characters; the grander people represented fine actions, i.e. those of fine persons, the more ordinary people represented those of inferior ones, at first composing invectives, just as the others composed hymns and praise-poems. We do not know of any composition of this sort by anyone before Homer, but there were probably many [who composed invectives]. Beginning with Homer [such compositions] do exist, e.g. his *Margites* etc. In these the iambic verse-form arrived too, as is appropriate. This is why it is now called "iambic," because they used to lampoon (*iambizein*) each other in this verse-form. Thus some of the ancients became composers of heroic poems, others of lampoons.

Just as Homer was the greatest composer of serious poetry (not that he alone composed well, but because he alone composed dramatic representations), so too he was first to indicate the form of comedy, by dramatising not an invective but the laughable. For his *Margites* stands in the same relation to comedies as do the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to tragedies. [1449a] When tragedy and comedy appeared, people were attracted to each [kind of] composition according to their own particular natures. Some became composers of comedies instead of lampoons, but others presented tragedies instead of epics, because comedy and tragedy are greater and more honourable in their forms than are lampoon and epic. To consider whether tragedy is now fully [developed] in its elements or not, as judged both in and of itself and in relation to its audiences, is a different topic.

Anyway, arising from an improvisatory beginning (both tragedy and comedy—tragedy from the leaders of the dithyramb, and comedy from the leaders of the phallic processions which even now continue as a custom in many of

9. Painter from Colophon. Polygnotus (ca. 500–ca. 440 B.C.E.), one of the first great Greek painters. Pauson (late 5th c. B.C.E.), Athenian caricaturist.

1. Athenian comic poet (active ca. 390 B.C.E.), whose *Deiliad* (*deillos* means "cowardly") parodied heroic epic. Cleophon (4th c. B.C.E.), Athenian tragic poet. Hegemon (5th c. B.C.E.), poet whose parodies won competitions in Athens.

2. Mythical one-eyed giants. Timotheus of Miletus (ca. 450–ca. 360 B.C.E.) and Philoxenus of Cythera (ca. 435–ca. 380 B.C.E.) were both Greek dithyrambic poets.

3. Greatest poet of Greek Old Comedy (450–385 B.C.E.). Sophocles (ca. 496–406 B.C.E.), great Greek tragedian.

4. A people (probably originally from southwest Macedonia) that invaded Greece ca. 1100–1000 B.C.E., reaching south into the Peloponnese.

5. Residents of a Dorian city on the Isthmus of Corinth (west of Athens); it was a democracy in the 6th century B.C.E.

6. Aristotle names three early comic poets: Ephicharmus was Sicilian (active early 5th c. B.C.E.) and wrote in Doric Greek, while Chionides (active ca. 485 B.C.E.) and Magnes (active ca. 470 B.C.E.) were Athenian.

our cities), [tragedy] grew little by little, as [the poets] developed whatever [new part] of it had appeared; and, passing through many changes, tragedy came to a halt, since it had attained its own nature.

(i) Aeschylus⁷ was first to increase the number of its actors from one to two; he reduced the [songs] of the chorus, and made speech play the main role. Sophocles [brought in] three actors and scenery.

(ii) Again, as for its magnitude, [starting] from trivial plots and laughable diction, because it had changed from a satyric [composition],⁸ [tragedy only] became grand at a late date. Its verse-form altered from the tetrameter⁹ to iambic verse. For at first [poets] used the tetrameter, because the composition was satyric and mainly danced; but when [spoken] diction came in, nature itself found the proper verse-form. The iambic is the verse most suited to speech; and indication of this is that in [everyday] speech with each other we use mostly iambic [rhythms], but rarely hexameters, and [only] when we depart from the intonations of [everyday] speech.

(iii) Again, as for the number of its episodes,¹ and how each of its other [parts] is said to have been elaborated, let them pass as described; it would probably be a major undertaking to go through their particulars.

[5] Comedy is, as we said, a representation of people who are rather inferior—not, however, with respect to every [kind of] vice, but the laughable is [only] a part of what is ugly. For the laughable is a sort of error and ugliness that is not painful and destructive, just as, evidently, a laughable mask is something ugly and distorted without pain.

The transformations of tragedy, and [the poets] who brought them about, have not been forgotten; but comedy was disregarded from the beginning, because it was not taken seriously. [1449b] For the magistrate granted a chorus of comic performers at a late date—they had been volunteers. The record of those termed its poets begins from [a time] when comedy already possessed some of its forms. It is unknown who introduced masks, prologues, a multiplicity of actors, etc. As for the composing of plots, Epicharmus and Phormis² [introduced it]. In the beginning it came from Sicily, and, of the poets at Athens, Crates³ was the first to relinquish the form of the lampoon and compose generalised stories, i.e. plots.

Epic poetry follows tragedy insofar as it is a representation of serious people which uses speech in verse; but they differ in that [epic] has a single verse-form, and is narrative. Again, with respect to length, tragedy attempts as far as possible to keep within one revolution of the sun or [only] to exceed this a little, but epic is unbounded in time; it does differ in this respect, even though [the poets] at first composed in the same way in tragedies as in epics. As for their parts, some are the same, others are particular to tragedy. For this reason, whoever knows about good and inferior tragedies knows about

epics too. Tragedy possesses all [the parts] that epic has, but those that it possesses are not all in epic.

[6] We will discuss representational art in hexameters, and comedy, later. Now let us discuss tragedy, taking up the definition of its essence that results from what we have said.

Tragedy is a representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements [used] separately in the [various] parts [of the play]; [represented] by people acting and not by narration; accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis⁴ of such emotions.

By "embellished speech," I mean that which has rhythm and melody, i.e. song; by "with its elements separately," I mean that some [parts of it] are accomplished only by means of spoken verses, and others again by means of song.

Since people acting produce the representation, first (i) the ornament of spectacle will necessarily be a part of tragedy; and then (ii) song and (iii) diction, for these are the media in which they produce the representation. By "diction" I mean the construction of the [spoken] verses itself; by "song" I mean that of which the meaning is entirely obvious.

Since [tragedy] is a representation of an action, and is enacted by people acting, these people are necessarily of a certain sort according to their character and their reasoning. For it is because of these that we say that actions are of a certain sort, [1450a] and it is according to people's actions that they all succeed or fail. So (iv) the plot is the representation of the action; by "plot" here, I mean the construction of the incidents. By (v) the "characters," I mean that according to which we say that the people in action are of a certain sort. By (vi) "reasoning," I mean the way in which they use speech to demonstrate something or indeed to make some general statement.

So tragedy as a whole necessarily has six parts, according to which tragedy is of a certain sort. These are plot, characters, diction, reasoning, spectacle and song. The media in which [the poets] make the representation comprise two parts [i.e. diction and song], the manner in which they make the representation, one [i.e. spectacle], and the objects which they represent, three [i.e. plot, character and reasoning]; there are no others except these. Not a few of them, one might say, use these elements; for they may have instances of spectacle, character, plot, diction, song and reasoning likewise.

But the most important of these is the structure of the incidents. For (i) tragedy is a representation not of human beings but of action and life. Happiness and unhappiness lie in action, and the end [of life] is a sort of action, not a quality; people are of a certain sort according to their characters, but happy or the opposite according to their actions. So [the actors] do not act in order to represent the characters, but they include the characters for the sake of their actions. Consequently the incidents, i.e. the plot, are the end of tragedy, and the end is most important of all.

(ii) Again, without action a tragedy cannot exist, but without characters it may. For the tragedies of most recent [poets] lack character, and in general there are many such poets. E.g. too among the painters, how Zeuxis⁵ relates

7. The earliest of the 3 great Greek tragedians (525–456 B.C.E.).

8. That is, like the satyr plays that formed part of the spring festival of Dionysus in early-5th-century B.C.E. Athens. Each of the poets competing wrote three tragedies and one satyr play; the latter presented grotesque versions of ancient legends, with the chorus dressed as satyrs (half-man, half-goat, and wearing a phallus).

9. That is, trochaic tetrameter (a 4-foot line based on the syllabic pattern long-short); though occa-

4. A much-debated Greek term, related to a verb meaning "to cleanse" or "purify"; usually left untranslated and understood as "purgation," it can

also mean "clarification."

5. Greek painter from Heraclea in southern Italy; he was in Athens ca. 400 B.C.E.

to Polygnotus—Polygnotus is a good character-painter, but Zeuxis' painting contains no character at all.

(iii) Again, if [a poet] puts in sequence speeches full of character, well-composed in diction and reasoning, he will not achieve what was [agreed to be] the function of tragedy; a tragedy that employs these less adequately, but has a plot (i.e. structure of incidents), will achieve it much more.

(iv) In addition, the most important things with which a tragedy enthralls [us] are parts of plot—reversals and recognitions.

(v) A further indication is that people who try their hand at composing can be proficient in the diction and characters before they are able to structure the incidents; e.g. too almost all the early poets.

So plot is the origin and as it were the soul of tragedy, and the characters are secondary. It is very similar [1450b] in the case of painting too: if someone daubed [a surface] with the finest pigments indiscriminately, he would not give the same enjoyment as if he had sketched an image in black and white. Tragedy is a representation of an action, and for the sake of the action above all [a representation] of the people who are acting.

Reasoning comes third, i.e. being able to say what is possible and appropriate, which is its function in the case of the speeches of civic life and rhetoric. The old [poets] made people speak like citizens, but the recent ones make them speak like rhetoricians. Character is that which reveals decision, of whatever sort; this is why those speeches in which the speaker decides or avoids nothing at all do not have character. Reasoning, on the other hand, is that with which people demonstrate that something is or is not, or make some universal statement.

Diction is fourth. By "diction" I mean, as we said earlier, communication by means of language, which has the same potential in the case of both verse and [prose] speeches.

Of the remaining [parts], song is the most important of the embellishments. Spectacle is something enthralling, but is very artless and least particular to the art of poetic composition. The potential of tragedy exists even without a performance and actors; besides, the designer's art is more essential for the accomplishment of spectacular [effects] than is the poets'.

[7] Now that these definitions have been given, let us next discuss what sort of structure of the incidents there should be, since this is the first and most important [part] of tragedy. We have laid down that tragedy is the representation of a complete i.e. whole action which has some magnitude (for there can be a whole with no magnitude). A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and a conclusion. A beginning is that which itself does not of necessity follow something else, but after which there naturally is, or comes into being, something else. A conclusion, conversely, is that which itself naturally follows something else, either of necessity or for the most part, but has nothing else after it. A middle is that which itself naturally follows something else, and has something else after it. Well-constructed plots, then, should neither begin from a random point nor conclude at a random point, but should use the elements we have mentioned [i.e. beginning, middle and conclusion].

Further, to be fine both an animal and every thing which is constructed from some [parts] should not only have these [parts] in order, but also possess a magnitude that is not random. For fineness lies in magnitude and

order. For this reason a fine animal can be neither very small, for observation becomes confused when it approaches an imperceptible instant of time; nor [can it be] very large, for [1451a] observation cannot happen at the same time, but its unity and wholeness vanish from the observers' view, e.g. if there were an animal a thousand miles long. Consequently, just as in the case of bodies and of animals these should have magnitude, but [only] a magnitude that is easily seen as a whole, so too in the case of plots these should have length, but [only] a length that is easily memorable.

As for the limit on their length, one limit relates to performances and the perception [of them], not to the art [itself]. If the performance of a hundred tragedies were required [at one tragic competition], they would be performed "against the clock," as the saying goes! But as for the limit according to the nature of the thing [itself], the larger the plot is, the finer it is because of its magnitude, so long as the whole is still clear. To give a simple definition, in whatever magnitude a change from misfortune to good fortune, or from good fortune to misfortune, can come about by a sequence of events in accordance with probability or necessity—this is an adequate definition of its magnitude.

[8] A plot is not unified, as some suppose, if it concerns one single person. An indefinitely large number of things happens to one person, in some of which there is no unity. So too the actions of one person are many, but do not turn into a single action. For this reason, it seems, all those poets who composed a *Heracleid*, a *Theseid*⁶ or similar poems are in error. They suppose that, because Heracles was a single person, his story too must be a single story. But, just as Homer is superior in other respects, it seems that he saw this clearly as well (whether by art or by nature). In composing the *Odyssey*, he did not put into his poem everything that happened to *Odysseus*,⁷ e.g. that he was wounded on Parnassus and pretended to be insane during recruitment; whether one of these things happened did not make it necessary or probable that the other would happen. But he constructed the *Odyssey* around a single action of the kind we are discussing, and the *Iliad* similarly.

Therefore, just as in the other representational arts a single representation is of a single [thing], so too the plot, since it is a representation of action, ought to represent a single action, and a whole one at that; and its parts (the incidents) ought to be so constructed that, when some part is transposed or removed, the whole is disrupted and disturbed. Something which, whether it is present or not present, explains nothing [else], is no part of the whole.

[9] It is also obvious from what we have said that it is the function of a poet to relate not things that have happened, but things that may happen, i.e. that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity. For [1451b] the historian and the poet do not differ according to whether they write in verse or without verse—the writings of Herodotus⁸ could be put into verse, but they would be no less a sort of history in verse than they are without verses. But the difference is that the former relates things that have happened, the latter things that may happen. For this reason poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history; poetry tends to speak of

6. In ancient Greece, there were several epic *Heracleids* and *Theseids*—poems depicting, respectively, the heroes Heracles and Theseus.

7. The wily king of Ithaca whose efforts to return home to Greece after the Trojan War are chronicled in the *Odyssey*.

8. Greek historian (ca. 484–425 B.C.E.), chiefly of the Persian Wars; sometimes called "the father of history."

universals, history of particulars. A universal is the sort of thing that a certain kind of person may well say or do in accordance with probability or necessity—this is what poetry aims at, although it assigns names [to the people]. A particular is what Alcibiades⁹ did or what he suffered.

In the case of comedy this has already become clear. When [comic poets] have composed a plot according to probability, only then do they supply the names at random; they do not, like the composers of lampoons, compose [poems] about particular individuals. In the case of tragedy [the poets] keep to actual names. The reason is that what is possible is believable; we do not believe that what has never happened is possible, but things which have happened are obviously possible—they would not have happened, if they were impossible. Nonetheless, even among tragedies some have only one or two well-known names, and the rest made up; and some have not one, e.g. Agathon's¹ *Antheus*. In this [drama] the incidents and the names alike are made up, and it is no less delightful. Consequently one must not seek to keep entirely to the traditional stories which tragedies are about. In fact it is ridiculous to seek to do so, since even the well-known [incidents] are known only to a few people, but even so everyone enjoys them.

So it is clear from these arguments that a poet must be a composer of plots rather than of verses, insofar as he is a poet according to representation, and represents actions. So even if it turns out that he is representing things that happened, he is no less a poet; for there is nothing to prevent some of the things that have happened from being the sort of things that may happen according to probability, i.e. that are possible, which is why he can make a poetic composition about them.

Among simple plots and actions, episodic [tragedies] are the worst. By "episodic" I mean a plot in which there is neither probability nor necessity that the episodes follow one another. Such [tragedies] are composed by inferior poets because of themselves, but by good ones because of the actors. For in composing competition-pieces, they extend the plot beyond its potential and [1452a] are often compelled to distort the sequence.

The representation is not only of a complete action but also of terrifying and pitiable [incidents]. These arise to a very great or a considerable extent when they happen contrary to expectation but because of one another. For they will be more amazing in this way than if [they happened] on their own, i.e. at random, since the most amazing even among random events are those which appear to have happened as it were on purpose, e.g. the way the statue of Mitys at Argos² killed the man who was the cause of Mitys' death, by falling on him as he looked at it. Such things do not seem to happen at random. Consequently plots of this kind are necessarily finer.

[10] Among plots, some are simple and some are complex; for the actions, of which plots are representations, are evidently of these kinds. By "simple," I mean an action which is, as we have defined it, continuous in its course and single, where the transformation comes about without reversal or recognition. By "complex," I mean an action as a result of which the transformation is accompanied by a recognition, a reversal or both. These should

arise from the actual structure of the plot, so it happens that they arise either by necessity or by probability as a result of the preceding events. It makes a great difference whether these [events] happen because of those or [only] after those.

[11] A reversal is a change of the actions to their opposite, as we said, and that, as we are arguing, in accordance with probability or necessity. E.g. in the *Oedipus*,³ the man who comes to bring delight to Oedipus, and to rid him of his terror about his mother, does the opposite by revealing who Oedipus is; and in the *Lynceus*,⁴ Lynceus is being led to his death, and Danaus follows to kill him, but it comes about as a result of the preceding actions that Danaus is killed and Lynceus is rescued.

A recognition, as the word itself indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, and so to either friendship or enmity, among people defined in relation to good fortune or misfortune. A recognition is finest when it happens at the same time as a reversal, as does the one in the *Oedipus*. There are indeed other [kinds of] recognition. For it can happen in the manner stated regarding inanimate objects and random events; and one can recognise whether someone has done something or not done it. But the sort that most belongs to the plot, i.e. most belongs to the action, is that which we have mentioned: for such a recognition and reversal [1452b] will contain pity or terror (tragedy is considered to be a representation of actions of this sort), and in addition misfortune and good fortune will come about in the case of such events.

Since recognition is a recognition of people, some recognitions are by one person only of the other, when the identity of one of them is clear; but sometimes there must be a recognition of both persons. E.g. Iphigeneia is recognised by Orestes⁵ as a result of her sending the letter, but it requires another recognition for him [to be recognised] by Iphigeneia. These, then, reversal and recognition, are two parts of plot. A third is suffering. Of these, we have discussed reversal and recognition. Suffering is a destructive or painful action, e.g. deaths in full view, agonies, woundings etc.

[12] Regarding the parts of tragedy, we stated earlier which ones should be used as elements. The quantitative parts, i.e. the separate parts into which it is divided, are as follows: (i) prologue, (ii) episode, (iii) exit and (iv) choral [part], with this divided into (a) processional and (b) stationary [song]—these are shared by all [dramas], and [songs sung] from the stage, i.e. dirges—these are particular [to some].

(i) A prologue is a whole part of a tragedy that is before the processional [song] of the chorus.

(ii) An episode is a whole part of a tragedy that is between whole choral songs.

(iii) An exit is a whole part of a tragedy after which there is no song of the chorus.

3. *Oedipus Rex* (ca. 430 B.C.E.), by Sophocles—a play to which Aristotle frequently refers as a model for his definition of tragedy. Unknowningly, Oedipus kills his father, Laius; takes his father's place as king of Thebes; and marries his mother, Jocasta. When he learns that he has not escaped the fate foretold, he gouges out his eyes and banishes himself, hence undergoing a reversal from king to outcast.

4. Lost tragedy by the orator and tragic poet Theodectes (ca. 375–334 B.C.E.), about the daughters of King Danaus of Argos, who ordered them to kill their husbands (all obeyed except Hypermestra, whose husband was Lynceus).

5. In *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (ca. 413 B.C.E.), by Euripides (ca. 485–ca. 406 B.C.E.), the youngest of the 3 great Greek tragedians.

9. Athenian politician and general (ca. 450–404 B.C.E.).

1. Innovative Athenian tragedian (d. ca. 401 B.C.E.); less than 40 lines of his works remain.

2. The providential punishment of the murderer of Mitys at Argos happened some time before or around 374 B.C.E. [translator's note].

(iv) Of the choral [part], (a) a processional is the first whole utterance of the chorus; (b) a stationary song is a song of the chorus without anapaestic⁶ trochaic verse; and (c) a dirge is a lament shared by the chorus and [those] on stage.

Regarding the parts of tragedy, we stated earlier which ones should be used [as elements]; the quantitative ones, i.e. the separate parts into which it is divided, are these.

[13] After what we have just been saying, we must perhaps discuss next what [poets] should aim at and what they should beware of in constructing plots, i.e. how tragedy will achieve its function. Since the construction of the finest tragedy should be not simple but complex, and moreover it should represent terrifying and pitiable events (for this is particular to representation of this sort), first, clearly, it should not show (i) decent men undergoing a change from good fortune to misfortune; for this is neither terrifying nor pitiable, but shocking. Nor [should it show] (ii) wicked men [passing] from misfortune to good fortune. This is most untragic of all, as it has nothing of what it should; for it is neither morally satisfying nor pitiable nor terrifying. [1453a] Nor, again, [should it show] (iii) a thoroughly villainous person falling from good fortune into misfortune: such a structure can contain moral satisfaction, but not pity or terror, for the former is [felt] for a person undeserving of his misfortune, and the latter for a person like [ourselves]. Consequently the outcome will be neither pitiable nor terrifying.

There remains, then, the person intermediate between these. Such a person is one who neither is superior [to us] in virtue and justice, nor undergoes a change to misfortune because of vice and wickedness, but because of some error, and who is one of those people with a great reputation and a good fortune, e.g. Oedipus, Thyestes⁷ and distinguished men from similar families. Necessarily, then, a plot that is fine is single rather than (as some say) double, and involves a change not from misfortune to good fortune, but conversely, from good fortune to misfortune, not because of wickedness but because of a great error by a person like the one mentioned, or by a better person rather than a worse one.

An indication [that this is so] is what is coming about. At first the poets recounted stories at random, but now the finest tragedies are constructed around a few households, e.g. about Alcmeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus and the others, who happen to have had dreadful things done to them, or to have done them.⁸ So the tragedy which is finest according to the [principles of the] art results from this structure. For this reason, people make the same error when they bring against Euripides the charge that he does this in his tragedies, and many of his [tragedies] end in misfortune; for this, as we said, is correct. A very important indication [that this is so is the following].

6. Based on a foot of the syllabic pattern short-short-long (sometimes known as marching meter because of its regularity).

7. Like Oedipus, a popular subject for Greek tragedy, though none survive; his story has numerous variants. He unknowingly ate the flesh of his own sons, served by his brother Atreus; and following the advice of an oracle, he committed incest with his daughter to beget the son who would avenge him.

8. Few of the tragedies involving these characters

On stage, i.e. in performance, tragedies of this sort, if they are done correctly, are obviously the most tragic, and although Euripides manages badly in other respects, he is obviously the most tragic of poets.

The second[-best] structure is that which some say is first, the [tragedy] which has a double structure like the *Odyssey*, and which ends in opposite ways for the better and worse [persons]. This [structure] would seem to be first because of the weakness of the audiences; the poets follow the spectators, composing to suit their wishes. But this is not the pleasure [that comes] from tragedy, but is more particular to comedy. There the bitterest enemies in the story, e.g. Orestes and Aegisthus,⁹ exit as friends at the conclusion, and nobody kills anyone else.

[14, 1453b] That which is terrifying and pitiable can arise from spectacle, but it can also arise from the structure of the incidents itself; this is superior and belongs to a better poet. For the plot should be constructed in such a way that, even without seeing it, someone who hears about the incidents will shudder and feel pity at the outcome, as someone may feel upon hearing the plot of the *Oedipus*. To produce this by means of spectacle is less artful and requires lavish production. Those [poets] who use spectacle to produce what is only monstrous and not terrifying have nothing in common with tragedy. For we should not seek every [kind of] pleasure from tragedy, but [only] the sort which is particular to it. Since the poet should use representation to produce the pleasure [arising] from pity and terror, it is obvious that this must be put into the incidents.

Let us consider, then, what sorts of occurrence arouse dread or compassion in us. These sorts of action against each another necessarily take place between friends, enemies or people who are neither. If it is one enemy [who does the action] to another, there is nothing pitiable, whether he does it or is [only] about to do it, except in the suffering itself. Nor [is it pitiable] if the people are neither [friends nor enemies]. But when suffering happen within friendly relationships, e.g. brother against brother, son against father, mother against son or son against mother, when someone kills someone else, is about to, or does something else of the same sort—these are what must be sought after.

[The poet] cannot undo the traditional stories, I mean e.g. that Clytemnestra is killed by Orestes or Eriphyle by Alcmeon; but he should invent for himself, i.e. use the inherited [stories], well. Let me explain more clearly what I mean by "well."

The action may arise (i) in the way the old [poets] made people act knowingly, i.e. in full knowledge, just as Euripides too made Medea¹ kill her children. Or (ii) they may be going to act, in full knowledge, but not do it. Or (iii) they may act, but do the dreadful deed in ignorance, and then recognise the friendly relationship later, as Sophocles' Oedipus [does]. This is outside the drama; but [they may do the deed] in the tragedy itself, as Atydarnas Alcmeon or Telegonus in the *Wounded Odysseus*² [do]. Again, fourth beside

9. Clytemnestra's lover (and Agamemnon's cousin), whom (in the version told in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*) Orestes also kills.

1. A sorceress from Colchis. In *Medea* (431 B.C.E.), to 'avenge herself on Jason, who has deserted her for the daughter of a king, she kills his—and her—children.

2. A lost play by Sophocles in which Telegonus, the son of Odysseus and Circe, fatally wounds his father without knowing his identity. Atydarnas (active ca. 390 B.C.E.), a prolific Athenian tragedian; Alcmaeon (and all but a few lines of his works) is lost.

these [ways] is (iv) to be about to do something deadly in ignorance [of one's relationship], but to recognise it before doing so. Beside these there is no other way; for the act is necessarily either done or not done, and those who act either have knowledge or do not.

Among these [ways], (i) to be about to act in full knowledge, but not do it, is the worst. For this is shocking and also not tragic, as there is no suffering. For this reason nobody composes in this way, [1445a] except rarely, e.g. Haemon against Creon in the *Antigone*.³ (ii) To act is second[-worst]. (iii) To act in ignorance, but recognise [the relationship] afterwards, is better. This has nothing shocking in it, and the recognition is astonishing. (iv) The last [way] is the best. I mean e.g. the *Cresphontes*, where Merope is about to kill her son, but does not kill him and recognises him; the *Iphigeneia*, where [it is the same for] the sister and her brother; and the *Helle*,⁴ where the son is about to hand over his mother but recognises her. This is why, as we said a while ago, tragedies are not about many families. [The poets] sought to produce this sort [of effect] in their plots, and discovered how to not by art but by chance; so they are obliged to concern themselves with those households in which such sufferings have happened.

As for the structure of the incidents, and what sort of plots there should be, let this suffice.

[15] Regarding characters, there are four things at which [the poet] should aim.

(i) First and foremost, the characters should be good. [The tragedy] will have character if, as we said, the speech or the action makes obvious a decision of whatever sort; it will have a good character, if it makes obvious a good decision. [Good character] can exist in every class [of person]; for a woman can be good, and a slave can, although the first of these [classes] may be inferior and the second wholly worthless.

(ii) Second, [they should be] appropriate. It is possible to be manly in character, but it is not appropriate for a woman to be so manly or clever.

(iii) Third, [the character should be life-]like. This is different from making the character good and appropriate in the way already stated.

(iv) Fourth, [the character should be] consistent. If the model for the representation is somebody inconsistent, and such a character is intended, even so it should be consistently inconsistent.

An example of unnecessary villainy of character is the Menelaus in the *Orestes*; of the unsuitable and inappropriate, the lament of Odysseus in the *Scylla*, and the speech of Melanippe;⁵ and of the inconsistent, the *Iphigeneia at Aulis* (the girl who begs [for her life] does not seem at all like the later Iphigeneia).⁶

In the characters too, exactly as in the structure of the incidents, [the

poet] ought always to seek what is either necessary or probable, so that it is either necessary or probable that a person of such-and-such a sort say or do things of the same sort, and it is either necessary or probable that this [incident] happen after that one.

It is obvious that the solutions of plots too should come about as a result of the plot itself, [1454b] and not from a contrivance, as in the *Medea* and in the passage about sailing home in the *Iliad*.⁷ A contrivance must be used for matters outside the drama—either previous events which are beyond human knowledge, or later ones that need to be foretold or announced. For we grant that the gods can see everything. There should be nothing improbable in the incidents; otherwise, it should be outside the tragedy, e.g. that in Sophocles' *Oedipus*.

Since tragedy is a representation of people who are better than we are, [the poet] should emulate the good portrait-painters. In rendering people's particular shape, while making them [life-]like, they paint them as finer [than they are]. So too the poet, as he represents people who are angry, lazy, or have other such traits, should make them such in their characters, [but] decent [too]. E.g. Homer [made] Achilles⁸ good as well as an example of stubbornness. [The poet] should guard against these things, as well as against [causing] reactions contrary to those that necessarily follow from the art of poetry. In fact one can often make errors in these; there is a sufficient account of them in my published work.

[16] We stated earlier what recognition is. As for the kinds of recognition, (i) the first is the least artful, which [poets] make most use of from lack of resourcefulness—recognition by signs. Of these, (a) some are congenital, e.g. "the spear-head that the earth-born bear," or [the birth-marks like] stars such as Carcinus⁹ [made up] in his *Thyestes*. (b) Others are acquired. Of these (1) some are on the body, e.g. scars, and (2) others are external, e.g. necklaces, and e.g. [the recognition] by means of the dinghy in the *Tyro*.¹

These can be used more or less well; e.g. Odysseus was recognised from his scar in one way by the nurse, and in another by the swineherds.² For the latter recognitions, and all similar ones, are less artful because of the [means of] proof; but those that result from a reversal, like that in the "Bath-scene," are better.

(ii) Second are those recognitions made up by the poet, which is why they are not artful. E.g. in the *Iphigeneia*, how Orestes makes it known that he is Orestes; for Iphigeneia is recognised by means of the letter, but he himself says what the poet wants, not what the plot does. For this reason, this recognition is not far from the error we [just] mentioned; Orestes could have brought some actual objects. Also "the shuttle's voice" in Sophocles' *Tereus*.³

7. In *Iliad* 8.155–81, only the arbitrary intervention of the goddess Athena prevents the Greeks from giving up the fight at Troy and going home. The *Medea*: after killing her children, Medea flies off in the chariot of the sun-god Helios, her grandfather; this "contrivance" is the *deus ex machina*.

8. The greatest warrior among the Greeks and the central character of the *Iliad*. He displays his "stubbornness" by long refusing to engage in the battle because of his anger with Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces.

9. Prolific Greek tragic poet (early 4th c. B.C.E.). The preceding quotation may be from Euripides.

lost *Antigone*.

1. A lost play by Sophocles; Tyro's sons are abandoned in a small boat that leads to their later recognition.

2. Odysseus is recognized artfully (because inevitably) by his nurse when he shows them his scar in the "bath scene" (*Odyssey* 19.386–475), but his declaration of his identity to the swineherds, when he shows them the scar as proof (21.205–25), is manufactured by the poet.

3. A lost play. Philomela tells her sister the story of her rape by Tereus, who has torn out her tongue to silence her, by weaving a picture of it.

Scylla: a lost dithyramb by Timotheus, in which Odysseus weeps in an unmanly way for his crew members killed by the monster Scylla.

6. That is, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*. Euripides' play set at Aulis (ca. 405 B.C.E.) depicts Iphigeneia about to be sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, so that the Greeks may have fair winds as they sail to Troy; according to one version of the myth, she was saved by Artemis and transported far away to Tauris, where she becomes high priestess (and where Orestes later comes).

3. By Sophocles (ca. 441 B.C.E.). Haemon, who loves Antigone, tries to kill his father (Creon, king of Thebes), who is responsible for her suicide.

4. Nothing more is known of this play. The *Cresphontes* (now lost) and *Iphigeneia in Tauris* are both by Euripides.

5. In *Melanippe the Wise*, a lost play by Euripides; the heroine apparently argues with a philosophical sophistation inappropriate for a woman. Menelaus in the *Orestes*; in Euripides' play (408 B.C.E.), Menelaus basely refuses to help his nephew.

(iii) The third [kind of recognition] is by means of a memory, when someone reacts to something he sees, [1455a] like the one in Dicaeogenes' *Cypriots* where he bursts into tears upon seeing the painting, or the one in the "Tale told to Alcinous"⁴ where Odysseus hears the lyre-player and weeps at his memories, as a result of which they recognise him.

(iv) Fourth is recognition resulting from an inference, e.g. in the *Libation Bearers*, on the grounds that "someone like [Electra] has come; but there is nobody like [her] except Orestes; it is he, then, who has come".⁵ Or the recognition [proposed by] the sophist Polyidus concerning Iphigeneia: it would be reasonable, he said, for Orestes to infer that "his sister was sacrificed, and it [now] falls to him to be sacrificed himself." Or in Theodectes' *Tydeus*, on the grounds that "he came to find a son, but is to die himself." Or the recognition in the *Sons of Phineus*,⁶ when the women see the place they infer their fate, on the grounds that "they are fated to be killed there, for [the boys] were left to perish there."

There is also a combined recognition resulting from a false inference by the audience, e.g. in *Odysseus the False Messenger*,⁷ for the fact that [Odysseus could] bend the bow, but nobody else [could], is made up by the poet and is a premise, and [so is Odysseus'] saying that he would recognise the bow which he had not seen; but the way he is expected to make himself known by the former means, but does so by the latter, is a [case of] false inference.

(v) The best recognition of all is that which results from the incidents themselves, when our astonishment comes about by means of probable [incidents], e.g. in Sophocles' *Oedipus* and the *Iphigeneia*: it is probable that Iphigeneia would wish to dispatch a letter. For such recognitions alone are without made-up [incidents] and necklaces. Recognitions as a result of inference are second[-best].

[17] In constructing his plots and using diction to bring them to completion, [the poet] should put [the events] before his eyes as much as he can. In this way, seeing them very vividly as if he were actually present at the actions [he represents], he can discover what is suitable, and is least likely to miss contradictions. An indication of this is the [contradiction] for which Carcinus was criticised. His Amphiarus comes up out of a shrine,⁸ this would have been missed by anyone not seeing it as a spectator. But [the play] failed on stage, as the spectators were upset about it.

As far as possible, [the poet should] also bring [his plots] to completion with gestures. Given the same nature, those [poets] who experience the emotions [to be represented] are most believable, i.e. he who is agitated or furious [can represent] agitation and anger most truthfully. For this reason, the art of poetry belongs to the genius or the madman; of these, the first are adaptable, the second can step outside themselves.

As for his stories, both those [already] made up and those he composes himself, [1455b] he should set them out as universals, and only then introduce episodes, i.e. extend them. I mean that he might investigate what is

universal in them in the following way, e.g. [the story] of Iphigeneia: "a girl has been sacrificed and disappears in a way unclear to the people who sacrificed her. She is set down in another country, where there is a law that foreigners must be sacrificed to the goddess; this is the priesthood she is given. Some time later it turns out that the priestess' brother arrives. . . ." The fact that the oracle commanded him to go there, for some reason that is not a universal, and his purpose [in going], are outside the plot. "After he arrives, he is captured. When he is about to be sacrificed [by his sister], he makes himself known [to her]," either as Euripides or as Polyidus arranged it, "by saying—as would be probable—that it was not only his sister's fate to be sacrificed, but his own too. This leads to the rescue." After this [the poet] should now supply the names and introduce episodes. Take care that the episodes are particular [to the story], e.g. in Orestes' case his madness through which he is captured, and his rescue by means of the purification.

In dramas the episodes are brief, but epic is lengthened out with them. The story of the *Odyssey* is not long: "someone has been away from home for many years, with a god on the watch for him, and he is alone. Moreover affairs at home are such that his wealth is being consumed by [his wife's] suitors, and his son is being plotted against [by them]. He arrives after much distress, makes himself known to some people, and attacks. He is rescued, his enemies annihilated." This is what is proper [to the *Odyssey*]; its other [parts] are episodes.

[18] [Part] of every tragedy is the complication, and [part] is the solution. The [incidents] outside [the tragedy] and often some of those inside it are the complication, and the rest is the solution. By "complication," I mean the [tragedy] from the beginning up to the final part from which there is a transformation towards good fortune or misfortune; by "solution," the [tragedy] from the beginning of the transformation up to the end. E.g. in Theodectes' *Lyneus*, the prior incidents, the capture of the baby and then its parents' explanation is the complication, and the [tragedy] from the demand for the death penalty up to the end is the solution.

There are four kinds of tragedy (for we said that its parts too are of the same number): (i) the complex tragedy, the whole of which is reversal and recognition; (ii) the tragedy of suffering, e.g. the [tragedies called] *Ajax* and [1456a] *Ixion*;⁹ (iii) the tragedy of character; e.g. the *Women of Phthia* and the *Peleus*;¹ (iv) the fourth [kind] is spectacle, e.g. the *Daughters of Phorcy*, the *Prometheus*² and [dramas set] in Hades. Preferably [the poet] should attempt to have all [the parts]; otherwise, the most important and the majority of them, especially given the way people belittle poets nowadays. Since there have been poets good at each part [of tragedy], they demand that a single [poet] surpass the particular good [quality] of each one; but it is not right to call a tragedy the same [as another] or different according to anything

9. No play of this name survives. Ixion was the first to murder kin and attempted to rape Hera, queen of the gods; as punishment for the second crime, he is chained forever to a wheel in the underworld. Ajax: Sophocles' play (ca. 445 B.C.E.) tells the story of the Greek warrior driven mad by Athena who then commits suicide out of shame.

1. Both lost works revolve around the family of Achilles, who was the son of Peleus and came from Phthia. *Women of Phthia* is by Sophocles; both

Sophocles and Euripides wrote plays titled *Peleus*. 2. Perhaps Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, whose hero speaks while bound to the rocks in the Caucasus. *Daughters of Phorcy*: perhaps by Aeschylus. Phorcy was a sea god, and his daughters were monsters: the 3 Graecae, old women who shared one tooth and one eye, and the 3 serpent-haired Gorgons, the sight of whom turned humans to stone.

168–234.

4. King of the Phaeacians and Odysseus's host in *Iliad* 7–12 (for the telltale weeping, see 8.521–34). Dicaeogenes (late 5th c. B.C.E.), a minor Greek tragedian.

5. Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* (458 B.C.E.), lines

8. In a lost play.

so much as the plot, that is, [plots] with the same development and solution. Many [poets] develop [the plot] well and solve it badly, but one should harmonise both [parts].

[The poet] ought to remember what we have often said, and not compose a tragedy with an epic structure (by an "epic" structure, I mean one with more than one plot), e.g. if someone were to compose [a tragedy with] the whole plot of the *Iliad*. For there, the parts receive suitable magnitude because of the length [of the epic]; but in dramas the result is far from one's expectation.

An indication [that this is so is the following]: those [tragedians] who composed a *Sack of Troy* as a whole and not in part like Euripides, or a *Niobe*³ and not like Aeschylus, either fail or compete badly, since even Agathon failed in this one respect. In reversals and in simple incidents, they aim to arouse the amazement which they desire; for this is tragic and morally satisfying. This is possible when someone who is clever but villainous is deceived, like Sisyphus,⁴ or someone who is brave but unjust is defeated. This is even probable, as Agathon says; for it is probable that many things will happen even against probability.

[The poet] should regard the chorus as one of the actors. It should be a part of the whole, and contribute to the performance, not as in Euripides but as in Sophocles. In the rest the sung [parts] belong to the plot no more than they belong to another tragedy. For this reason they sing interludes; Agathon was first to begin this. Yet what difference is there between singing interludes and trying to adapt a speech, or a whole episode, from one [drama] to another?

[19] We have discussed the other elements [of tragedy]; it remains to discuss diction and reasoning. As for reasoning, what was said about it in my *Rhetoric*⁵ should be assumed; for this is proper rather than that enquiry. All [the effects] that have to be produced by speech fall under reasoning. The types of these are (i) demonstration and refutation, (ii) the production of emotions [1456b] (e.g. pity, terror, anger, etc.), and again (iii) [arguments about things'] importance or unimportance.

In the incidents too [the poet] clearly should use some of the same elements when he needs to make things [e.g.] pitiable, dreadful, important or probable, except that there is this difference, that these [effects] should be apparent without a production, but those dependent on speech should be produced by the speaker and arise from speech. What would be the speaker's function, if the element were apparent even without [the use of] speech?

Among matters related to diction, one kind of investigation is the forms of the diction. Knowledge of this belongs to the art of delivery and to the person with mastery in it. [I mean] e.g. what is a command, what is a wish, a statement, a threat, a question, an answer, etc. No criticism at all made

against the art of poetry, that is based on knowledge or ignorance of these [forms], actually deserves to be taken seriously. What error could anybody consider there to be in "Sing, goddess, of the wrath," which Protagoras⁶ criticises on the grounds that [Homer] supposes he is making a wish, but is giving an order? (For Protagoras says that telling someone to do something or not do it is an order.) For this reason let us leave this investigation aside, as it belongs to another art and not to that of poetry.

[20] The parts of diction in its entirety are as follows: (i) the element [i.e. letter], (ii) the syllable, (iii) the particle, (iv) the conjunction, (v) the name [i.e. noun or adjective], (vi) the verb, (vii) the inflection, (viii) the utterance.

(i) The element is an indivisible sound—not every [kind of] sound, but one from which it is natural for a composite sound to arise. For wild animals too make indivisible sounds, none of which I mean by an element. The types of this [kind of] sound are (a) the vowel, (b) the semi-vowel and (c) the consonant.

(a) A vowel is that which has an audible sound without a contact [between the parts of the mouth]. (b) A semi-vowel is that which has an audible sound with [such] a contact, e.g. *s* and *r*. (c) A consonant is that which has no audible sound in itself with [such] a contact, but becomes audible together with those elements that have a sound of some sort; e.g. *g* and *d*.

The elements differ according to the forms of the mouth, the places [in the mouth where they are produced], aspiration, non-aspiration, length, shortness, and also high, low or intermediate pitch. One must investigate the particulars of these matters in works on versification.

(ii) A syllable is a non-significant sound composed of a consonant and [an element] which has sound. In fact *gr* without an *a* is a syllable, and [it is also a syllable] with an *a*, as in *gra*. But the investigation of the differences between these also belongs to the art of versification.

(iii) A particle is (a) a non-significant sound which neither precludes, [1457a] nor brings about, the production of a single significant sound that by nature is composed of several sounds [i.e. an utterance], and which it is not appropriate to place at the beginning of an utterance on its own, e.g. *men*, *ētoi*, *de*. Or [it is] (b) a non-significant sound which by nature produces, as a result of [joining together] several sounds that are significant, a single significant sound [i.e. an utterance], e.g. "about," "concerning" etc.

(iv) A conjunction is a non-significant sound which makes clear the beginning of an utterance, its end or its dividing-point, and which by nature is placed both at the extremities and in the middle [of an utterance], e.g. "or," "because," "but."

(v) A name [i.e. noun or adjective] is a composite significant sound without [an indication of] time, no part of which is significant in itself. For in double names we do not use [any part] as being significant in and of itself: e.g. in "Theodore" [i.e. "gift of god"] *dore* is not significant.

(vi) A verb is a composite significant sound with [an indication of] time, no part of which is significant in itself, just as in the case of names. For "human being" or "white" does not signify when, but "walks" or "walked"

3. There are no known epics concerning Niobe; Aeschylus's *Niobe* is lost. *Sack of Troy*: a poem in the epic cycle, by Lesches of Mytilene (ca. 7th c. B.C.E.) or Arctinus of Miletus (ca. 8th c. B.C.E.). Euripides treated some of the same events in his *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*.

4. A sly trickster who murdered travelers and once even chained the god of death, he is punished eter-

nally for betraying Zeus's secrets; he tries to roll a stone over the top of a steep hill, but always fails and must try again from the bottom. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all wrote plays on Sisyphus.

5. In a discussion of types of argument; see *Rhetoric* 1356a-1358a.

6. Pre-Socratic philosopher (5th c. B.C.E.), who was one of the most successful of the sophists, or itinerant teachers. "Sing . . .": the first words of the *Iliad*.

signifies this as well, present time in the first case, and past time in the second.

(vii) An inflection of a name or verb is either (a) the inflection according to the [part] that signifies "of him," "for him," etc., or (b) that according to the [part] that signifies "one" or "many," e.g. "person" or "persons," or (c) that according to the delivery, e.g. according to [whether it is] a question or an order; for "did he walk?" or "walk!" is an inflection of the verb according to these kinds.

(viii) An utterance is a composite significant sound, some parts of which signify something in themselves. For not every utterance is composed of verbs and names, e.g. the definition of a human being, but there can be an utterance without verbs. However, an utterance will always have a part that signifies something [in itself], e.g. "Cleon" in "Cleon walks."

An utterance can be single in two ways, either (a) by signifying one thing, or (b) by a conjunction of several things. E.g. the *Iliad* is one by a conjunction [of many things], but the definition of a human being is one by signifying one thing.

[21] The kinds of name are (i) single (by "single," I mean that which is not composed from [parts] that are significant, e.g. "earth"), and (ii) double. Of the double name, (a) one [kind] is composed of [a part] that is significant and [a part] that is non-significant, except that these [parts] are not significant and non-significant in the [double] name [itself]; (b) the other [kind] is composed of [parts] that are significant. There can be a triple and a quadruple name, even a multiple one; e.g. most of the names of the people of Marseilles, "Hermocleoxanthus," who prays to Zeus." [1457b] Every name is either (i) standard, (ii) exotic, (iii) a metaphor, (iv) an ornament, (v) made-up, (vi) lengthened, (vii) reduced or (viii) altered.

By (i) "standard," I mean a name which a particular people uses; by (ii) "exotic," I mean one which other people uses. Consequently it is obvious that it is possible for the same [name] to be both exotic and standard, but not for the same people. For *siguron* ("spear") is standard for the Cypriots,⁷ but exotic for us; and "spear" is standard for us, but exotic for the Cypriots. (iii) A "metaphor" is the application [to something] of a name belonging to something else, either (a) from the genus to the species, or (b) from the species to the genus, or (c) from a species to [another] species, or (d) according to analogy.

By (a), "from genus to species," I mean e.g. "here stands my ship": for [the species] lying at anchor is [a part of the genus] standing. By (b), "from species to genus," I mean e.g. "truly has Odysseus done ten thousand deeds of worth": for [the species] "ten thousand" is [a part of the genus] "many," and [Homer] uses it here instead of "a lot". By (c), "from species to species," I mean e.g. [killing a man by] "draining out his life with bronze" [i.e. a weapon], and [drawing water by] "cutting it with long-edged bronze" [i.e. a bowl]: for here [the poet] calls cutting "draining" and draining "cutting". Both are [species of the genus] "taking away." By (d), "analogy," I mean when *b* is to *a* as *d* is to *c*; for [the poet then] will say *d* instead of *b*, or *b* instead of *d*.

7. A comical name compounded from the names of three rivers (Hermus, Caicus, and Xanthus) in western Asia Minor, where the founders of Marseilles (then called Massalia) originated.

8. That is, those speaking the dialect of Greek used on the island of Cyprus.

Sometimes too [poets] add [to the metaphor] the thing to which the name relates, instead of what it means. I mean e.g. that the wine-bowl stands to Dionysus as the shield does to Ares:⁹ so [the poet] will call a wine-bowl "shield of Dionysus" and a shield "wine-bowl of Ares." Again, as old age stands to life, so the evening stands to the day: so [the poet] will call evening "old age of the day," as Empedocles does, and old age "the evening of life" or "the sunset of life."

There may be no current name for some of the things in the analogy, but even so they will be expressed in the same way. E.g. to scatter seed is to sow, and to scatter radiance from the sun has no name; but this has the same relation to the sun as sowing does to the seed. For this reason [the poet] says "sowing god-wrought radiance."

This manner of [making a] metaphor can be used in another way too. After terming something by a name that belongs to something else, one can deny to it one of the things particular to [that other thing], e.g. if [a poet] called a shield not "wine-bowl of Ares" but "wine-bowl without wine."

(iv) [An "ornament" is ***]

(v) A "made-up [name]" is one which is wholly unused by people, but which the poet supplies himself. There would seem to be some such names, e.g. "branchers" for "horns" or "prayerman" for "priest."

(vi)-(vii) As for lengthened [1458a] or shortened names, the former is one which uses a longer vowel than the one particular [to it], or an inserted syllable. The latter is one some [part] of which has been shortened. A lengthened [name] is e.g. *polēos* for *polēs* "of the city," and *Peleïadeōs* for *Peleïdou* "son of Peleus"; a shortened [name] is e.g. *kri* [for *kritēz*] "barley," *dō* [for *dōma*] "mansion" and, in "one seeing comes from both [eyes]," *ops* [for *opsis*] "seeing."

(viii) An altered [name] is when [the poet] leaves some of the appellation [unaltered], but makes up some of it, e.g. "by her righter breast" instead of "right."

Among names [in] themselves, (a) some are masculine, (b) some are feminine, and (c) some are in between [i.e. neuter].² (a) Masculine names are those that end in *n*, *r*, *s* and the elements that are composed of *s*; there are two of these, *ps* and *x* [i.e. *ks*]. (b) Feminine names are (i) those that end in the vowels that are always long, i.e. in *ē* and *ō*, and (ii) those that end in *a* among the vowels that may be lengthened. Consequently the elements in which the masculine and feminine names end turn out to be equal in number [i.e. three], for *ps* and *x* are composite. No names end in a consonant, nor in a short vowel [that is always short]. There are only three names ending in *i*, "honey," "gum" and "pepper" (*meli*, *kommi*, *peperi*); there are five ending in *u*, "spear," "fleece," "mustard," "knee" and "city" (*doru*, *pou*, *napu*, *gonu*, *astu*). The [names] that are in between end in these elements [*a*, *i* and *u*], and in *n*, [*r*] and *s*.

[22] The virtue of diction is to be clear and not commonplace. Diction made up of standard names is clearest, but is commonplace. An example is the poetry of Cleophon and that of Sthenelus.³ Diction that uses unfamiliar

9. Greek god of war.

1. Aristotle distinguishes between ornamental and standard names, but his account here is missing in all surviving manuscripts.

2. Some editors condemn this paragraph (which contains much that is not true) as spurious.

3. Perhaps a tragic poet whose style was mocked by Aristophanes (translator's note).

names is grand and altered from the everyday. By "unfamiliar," I mean the exotic [name], metaphor, lengthening and everything that is contrary to what is standard. But if someone makes all [the names] of this sort, [his poem] will be either a riddle or gibberish. If [it is composed] of metaphors, it will be a riddle; if of exotic [names], gibberish. For it is the form of a riddle to use an impossible combination [of names] in saying things that are the case. This cannot be done with the combination of the other names, but is possible with metaphor, e.g. "I saw a man glue bronze on a man with fire," etc. Things [composed] of exotic names are gibberish. [The poet], then, should mix these [two kinds] in some way. The first (e.g. the exotic name, metaphor, ornament and the other kinds we mentioned) will produce that which is not everyday and commonplace, and the standard name will produce clarity.

Lengthenings, curtailments and alterations of names make no small contribution [1458b] towards making the diction clear and not everyday. These will produce what is not everyday, because of their variation from what is standard, as they are contrary to the norm, but clarity will come from what they have in common with the norm. Consequently those who criticize this manner of speech and ridicule the poet [for using it] are not correct to abuse him. E.g. old Euclides, to show that it is easy to compose if [a poet] is allowed to lengthen [names] as much as he wishes, composed as a lampoon in his words "I saw Epichares walking to Marathon" and "not mixing hellebore for him."⁴ To use this manner in some obvious way is laughable. [The need for] due measure is shared by all the types [of unfamiliar names]. For [a poet] who purposely uses metaphors, exotic [names], and the other kinds unsuitably, with a view to arousing laughter, can accomplish the same [effect].

How much what is appropriate is superior [to what is inappropriate] can be observed, in the case of lengthened [names], by inserting the [standard] names into the verse [instead]. In the case of exotic [names], as well as metaphors and the other forms, someone who substitutes the standard names can see that what we are saying is true. E.g. when Euripides composed the same iambic verse as Aeschylus, and substituted only one name, an exotic name instead of the usual standard one, his verse seems fine, but Aeschylus' seems ordinary. For Aeschylus in his *Philoctetes*⁵ composed the verse

"the gangrene which eats at the flesh of my foot,"

but Euripides substituted "feasts on" for "eats at." Also, [in the verse]

"now I am a paltry man, nothing worth and plain,"⁶

suppose that someone substituted the standard names to say

"now I am a little man, a feeble one and ugly."

Compare too

"setting down a squalid hassock and a paltry table,"⁷

4. The two phrases are unrelated; both contain words with arbitrarily lengthened syllables. Euclides: identity unknown; both an Athenian magistrate and a Megarian philosopher of that name were active ca. 400 B.C.E. Epichares: a common name in Athens. Marathon: a large Attic city on the northeast coast. "Hellebore": an herb thought to be a cure for madness.

5. A lost play (the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles but not

Euripides survives). Philoctetes, who used the bow and arrows of Heracles, sailed with the Greeks for Troy but was left behind on an island because a wound on his foot, caused by snakebite, produced a horrible smell. He remained alone for 10 years, until on the advice of an oracle he and his bow were brought to Troy.

6. *Odyssey* 9.515.

7. *Odyssey* 20.259.

with

"setting down a nasty hassock and a little table," or "the headlands bellow" with "the headlands yell."

Again, Ariphraides⁸ ridiculed the tragedians on the grounds that they use things which nobody would say in his [everyday] speech, e.g. "without the palace" and not "outside the palace," "of thee," "mine own," [1459a] "Achilles round" and not "around Achilles," etc. Because all such [names] are not among the standard ones, they produce what is not everyday in the diction. But Ariphraides was ignorant of this.

It is important to use each of the [kinds] mentioned suitably, both double names and exotic ones, but the metaphorical [kind] is the most important by far. This alone (a) cannot be acquired from someone else, and (b) is an indication of genius. For to make metaphors well is to observe what is like [something else].

Among names, double ones are most appropriate for dithyrambs, exotic ones for heroic [verses]⁹ and metaphors for iambic verses. In heroic verses all the [kinds] mentioned are useful. In iambic verses, because these represent [everyday] diction as far as possible, those [kinds] of names are appropriate which one can use in [prose] speeches too. These are the standard name, metaphor and ornament.

As for tragedy, i.e. representation by means of acting, let this account suffice us.

[23] As for the art of exposition and representation in verse, it is clear that, just as in tragedies, [the epic poet] should construct plots that are dramatic (i.e. [plots] about a single whole action that is complete, with a beginning, middle [parts] and end), so that it will produce the pleasure particular to it, as a single whole animal does. The constructions [of the incidents] should not be like histories; in these it is necessary to produce a description not of a single action, but of a single time, with all that happened during it to one or more people; each [event] relates to the others at random. Just as the sea-battle at Salamis and the battle against the Carthaginians in Sicily happened at the same time,¹ but did not contribute to the same end, so too in sequential [periods of] time one thing sometimes comes about after another, but from these there comes about no single end. But this is what the majority, almost, of [epic] poet do.

For this reason, as we said already, Homer appears marvellous compared to the others, in that he did not undertake to put into his composition even the [Trojan] war as a whole, although it has a beginning and an end. For the plot would probably have been too big and not easily seen as a whole; or, if it were moderate in magnitude, [it would have been too] complex in its variety [of incidents]. As it is, selecting a single part [of it], Homer has used many of them as episodes, e.g. he diversifies his composition with the "Catalogue of Ships"² and other episodes. The other [poets] compose about a single man, a single time, or a single action that has many parts, e.g. he who composed the [1459b] *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad*.³ Consequently one or at most two

8. An unknown comic poet.

9. That is, verses in the meter of epic (dactylic hexameter).

1. According to Herodotus (7.166.1), the victory of the Greek fleet over the Persians at Salamis and the victory of the Sicilian Greeks led by Gelon over

the Carthaginians occurred on the same day in 480 B.C.E.

2. *Iliad* 2.484-759.

3. Poems in the epic cycle, of unknown authorship: the *Cypria* related the origins of the Trojan War and the *Little Iliad* events after the end of the *Iliad*.

tragedies in each case are produced from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; but many [are produced] from the *Cypria*, and from the *Little Iliad* more than eight, e.g. the *Judgment of Arms*, *Philoctetes*, *Neoptolemus*, *Eurypylos*, *Vagabondage*, *Laconian Women*, *Sack of Troy*, *Embarkation*, *Sinon*, and *Trojan Women*.⁴

[24] Again, epic must have the same kinds as tragedy, for [it must be] either (i) simple or (ii) complex, (iii) an epic of character or (iv) one of suffering. Its parts, except for song and spectacle, are the same; in fact it needs reversals, recognitions and sufferings. Again, the reasonings and diction should be fine.

Homer is first and foremost in the use of all of these. In fact each of his poems is constructed in each of the two ways—the *Iliad* is simple and full of suffering, the *Odyssey* is complex (for it is recognition right through) and full of character. In addition, he has surpassed all [others] in diction and reasoning.

Epic differs [from tragedy] in (i) the length of its [plot]-structure, and (ii) its verse.

(i) As for its length, the definition that we stated is sufficient; it should be possible to see at one view its beginning and end. This would be so, if the structures were smaller than the ancient ones, but reached [the length of] the number of tragedies presented at a single hearing.

For extending its magnitude, epic has an [advantage] very particular [to it]. In tragedy, it is not possible for many parts [of the action] to be presented as being done at the same time, but only the part of the actors on the stage. But in epic, because it is exposition, it is possible to put in many parts which are accomplished at the same time; with these—provided they are particular [to it]—the weight of the poem is increased. Consequently, epic has this advantage [over tragedy], both (a) for [giving it] splendour, and (b) for diverting the listener and introducing episodes that are unlike [one another]. For likeness [in episodes] is soon boring and makes tragedies fail.

(ii) As for its verse-form, heroic verse has been found appropriate from experience. If anyone produced an expository representation in some other verse-form, or in many, it would obviously be unsuitable. Heroic verse is the stateliest and weightiest of the verse-forms. For this reason, it most readily admits exotic names, metaphors and lengthenings—for expository representation exceeds the other [kinds] in this too. But the iambic and tetrameter [1460a] verse-forms are [fast-]moving, as the first is related to action, and the second to dance. It would be still more odd if someone mixed them, as Chaeremon did. For this reason, nobody has composed a long structure in any verse other than the heroic; but, as we said, nature itself teaches [poets] to choose [the verse-form] that is appropriate to it.

Homer deserves acclaim for many things, but especially because he alone among [epic] poets is well aware of what he himself should do. The poet should say very little himself; for this is not the way in which [a poet] represents. The other [epic poets] do the performing themselves right through [the poem], but represent few [people speaking] and do so rarely.

But Homer, after a brief preamble, immediately brings on a man, a woman, or some other [person]—and none of them characterless, but [all] with character.

[The poet] should put what is amazing into his tragedies; but what is improbable, from which amazement arises most, is more admissible in epic because [the audience] does not see the person in action. For the passage about the pursuit of Hector⁵ would obviously be laughable on the stage, with the Greeks standing still and not pursuing him, and Achilles forbidding them to do so, but it passes unnoticed in the epic verses. What is amazing is pleasant. An indication [of this is that] everyone narrates [stories] with additions, so as to please.

Homer above all has taught the other [poets] to tell untruths in the right way, that is, [by] a false inference. For if, whenever *p* exists or comes to be, *q* exists or comes to be, people suppose that if the latter (*q*) exists, the former (*p*) also exists or comes to be. But this [supposition] is untrue. For this reason, if the former (*p*) is untrue, but it follows from its existence that something else (*q*) exists or comes to be, [the poet] should add it [i.e. *q*]. Because we know that this (*q*) is true, our soul falsely infers that the former (*p*) exists too. An example of this is the passage in the "Bath-scene."⁶

Impossible [incidents] that are believable should be preferred to possible ones that are unbelievable, and stories should not be constructed from improbable parts, but above all should contain nothing improbable; otherwise, it should be outside the plot-structure, like Oedipus' not knowing how Laius was killed. But it should not be within the drama, like the people who narrate [the accident at] the Pythian games in the *Electra*, and the person who comes to Mysia from Tegea without speaking in the *Mysians*.⁷ Consequently it is ridiculous to say that the plot would have been ruined [without the improbability]; such plots should not be constructed in the first place. But if one is set up, and it appears fairly logical, even an oddity can be admitted. For even the improbabilities in the *Odyssey* over the putting ashore [of Odysseus]⁸ would clearly not be tolerable, if an [1460b] inferior poet composed them. But as it is, the poet makes the oddity disappear by using his other good [qualities] for embellishment. [The poet] should take great pains with the diction in the slack parts [of the poem], i.e. those with neither character nor reasoning. For in turn excessively resplendent diction obscures characters and reasoning.

[25] As for the questions that are raised [about epic poetry] and their solutions, it may become obvious to how many kinds they belong, and of what sort they are, if we investigate them as follows.

(i) Since a poet represents, just like a painter or some other maker of images, at any moment he is necessarily representing one of three things, either (a) things as they were or are, or (b) things as people say and think [they were or are], or (c) things as they should be.

5. *Iliad* 22.131–207; Hector, eldest son of the king of Troy and the greatest Trojan warrior, initially flees Achilles.

6. That is, Penelope's false inference, from the disguised Odysseus's accurate description of some clothing, that his tale of being a Cretan who met her husband Odysseus is true (*Odyssey* 19.165–250).

7. A play of Aeschylus or Sophocles; Tegea in the Peloponnese is far distant from Mysia in northwest Asia Minor. *Electra*: Sophocles' tragedy (ca. 414 B.C.E.) contains a false account (lines 680–763) of Orestes' death in a chariot crash in the Pythian games, which were founded centuries after the events of the play.

8. *Odyssey* 13.116–25.

4. Only Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Euripides' *Trojan Women* are extant; some editors doubt that Aristotle is responsible for all the titles in this list.

(ii) These things are expressed in diction in which there are exotic names, metaphors and many modifications of diction; we grant these to poets.

(iii) In addition, there is not the same [standard of] correctness in that of civic life as in that of poetry, nor is there in any other art as in that of poetry. Error in the art of poetry itself is of two sorts; (a) error in the art itself, (b) error in it by coincidence. For if [an artist] decided to represent [a horse correctly, but erred in the representation because of his] lack of ability, the error belongs to the art itself; but if he decided to represent it incorrectly, and [represented] the horse with both right legs thrown forward, [it is] an error in the individual art (e.g. one in medicine or another art of whatever sort), not in the art of poetry itself.

Consequently one should consider and solve the criticisms that are among the questions raised [starting] from these [principles].

(i) First, some [criticisms should be solved] with reference to the art itself. [If] impossibilities have been produced, there is an error; but it is correct, if it attains the end of the art itself. The end has been stated [already, i.e.] if in this way it makes either that part [of the poem], or another part, more astonishing. An example is the pursuit of Hector.

However, if the end [of the art] could have been brought about better or no worse [without erring] according to the art concerned with these matters, the error is not correct. For [the poet] should, if possible, have made no errors at all.

(ii) Again, to which sort does the error belong, to those in the art [itself], or [to those in it] by coincidence? The error is less, if [an artist] did not know that a female deer has no horns, than if he painted without representing [anything].

(iii) In addition, if [the poet] is criticised for representing things that are not true, perhaps he is representing them [as] they should be, e.g. as Sophocles said that he himself portrayed people as they should be, but Euripides portrayed them as they are—there is the solution.

(iv) If [the solution] is in neither of these ways, then [it may be] on the grounds that people say [it is] so, e.g. the [stories] about the gods. These are perhaps neither better [told this way] nor true, but are possibly [lies] [1461a] as Xenophanes' thought; yet people say [it is] so.

(v) Some things are perhaps not better [than they should be], but were so, e.g. the passage about the weapons:

"their spears, [set] upright on the butt-spike . . ."

This was the custom then, as it is among the Illyrians even now.

(vi) As for whether someone's saying or action is fine or not so fine, one must consider not only what was said or done itself, to see whether it is good or inferior, but also the person saying or doing it, and to whom, at what time, by what means and to what end, e.g. whether it is to bring about a greater good, or to avert a greater evil.

(vii) Some [criticisms] must be resolved by looking at the diction, e.g. by [assuming] an exotic name in "the *oureis* first";² perhaps [Homer] means not

9. Pre-Socratic philosopher and poet (ca. 570-ca. 480 B.C.E.) who denounced immoral tales of the Greek gods.

1. *Iliad* 10.152-53.

2. *Iliad* 1.50, where the Greek word *oureis* may derive either from *oreus* (mule) or *ouros* (sentinel).

"mules" but "sentinels." As for Dolon³ "who was evil in form," [Homer may mean] not that his body was misproportioned, but that his face was ugly; for the Cretans call someone fair of face "well-formed." Also by "mix it purer" [he may mean] not "[mix the wine] stronger," as if for drunkards, but "mix it faster."

(viii) Some things are said with a metaphor, e.g. "all gods and men slept all night long," but [Homer] says at the same time "but when he gazed at the Trojan plain, [he marvelled at] the din of flutes and pipes." "All" is said for "many" with a metaphor; for "all" is a lot. So too "[this constellation] alone has no share [in the baths of Ocean]" is said with a metaphor; for what is best known is "alone."

(ix) [Some questions should be solved] with reference to the pronunciation, as Hippias of Thasaos⁴ solved [the question of] "but grant that he gain his prayer" [instead of "we grant"], and "part rotted by rain" [instead of "not rotted"].

(x) Some [should be solved] by punctuation, e.g. Empedocles' "at once were things mortal born, that learnt before to be immortal, and things were mixed, pure before."

(xi) Some [should be solved] by [assuming] an ambiguity, [e.g.] in "more of the night has gone," "more" is ambiguous.

(xii) Some [should be solved] with reference to a habit of diction. People call mixed [wine] "wine," whence [Homer] composed "a greave of new-wrought tin" [i.e. of bronze, copper mixed with tin]; and they call men who work iron "bronze-smiths," whence his calling Ganymede⁵ "wine-pourer of Zeus," although [gods] do not drink wine [but nectar]. This could also be [solved] with reference to a metaphor.

Whenever any name would seem to signify something contradictory, one should consider how many ways it may signify in the passage, e.g. in "there the brazen spear was held" consider how many ways it can mean "was stopped there," one way or another as best one may understand it, according to the exact opposite of what [1461b] Glaucón⁶ says.

Again, some people illogically make some prior assumption, and judging it right themselves make inferences [from it]. If there is a contradiction to their own supposition, they criticise [the poet] as if he had said what they think. This has happened in the case of Icarus. People suppose that Icarus is a Lacedaemonian: so they think it odd that Telemachus⁷ does not meet him when he goes to Lacedaemon. But perhaps it is as the Cephalenians say; they say that Odysseus took a wife from among them, and that [Penelope's father] was Icaeus and not Icarus. It is probable that the question [has arisen] because of an error [by Homer's critics].

In general, (i) the impossibility should be explained with reference either to (a) the composition, or to (b) [making something] better [than it is], or to (c) opinion. In relation to [the needs of] the composition, a believable impos-

All the following examples in this passage come from the *Iliad*, sometimes abbreviating the original.

3. A Trojan scout killed by the Greeks (*Iliad* 10.314-457).

4. An unknown figure (possibly an individual who died in Athens in 404 B.C.E.).

5. A beautiful young Trojan prince seized and carried to Olympus by Zeus's eagle; he became a minor Greek god.

6. Perhaps the interpreter of Homer named by Plato in *Ion* 530d (see above).

7. Odysseus's son, Icarus; Penelope's father, from Sparta (Lacedaemonia).

sibility is preferable to an unbelievable possibility. For it may be impossible that there are people like those Zeuxis painted, but [it is] better [so]. For [the artist] should improve on his model.

(ii) Improbabilities [should be explained] with reference to what people say; for one must solve them in this way, and on the grounds that sometimes an improbability is no improbability: for it is probable that things will happen even against probability.

(iii) Sayings that are contradictory should be considered just like refutations in arguments, as to whether it is the same thing [that is meant], relates to the same thing, or is said in the same way. Consequently [these] must be solved with reference either to (a) what [the poet] himself says or to (b) what a sensible person may assume.

Criticism of improbability and wickedness is correct when, with no necessity at all to do so, [the poet] uses an improbability, as Euripides uses Aegeus,⁸ or villainy, as Euripides uses Menelaus in the *Orestes*.

So the criticisms that people make are of five kinds—that things are impossible, improbable, harmful, contradictory, or incorrect in terms of [another] art. Solutions must be looked for among the items we have stated; there are twelve of them.

[26] One may be puzzled about which is better, epic or tragic representation. If the less vulgar representation is better, and the less vulgar is always that which relates to better spectators, it is very clear that the one which represents in all respects is vulgar. Assuming that [the spectators] will not react unless [each actor] adds something himself, they use a lot of movement, like inferior oboe-players who whirl about if they have to represent a discus, and drag the chorus-leader about if they are playing the *Scylla*. So tragedy is [a representation] of this sort. Compare too how the earlier actors regarded those who came after them. Mynniscus used to call Callippides a monkey, on the grounds that he went to great excesses, and the opinion about Pindarus⁹ was similar. [1462a] As the later actors stand to them, so the whole art [of tragedy] stands to epic. So people say that epic relates to decent spectators, who have no need of gestures, but the tragic [art] relates to inferior ones. Therefore, if it is vulgar, clearly it would be worse [than epic].

So let us discuss these matters. (i) First, the charge is not against the art of [tragic] composition but against that of [the actors'] delivery. For [visual] signs can be overworked even in reciting an epic, as Sositratius did, and in singing, as Mnasiethus of Opus¹ did.

(ii) Next, not all movement is to be rejected, unless dance is to be too, but [only] that of inferior [people], such as that for which Callippides was criticised, and others now are, on the grounds that they represent women who are not free born.

(iii) Again, tragedy can produce its own [effect] even without movement, as epic does. For it is obvious from reading it what sort [of tragedy] it is. So if tragedy is superior in all other things, this at any rate does not necessarily belong to it.

(i) Furthermore, [tragedy is superior] because it has everything that epic has; for it is even possible to use its verse [in tragedy].

(ii) Again, it also has as no small part of it music and spectacles, by means of which its pleasures are constructed very vividly.

(iii) Next, it has vividness in reading as well as in performance.

(iv) Again, [it has the advantage] that the end [1462b] of the representation is in a smaller length. What is more concentrated is more pleasurable than what is diluted with a lot of time [in performance]. I mean, e.g. [the effect] if someone put Sophocles' *Oedipus* into as many epic verses as the *Iliad*.

(v) Again, the epic poets' representation is less unified. An indication [of this is] that more than one tragedy comes from any [epic] representation. Consequently, if they compose a unified plot, it appears either docked, if it is briefly presented, or watery, if it accords with the length [appropriate to] the verse-form. [By "less unified"], I mean, e.g. [the effect] if it is composed of several [complete] actions, just as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have many such parts, which have magnitude even in themselves. Yet these poems are as well constructed as [epics] may be, and are, as far as possible, representations of a single action.

So if tragedy is superior in all these ways, and also in [achieving] the function of the art (for tragedy and epic should produce not a random pleasure, but the one we have mentioned), it is obvious that it will be superior to epic as it achieves its end more than epic does.

So regarding tragedy and epic, in themselves, their kinds and their parts, as to how many there are and how they differ, and what are the causes of doing well or not [in them], and regarding questions raised and their solutions, let this account suffice.

ca. 330 B.C.E.

From Rhetoric¹

From Book I

FROM CHAPTER 2

Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion. This is the function of no other art;² for each of the others is instructive and persuasive about its own subject: for example, medicine about health and disease and geometry about the properties of magnitudes and arithmetic about numbers and similarly in the case of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric seems to be able to observe the persuasive about "the given," so to speak. That, too, is why we say it does not include technical knowledge of any particular, defined genus [of subjects].

Of the *pisteis*,³ some are atechnic ["nonartistic"], some entechnic ["em-

1. Translated by George A. Kennedy, who sometimes adds clarifying words or phrases in square brackets. Also in square brackets in the text are the Bekker numbers used almost universally in citing Aristotle's works; they refer to the page numbers and columns of an 1831 edition by Immanuel Bek-

ker.

2. In Greek, *technē*. Aristotle distinguishes between human arts, such as rhetoric or poetics, and sciences, such as physics or logic, which adduce verifiable results.

3. Proofs or means of persuasion (Greek).

8. In *Medea* (lines 663–758). Aegeus, king of Athens, happens to pass through Corinth and see *Medea*; he promises her future asylum.

9. Presumably an actor. Mynniscus of Chalcis

(active ca. 460–420 B.C.E.), an actor known for roles in Aeschylus's plays. Callippides (active ca. 427–400 B.C.E.), a Greek actor.

1. Both unknown.

bodied in art, artistic"]. I call atechnic those that are not provided by "us" [i.e., the potential speaker] but are preexisting: for example, witnesses, testimony of slaves taken under torture, contracts, and such like; and artistic whatever can be prepared by method and by "us"; thus, one must use the former and *invent* the latter. [1356a] Of the *πίστες* provided through speech there are three species: for some are in the character of the speaker, and some in disposing the listener in some way, and some in the argument itself, by showing or seeming to show something.

[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt. And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person; for it is not the case, as some of the technical writers propose in their treatment of the art, that fair-mindedness on the part of the speaker makes no contributing factor in persuasion.

[There is persuasion] through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile. To this and only this we said contemporary technical writers try to give their attention. The details on this subject will be made clear when we speak about the emotions.

Persuasion occurs through the arguments when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case.

* * *

FROM CHAPTER 3

The species of rhetoric are three in number; for such is the number [of classes] to which the hearers of speeches belong. A speech [situation] consists of three things: a speaker and a subject on which he speaks and someone addressed, [1358b] and the objective⁴ of the speech relates to the last (I mean the hearer). Now it is necessary for the hearer to be either a spectator or a judge, and [in the latter case] a judge of either past or future happenings. A member of a democratic assembly is an example of one judging about future happenings, a jury-man an example of one judging the past. A spectator is concerned with the ability [of the speaker]. Thus, there would necessarily be three genera of rhetorics, deliberative, judicial, demonstrative.⁵ Deliberative advice is either protreptic ["exhortation"] or apotretic ["dissuasion"]; for both those advising in private and those speaking in public always do one or the other of these. In the law court there is either accusation or defense; for it is necessary for the disputants to offer one or the other of these. In epideictic, there is either praise or blame. Each of these has its own "time": for the deliberative speaker, the future (for whether exhorting or dissuading he advises about future events); for the speaker in court, the past (for he always prosecutes or defends concerning what has been done); in epideictic the present is the most important; for all speakers praise or blame

4. In Greek, *telos*, also translated as "end" or "goal."

5. In Greek, *epideiktikon*, also translated as "epideictic."

in regard to existing qualities, but they often also make use of other things, both reminding [the audience] of the past and projecting the course of the future. The "end" of each of these is different, and there are three ends for three [species]: for the deliberative speaker [the end] is the advantageous and the harmful [for someone urging something, advises it as the better course and one dissuading dissuades on the ground that it is worse], and he includes other factors as incidental: whether it is just or unjust, or honorable or disgraceful; for those speaking in the law courts [the end] is the just and the unjust, and they make other considerations incidental to these; for those praising and blaming [the end] is the honorable and the shameful, and these speakers bring up other considerations in reference to these qualities. Here is a sign that the end of each [species of rhetoric] is what has been said: sometimes one would not dispute other factors; for example, a judicial speaker [might not deny] that he has done something or done harm, but he would never agree that he has [intentionally] done wrong; for [if he admitted that,] there would be no need of a trial. Similarly, deliberative speakers often grant other factors, but they would never admit that they are advising things that are not advantageous [to the audience] or that they are dissuading [the audience] from what is beneficial; and often they do not insist that it is not unjust to enslave neighbors or those who have done no wrong. And similarly, those who praise or blame do not consider whether someone has done actions that are advantageous or harmful [to himself] [1359a] but often they include it even as a source of praise that he did what was honorable without regard to the cost to himself; for example, they praise Achilles because he went to the aid of his companion Patroclus⁶ knowing that he himself must die, though he could have lived. To him, such a death was more honorable; but life was advantageous.

* * *

From Book II

FROM CHAPTER 1

These [topics, set forth in book I] are the proper sources of exhortation and dissuasion, praise and blame, and prosecution and defense, and the kinds of opinions and propositions useful for their persuasive expression; for *enthymemes*⁷ are concerned with these matters and drawn from these sources, so the result is speaking in a specific way in each genus of speeches. But since rhetoric is concerned with making a judgment (people judge what is said in deliberation, and judicial proceedings are also a judgment), it is necessary not only to look to the argument, that it may be demonstrative and persuasive but also [for the speaker] to construct a view of himself as a certain kind of person and to prepare the judge; for it makes much difference in regard to persuasion (especially in deliberations but also in trials) that the speaker seem to be a certain kind of person and that his hearers suppose him to be disposed toward them in a certain way and in addition if they, too, happen

6. In stories of the Trojan War, Achilles' closest friend; Achilles rejoined the battle to avenge his death at the hands of the Trojan hero Hector.

7. Rhetorical argument by deduction, applying general principles to specific cases, that leaves one of its premises unstated. Enthymemes use a looser form of reasoning than syllogisms, which are technical logical arguments that follow a rigid 3-part procedure.

to be disposed in a certain way [favorably or unfavorably to him]. For the speaker to seem to have certain qualities is more useful in deliberation; for the audience to be disposed in a certain way [is more useful] in lawsuits, for things do not seem the same to those who are friendly and those who are hostile, nor [the same] to the angry and the calm but either altogether different or different in importance: [1378a] to one who is friendly, the person about whom he passes judgment seems not to do wrong or only in a small way; to one who is hostile, the opposite; and to a person feeling strong desire and being hopeful, if something in the future is a source of pleasure, it appears that it will come to pass and will be good; but to an unemotional person and one in a disagreeable state of mind, the opposite.

There are three reasons why speakers themselves are persuasive; for there are three things we trust other than logical demonstrations. These are practical wisdom and virtue and good will; for speakers make mistakes in what they say or advise through [failure to exhibit] either all or one of these; for either through lack of practical sense they do not form opinions rightly; or though forming opinions rightly they do not say what they think because of a bad character; or they are prudent and fair-minded but lack good will, so that it is possible for people not to give the best advice although they know [what] it [is]. These are the only possibilities. Therefore, a person seeming to have all these qualities is necessarily persuasive to the hearers. The means by which one might appear prudent and good are to be grasped from analysis of the virtues, for a person would present himself as being of a certain sort from the same sources that he would use to present another person; and good will and friendliness need to be described in a discussion of the emotions.

The emotions are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites. There is need to divide the discussion of each into three headings. I mean, for example, in speaking of anger, what is their *state of mind* when people are angry and against *whom* are they usually angry, and for what sort of *reasons*; for if we understood one or two of these but not all, it would be impossible to create anger [in someone]. And similarly, in speaking of the other emotions.

* * *

From Book III

FROM CHAPTER 2

[1404b] Let the matters just discussed be regarded as understood, and let the virtue of style⁸ be defined as "to be clear" (speech is a kind of sign, so if it does not make clear it will not perform its function)—and neither flat nor above the dignity of the subject, but appropriate. The poetic style is hardly flat, but it is not appropriate for speech. The use of nouns and verbs in their prevailing meaning makes for clarity; other kinds of words, as discussed in the *Poetics*,⁹ makes the style ornamented rather than flat. To deviate [from

8. In Greek, *lexis* literally "speech"; the word is variously translated "language," "word choice," and

"expression," as well as "style."
9. See *Poetics* 21–22, 1457a–1459a (above).

prevailing usage] makes language seem more elevated; for people feel the same in regard to *lexis* as they do in regard to strangers compared with citizens. As a result, one should make the language unfamiliar, for people are admirers of what is far off, and what is marvelous is sweet. Many [kinds of words] accomplish this in verse and are appropriate there; for what is said [in poetry] about subjects and characters is more out of the ordinary, but in prose much less so; for the subject matter is less remarkable, since even in poetry it would be rather inappropriate if a slave used fine language or if a man were too young for his words, or if the subject were too trivial, but in these cases, too, propriety is a matter of contraction or expansion. As a result, authors should compose without being noticed and should seem to speak not artificially but naturally. (The latter is persuasive, the former the opposite; for [if artifice is obvious] people become resentful, as at someone plotting against them, just as they are at those adulterating wines.) An example is the success of Theodorus' voice when contrasted with that of other actors; for his seems the voice of the actual character, but the others' those of somebody else. The "theft" is well done if one composes by choosing words from ordinary language. Euripides² does this and first showed the way.

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ca. 340 B.C.E.

1. Renowned Athenian tragic actor (active ca. 370 B.C.E.).

2. Greek tragedian (ca. 485–ca. 406 B.C.E.).

HORACE

65–8 B.C.E.

It would be impossible to overestimate the importance of Horace's *Ars Poetica* (*Art of Poetry*) for the subsequent history of literary criticism. Since its composition in the first century B.C.E., this epigrammatic and sometimes enigmatic critical poem has exerted an almost continual influence over poets and literary critics alike—perhaps because its dicta, phrased in verse form, are so eminently quotable. Horace's injunction that poetry should both "instruct and delight" has been repeated so often that it has come to be known as the Horatian platitude. His practical approach to poetry as a craft, or *ars*, contrasts markedly with the more theoretical bent of his predecessors, especially ARISTOTLE and PLATO. In fact, unlike Plato, Horace holds the poet in very high regard, as his "Epistle to Augustus" suggests: "The poet forms the young child's stammering mouth, and turns his ear at a timely hour from obscene discourse; next he also shapes his heart with friendly precepts, castigating harshness, resentment, and wrath. He tells of deeds honorably done, instructs rising generations by the examples of famous men, and consoles the sick and helpless."

Horace describes himself in his youth as the impoverished son of a freed slave, yet he rose to great prominence in Rome, becoming both a leading member of the illustrious circle of poets patronized by the emperor Augustus (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) and one of Rome's greatest poets and satirists. Quintus Horatius Flaccus was born in Venusia, a Roman military colony in southeastern Italy on the border between Apulia and