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MYTHOS AND TRAGEDY IN THE *POETICS* OF ARISTOTLE

Despite the overmentioned influence of Aristotle and the multitude of interpretations of Aristotle from the Hellenistic times to the interpretation of W. Jaeger and even to the more recent interpretations, a careful and unprejudiced (to the possible extent) examination of the arguments of Aristotle would persuade us that Aristotle is one of the least understood and probably most misunderstood philosophers. Platonist and anti-platonist, realistic and idealistic, common sense and philosophical, charges or praises have been made for and against Aristotle. What the author of this short essay believes is that one should study the Aristotelian arguments in Aristotle's own terms without imposing his own terms and prejudices on them, and what he proposes to do is to give an example of such a study, in analyzing the third part of the sixth chapter of the *Poetics* (*Περὶ ποιητικῆς* 1450 a 15-b 20).

The argument in this essay is divided in three parts. The first part is an introduction to the Aristotelian science of the artificial object ποίημα. The second part examines closely the text, weighing and balancing the words and the concepts used, showing that the sequence of sentences is based on a consequence of argument and thought. The third part moves in an opposite direction from the second. If one could call the second part inductive, since it starts from the text and moves towards the problem Aristotle is positing, then he would call the third part deductive, for, in it, the author starts with a problem and shows that the steps required for its formulation and its solution are to be found in the specific text of Aristotle. Thus a two-fold purpose is achieved. The second part shows what a proper reading of Aristotle is, while the third part shows what a fruitful reading of Aristotle is.[1]

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1. The author feels obliged to mention honourably the name of Prof. Richard P. Mckeon who «awakened the author from his domgatic slumber» in his studies of Aristotle and taught him a proper and fruitful way of reading Aristotle.

It is proper to state, more as a warning rather than as information, in short, the possibilities of misinterpreting the *Poetics*. The misinterpretations of Aristotle are various. Applying Platonism to the *Poetics* and talking about the Beautiful, applying Neoplatonic sharp differentiations between form and content, talking about a «copy» theory of imitation are few of the most common misinterpretations. Other readers tend to see the artificial object as a product of the psychology of the artist, or of the social conditions in which the work was created, while people who still want to talk in Aristotelian terms center on an examination of «pity and fear» and talk about «katharsis», out of the context in which these terms appear. This last interpretations center around problems of tragedy as such. Aristotle's great achievement, however, is not a lofty discussion of tragedy b u t a science of poetics which deals with the artificial object as such.

In the *Poetics,* Aristotle makes a new beginning in the study of poetics, by recognizing that the poema, the artificial object, is an object distinct from the natural objects, with its own integrity, and as such he believes that it must have its own science, with its own specific subject matter, method, and principles. The subject matter of Poetics is the Tragedy as an artificial object, the method is a method of composition of such an object out of parts, and the principles are like those of motion and are differentiated from them by the fact that an artificial object has an external principle of motion (an artist) while nature is an internal principle of motion.

The artificial object then has an external principle of motion which is equivalent to saying that it is created (creation is motion change) by something external, an artist. But it is also the case that in making an object the artist is imitating and what he is imitating is Nature. Here we can see the difference between Aristotle and Plato. While Art is Nature imitated for Aristotle, for Plato the sensible nature is created by a Creator who is a perfect Artist in imitation of the Beautiful, of the world of ideas. Consequently, the examination of Art and Poetics for Plato is subordinate to the search for Truth and Beauty, while for Aristotle the study of the artificial object has its own integrity and its own proper place in inquiry. This is the great achievement of Aristotle in Aesthetics. For he is the first to make a separate science of Aesthetics. And while it is true that the *Metaphysics* supply the first principles of the sciences and in this sense is the most architectonic of all, the separate sciences still have their own integrity and deserve to study in themselves.

An artificial object is an object made by an artist, a maker, a poet and in this sense it is an object of imitation. By imitation we do not mean a copy of nature but more a completion of nature. In the same line of argument we

claim that the natural objects that are imitated are not only important tragic characters but even the most trivial artificial object is a product of imitation in many modes. A chair, for example[2], is an imitation of the posture of a sitting man, in a complementary fashion as much as Medea is an imitation of a woman possessed with the passion of love and jealousy. Tragedy is differentiated from other modes of imitation in «what it imitates» by the part of the definition of tragedy which states that it is an imitation of action which is «serious» and complete.

In the first five chapters of the *Poetics* Aristotle in a dialectical way shows the integrity of the artificial object of Tragedy as a preliminary recognition for its philosophical examination. If artificial objects are a specific subject matter worthy of being studied, then we have to study them as such and we have to develop a method for them or a function of their principles. Since an artificial object is a σύνολον, a whole made up of parts, then its principles will be parts of it and this is what the definition of Tragedy in chapter six states. For we showed that, in as much as they are imitations, artificial objects have their integrity. Then we leave behind the considerations of the maker, the poet and center our inquiry on the examination of the poema itself. The poema is a *synolon* of parts. Thus in parts we search fort he principles and the causes of tragedy as an artificial object. This also gives us the method proper for poetics since it is by composition and construction that parts are put together to make up wholes. Thus toward the end of the sixth chapter we have all the necessary elements for a science of Poetics. It is this first endeavour in the science of the *Poetics,* that the author of this short essay tries to analyse and show beyond the text the use of it in the branch of philosophy called Aesthetics.

Our problem is the importance of the plot in the *Poetics* of Aristotle. At first two points have to be made with respect to the text. The first deals with the limits of the problem and the argument in the *Poetics* : it is contained in the third part of ch. 6. The second deals with the position of the above part and its content in the whole of the *Poetics*. After the end of the dialectical part of the book, the third part of ch. 6 is the beginning of the second part of the *Poetics* in which tragedy is studied properly in a science of poetics with its own principles and method. Apart from the tracing of the argument in a search to answer our problem, we shall also look at it from the point of view of its position in the *Poetics* and consequently we shall examine the

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2. I am indebted for the example of the chair to the late Dr. Paul Goodman (*The Structure of Literature*, University of Chicago Press, 1954).

first problem in the theory of Tragedy under the light of the importance of the problem for the entire book.

We will begin then by making a general hypothesis about our problem and its importance in the *Poetics*. With this in mind we shall trace and reconstruct the argument giving various interpretations. We will also examine problems that will appear in the course of our study in the same way. Finally using the knowledge that we acquired by tracing the argument we will expand our general hypothesis and finally place our problem in the general argument of the *Poetics*.

The definition of tragedy at first repeated that it is an imitation (art is an external principle of motion, while nature is an internal principle of motion) and proceeded to define tragedy in terms of its parts. Action, Language and Acting Actors were the parts which were connected into a form by pity and fear. In the same parts we recognized the principles and the causes. The imitation of a serious and complete action, analogous to the privation in the *Physics*, is the «what» and plays the role of an efficient cause. The language which is enriched with all kinds of ornament, analogous to the matter in the *Physics*, is the «in what» and plays the role of the material cause. The Acting Actors (men in action), analogous to the forces of the *Physics* is the h o w, the final cause of the tragedy and finally pity and fear as formal causes tie the other principles together in an artistic *synolon*. Thus we have analogous to the Privation-Matter-Form of the *Physics* the principles of the tragedy which give us the «what» is imitated, the «in what» is imitated, the «how» it is imitated and the way that all the above three come together[3].

In an almost visual way the three parts (principles) were analysed into six in the way that a spectator would notice them upon watching a tragedy, starting with the spectacle and finally completing our enumeration with the plot, which in a complete form the spectator would perceive last. This way of enumeration and ordering suggests to us that we are looking now at a tragedy as a nature in itself with no consideration of the poet, or the circumstances, or the audience. We are simply watching and examining a tragedy. A tragedy is an artificial object, a poema, something made. If we are to examine it is a nature in itself we have to see how these parts that we were able to discern were made and how they were put together. With respect to our specific problem, the importance of our criticism does not lie on the particular argument of the third part of ch. 6 but on the fact that the art of poetry (and consequently the science of poetics) accepts here its final principles and its method of analysis. It is not then a coincidence that such an important part

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3. The above schematism is according to the interpretation of Prof. Mckeon.

of the general argument starts by considering parts, because the object of our inquiry is an artificial object, a *synolon* as it is said in the first chapter, a whole made up out of parts. We are in search of an organising principle in order to make up the whole out of the parts.

It follows then from what was said up till now that the general problem we are facing in part 3 of ch. 6 is the arrangement of the parts in terms of their importance. This arrangement will in terms of method give us the general schema for our study of poetry. In terms of tragedy as a nature and our specific problem, this arrangement will give us the schema which will enable us to construct out of the parts the whole, the *synolon* of the tragedy. This schema, since we are dealing with an artificial object must be a part. Thus our problem is that of the inquiry into parts and into their relations to each other.

The argument begins by defining the plot and ascertaining that it is the μέγιστον of all parts. As all introductory sentences in Aristotle it gives us the problem and the argument. The term «σύστασις πραγμάτων» functions in two ways: «*systasis*» connects us to the general hypothesis of «*synolon*» (here: things put together) and indicates that plot is what puts together the parts of tragedy. The πράγματα refers to the things done (actions) and prepares the next step, which will be the answer to the question why the plot is the m o s t e s t as a *systasis*).

The first step then of the argument stated positively and proved syllogistically is the following: Tragedy imitates action and life, the end of life is action, plot is of things done; therefore the end of tragedy is plot and things done (action). This is our first conclusion and it employs two terms, action and life. Both though have action as the end. The differentiation has been explained either in terms of voluntary and involuntary activity or, in another entitative interpretation, so that it will include both, what somebody does and what is done to him (by Gods, other people, etc.). But it can also be explained as an attempt to connect, at first, life with *pragmata* and action with plot so that our final conclusion involves also two terms: *pramgata* and plot (as a systasis). To answer the question why the plot is the *megiston* we insert a second premiss that the end is the *megiston*, therefore the plot is the *megiston*. One should not here think that the premiss is inserted for the sake of the syllogism, but he should keep in mind the connection of the end (final cause) to our principles (actors acting) and to the importance that the end has for art (the artificial object). Parallel to the positive part of the argument runs the negative part thus completing our syllogistic formulation and furthermore differentiating character, another of the parts of tragedy, which has quality as its end (not action). Therefore tragedy is not «of character».

Happiness and unhappiness (not fortune) come in our formulation to add to the premisses and to connect action and life. Happiness is the end of life and action is the end of life, and happiness is the end of action (in the negative part of the argument, happiness is not connected to character and quality. As Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that it is the ones that struggled (acted) that may (fortune or misfortune) be the winners in the Olympics and not the most beautiful or the most powerful (qualities). A further relation is established in this first step of the argument which serves as a link to the next one; it is the relation of action and character and is given directly in terms of the end and of tragedy. Action does not portray character, but character is included f o r t h e s a k e of the action. Again the expression «for the sake» indicates the end and brings with it the importance of action in the tragedy as an end.

The next step is the contrast of character and action in the tragedy. Action being the end as well as the organizing principle of it, is necessary for a tragedy. Tragedy is contrasted to painting because, given the action as an organizing principle and the end of tragedy; in other arts this need for a specific organizing principle in terms of action is not existing and consequently, a part of tragedy other than the plot, by being shown in another art as apart from the action can be shown as not being the *megiston* in tragedy.

The third argument brings plot through character to a consideration with other parts of tragedy. The new problem that arises is the following: Suppose that we do not reject character as being an organizing principle but apart from the plot we make up a sequence, more correctly a «sticking together» in a row, of speeches, that show character, a thing which one could observe in a tragedy (if he did not understand the plot), and furthermore polish these speeches as they are in the tragedy in thought and in diction, will this sequence make up a tragedy? Again it is proved here that these elements stuck together by themselves (even when polished) and not being put together by the principle of action, cannot make up a tragedy, because without a plot they are not in a s y n o l o n and as a result they are not in an artificial object but all of them can be thought in terms of rhetoric (speeches) or ethics (characteristic), that is to say apart from the whole, the poema, the tragedy.

The expression used in the preceding argument «to stick together, to throw together in a random order» is the link for this argument. The problem that arises is the following: since a random sequence of parts of tragedy (plot not included) does not constitute a tragedy then why is it that the sequence of incidents, that is the plot, makes a tragedy, as we said in the second argument? The answer given is that it is the περιπέτεια and the ἀναγνώρισις that make the sequence the proper one for tragedy. The «necessary» and

the «probable» are only in the complex tragedies (having a reversal and a discovery). Thus the discovery and the reversal are connected to the «necessary» and «the probable» and therefore a sequence like the plot is characterized by necessity and probability if it has discovery and reversal and it is the plot alone that can have them. The argument is given in terms of the spectator (psychagogy). Again if we keep in mind a modification of the principles as discovery and reversal in contrast to the present formulation, action and actors acting, and the plot as being of action we can relate our terms more basically, a task which is done later in the book.

The final step of the argument is given as a sign and not as a proof. In contrast to the previous one it is given in terms of the poet and not of the spectator, and it is not the psychagogy coming from the perceived complex plots but it is the dealing with the construction of these complex plots, determining the degree of perfection of the poet. The inexperienced poets may be good in diction, character, etc., because these elements can be worked alone, but the construction of a good plot is a complex work, and a sign of experience, and perfection.

The next sentence recapitulates our argument and completes it. We learned in the first step that the plot is the *megiston* because it is the end of tragedy. Now we see that the plot is the beginning (ἀρχὴ) of tragedy. Again if we take into account our original principles we see that action is the object, and «actors acting» is the manner. The plot follows these connections and becomes the beginning of tragedy, the organizing principle and the end, that is to say that it becomes the form of tragedy. In the same schema plot also assumes, through probability and necessity, discovery and reversal, and pity and fear, the third part of the definition that unifies the form, the formal cause. Language only remains as the means.

Our argument continues with the following problem, which we encountered at the beginning talking about the «*systasis* of things». Since the plot is the organizing principle, the *megiston* of the parts, how then are the rest of the parts fitting in it, to make up the *synolon*? The arguments that are given for the ordering (which I will not trace as they are not directly connected to the importance of the plot) are in a lot of ways similar to the previous ones. In them the plot is not only a backbone in which we place the other elements. We establish the other elements in an organic relation to the plot. This is succeeded by considering them in terms of action, as the terms πράξεως-πραττόντων, (1st argument), ἑνόντα-ἁρμόττοντα (2nd arg.), προαιρεῖται-φεύγει (3rd arg.) reveal.

A question arises from our formulation. If language (diction and melody) is the means (the matter), how can the plot which determines the form

only, have language fitting in it as a part? In the physics, matter remains a potentiality and appears never without a form (actuality). Is language in the same way a potentiality? In the case of art, where the principle of motion is external, an existing language is a potentiality. A poet might use it. It is a potentiality in the sense that the bricks (matter) to build a house are a potentiality because the builder (ext. principle) may or may not use them to build a house. Once though the house is built the materials are actualized in the form. Accordingly here lies the importance of the plot (action of acting actors). It influences the matter (actualizes it) as an organizing principle and as an end.

To conclude this part: the foregoing argument dealt with the parts of a *poema*, a *synolon*, as a whole and a nature in itself and proved the plot to be a beginning and an end and an organizing principle. Plot was established both in terms of the parts and the principles (causes). The specific position of this argument in the *Poetics* makes these considerations important for the further study of tragedy in terms of method, and in terms of principles.

In the preceding part we analyzed the arguments that Aristotle gives in ch. 6 part III of his *Poetics* supporting the importance of the plot in a tragedy. Special effort was made to connect the specific argument as a single line of argumentation (both in terms of method and context) to the general argument of the *Poetics* and to justify its place with respect to what was preceding it, and, more important, to what followed it. During the course of the previous paper various problems appeared. We will attempt to inquire into them.

The occasion for the present problem starts way back at the disagreement between what used to be considered as the beginning or the end of aesthetic analysis or more specific of literary criticism, and what appeared as such in the *Poetics*. Habits acquired since long before, through readings of criticism of literary work, statements of the artists about art seemed to point to a direction different from Aristotle's treatment of poetry. Poetry, as well as other forms of art, used to be analyzed as expressions of a general idea of the poet about reality, or of the poet's personal reality, or of the times and places (cultural background and environment); and from the point of view of the reader, as identification with the heroes of a literary work (in ideological, psychological, cultural terms). And even though there was in this analysis some consideration of the composition of the artificial object (and of the plot, specifically) there seemed to be in Aristotle a lack of the consideration of the «content» of a poetic work. In terms of the specific argument, Aristotle's naming of the plot as the beginning, end, and soul of tragedy gave

rise to a problem, namely that of the limits of the analysis of poetic criticism and creation. More specifically: could the poetic analysis not be extended to what we called «content»? And if not why? Naturally, such a problem involves questions about imitation. In the dialectical part of the book Aristotle undertook such a task (that is: he did not attack a content analysis but he specified the subject matter of his inquiry) and so we ended up with a science of poetics which inquires into the artificial object and instead of the poet and the reader we have two ways of approach in our inquiry: perception and judgement. We were also given a definition of tragedy in terms of its parts as of an artificial object and as of a tragedy specifically. The discussion of the plot is for us the starting point. A similar occasion as the one we described above gave rise to the new problem. The plot was named the beginning, end, and soul of tragedy. The previous statement seems to us as setting limits to our inquiry in much the same way we noticed in our previous discussion. Because we will find again that while the other parts of tragedy can be studied in another science, plot is properly treated only in the poetic science, in the way that the «content» can be studied in Metaphysics (poet's idea about reality) or in psychology (poet's personal reality and emotions of the audience) or in Politics (environment of poet and audience) or in ethics.

Our problem then is arrived at as follows: we know that the artificial object is made out of parts and that if we are to make a poema or to criticize one, we have to know w h a t i s a p a r t (of a tragedy) and w h a t a r e i t s f u n c t i o n s (δύναμις) t h a t m a k e i t u n i t e i n t o a w h o l e. Furthermore, we have to have a part that will be our beginning in construction and in appreciation, because it is not by chance or by necessity that a poema is existing, made out of specific parts. Given then what we know about the parts of tragedy we inquire into their function and into their relations that are dependent on the functions. And given also that we are looking in the parts for an organizing principle (because the poem is a whole which is organized, and if we are only considering an artificial object the only thing we can inquire into is «parts»), we can give the f i n a l f o r m u l a t i o n o f o u r p r o b l e m as follows: W h a t a r e t h e f u n c t i o n s o f t h e p l o t (a s a p a r t o f t r a g e d y) i n r e l a t i o n t o t h e o t h e r p a r t s t h a t m a k e i t t h e b e g i n n i n g o f t r a g e d y b o t h i n t e r m s o f p o e t i c a l c r e a t i o n a n d a p p r e c i a t i o n? In other words: why is it that the plot is the organizing principle in the tragedy and not the «content» as expressed in other parts such as character, or dianoia or others?

We are therefore engaged in an inquiry which has as its object to identify among the parts of the poema a «beginning part» and to examine how it

operates in the synthesis of the whole. We are given the parts, we are also given the general statement that tragedy imitates action. The term «imitates» does not have primary significance in this part of the argument (it has in the dialectical part). We concentrate on the term action (for all practical purposes any use of the term action from now and on refers to action as imitated and not as the object that was imitated). The plot is the part of the tragedy that fulfills the requirement for action. But, why action and why plot? Action is on the one hand perceptible (both as action alone and as imitated). Both character and thought are not perceptible alone. We can only infer them through action. But is the perceptibility alone the criterion for a beginning part in an artificial object? In other words are any actions imitated a beginning for a tragedy? Here we employ the concept of a plot which is a sequence of incidents (actions). But again what makes a sequence of actions perceptible as a sequence? After all every action is in itself a sequence ot actions and there is no action in the present in the way that there is no motion in the present. Furthermore, an action, can be always thought as a sequence, being continuous. What makes an action perceptible as a sequence is the change from happiness to unhappiness and what creates a perceived sequence in a tragedy is consequently this change from happiness to unhappiness. We are able to arrange and discern sequential steps in a series of actions only in this way in a tragedy. Otherwise all action as continuous is sequential and vice versa. But again is it possible that another part of the tragedy will have the power to establish such a sequence determined by changes from happiness to unhappiness? To answer this we have to turn to the other parts that are with respect to the objects of imitation, because our definition is in terms of form (every definition being a form) and thus we do not have to inquire into the means. Character, even though it is the cause of action, is not on the one hand perceptible. On the other hand it is not the character that determines happiness or unhappiness and consequently character cannot give perceptible sequence to the action; nor is it true in the reverse way, that is that action aims at some quality (character). Therefore it is only a sequence of action, as the plot is, that can be the beginning part. We have thus in our hands two concepts: action and sequence. These two faculties of the plot are the basis of a poema because out of action we get the unity of the plot and out of the sequence its order. But let us proceed with our inquiry in the direction of the sequence. A tragedy appears on stage (or when read) as made up of speeches coming from the different characters in a sequence. Is it then a sequence of speeches that establishes an order in the poema (even if these speeches talk about happiness or unhappiness)? Again we can employ perception, but this time another faculty must be found that will establish beyond the mere se-

quence, the concept of unity. We said that the sequence becomes poetically constructible and perceptible through changes from happiness to unhappiness. We need to inquire further into the faculties of the plot that we called unity and order. The further characteristic that will unite parts of the plot are the περιπέτειαι and the discoveries. The sequential steps of the plot from happiness to unhappiness are connected by περιπέτειαι and discoveries. This connection between them is according to the probable and the necessary.

Let us summarize what we found about the faculties of the plot. The plot being of action is perceptible, and being a sequence it perceptibly developed in time and only in it (the spectacle alone can be perceptible in space). The plot is a sequence and is perceptible as such because it contains in it changes from happiness to unhappiness. The plot has unity and order together because it contains as parts-faculties the περιπέτειαι and the discoveries which connect the steps from happiness to unhappiness and make the sequence one and orderly in terms of probability and necessity.

By finding, though, the parts-faculties of the plot we solved only part of our problem. What remains is to examine how the faculties of the plot are employed in the making up of the whole, the poema. This organic whole is made out of parts, and consequently our inquiry is directed towards the problem of how to employ the faculties of the plot in relation to the other parts of tragedy so that we can form a poetic whole, a poema.

We said previously that the plot is the beginning of our process as critics and poets to make up a synthesis of the parts. It is in terms of probability and necessity that all the other parts are fitted into the plot, and every part is put in it as necessary and probable in terms of the ongoing action and as it is proper to its specific function. The characters, for example, have as specific faculty the fact that they are causes of action, as such they are properly placed in the plot according to the action but they operate in terms of probability and necessity and not only in one direction (as causes of action) but they are also revealed by probable or necessary discoveries (discovery = insight into character) and become causes of further action (reversal of action), which is necessary and probable. The thought has as a specific faculty that it is found in the speeches of the characters. They are thus connected to the characters and the plot in probability and necessity. The line of argumentation can proceed in the same way all the way down to the spectacle and show that all parts are connected to the plot in probability and necessity, thus making up the overall unity and order of tragedy. As we proceed to the least poetic parts the connection seems to be weaker; not that it is possible to think of the parts as not connected to the plot in probability and necessity,

but because they are not so important (essential) to the tragedy. Therefore a theory like this can accept a construction and appreciation of a play that will only be read or that will be acted without a scenery, or a play with no song and music, or even a pantomime.

We found out therefore that the plot is the part which is the organizing principle of tragedy. It is the beginning for the poet and the critic because it makes up the unity and the order of the play and as a complete whole it is the end. The poet begins by making a plot and has as his end the organized whole. The critic begins by criticizing the sequence (the δομὴ) and has as an end the proper tragic effect, which is dependent on the probable and the necessary in the plot. The object is to make or to criticize an organized whole, therefore the plot is the beginning and the end of tragedy.

We can do further investigation concerning the relation of the faculties of the plot and the artificial whole in general. We examined the tragedy as a *synolon* and as a form. We found that the *synolon* is based on the plot's faculties necessity and probability. Thus we can return to our original problem of form and content (περιεχόμενον) and point out that the tragedy qua tragedy is an artificial object which achieves beauty because of the probability and necessity in its form. If we extend the probable and the necessary to what they offer to tragedy we can establish another more general law of Aesthetics. The probable and the necessary are the bases for the unity and order of the tragedy. The plot establishes two kinds of unities : the unity of incidents within the plot and the unity of all the parts of the tragedy. The sequence establishes the unity in terms of judgement and the unity establishes the sequence in terms of perception. In a very long play the sequence is forgotten and a play that does not have a proper sequence cannot be said to be one. The two concepts are reflexive in the above manner and the two μεγέθη that come from them are for that reason united. To make the further generalization, that Aristotle makes, the beauty of the artificial object is based on the reflexivity and interdependency of unity and order according to the probability and necessity.

ΜΥΘΟΣ (ΠΛΟΚΗ) ΚΑΙ ΤΡΑΓΩΔΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ *ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΗ* ΤΟΥ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΟΥΣ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η.

Τὸ δοκίμιο αὐτὸ ἀποτελεῖ ἀνάλυση τοῦ τρίτου μέρους τοῦ ἕκτου κεφαλαίου τοῦ *Περὶ ποιητικῆς* τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους, ἀνάλυση ποὺ ὁ συγγραφεὺς θεωρεῖ ὑποδειγματικὴ ἑρμηνεία ἀριστοτελικοῦ κειμένου μὲ ἀποκλειστικὴ βάση τὸ ἴδιο τὸ ἔργο καὶ τὴν ἐπιχειρηματολογία του, χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάγκη ἀναδρομῆς σὲ ἄλλα κείμενα καὶ καταφυγῆς σὲ θεωρίες ξένες καὶ πρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ φιλοσόφου καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐτονομία τῆς ἐπιστήμης τῆς Ποιητικῆς. Τὸ δοκίμιο διαιρεῖται σὲ τρία μέρη. Τὸ πρῶτο εἶναι καθαρὰ εἰσαγωγικὸ στὴν ἀριστοτελικὴ ἐπιστήμη τοῦ τεχνητοῦ ἀντικειμένου, τὸ δεύτερο κινεῖται ἐπαγωγικὰ ἀπὸ τὴ λέξη στὴ σκέψη, καὶ τὸ τρίτο, ἀντίστροφα, ἀπὸ τὸ συγκεκριμένο πρόβλημα στὴ λεκτική του διατύπωση καὶ τὴν ἐπιχειρηματολογικὴ δικαίωσή του. Μὲ τὸ συνδυασμὸ αὐτὸ ἀναλυτικῆς καὶ συνθετικῆς πορείας ὁ συγγρ. πιστεύει πὼς ἐπιτυγχάνει τόσο τὴν ὀρθὴ ὅσο καὶ τὴ γόνιμη ἀνάγνωση τοῦ ἀριστοτελικοῦ αὐτοῦ κειμένου.

Ἡ Ποιητικὴ θεωρεῖται ὡς ἡ ἐπιστήμη τοῦ τεχνητοῦ ἀντικειμένου — τοῦ ἔργου δηλ. τῆς τέχνης — ἀνεξαρτήτου ἀπὸ τὰ φυσικὰ ἀντικείμενα, μὲ δικό της ὑποκείμενο, δική της μέθοδο, δικές της ἀρχές, ἄσχετες ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνες τῶν λοιπῶν ἐπιστημῶν. Ὑποκείμενό της εἶναι ἡ τραγωδία, ὡς τεχνητὸ ἀντικείμενο, μέθοδός της ἡ σύνθεση τῆς τραγωδίας, ὡς «ὅλου» ἀπὸ τὰ μέρη της, καὶ ἀρχές της — ἀνάλογες πρὸς τὶς ἀρχὲς τῆς κινήσεως, μὲ τὴ διαφορὰ ὅτι στὴν προκειμένη περίπτωση ὑπάρχει ἐξωτερικὴ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, ὁ καλλιτέχνης — τὰ μέρη ἀπὸ τὰ ὁποῖα ἀποτελεῖται. Τὸ τεχνητὸ ἀντικείμενο ὡς καλλιτεχνικὸ δημιούργημα εἶναι προϊὸν μιμήσεως ἑνὸς ἐξωτερικοῦ αἰτίου. Ἡ τραγωδία, εἰδικώτερα, εἶναι *μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας*. Ἡ αὐτονομία της, ὡς τεχνητοῦ ἀντικειμένου, ἀποδεικνύεται διαλεκτικὰ στὰ πέντε πρῶτα κεφάλαια τοῦ *Περὶ ποιητικῆς*. Ὁ ὁρισμὸς τῆς τραγωδίας στὴν ἀρχὴ τοῦ ἕκτου κεφ. ὡς «συνόλου» προσδιορίζει καὶ τὶς ἀρχές της, τὰ «αἴτιά» της. Αὐτὰ εἶναι τὰ μέρη της. Τὸ ποίημα εἶναι σύνολο ἀπὸ μέρη. Ἡ σύνθεση, δηλ. ἡ δομή τους συνιστᾶ, τὴ μέθοδο τῆς Ποιητικῆς. Ἔτσι πρὸς τὸ τέλος τοῦ ἕκτου κεφ. ἔχουν ἐντοπισθῆ καὶ προσδιορισθῆ ὅλα τὰ ἀναγκαῖα στοιχεῖα γιὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμη τῆς Ποιητικῆς.

Κύριο θέμα τοῦ δευτέρου μέρους τοῦ δοκιμίου εἶναι ἡ πλοκὴ (ὁ μῦθος) καὶ ἡ σημασία του στὴν ποιητικὴ τέχνη. Ἡ τραγωδία ὡρίστηκε σὲ συνάρτηση πρὸς τὰ μέρη ποὺ τὴν συνθέτουν. Αὐτὰ ἀντιστοιχοῦν στὰ «αἴτια» τῆς ἀριστοτελικῆς Ὀντολογίας, ὅπως προσδιορίζονται στὴν *Φυσικὴν ἀκρόασιν* καὶ στὰ *Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*. Οἱ ἀντιστοιχίες δείχνονται σχη-

ματικά. Ἡ ὀργανωτικὴ ἀρχὴ τῆς τραγωδίας ὡς «συνόλου» ἀναζητεῖται ἔτσι στὰ μέρη της, ὁρίζεται ἡ σχέση τῶν μερῶν μεταξύ τους γιὰ τὸν ἀπαρτισμὸ «συνόλου» καθὼς καὶ ἡ ἱεράρχησή τους. Ὡς ὀργανωτικὴ ἀρχὴ λαμβάνεται ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη ὁ μῦθος, ὡς *σύστασις πραγμάτων* (ὅπου *πράγματα* = οἱ τραγικὲς πράξεις), καὶ χαρακτηρίζεται ὡς *μέγιστον*. Γιατὶ ὁ μῦθος εἶναι τὸ *μέγιστον*, ἀποδεικνύεται στὴ συνέχεια μὲ ἐπακριβωμένη ἐπιχειρηματολογία: Ἡ τραγωδία μιμεῖται πράξεις, δηλ. τὴ ζωή: *τέλος* τῆς ζωῆς εἶναι ἡ πράξη· ὁ μῦθος ἀναφέρεται σὲ πεπραγμένα· ἄρα *τέλος* τῆς τραγωδίας εἶναι ὁ μῦθος (δηλ. ἡ πράξη)· καὶ ἐπειδὴ — εἰδικώτερα γιὰ τὰ τεχνητὰ ἀντικείμενα — τὸ *τέλος* εἶναι τὸ *μέγιστον*, ἄρα ὁ μῦθος εἶναι τὸ *μέγιστον*.

Ἡ ἴδια θέση ἀποδεικνύεται καὶ ἀρνητικά, ἀφοῦ ἡ τραγωδία δὲν εἶναι μίμηση *ἤθους (τὰ ἤθη συμπεριλαμβάνουσιν διὰ τὰς πράξεις)*. Οἱ «περιπέτειες» καὶ οἱ «ἀναγνωρίσεις» ἐξ ἄλλου, ποὺ διαρθρώνουν τὴν τραγωδία *κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον*, δὲν ἀνήκουν σὲ κανένα ἀπὸ τὰ λοιπὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς τραγωδίας παρὰ μόνο στὸ μῦθο. Ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ τοῦ ποιητῆ πάλι «*τὰ πράγματα συνίστασθαι*» ἀποτελεῖ τὸ κορύφωμα τῆς δραματουργίας. Εἶναι, λοιπόν, ὁ μῦθος, ὡς *ἀρχή*, *ψυχὴ* καὶ *τέλος* τῆς τραγωδίας, τὸ *εἶδος*, ἡ *μορφὴ* τῆς τραγωδίας, κατὰ τὴν ἀριστοτελικὴ ὁρολογία. Ἀπὸ τὴν ὅλη λοιπὸν ἐπιχειρηματολογία τοῦ τρίτου μέρους τοῦ ἕκτου βιβλίου τῆς *Ποιητικῆς* συνάγεται ἐπαγωγικὰ τὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι ὁ μῦθος εἶναι ἡ (χρονικὴ) *ἀρχή*, ἡ ὀργανωτικὴ ἀρχὴ (*ψυχὴ*) καὶ τὸ *τέλος* τῆς τραγωδίας σὲ συνάρτηση πρὸς τὰ μέρη της (ἀρχὲς-στοιχεῖα καὶ «αἴτια»).

Στὸ τρίτο, τέλος, μέρος, σὲ ἀντιπαράθεση μὲ ἄλλες θεωρίες λογοτεχνικῆς κριτικῆς, ὁ συγγρ. παρατηρεῖ ὅτι ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης στὸ διαλεκτικὸ μέρος τῆς *Ποιητικῆς* (τὰ πέντε πρῶτα κεφάλαια) ἀνευρευνᾶ τὸ τεχνητὸ ἀντικείμενο ἀπὸ δύο κυρίως ἀπόψεις: τῆς ἀντίληψης καὶ τῆς κρίσης. Σημειώνει ἀκόμη ὅτι ἡ τραγωδία ὡρίστηκε σὲ συνάρτηση πρὸς τὰ μέρη της, καὶ ὅτι ἀφετηρία τῆς ὅλης συζήτησης ὑπῆρξε ὁ μῦθος ὡς *ἀρχή*, *ψυχὴ* καὶ *τέλος* τῆς τραγωδίας. Γιατὶ ἐνῶ ἄλλα μέρη καὶ ἄλλες ἀπόψεις τῆς τραγωδίας μποροῦν νὰ ἀποτελέσουν ὑποκείμενο καὶ ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν, ὁ μῦθος εἶναι ὑποκείμενο τῆς Ποιητικῆς ἀποκλειστικά. Ἐξ ἄλλου ἀπὸ τὴν ἄποψη τόσο τῆς δημιουργίας ὅσο καὶ τῆς κριτικῆς ἐπιβάλλεται ἕνα «μέρος» νὰ ληφθῆ ὡς ἀρχή. Ἡ τραγωδία εἶναι *μίμησις πράξεως*, ὁ μῦθος ἐκπληρώνει τὶς ἀπαιτήσεις τῆς πράξης, καὶ μόνο ἡ πράξη εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ εἶναι «ἀντιληπτὸ» ἀντικείμενο. Μόνο ἡ ἀκολουθία (συνοχὴ) τῶν δρωμένων κάνει τὴν πράξη ἀντιληπτή, καθὼς καὶ ἡ μεταβολὴ ἀπὸ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν· καὶ αὐτὰ δὲν ἀνήκουν σὲ κανένα ἄλλο ἀπὸ τὰ μέρη τῆς τραγωδίας παρὰ μόνο στὸ μῦθο. Ἔτσι ὁ μῦθος νοεῖται καὶ πάλι ὡς *ἀρχή*. Ὡς «πράξη» προσδίδει στὸ τεχνητὸ ἀντικείμενο ἑνότητα καὶ ὡς «ἀκολουθία» προσδίδει τάξη. Οἱ «πε-

ριπέτειες καὶ οἱ ἀναγνωρίσεις» εἶναι στοιχεῖα ἑνότητος καὶ τάξεως *κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον*. Εἶναι συνεπῶς ὁ μῦθος ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς συνθέσεως τῶν μερῶν. Τὰ λοιπὰ μέρη συσχετίζονται καὶ ἐντάσσονται στὸ ὅλον *κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον*· δηλαδὴ τὰ σημαντικώτερα: *ἦθος*, *λέξις*, *διάνοια* συνδέονται μὲ τὸ μῦθο στενότερα (ἰσχυρότερα), τὰ πιὸ ἐπουσιώδη: *μελοποιΐα*, *ὄψις*, ἀσθενέστερα. Ὁ μῦθος λοιπὸν ὡς στοιχεῖο ἑνότητος καὶ τάξης καὶ ὡς τέλειο ὅλον καθ' αὑτό, τόσο ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ τῆς δημιουργίας ὅσο καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ τῆς κριτικῆς, ἀποτελεῖ πράγματι τὴν *ἀρχὴ* καὶ τὸ *τέλος* τῆς τραγωδίας.

Περαιτέρω ἔρευνα σχετικὰ μὲ τὴ σχέση τῶν ἰδιοτήτων τοῦ μύθου καὶ τῆς τραγωδίας ὡς τεχνητοῦ «ὅλου» γενικῶς, ὁδηγεῖ στὰ ἑξῆς συμπεράσματα: Τὸ «σύνολον» βασίζεται στὶς δυνατότητες τοῦ μύθου: ἀναγκαιότητα καὶ πιθανότητα. Ἀναφορικὰ πρὸς τὸ πρόβλημα μορφῆς - περιεχομένου μπορεῖ νὰ ἰσχυρισθῆ κανεὶς πὼς ἡ τραγωδία, ὡς τεχνητὸ ἀντικείμενο, πραγματώνει τὸ ὡραῖο λόγῳ τῆς πιθανότητος καὶ ἀναγκαιότητος τῆς μορφῆς της. Θὰ μποροῦσε λοιπὸν νὰ θεωρηθῆ ὡς νόμος τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς, ὅτι *τὸ εἰκὸς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον* εἶναι ἡ βάση τῆς ἑνότητος καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῆς τραγωδίας. Ὁ μῦθος θεμελιώνει δύο εἴδη ἑνότητος: τὴν ἑνότητα τῶν ἐπεισοδίων τῆς πλοκῆς καὶ τὴν ἑνότητα μεταξὺ τῶν μερῶν τῆς τραγωδίας. Ἡ ἀκολουθία ἐξ ἄλλου θεμελιώνει τὴν ἑνότητα μὲ τὴν «κρίση» καὶ ἡ ἑνότητα τὴν ἀκολουθία μὲ τὴν «ἀντίληψη». Τὸ «ὡραῖο» δηλ. τοῦ τεχνητοῦ ἀντικειμένου γιὰ τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη στηρίζεται στὴν ἀμοιβαιότητα καὶ τὴν ἀλληλεξάρτηση τῆς ἑνότητος καὶ τῆς τάξης *κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον*.

(Περίληψη ὑπὸ Μ. Δραγώνα-Μονάχου).