

# Bodies of Speech

*Text and Textuality in Aristotle*

Gabriel Zoran



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Bodies of Speech:  
Text and Textuality in Aristotle

By

Gabriel Zoran

*From the Series*  
*Texts and Embodiments in Perspective*

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P U B L I S H I N G

Bodies of Speech: Text and Textuality in Aristotle,  
by Gabriel Zoran

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In memory of my parents  
Rudolf Zorn (1913-1999)  
and Selma Zorn nee Redlich (1917-1973).

When the word will become a body  
And the body will open its mouth  
And utter the word from which it has been

Created -

Hezi Leskly, **Hebrew Lesson V**

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## PREFACE

The long tradition of *Poetics* scholarship has created an almost automatic linkage between the Aristotelian theory of poetry and a series of subjects—in the first place tragedy and the tragic. It cannot be denied, of course, that most of the *Poetics*, as transmitted to us, is dedicated to tragedy, and moreover that the *Poetics* regards tragedy as the most superior genre. Still, this does not necessarily imply that the *Poetics* as such is a "theory of tragedy", or that it is exhausted by such a title.

The prestige ascribed to tragedy in the *Poetics* itself, side by side with the prestige of the tragic genre from Renaissance literature till Romanticism, gave rise to an evident "tragocentric" reading of the *Poetics*, which predetermined all that was to be important for successive generations' theory of tragedy, and displaced, or entirely abandoned, all that seemed not immediately relevant to the tragic effect. Naturally, such a reading centers on the concept of "catharsis", whose status is far grander in the post-Aristotelian tradition than in its real place in the *Poetics*.

Also, less "tragocentric" readings have still been applied to some distinctly Aristotelian subjects, for instance, the poetic genres. The classicist tradition situated the genres (tragic, comic, epic) at the center of the map of interest, and this position reflects back on the understanding of the *Poetics*. Here too, the concept is undeniably central in the *Poetics* and in Aristotelian thought in general; nevertheless, the question is if this is sufficient for an exclusive identification of the *Poetics* with the theory of genres.

Finally, the concept of "mimesis", imitation, has certainly become a starting point for understanding the *Poetics*, against which one can argue even less than against the preceding ones. Yet even here, being content with "mimesis" as an exclusive starting point can lead to discarding a rich complex of assumptions existing in the *Poetics*, which are not necessarily mimetic. Moreover, this discarding may apparently impoverish even the very concept of "mimesis".

Although the *Poetics* is decidedly a key book in the theory of literature, the neo-classical aura unwillingly irradiating from it somehow frustrates the possibility of a dialogue between it and any theoretical thinking relevant to the present. And apart from the school of "neo-Aristotelian criticism" only few theoretical schools acknowledge their debt to Aristotle.

The present study aims to contribute to a reading of the *Poetics* more relevant to modern theory—but obviously not at any cost. The *Poetics* is a product of its own time and environment, and if it is significant for our time, this is only through its own time and place.

In the space of modern literary and linguistic thinking, many theories have close affinity to Aristotle, but sometimes with very little awareness. A quite curious *bon ton* is to recognize again and again our debt to Plato, whether in agreement or disagreement. Aristotle, on the other hand, continues to rest under the neo-classical aura, and beyond that remains a matter mainly for philologists.

The present study sets out to read the *Poetics* in a way bypassing the complex of neoclassical questions and their aftermath, and examine it as the first systematic treatise on the literary text as such. This starting point leads immediately to a widening of the scope, and to a joint examination of the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. Rhetoric, being a theory of verbal persuasion, deals with communicational procedures and with the relationship between speaker and audience. These subjects are barely treated in the *Poetics*. The *Rhetoric* also contains a much broader reference to language and style. So including the *Rhetoric* in our study offers the completion of many important details which are lacking in the *Poetics*. But beyond this contribution, the combination of the two treatises makes possible an absolute change in perspective and inner proportions.

Combining the two books shows that they are two parts of a comprehensive theory of communication, which is all about the concepts of **text** and **textuality**. True, this "text" can be a poetical one too, but textuality is a much broader phenomenon than the aesthetic literary aspect. There are rhetoric texts, legal, political or historical ones, which despite their difference from poetry are closely connected to it, being verbal texts.

And again, one can also discuss "mimesis", imitation. But this important concept too acquires a different meaning and a different status within the broader scope. Mimetic representation is one possible end of a text, but besides this there are ends like arousing belief, arousing emotions, etc. There are representational elements in rhetoric, just as there are rhetorical elements in poetry. To present a full picture of this complex, the field of vision must be broadened so as to capture the concept of **verbal text**; only in this spirit may the concept of poetical text be understood.

This viewpoint, as we shall see, reveals a surprising (or perhaps not so surprising) affinity between Aristotle and several trends in the theory of literature of the last century. It creates a dialogue between him and structuralist, communicational and phenomenological conceptions, and between theories dealing with the reader's response and with the semantic

structures of the text. Aristotle is found capable of saying something on the subjects of these theories as well, once he is asked the right questions. I don't mean to say that his answers will always hit on modern wishes, or offer the most innovative solutions. Sometimes he may be strikingly innovative and modern, and sometimes conservative and bound to his time and space.

The text theory which underlies Aristotle's thought is structuralist in character, albeit in a rather hierarchic version; post-structuralism and deconstruction are of course alien to him. Nevertheless, the questions raised by all these theories and the intellectual milieu out of which they grew are by no means alien to him. In that respect he is no less relevant for his avant-garde than for his conservative aspects.

Explication of these aspects in Aristotle makes it possible to detect hidden dialogical channels between modern theory and his thought, which are not always conscious. But first and foremost, this explication may at several points clarify Aristotelian theory itself by setting it in a new context.

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The study is divided into seven chapters. The first two deal with the basic assumptions. I try to clarify the concepts of **text** and **language** in Aristotle, and do so through an examination of his attitude to writing and the written text, and pointing out the difference between him and Plato in that respect. The centrality of the text concept in Aristotle is due to his being the first philosopher to deeply internalize the thinking pattern of a literate culture—unlike Plato, who in various respects still thinks in terms of oral culture.

Following the introduction of the concept of text, the next chapters present a systematic description of an Aristotelian text theory, derived mainly from the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. This theory concerns a semantic and a communicative structure, as is explained in the interim discussion after chapter 2.

The semantic structure, discussed in chapter 3, is constructed as a series of semantic layers ordered on the axis through a surface level and a deep structure. The communicational structure concerns the communicative act between speaker and recipient. This process takes place on one single level, so it is "horizontally" structured. Chapter 4 deals with the overall communicational scheme, chapter 5 with the addressor (artist, poet, orator), and chapter 6 with the addressee (audience, listener, reader).

This entire complex, which outlines the dimensions of the text, is embedded in a broader system, that of **context**. The context is generic in nature: each text is understood as a manifestation of a poetic genre. However, there is also a genetic and historical context. The genre itself undergoes a process of coming into being, development and growth. The complex of these issues is discussed in chapter 7.

On the basis of the assumptions herewith presented, the epilogue suggests a new understanding of the concept of "*mimêsis*" which will hopefully be further developed in a following study.

As is clearly understood from this short outline, this study does not follow the Aristotelian argument linearly, as it is originally presented in the *Poetics* or in the *Rhetoric*, and is by no means a companion or any kind of commentary to either of these books. It takes a track of its own, based on Aristotelian thinking and trying to elucidate it, but is not committed to any order or formal division of the Aristotelian writings. Furthermore, it deals with several subjects implied in Aristotle's discussion, but not always explicitly discussed. As a result, some of the Aristotelian passages and discussions are analyzed several times, each time from the aspect relevant to the subject under discussion. This may create an impression of repetitiveness, but I preferred, when necessary, to quote the same passage again, and at times even to repeat a short explanation, so that the relevant passages may be accessible and present in every course of reading; the reader need not go back and leaf through the pages to understand a given discussion.

The quotations too are not from the original: they are all from accessible translations, notified in the list of references; where necessary, for certain sections I have added the original, a translation of my own, or both. Quotations from Aristotle are all from the *Complete Works of Aristotle*, Barnes 1984. Quotations from Plato are from the *Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*, Hamilton & Cairns 1973. Greek words are transliterated into Latin according to the common rules, and set in italics.

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The book is based on years of teaching and research. My thoughts about Aristotle have been discussed in seminars I held in the department of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of Haifa. Some of them have been presented at conferences and in symposia held in Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Groningen, Chicago and Helsinki.

The present book is a revised, rethought and rewritten version of seven chapters from my previous Hebrew book, *Beyond Mimesis: Text and Textual Arts in Aristotelian Thought* (Me'ever LaKhikui: Text VeUmnuiot Lashon BaMakhshavah Ha Aristotelit), published by Tel Aviv University Press, 2009. A first version of chapter 2 was published ten years earlier, in *An Overcoat for Benjamin: Papers on Literature for Benjamin Harshav, on his Seventieth Birthday* (Aderet LeBiniamin), Vol. I, Tel Aviv University, 1999.

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During the work on this study I shared my thoughts with several friends, students and colleagues, and their valuable contributions penetrated the written version in ways which today are not always clearly recognizable, but which I can always appreciate. I should mention the long and continuous support and friendship of Dr. Vered Lev Kenaan, the important comments of Prof. Margalit Finkelberg, Prof. Menachem Brinker, Prof. Stephen Halliwell, Prof. Aviad Kleinberg, Prof. Nurit Yaari, Prof. Ariel Meirav, Prof. David Fishelov, and last but not least, the numerous conversation I had, at the primary stages of the study, with my friend, Prof. Rina Drory, who sadly passed away before the work was finally shaped.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## ART, LANGUAGE, TEXT

### 1. Aristotelian theory and Aristotelian agenda

The title of this discussion, "Art, Language, Text", comprises three concepts which will be discussed in the following study from various aspects. They are well known also from modern contexts which have nothing to do with Aristotle. But to use them as explicatory concepts for Aristotle's theory, and certainly to regard them as parts of the body of Aristotelian thought, one has to define them and their contexts accurately. Each of these concepts makes its own way into Aristotelian thought.

The way of the concept "art" seems the shortest. This is a clear and definite concept in the Aristotelian system. Indeed, its meaning in this context is quite different from the modern one, but the shift it has to undergo from its modern uses to the Aristotelian meaning is mainly technical. Once we accept the rules of Aristotelian thought and understand the concept the way Aristotle does (that is, through the term *tekhnē*), there is no problem using it consistently without contradicting Aristotle's meanings or getting into misunderstandings.

The other concepts, those of language and text, are more difficult, since they have no exact parallel in Aristotle. Also, their very relevance as concepts in Aristotelian philosophy therefore requires proof and an explanation. Aristotle speaks about language at many points in his writings—in the *Rhetoric*, in the *Poetics* and in his books on logic. From the quantitative viewpoint these discussions may be even broader than those about "art". Still, one cannot say with certainty that they refer to a single and unified concept of language. The words referring to language in Greek, and especially in Aristotle's thought, are *logos* and *lexis*. The meaning of the former is too broad for our purposes; the meaning of the latter is too narrow. *Logos* means speech, thing, discourse, expression, sentence, utterance, thought, logic, argument, system, story, plot-structure, oration: a far broader range than the meaning of "language". *Lexis* refers to style, discourse, form of expression, concrete speaking, so its meaning is too narrow.

Despite their affinity the two concepts differ in principle: the concept of *logos* is closely linked to the domain of form (*eidos*) and of Aristotelian logic in general. *Lexis* is understood more in relation to medium, so it is linked to the domain of matter (*hulê*). These concepts are thus located at two distinct poles of the Aristotelian system: that of form and that of matter, and each belongs to a context of its own. This creates difficulty in understanding the Aristotelian concept of language in modern terms, that is, to find an Aristotelian concept parallel in scope and content to our concept of language: a single system that includes phonetic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic elements. To reconstruct an Aristotelian concept of language various fields and discussions which Aristotle not always regarded as connected have to be combined, and which Aristotle himself deemed marginal must be placed at the center.

The third concept, that of "text", does not actually exist in Aristotle. In fact, the use of the term "text" as a theoretical concept is relatively new, and is typical mainly for structuralist and post-structuralist thought. A **text** is a definite utterance within language, whether a natural language or any other sign system, such as painting, cinema or theater. The concept of text suggests an overall definition of something defined in Aristotelian theory (and in traditional theories in general) by a series of more specific terms, which are usually generic: tragedy, novel, sonnet or movie. The concept of text abstracts from all these genres general qualities of linguistic or semiotic structure in its broadest sense. In that respect it differs from the general concept of "work of art", since the peculiarity of a text as such has nothing to do with artistic creativity or with aesthetics, but only with semiotic qualities, that is, with "textuality".

The aim of this study is to use the concept of text as a clue to understanding Aristotelian theory, that is, to examine Aristotle through a new concept which on the face of it he himself does not know. Although it may sound absurd, this course of argumentation is entirely possible; except it must be pursued cautiously, and by no means through invasive application of ideas alien to Aristotle.

The first question one should ask for that purpose is why in fact there is no explicit concept of text in Aristotle. This question must be dealt with in a two ways: one leads to the history of language and culture in general, the other to Aristotelian philosophy in particular.

From the linguistic and cultural viewpoint one can refer here to Scheid and Swenbro's brilliant discussion (1996) on the history of the metaphor of weaving in antiquity. The concept of text, especially in antiquity, should not be accepted as simple and homogeneous, and its metaphorical roots must be examined. The source of the term is the Latin verb *texere*, which

means to weave. So the noun's primal meaning is that of cloth, textile. The roots of the metaphorical transformation from verbal utterances to textile are Greek, but until the first century a.C. they were not manifested as a noun, but only as metaphorical uses of the verb. The first use of the Latin noun *textus* is documented in Quintilian's writings.<sup>1</sup>

Longinus in *On the Sublime* (1.4.) is one of the first to use the Greek parallel to "textus"—*huphos*, probably as a loan translation of the Latin term, and this is the earliest documentation of that Greek root as a noun.<sup>2</sup> The original meaning of these terms ascribes the image of textile to the lexical and stylistic structure of the work, unlike the modern use shown above, where "text" means the complete utterance with all its components.

The first part of the question "why not in Aristotle?" can thus be answered simply: because in the language of his times no parallel term existed as yet. But this answer is insufficient, because even if the term had no exact parallel, it might have had certain substitutes, albeit partial ones. Aristotle himself uses terms like *epopoia* or *rhapsodia* in a way which is not clearly generic, but seems rather to mean a "work of language". This phrase is also the literal translation of *epopoia* (if the component of *epos* is read in its original sense as "word" or "saying"), which makes it the closest Aristotelian parallel to "text" in its modern sense. Aristotle mentions it in the first chapter of the *Poetics*: "There is further an art which imitates by language alone" (*hê de [epopoia] monon tois logois*, *ibid.* 1447a28), but this is merely an episodic use; it is textually uncertain and is not further developed.<sup>3</sup>

Precisely this lack of development raises the second aspect of the question: what is there in Aristotle's philosophy that stops him from consistently and definitively using this concept or any of its substitutes? Is it a linguistic lack, or a deeper, conceptual want?

On the face of it the term "text" signifies a general kind, perhaps a "super-genre", which can be split into various genres, and in that respect such a concept could have found its place in Aristotle. But actually Aristotle does not go that way: he speaks about tragedy or comedy, or about political and epideictic speech; he also points out several qualities common to all of them, but still, he does not regard them as existing under the same roof. Nor is a general use of terms like *rhapsodia* or *epopoia* repeated after the first chapter of the *Poetics*, and even in that chapter the general definition seems possible only because at that stage of the discussion there are still no definitions of particular genres. But once the genres have been defined, Aristotle makes no further use of these indeterminate terms.

A super-concept does exist, to which all the generic definitions are subject, but that concept does not resemble that of "text" or its possible substitutes. Comedy, tragedy and epic are all **imitations**, various kinds of *mimêsis*, therefore they are *mimêmata*.<sup>4</sup> But the Aristotelian concept of *mimêsis* also refers to non-verbal utterances, such as painting or sculpture; on the other hand it does not refer to clearly verbal utterances, such as speeches, lyrical poems and historical compositions.

The Aristotelian concept of imitation deserves a special study, but even at this stage this concept clearly does not offer a satisfactory answer to the questions posed at the beginning of our discussion. True, the concepts discussed in the *Poetics*—epic, tragedy, etc.—are all kinds of imitation, and so are painting and sculpture, which are not broadly discussed in the *Poetics*. But if we examine the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* together it becomes clear at once, even without careful comparison, that in both works Aristotle discusses verbal products. The works are thus quite similar as to their objects. Aristotle is fully aware of this, since when discussing style in the *Rhetoric* he refers to the *Poetics*, and when discussing "thought" (*dianoia*) in the *Poetics* he refers to the *Rhetoric*.<sup>5</sup> But despite this affinity, one cannot use the Aristotelian concept of *mimêsis* as a *genus proximum* for the verbal products discussed in the two books.

What then is the common denominator of the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*? What is the common genus to which the objects of both disciplines belong? Both works deal with language or with objects that can be made of language. No matter if one speaks of an act of imitation or an act of convincing, tragedy and epic, like political and judicial oration, are always **texts** in language.

As stated above, Aristotle does not use the term "text" or any of its possible parallels, and in general he is not concerned with the question of the common object of the two works. But to understand the relation between them, and even specific phenomena in each, we are sometimes forced to substitute concepts like tragedy, comedy or oration by the general concept of **text** or **verbal text**. From the modern scholar's viewpoint this is an inevitable step: we enter Aristotle's work equipped with concepts of our own, and address him questions from our own world. Thus Aristotelian thought is reorganized according to questions not necessarily raised by it.

This experiment is not the outcome of the rhetorical temptation to read our own beliefs into Aristotle, nor is it led by the exegetic wish to prove that Aristotle can provide answers to every question. I believe that although Aristotle has not formulated a complete and coherent linguistic theory, one can use concepts from such a theory for a better understanding

of arguments he has presented in several contexts, but seems not to have fully structured and formalized. This way one can detect in Aristotle directions of thought previously concealed.

If this approach is a change, it is not a change of conception but of agenda. The Aristotelian agenda was dictated by the needs and assumptions underlying Aristotle's own theory. Sometimes scholarship and exegesis adopted what seemed to them the genuine Aristotelian agenda; but sometimes they ascribed to him an agenda according to their own needs. Sometimes his discussion was understood as a normative treatise, sometimes as a descriptive one. Sometimes tragedy was positioned as the center of interest, sometimes not. Sometimes the scholarly tradition determined an agenda significantly different from the original. For example, the various attempts to explicate the concept of *katharsis*, and the exegetic and cultural effort invested in it, determined an agenda which occasionally deviated from the Aristotelian, so perhaps also the attempts to compose an Aristotelian theory of comedy. Can the promises Aristotle scatters at various points in his writings that he is about to present somewhere a theoretical discussion of *katharsis* and of comedy serve as real testimony about his agenda?

To read the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* in light of an agenda which ascribes weight to questions of language and communication is possible, like any other reading of Aristotle. The emphasis on **text** and **textuality** may perhaps fertilize and promote understanding of his thought and point to significant links between the two works. But to outline the assumptions for such a discussion, it would be best to begin with the concept in which the original Aristotelian agenda can be most easily detected. This is the concept of "art", *tekhnê*, which is well rooted in Aristotle's epistemology.

## 2. The Concept of "Art"

The Greek term for "art" (*tekhnê*) is actually included in the titles of both Aristotle's books considered here. The *Rhetoric* is called in Greek *Tekhnê Rhêtorikê* (Rhetorical Art). True, in the title of the *Poetics* the term is not explicitly mentioned, and the work is called *Peri Poiêtikês*, but the term *Poiêtikês* is actually an adjective that became a noun: the title is an abbreviation of *Peri Poiêtikês [Tekhnês]* (On Poetic [Art]).<sup>6</sup>

The Greek term *tekhnê* refers to both the art itself and the work containing the collected rules of that art, the "manual". This use is not special to Aristotle. The works by forerunners on rhetoric are all defined as *tekhnai* (manuals). Plato, as we shall see immediately, does not believe that rhetoric is an art. Of course, a statement of this kind also requires an

assumption about the meaning of the term, and raises certain questions as to that meaning. The questions raised by Plato, together with the "regular" use of the term, are the basis of the special Aristotelian understanding of that concept.

For Aristotle *tekhnê* is the fourth of five grades of cognition, which from simple to complex are (a) *aisthêsis*—sensation; (b) *mnêmê*—memory; (c) *empeiria*—experience; (d) *tekhnê*—art; (e) *epistêmê*—science.

Sensation, Aristotle claims, is the primal and most natural epistemological datum: "By nature animals are born with the faculty of sensation" (*Metaphysics* A, 1, 980a25). Nevertheless, there are also more developed animals:

And from sensation memory is produced in some of them, though not in others. And therefore the former are more intelligent and apt at learning than those which cannot remember. (Ibid.)

These two grades, sensation and memory, are common to human beings and other animals; the other three are particularly human:

And from memory experience is produced in men; for many memories of the same thing produce finally the capacity for a single experience. (Ibid. 980b13-981a1)

Experience is the natural basis for the grades of art and science, as Aristotle states at another point:

So from perception there comes memory, as we call it, and from memory (when it occurs often in connection with the same thing), experience; for memories that are many in number from a single experience. (*Posterior Analytics* II, 19, 100a5-10)

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle explains how art grows out of experience:

And art arises, when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgement about similar objects is produced. For to have a judgement that when Callias was ill of this disease this did him good, and similarly in the case of Socrates and in many individual cases, is a matter of experience; but to judge that it had done good to all persons of a certain constitution, marked off in one class, when they were ill of this disease, e.g. phlegmatic or bilious people when burning with fever—this is a matter of art. (Ibid. A, 1, 981a5-12)

Experience thus is a repeated event, and in that respect it is knowledge of one thing about many objects. But things learned from experience,

whether concerning a single object or many, are always particular in nature. Experience always exists on the level of details. In art, however, the details are substituted by a general concept; medicine, for instance, concerns not Callias or Socrates but a general concept of people suffering from a certain disease. The generic definition refers to all people, but it specifies from them not particular ones, but a sub-genre of people who are in a certain state. Once the knowledge drawn from experience is about an object of this kind, it can be duplicated, applied and broadened; that is, it can be taught.

Nevertheless Aristotle admits that this general knowledge is not always what promises the immediate results.

With a view to action experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and we even see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience. The reason is that experience is knowledge of individuals, art of universals, and actions and productions are all concerned with the individual: for the physics does not cure a man, except in an incidental way, but Callias or Socrates or some other called by some such individual name, who happen to be a man. If, then, a man has theory without experience, and knows the universal but does not know the individual included in this, he will often fail to cure; for it is the individual that is to be cured. (*Metaphysics* A, 1, 981a13-23)

The practical world, whether of actions done or works created, always consists of particulars. Therefore the general nature of art will often be fruitless if not accompanied by a certain sensitivity to particulars, namely experience. However, the epistemological value of an action concerns not its effectiveness in attaining immediate results, but its doer's general knowledge.

But yet we think that knowledge and understanding belong to art rather than to experience, and we suppose artists to be wiser than men of experience [---] and this because the former know the cause, but the latter do not. For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others know the 'why' and the cause. (Ibid. 981a23-30)

For that reason, those who master an art are suitable for functions of work managers, architects or engineers; those with experience are fit for mechanical work -

[B]ecause they know the causes of the things that are done. (We think the manual workers are like certain lifeless things which act indeed, but without knowing what they do [---]). (Ibid. 981b1-2)



Those who act out of experience are likened to machines or robots: those who act out of art are those who activate these machines.

Another difference between people with experience and with art is their ability to teach. Unlike those with experience, those with art are able to teach. Experience is a skill that cannot be transmitted. The worker cannot transmit his skills to somebody else. But knowledge, being formalized, is transmittable, therefore can be taught. Science, in Aristotle, is knowledge located one grade higher than art, since it concerns being, not coming into being. As he puts it:

There comes a principle of skill and of understanding: of skill if it deals with how things come about, of understanding if it deals with what is the case. (*Posterior Analytics* II, 19, 100a8-10)

As we saw above, art as discipline is indeed based on general rules, but the objects it deals with are necessarily particulars, creatures coming into being: "the physician does not cure a man [---] but Callias or Socrates". Science, on the other hand, does not deal with particulars in any respect, but only with universals, therefore with constant essences. Moreover, the fact that the real objects of science are concepts like "human being" or "animal" is partly because science, in Aristotle, does not strive to attain a specific result in the real world, such as to cure, to convince, to design furniture or compose a tragedy, since every practical end will make the scientist deal with concrete details. Science is an end in itself, not a means to anything else.

Science and art are two epistemological levels, based, each in its own way, on general concepts. So one can say that Aristotle's writings are all ordered according to these two domains: some belong to the level of *epistêmê* (*Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul* and more), others to the level of *tekhnê*; and here we return to the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*.

The definition of *poetics* and rhetoric as arts, that is, their grading at given points on the Aristotelian epistemological ladder, is a polemical statement, for two reasons. One is the disagreement with Plato, who refused to recognize *poetics* and rhetoric as arts. The other is an argument (albeit intimated and implied) between Aristotle and the early rhetoricians as well as the conventional beliefs about poetry. True, the early writers use the term *tekhnê* for rhetoric as well as for poetry, but the meaning they actually ascribe to that term is more fitting, in Aristotelian terms, for the level of experience.

Aristotle's argument with Plato concerns the latter's attacks on rhetoric in *Gorgias*, and on poetry in *Ion* and the *Republic*. The attacks on these disciplines target various issues, some ethical and some ontological. The

determination of the epistemological level of the discipline (that is, its grading as art or not) is only one of them. We shall refer here to the epistemological component only.

In Plato's *Gorgias* Socrates attacks rhetoric and claims among other thing that it is not art:

And I insist that it is not an art [*tekhnê*] but a routine [*sunêtheia*], because it can produce no principle in virtue of which it offers what it does, nor explain the nature thereof, and consequently is unable to point to the cause of each thing it offers. (Ibid. 465a)

Plato conceives of rhetoric as something basically unscientific and non-artistic, since it deals with the irrational aspects of existence: passions, emotions and all that is uncontrolled by the idea. For him the right treatment of the soul is through the disciplines of legislation and justice, while rhetoric, with its charms, is like "flattering" (*kolakeia*); it addresses the soul not through its real needs, that is, through the idea, but through its weaknesses, that is, through semblance: exactly as cosmetics and pastry cooking flatter the body through its own weaknesses, while medicine and gymnastics really treat it. This also implies that rhetoric causes real damage, and this after all is Plato's central claim against it.

The important point for our purpose is that rhetoric is connected in essence to things exterior to the idea, hence it is irrational. Therefore if rhetoric works in a consistent way it can be only a matter of habit and dexterity. There is no idea behind this occupation, just as there can be no idea of absence, baseness, spoiling or weakness. Things of that kind are defined mainly by their remoteness and disconnection from the ideas, not by an idea of negativity. In principle a science of bad things is impossible according to Plato, just as one cannot know good without doing it. The link between knowledge and action, which is so typical for Plato, makes it impossible to connect a rational system with something conceived as bad or harmful. In that context habit and experience are not conceived as grades in the development of knowledge, but as variations of non-truth, and their relationship with knowledge is conceived more as that between truth and lie, being and un-being.

Aristotle's position, as noted before, is different: first, the assumption that rhetoric is an art is the basic justification for all his activity in the field, or at least, this is the title of his work. But the fact that rhetoric is an art is independent of any of its essential qualities: it is an art just like every kind of knowledge which has been sufficiently accumulated and organized by experience. Art is the direct continuation of habit and experience; it is

based on its former states of cognition and is not a separate option posed against them:

All men attempt to discuss statements and maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either by random [*eikê*] or through practice and from acquired habit [*sunêtheia*]. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and everyone will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art. (*Rhetoric* I, 1, 1354a5-11)

Aristotle thus claims that it is possible to develop a professional field subject to the general conditions of the growth of knowledge. What has been a habit can be developed into a system, since one can examine the answers to the question why in certain cases this habit proved itself. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle refers to it in a more laconic way, but he adds an interesting reference:

[B]ut really science and art come to men through experience; for 'experience made art', as Polus says, 'but inexperience luck'. (Ibid. A,1, 981a7)

Polus' words, to which Aristotle refers, are quoted from nowhere else than Plato's *Gorgias*, the dialogue which attacks rhetoric so harshly. Polus says:

There are many arts, Chaerephon, among mankind experimentally devised by experience, for experience guides our life along the path of art, inexperience along the path of chance. And in each of these different arts different men partake in different ways, the best men following the best arts. (Ibid. 448c)

This idea about the beginning of arts is a common belief, repeated by several sophists and their disciples. Similar sayings are ascribed also to Agathon, Moschion and others.<sup>7</sup> Polus' formulation is no deeper than theirs and is certainly not a part of a coherent system. But it is worth noting that Aristotle refers precisely to him, since that way he takes a direct part in the controversy expressed in the *Gorgias*, by supporting the non-Socratic position.

The disagreement about poetry is even sharper. Indeed, unlike the case of rhetoric, the question whether *poetics* is an art or not is not explicitly raised here, and the term "art" has no role in that disagreement. However, the Platonic arguments against poetry are basically quite similar to those against rhetoric, and so are Aristotle's answers.

According to Plato, poetry, like rhetoric, harms the soul and is composed irrationally. In poetry it is more difficult to distinguish ethical from epistemological criticism. But if we focus on the epistemological level, that is, the question whether poetry is an "art" or not, we can find the best answers in the *Apology* and in *Ion*. In the *Apology* Socrates relates that in his searches after wisdom and wise people he addressed the poets, but very soon found out that they were not as wise as one might imagine from their poems:

Well, gentlemen, I hesitate to tell you the truth, but it must be told. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that any of the bystanders could have explained those poems better than their actual authors. So I soon made up my mind about the poets too. I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean. (Ibid. 22b-c)

The dialogue *Ion* presents a conversation with a poet of that kind and the conclusion is that the poet really does not understand what he is talking about. Indeed, Ion is presented as not very impressive in his personality or in his intelligence, and seems not to pose much of an intellectual challenge for Socrates (especially if compared with Socrates' interlocutors presented in *Gorgias* or in *Protagoras*). But although he is easy prey, Socrates, in a jest untypical for him, does not expose his stupidity, nor does he use the situation to reject poetry entirely, as he did with rhetoric in the *Gorgias*. He finds a kind of mitigating circumstances: poetry is indeed not a "wisdom" (that is, an art), but it is conceived as a certain action done under the influence of divine inspiration, like that of prophets and soothsayers.

This mitigation, by the way, later proves insufficient for Plato, and in the *Republic* his criticism is much more extreme. In that text also the theory of ideas is presented, which makes possible a clearer comparison of poetry with other arts. The true artist should know the idea and shape his product according to it. The imitating artist (whether poet or painter) has no access to the ideas of things but only to their material realization, and he shapes his product according to it. Thus he does not create a new object but a kind of illusion, like a shadow or a reflection. The argument that poetry is not art is based here on the assumption that art concerns viewing the idea, and the poet does not view it, but the material world. This argument is very different from that of the earlier dialogues (*Apology*, *Ion*), and we shall deal with this difference later. But for our purpose note that both arguments alike imply that poetry cannot be deemed art, even though the term "art" is not used explicitly in that discussion.<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle's answer to these arguments is very comprehensive, and unlike the case of the *Rhetoric* it is not limited to one single direct reference. But here too Aristotle's standpoint is first of all a kind of justification for the very existence of the *Poetics*, since the main issue of that book is to regard the composition of poetry as a series of decisions referring a system of rules, drawn from acquaintance with the *eidos*, the genre.

In addition, certain remarks in the *Poetics* can be understood as referring to several aspects of Plato's sayings. Aristotle states that poetry is "more philosophic than history" (*Poetics* 9, 1451b5), since poetry deals with what is possible (*ta dunata, oia an genoito*) while history deals with what actually happened (*ta genomena*).<sup>9</sup> This important statement does not necessarily imply that poetry is an art; however, it is opposed to Plato's irrational conception of poetry, and ascribes to it philosophical knowledge. At another point Aristotle says that poetry is a matter of natural talent (*euphuos*) rather than of madness (*Poetics* 17, 1455b32). This saying too implies many other claims and does not entail a specific statement about art, since "natural talent" is not exactly "art". Here Aristotle seems only to argue against, or to try to modify, Plato's theory about the poetic "mania".<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, more than any explicit saying of Aristotle the very task he undertook—to analyze poetry as a system of professional rules—is in itself a refutation of Plato's standpoint.

As mentioned, besides the disagreement with Plato, Aristotle fights on a second front as well: theories of old rhetoricians. The *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* are full of polemic and critical sayings about old theories of rhetoric as well as conventional beliefs about poetry. The common denominator of all these positions is that they are not based on a consistent professional theory of rhetoric or poetry. Whenever orators or poets yield to easy solutions, to shortcuts or to cheap emotional effects, they violate their own professional principles. They do not follow the rules, but act out of their own or the audience's need for immediate gratification.

Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not identify poetry and rhetoric with that kind of behavior, therefore he does not reject them as disciplines. He knows very well the possibility that poetry or rhetoric may behave as "flattery to the soul", but for him they do not act like this out of their essence, as Plato believes, but on the contrary—whenever they deny their own essence; when they act not according to the rules but to a certain extra-artistic need.

The definition of rhetoric and *poetics* as *tekhnai* is descriptive, but at the same time there is something normative about it. These are arts once they have attained a certain level, but this does not mean that every product of theirs will be regarded as a work of art and that every saying

about them will be regarded as a *tekhnê*. Within the framework of rhetorical and poetic activities in general, many activities are the fruits of skill and habit, or ecstasy and madness. The title *tekhnê* is thus not a mere description; it also entails professional standards: rhetoric and *poetics* are *tekhnai* when they are at their best.

### 3. The Realms of Human Thinking

Unlike pure science, *tekhnê* is always applied to a certain human activity, so not only must its epistemological level be taken into account but also the kind of human activity it refers to. The various kinds of human activities are expressed in the special way of thinking attached to each.

Aristotle distinguishes three patterns of thinking: theoretical, practical and productive. In Aristotelian terms these are *theôria*, *praxis* and *poiêsis*. These patterns are distinguished according to their objects and aims. The purpose of theoretical thinking is to know, to observe, to recognize. This is an activity whose aim and pattern is to attain knowledge. Practical thinking concerns actions and behaviors in the world. This is every activity which refers to and tries to change a certain state of affairs, or to create a new one. These can be actions like going to war, making friends, marrying, quarreling, reconciling, etc. Productive thinking, *poiêsis*, concerns making: this is an activity which creates new objects in the world: a sculpture, a saddle, a tragedy, a comedy, a chair, a house.

Each of these patterns underlies a certain kind of science, and Aristotle's writings are divided according to these patterns. Theoretical thinking, *theôria*, underlies the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul* and other compositions in the study of nature; practical thought, *praxis*, underlies compositions like the *Politics* and the *Ethics*, the objects of which are human behaviors, their patterns and their aims; productive thinking, *poiêsis*, underlies the *Poetics*.<sup>11</sup>

Most of Aristotle's writing concerns theoretical thinking; the part concerning practical thinking is notable but not incisive; the part dedicated to creative thinking is the smallest. One can also recognize a very slight sense of grading or preference as to the relative status of the three patterns. Usually Aristotle prefers theoretical thinking, and it is dominant in his writings. This can be seen, for example, in the *Ethics*, where he refers to the values to which each kind of thinking is subject:

Now this kind of intellect and of truth is practical; of the intellect which is contemplative, not practical nor productive, the good and the bad state are truth and falsity (for this is the function of everything intellectual; while of

the part which is practical and intellectual the good state is truth in agreement with right desire. (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 2, 1139a25-31)

This paragraph is not simple and straightforward, and it does not present a clear-cut distinction; however, it implies that each thought and each action is subject to values of positive vs. negative, true vs. false, good vs. bad. In theoretical thinking the dominant expression of positive and negative concerns truth values; in practical thinking it concerns the distinction of good and bad.

Aristotle does not continue that line of thought in a way which may also include productive thinking, but presumably in that respect it does not differ from practical thinking: this pattern of thinking too is subject to the distinction of good and bad in a certain sense (good and bad regarding the fulfillment of the product's end).<sup>12</sup> So basically Aristotle seems to distinguish theoretical thinking, aimed at knowledge and subject to values of truth, from practical and creative thinking, both aiming at objects and situations in the world and subject to values of good and bad.

Aristotle presents the three thinking patterns also in the *Metaphysics*, with a certain setting aside of theoretical thinking: he speaks mainly of the status of physics, mathematics and theology, and describes them with regard to their quality and objects:

There must, then, be three theoretical philosophies, mathematics, natural science, and theology,[--]. And the highest science must deal with the highest genus, so that the theoretical sciences are superior to the other sciences, and this to the other theoretical sciences. (Ibid. VI, 1, 1026a17-20)

The theoretical disciplines are presented here as more sublime, and the grading refers to the status of the objects of research. Theology deals with the eternal being, which is an end in itself so it is more sublime than the other theoretical disciplines, which deal with qualified being, not with being as such. According to this principle, theoretical disciplines in general are understandably more sublime than other sciences, both practical and creative, since they deal with eternal laws, while the others deal with the manifestations of these laws in particular and concrete phenomena.

The *Poetics* belongs to the realm of *poiêsis*. This linkage is clear from the common root of the two terms, but this very common root can also mislead. The term *poiêsis* derives from the verb *poiein*, to make, which points at a certain production, whether applied, architectural or artistic. As stated already, the common distinctions between artistic creation and

production or between art and craft do not exist in antiquity. There is no distinct group of activities defined as "fine arts". Moreover, the sculptor and the painter, who are engaged in fine arts (for us) or in imitation (for Aristotle), take part in *poiêsis* only, and not in *poiêtikê*. The concept *poiêtikê* is limited and refers only to poetry. This is not explained in Aristotelian theory, since it is due to changes the Greek language underwent: at a certain stage the term *poiêtês* (maker, producer, creator) began to refer to the poet, and pushed aside the older term, *aoidos*.<sup>13</sup> The term *poiêtikê* was coined probably from that later metamorphosis, so the same root is used both in its general meaning (*poiêsis*) and in its limited meaning (*poiêtikê*).

Some believe that rhetoric too belongs to *poiêsis* (which can include a wide range of activities other than poetry). But I count myself among those who think differently: both the way in which Aristotle presents it and the nature of the object itself associate it with *praxis*. **Rhetoric** is defined in reference to one of the most typical practical activities: convincing. Still, the association of rhetoric with *poiêsis* is not entirely unjustified since one cannot ignore its poetical qualities, more especially its very product: speeches.

Views on this matter are divided according to two different starting points. Scholars who wanted to take a bird's eye view of Aristotle's thinking usually tended to associate the **Rhetoric** with the **Poetics** and to regard both as different cases of *poiêsis* (Ross 1923, Edel 1982). But scholars who examined the **Rhetoric** in itself tended more to associate it with Aristotle's political thinking (Halliwell 1990), or to emphasize its practical relevance for social and behavioral sciences (Watson 2012, pp. 44-46) so they regarded it as *praxis*. The reasons of both parties are quite good, but the very logic of Aristotelian thinking justifies more the conception of rhetoric as *praxis*.

Unlike **poetics**, rhetoric is not a productive activity, since its business is not to produce speeches as such, but to use speeches as a means of convincing. Its productive aspect is a side effect of its main end, just as for every other kind of activities one can find side effects and secondary ends. One can say, for instance, that by means of poetry as well one can convince and affect people, so it too has qualities of *praxis*; however, this is not its main goal but only a side effect. Similarly, theoretical activity also can be manifested by the composition of books and treatises, but this does not make it a productive activity. The relation of the three kinds of activity is mainly that of changing dominance. Each activity has components of all three, since it will always include a certain aspect of knowledge, of production and of practice. The realms differ only in



reference to their dominant element, which determines the definition, and to those which are conceived as secondary.

As for rhetoric, the dominant aspect, as presented by Aristotle himself, seems to be *praxis*, practical thinking. The verbal texts created in the course of that action are byproducts, and they do not justify viewing the entire activity as productive.

It is entirely possible to recognize all the links between the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, and still see their peculiarity and the differences between them. These are due to the different thinking pattern underlying each one: productive thinking and practical thinking.

#### 4. Art and the Use of Language

Recognition of the difference between the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* requires a more accurate definition of the common substratum of both realms. Undoubtedly, the common factor of the two works is that both, each in its own way, deal with linguistic activity. This is the subject regarding which they refer to each other, and this is also the common substratum on which those who tend to associate the two disciplines base their argument.

But language is common not only to productive and practical thinking: theoretical thinking also can use linguistic tools, since it can be realized in a conversation, in a lecture or in a written treatise. Language is thus common to all three patterns of thinking. Moreover, this allows adding one more art to the two already discussed: to a certain extent Aristotle's *Organon*, the body of compositions about logic, is a kind of *tekhne* concerning theoretical use of language. This is the art of defining ideas, proving and explaining truth and recognizing valid inferences, that is, the art of using language for shaping, examining and transmitting knowledge.

Things may be clearer if one crosses the distinction of the three patterns of thought (theoretical, practical and productive) with the distinction between experience, art and science (the three upper grades of cognition on Aristotle's ladder), and determines a more accurate relation between the two lists. On the face of it, there is a certain parallelism between them. For instance, the concepts of *theôria*, theoretical thinking, and *epistêmê*, scientific knowledge, greatly resemble each other: in both cases Aristotle describes a realm of pure knowledge, separated from other realms by being exempt of any practical end, and in both cases this realm is placed at the top of the grading. And indeed, some of the actions described as *epistêmê* can also be described as *theôria*, and vice versa. Nevertheless, this resemblance does not cancel the basic difference

between the two lists: although both refer to human thinking, they analyze the subject on two entirely distinct dimensions.

The first distinguishes different stages of knowledge, and these stages are dependent on each other in a gradual and hierarchic way. The second distinguishes several kinds of human activity, and although a certain grading can be detected here also, it does not imply any hierarchy. The various patterns of thinking are not interdependent and do not develop from each other. These are not different stages in attaining knowledge, but essences distinct from each other in content and definition.

True, Aristotle nowhere points to an explicit relation between the two lists, but according to their logical structure their crossing seems quite natural:<sup>14</sup>

	<i>Theôria</i> , theoretical thinking	<i>Praxis</i> , practical thinking	<i>Poiësis</i> , productive thinking
<i>Epistêmê</i> , scientific knowledge			
<i>Tekhnê</i> , art			
<i>Empeiria</i> , experience			

Table 1-1

This table clarifies several things: in principle a separate grading can be determined for each kind of action. Not always does Aristotle realize all the grades, but even where the grading is only partial it can always be detected.

In the realm of *praxis*, practical thinking, we can take for example the ***Ethics*** and the ***Politics***, compositions dedicated to human activity, private or public. The very engagement in such subjects implies the possibility of applied knowledge, but Aristotle does not define these compositions as *tekhnai*, handbooks of given arts. But the ***Rhetoric*** is defined explicitly as *tekhnê* in that sense. It is aimed to instruct those who intend to enter the Athenian public world, and teach them how to use their capacity to convince, and how to survive in a society so politically and juristically oriented as the Athenian. Just as the ***Rhetoric*** contains discussions with a more theoretical quality, so the ***Ethics*** and the ***Politics*** contain references to real human behavior. But here a dominant tendency should be detected: the ***Ethics*** and the ***Politics*** are not defined as *tekhnai* since they are not aimed at guiding activities but at pure understanding of the systems of

state and of human behavior; the *Rhetoric* is a particular handbook for public behavior.

Moreover, the difference between *tekhnê* and *epistêmê* is, as noted, a difference of grade and not of essence. This can be proved precisely by examining the overlap of the *Rhetoric* with the *Politics* and the *Ethics*. In fact, the *Rhetoric* has discussions of kinds of political regimes, like the *Politics*, and of virtue, like the *Ethics*. But the discussions are very different in depth and level of analysis. The political and ethical theory in the *Politics* and the *Ethics* is meant for philosophers, and it is formulated most completely and accurately. The political and ethical theory in the *Rhetoric* is meant to serve as a basis for practical application of speaking competence. The orator is not necessarily philosophically trained, and his audience is certainly not.

The items of knowledge in the *Rhetoric* are organized as topics (*topoi*), that is, constant reservoirs of information which provide the orator with his basic assumptions ready for fast and efficient drawing out. In the *Ethics* and the *Politics* the items of knowledge are organized as a systematic structure, based on definitions, axioms, theorems, etc.

Moreover, not always are these very items identical in the two sources. To convince, one has to be supported by concepts held by the audience, and these concepts will most probably differ from those held by the philosopher. Note, for instance, the various definitions of happiness in the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric*. According to the *Ethics*, the greatest happiness is that of contemplative life (*Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7-8). The *Rhetoric* however presents a series of definitions, almost all based on abundance and power (*ibid.* I, 5). The orator must be acquainted with popular ethics in order to make use of it in his speech; concepts of philosophical ethics may prove unhelpful if he wants to convince an audience of utilitarian or hedonistic people.

Some scholars believe that the political and ethical sections of the *Rhetoric* belong to an earlier stage of Aristotelian philosophy, before the systematic concepts of the *Politics* and the *Ethics* had been developed.<sup>15</sup> Whether true or false, the fact is that all these allegedly "unripe" concepts are preserved in the *Rhetoric*, and not in the ethical and political writings. The reason is perhaps that the *Rhetoric*, as *tekhnê*, belongs to a lower grade and does not need philosophical accuracy. But the differences due to the level of discussion are marginal, as against the essential differences due to the different ends of the books.

Like the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, Aristotle's logical writings too can be regarded as professional manuals, but the *tekhnê* which they teach refers to the realm of theoretical thinking. To deal properly with science,

and to have the knowledge clean and under control, Aristotle develops various methods for defining, inferring and reasoning. The *Analytics* is the logical guide to exact sciences; the *Topics* is the logical guide to dialectics, to inferences based on beliefs, etc. The very title given later to the whole body of logical writings, the *Organon* (the Tool), and the ancient title given by Aristotle to the books of *Analytics*—the *Methodics*—show that he means here a kind of professional skill in the service of higher knowledge.

As for the *Poetics*, since it is the only Aristotelian composition about productive thinking, it is not subject to any composition on the level of *epistêmê* graded above it. In Aristotle's writings there is no systematic composition about aesthetics, or any other subject from the realm of fine arts, which could be paralleled to the status of the *Ethics* or the *Politics* in the realm of practical thinking (there is of course nothing surprising about this absence, since aesthetics as a discipline was founded only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the theory of arts even later).<sup>16</sup> Our knowledge about Aristotelian theories of culture and aesthetics is drawn entirely from notes scattered through the *Poetics*. It seems that in spite of being a *tekhnê*, the *Poetics* is philosophical and systematic enough to make it possible.

So the three kinds of *tekhnê* may be outlined thus:

	<i>Theôria</i>	<i>Praxis</i>	<i>Poiêsis</i>
<i>Epistêmê</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i> , all the compositions about natural science	<i>Politics, Ethics</i>	-----
<i>Tekhnê</i>	<i>Organon</i> , all the books about logic and dialectics	<i>Rhetoric</i>	<i>Poetics</i>

Table 1-2

The table shows that all Aristotelian compositions about art actually deal with the art of using language, not with the arts of producing and acting with real things. Aristotle himself hints incidentally at this:

But the more we try to make either dialectic or rhetoric not what they really are, practical faculties, but sciences, the more we shall inadvertently be destroying their true nature; for we shall be re-fashioning them and shall be passing into the region of science dealing with definite subjects [*tinôn pragmatôn*], rather than simply with speeches [*logôn*]. (*Rhetoric* I, 3, 1359b12-16)

The essence of rhetoric and dialectic is thus that they do not deal with facts (*pragmata*) but with words. Dialectic is the use of language for scientific purposes, and rhetoric is the use of language for social and political purposes. *Poetics*, which should be added to this pair, is the use of language for producing imitations. As Aristotle says, *poetics* belongs to the arts "which create imitation by means of rhythm, **words** and harmony" (*Poetics* 1, 1447a21). It is thus a productive use of language.

In each realm of human activity one could imagine also an art dealing with real things, *pragmata*. In politics one can think of guides to military practice, to economics (e.g., Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*);<sup>17</sup> in the realm of production one can imagine *tekhnai* of painting, pottery or architecture (e.g., Vitruvius' *De Architectura*). Also in the realm of science one could compose guides to methods of observation, to experiment, etc. (although actually nothing of that kind was done). Anyway, in all his extant *tekhnai* Aristotle chooses to deal with verbal behavior. This does not mean that he tries to formalize a comprehensive theory of language. One can imagine more actions and contexts in the realm of language besides those discussed in Aristotle's *tekhnai*: he does not deal with historical writing, lyrics or didactics, although in principle he could have done. Yet he nowhere claims that he has exhausted the entire field of verbal behavior.

But two plain facts cannot be ignored: first, each of the three patterns of thinking is accompanied by an Aristotelian *tekhne* dealing with verbal behavior in that realm; secondly, besides the *tekhnai* on linguistic behavior, no compositions deal with other subjects in the Aristotelian corpus. These two facts suffice for regarding these *tekhnai* as the beginnings of a comprehensive theory of linguistic behavior.<sup>18</sup>

## 5. Language and the Verbal Text

Now our discussion returns to the third concept, that of **text**. This time our focus of interest is not the common qualities of the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* but the difference between both and the *Organon*. Examining the *Organon* from that viewpoint seems to enrich the Aristotelian conception of language. Indeed, Aristotle would not have regarded the books of the *Organon* as directly concerning language: the books of the *Analytics*, which deal with the logic of scientific thought, would have seemed rather a certain kind of mathematics, and if there is any reason to call it a language, it is only in that sense in which nowadays we regard mathematics as a kind of language. In antiquity mathematics was regarded as dealing with real entities and not with signs (which is true not only for the Pythagoreans), and in that respect the status of the *Analytics* as dealing

with language is not unequivocal. In the **Topics** this same purely logical system becomes a logic of probabilities, that is, of inferences based on probability rather than on necessity. These inferences are located in the philosophical dialogue, the methodology of which is the subject of the theory of dialectics. The relation of the **Topics** to dialogue makes its status as verbal art more conspicuous.

In the **Rhetoric** this system becomes a logic of convincing. At the center of this discipline there are looser logical structures: on the one hand a deficient inference, being based on a single assumption instead of two (the enthymeme, *enthymêma*); on the other hand a loose induction, being based on a single finding instead of all the relevant findings for a generalization (the rhetorical example, *paradeigma*). The logical deficiencies in these processes are complemented by hidden assumptions, provided by the listeners themselves according to their system of beliefs.

The passage depicted here is thus from a strict and systematic logical scientific system to a more natural use of language. But the difference can be viewed from another direction as well: the **Analytics** presents a complete and closed system, but it is not interested in the linguistic realization of that system. The **Topics** deals with the rules of dialectic conversation, so it is closer to dealing with the linguistic realization of things, but actually it deals only with the logical structure of the conversation, not with the voices of the interlocutors. The **Rhetoric** too is based on a logical system, but its real interest is in the way that system is expressed in concrete verbal behavior. The question whether a certain part of the argument is explicit or implicit, which defines the inference as rhetoric (enthymeme), no longer concerns the argument's logical structure, but its verbal selection. Moreover, the **Rhetoric** is especially interested in the verbal realization of the argumentative process, since this is the nature of convincing.

This could be explained through the distinction between the two concepts of language, *logos* and *lexis*. As stated above, the meaning of the first term is broader than the usual meaning of "language", while that of the second is narrower. Now we can be helped by this difference. *Logos* is the common subject of the three verbal arts: in the **Organon** it means a scientific inference and a logical process; in the **Rhetoric** it means a convincing argument; and in the **Poetics** it means the logic and structure of plot. In all three cases *logos* is a semantic deep structure underlying things, a kind of conceptual skeleton.

The difference between the three arts lies in the status of *lexis*, that is, style. The logical writings do not refer to *lexis*. They are interested in semantic-logical relations among various things, not in their verbal

expression. Even the *Topics*, which deals with philosophical conversation, deals with it only in terms of semantic structures and not of lexical, syntactic or phonetic choices. It is not interested in verbal utterance. Also *De Interpretatione*, which is a clear analysis of the structure of language, is concerned mainly with its semantic structure, and not its realization as utterance. Nor does Aristotle deal with the ways one speaks about, writes about, or teaches science. For him the verbal expression of scientific thought, after it has come into being, is no longer the business of science.

The *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* both differ from the *Organon* in the interest they have in *lexis*. This is decisive especially for the *Rhetoric*, since its semantic inner structure is very close to that of dialectics and is drawn from it. But in rhetoric, unlike in logic, the verbal and stylistic expression of thought is no less important, since its end is to convince, so a great many of its considerations concern the hearer. Thought does not reach the hearer as an abstract semantic structure, a kind of *logos*, but always as *lexis*. To convince effectively one must therefore deal with the *lexis* of speech, not only with the *logos* underlying it.<sup>19</sup>

This problem is not raised at all in the discussion of poetry. Poetry, from its very definition, is presented as an art related to language, since it carries out its acts of imitation by means of words and sounds, just as painting does through shapes and colors. Thus language is the medium of poetry. When Aristotle defines the six parts of tragedy, as we shall see later, one of these parts is *lexis*, language or style.<sup>20</sup>

In both the realms of rhetoric and *poetics* the engagement in *lexis* generates certain utterances which are clearly circumscribed with boundaries of beginning and ending, and which carry special identification marks that distinguish them clearly from the endless continuum of our daily use of language and dialogue. The *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* thus deal with **texts**: they speak about epic works, tragedies, speeches of eulogy, speeches of defense—all these are actually texts. But as stated above, the concept of "text" in itself does not exist in Aristotle.

We have already noted this problem, and at the present point of the discussion it may be easier to understand it: although "text" is a general concept for various objects Aristotle discusses in his *tekhnai*, for him they have no single super-genre. For the *Poetics* the super-genre is *mimēsis*. The *Rhetoric*, on the other hand, is not mimetic. So there is no possibility in Aristotelian terms to define "text" as a general concept in the sense of *eidōs*.

But even if such a super-concept is lacking in Aristotle, it is impossible not to be impressed by his general system of discussion, which actually deals again and again with qualities of textuality. His entire way of

thinking about oration and about poetry is thoroughly textual. So even without a distinct concept of "text", a spirit of "textuality" pervades every line of the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*.

Actually, very many of the discussions in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* do not refer to clear generic qualities. When Aristotle discusses concepts like unity and completeness (*Poetics* 7), when he discusses the process of composing a poetic work (ibid. 17), when he defines the "parts" of tragedy (ibid. 6), and again, when he analyzes the style of a speech (*Rhetoric* III) and the way one has to choose arguments (the system of topics), his discussion is always broader and more general than needed for the genre under discussion, be it tragedy, epic, deliberative speech or epideictic speech; Aristotle does not deal with generic qualities only, but with texts and textual qualities.

This shift from dealing with generic terms to dealing with the concept of text as such is by no means trivial. I wish to claim—and this claim is the basis of the present study—that this textual approach (and no matter if Aristotle has no distinct name for it) is perhaps the basic innovation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Furthermore, one dare say that this shift of approach is due to a thinking revolution which transformed the ways of dealing with poetry and literature. The textual emphasis is actually the earliest adoption of the thinking patterns of a literate culture, as opposed to the patterns of oral thinking, which prevailed before Aristotle. This revolution is the subject of our next chapter.





## CHAPTER TWO

# FROM SPEECH ACT TO A WRITTEN TEXT: ORALITY AND LITERACY IN ARISTOTLE AND HIS FORERUNNERS

### 1. Aristotle, Plato, and the Problem of Writing

Aristotle was not only the first systematic theoretician of literature, he was also the first whose thought was underlain by a distinct concept of literary text. The thesis I hope to prove here is that this new concept is closely connected to the introduction of the model of the literary work as a written text, instead of the earlier model, based on oral poetry.

From its earliest days Greek literature was incessantly accompanied by a kind of meta-poetic discourse, to mention only Homer, Hesiod, Xenophanes, Pindar, Aristophanes, and Plato as its participants, as well as others. All these thinkers, some poets and some philosophers, tried to deal with questions of poetry and poetics before Aristotle's systematic treatment. The answers given were varied, and even if they were not as coherent and detailed as Aristotle's they contained important ideas without which the *Poetics* surely could not have been composed. Yet despite the diversity in their answers, they had at least one thing in common which sharply differentiated them from Aristotle: in referring to poetry all the pre-Aristotelian thinkers meant oral poetry, not written.

The reasons for this were various. For the earlier thinkers it was simply reality as they knew it. Homer and Hesiod were originally oral poets, so although their poetry has been committed to writing since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the self-image and poetic conscience they reflect are naturally those of oral poets. The farther one advances along the temporal axis, the more complicated things become. Writing indeed became a natural practice within the literary activity, but the self-image of poetry continued to be oral. This process peaked in Aristophanes and Plato. Both of them lived within a literate environment par excellence, yet the image of poetry as reflected in their works was mostly derived from oral poetry, not written. The first to realize the written phase of poetry and to regard it as

something inherent in the nature of the literary text was Aristotle, and in that respect his thought is a turning point in the history of poetics.

To grasp this radical change one should first focus on the differences between Plato's and Aristotle's conception of poetry. From the ontological point of view Plato claims that poetry is a copy of a copy; its status is similar to that of shadows and reflections of physical objects, which are themselves reflections of ideas, hence poetry is two degrees remote from truth and closer to falsehood. For Aristotle, on the other hand, poetry belongs to an autonomous domain, that of *mimêsis*, imitation, which is not defined in terms of truth value. From the epistemological point of view, Plato believes that poetry is not composed through knowledge relating to real existence, but through opinion, relating to apparent existence. For Aristotle, on the other hand, poetry is conceived as an art, *tekhnê*, which can be learned and which is based on rational principles. From the psychological and ethical point of view, Plato conceives poetry as corrupting because it incites the emotions in a way that makes them irrational and not ruled by reason; Aristotle thinks that poetry furnishes for the soul a cathartic process, and is thus healing for the soul.

These differences are presented here only roughly and without the complexity and nuances of their details. Behind them lies a deep philosophical gulf concerning the status and significance of ideas; a psychological gulf concerning the conception of soul and of education; a political gulf concerning the view of the citizen and the state; and so on. But without disregarding any of their causes, I wish to examine these differences here on the basis of the opposition between a conception which is basically oral and one that is written.

Understanding Plato through the problem of the oral and the written is not new in itself. The examination of Aristotle in that respect, as far as I know, is only at its beginning stage, and I think that it can contribute much to understanding him.<sup>21</sup> Since the Aristotelian view in this respect cannot be understood without considering the Platonic, I would like to examine first what has been said about Plato.

Two important theories on the oral-written problem accord a central place to the discussion of Plato, and strangely they attribute to Plato, at least on the face of it, two opposite views. The first theory is that of Eric Havelock, especially in his book *Preface to Plato* (Havelock 1963); the other is that of Jacques Derrida, and it appears in his essay on Plato's "Pharmacy" first published in 1968 and then in a book four years later (Derrida 1972).

Havelock's book is one of several studies published in the early 1960s about the verbal and written media, and they are landmarks of this field of

research.<sup>22</sup> Havelock's main concern is the attempt to understand Plato's harsh criticism of poetry. Some of Plato's arguments—moreover, some of the questions he asks, may seem almost pointless in light of our present conception of poetry. What is the relevance of the question whether Homer understands more or less than the blacksmith about the blacksmith's profession? And how can poetry be entirely delegitimated just because the poet cannot prove such an understanding?

Havelock's answer is that Plato indeed cannot be properly understood unless one considers a conception of poetry entirely different from that of our time. The attack on poetry and the readiness to expel poets from the ideal state is actually directed against the status and function of poetry within an oral culture. The transition to a written culture deprives this status of its justification, and Plato, says Havelock, strives to replace the poet by the philosopher, the typical product of the written culture.

The modern conception of the poet as an artist has been formed as a part of the written culture; in oral culture the poet is the one who treasures the entire knowledge and memory of the community. Verse helps to accumulate information in memory, and narrative structure makes it possible to organize this information both for storage and usage. The poet and poetry is to serve as a kind of world encyclopedia—to determine the relations between men and gods, the patterns of relations among human beings, the norms of behavior in war and peace, the professional principles of vital activities such as agriculture, warfare, and rites. The poet preserves and suggests the traditional models for behavior and understanding, or suggests new ones if necessary.

*Mimêsis*, imitation, in such a culture is in fact the only way of accumulating and transmitting knowledge. It means assimilation and absorption of knowledge by internalizing the poem or the story in which it is incorporated. Thus, not only the poets practice *mimêsis*, but also the audience: the hearer in a certain way "becomes" the poet and he or she appropriates the information implied in the poem. This, according to Havelock, is the method of education and socialization in oral culture.

In the written culture, however, there is no need for that system. Writing allows more efficient methods, both for reception and preservation. Written culture does not require the internalization of linguistic units; a clear distinction between the writer and the reader always remains, as it does between both of them and the written text and its contents. This makes possible a different method, more conceptual and abstract, which no longer needs the scaffolding of verse and mythical plot; this is philosophy. Plato thus prefers the option of philosophy as a

competitive system of education to that of poetry, which has lost its effectiveness.

This is a highly important thesis, because it evidently points at the remnants of orality within Greek culture, even in its written stages. But some questions still arise here. According to Havelock, Plato belongs absolutely to the written pole, and the Platonic dialogues show a more complex picture. Beyond Socrates' insistence on keeping his philosophical dialogues oral and his typically suspicious attitude to books, there is the well-known passage at the end of the *Phaedrus* in which he explicitly criticizes writing, and regards it as a deterioration of the living oral discourse. Havelock is well aware of this, and he mentions it in his book; however he regards it as no more than an anomaly, among the many self-contradictions within the Platonic writing. Havelock does not lay enough stress on it in the framework of his overall system.

This passage from the *Phaedrus* becomes the starting point for the second theory, that of Derrida. Since this is important for our further discussion, I shall partly quote it. It tells the myth of the Egyptian God Theuth, the inventor of writing, who offers his invention to Tamuz, king of Egypt. Tamuz rejects the invention:

If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder. And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance, for by telling them of many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much, while for the most part they know nothing, and as men filled, not with wisdom, but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be burden to their fellows. (Ibid. 275-275b)

And Socrates goes on:

You know, Phaedrus, that's the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words; they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever. And once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it does not know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its

parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself. (Ibid. 275 d-e)

Derrida, as mentioned, analyzes these differences in his article on Plato's pharmacy. Here "pharmacy", *pharmacie* in French, is the word for the Greek *pharmakon*, which means drug, medicine or poison. The article follows Plato's various uses of this word, among others the metaphoric use of the passage quoted above ("recipe" in Hackforth's translation, quoted above). Of course the problem of writing does not interest Derrida only here; he presents a philosophical conception in which the written text is prior to the spoken utterance, and he thus criticizes the traditional Western philosophy, which regarded speaking as the most authentic manifestation of language, and writing only as a system of signs for the phonetic sounds, hence as something secondary.

The myth Socrates tells about the invention of writing and his criticism of its usage are conceived by Derrida as the starting point of the Western tradition of the inferiority of writing, against which he argues. Derrida, for his own purposes, carries over the metaphor of "pharmacy" and over a recurrent metaphor of father and son in the relation between speaking and writing. It is not the aim of the present discussion to examine this conception as a whole. We need only note that Derrida points to an element in Plato that Havelock seems to have overlooked, so that in Havelock Plato is identified with the written culture, whereas in Derrida he is identified with the oral.

One can of course say that each of the scholars focused on a different text: one refers mainly to the *Republic* and the other to the *Phaedrus*. There are indeed many internal contradictions within the Platonic writing, but viewing the problem only in the light of these contradictions will not be enough. Each of the scholars presents a comprehensive thesis about Plato, beyond the local contexts. How are these two conceptions to be reconciled?

Havelock presents Plato as the harshest critic of the oral culture, but the emphasis should be laid on the word "culture". Plato's specific view about writing or speaking does not matter for this conception. Havelock only says that the aspects that Plato criticizes in poetry are those that have survived from the oral culture. He likewise links the positive Platonic thought, including the dialectic method and the theory of ideas, with the possibilities which have been opened up by the written culture. He nowhere speaks of Plato's attitude to language in itself. The opposition between oral and written culture is not derived from any Platonic context. In fact it is a super-opposition, an interpreting model, which belongs to Havelock's own conceptual system, and which he applies for the

clarification of certain problems in Plato. Accordingly, it is not meant to be in harmony with what Plato explicitly says about language.

Derrida, on the other hand, is interested not in Plato's place within the opposition between oral and written culture, but in what Plato thinks about writing as opposed to speaking, and his responsibility for the later beliefs about this subject. The similarity between these two starting points is only external; in fact these are two different orientations, one belonging to the history of culture, the other to hermeneutics.

If things are understood this way, there is no real contradiction between the two theses, at least not in what they say about Plato; both aspects can be found in him. From the viewpoint of his conscience he still belongs to the oral culture. He is the harshest critic of its manifestations, but it is from within, not without.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand it is quite probable that Plato's dialectic and mathematical methods and his theory of ideas could not have been created in conditions other than those of a written culture. However, if this was true, it was beyond the scope of Plato's consciousness; so he naturally drew no conclusion from it, and was not committed to it. His conceptual system remains an oralistic one. In this respect one can say that Plato represents in his very person the borderline between these two cultural stages.<sup>24</sup>

If at this point we broaden our field of vision to encompass Aristotle, we see that he was the first to develop a coherent conceptual system based on the assumptions of a written culture. If Plato criticizes oral culture from within, Aristotle does not criticize it at all: he is outside it. The temporal gap between Plato and Aristotle is indeed barely significant. However Plato is located as it were with his face to orality and his back to literacy, so his conceptual system is derived from orality even when he argues against it. Aristotle is located almost at his side, but his face is turned to literacy and his back to orality, so his conceptual system is derived from assumptions of writing, even, as we shall see, when he deals with oral speaking. Aristotle is thus the only one of the Greek thinkers whose conception of poetry can at the same time be regarded as a theory of artistic text, and whose concepts are in that respect compatible with modern ones such as those of Roman Ingarden or Roman Jakobson. A theory of that kind was not created by Plato or his forerunners, nor did they try to create it. This is firmly connected with the transition from an oral conception to a written one.<sup>25</sup>

In all fairness regarding this turning point, besides its being an immense breakthrough, one discerns in it a restrictive element too, responsible for some stagnation and perhaps even for a kind of misconception. The works which Aristotle has described in terms of

written texts were not always written. Sometimes Aristotle applied categories that were wholly unsuitable for the texts he dealt with; at least they were inadequate for them.

Neither of the two genres with which the *Poetics* especially deals, tragedy and epic, fully meets the terms of a written text. The epic was an oral work, rendered into written form only at a late stage of its development; tragedy, on the other hand, was a text originally written, but intended first and foremost for theatrical performance, not for reading. In both cases what Aristotle actually saw was an array of manuscripts (either performed or unperformed), and this technical fact was very significant for the theoretical development of his view.

The fact that Aristotle was unconscious of Homer's orality, or at least that he did not consider it as a structural principle, is fairly easily understood, since oral qualities as such cannot be preserved, and the written texts are precisely what blocks the way to them.<sup>26</sup> As for drama, however, this overlooking is much more questionable. Orality in drama is not the quality of a remote and undocumented past, but of a close and accessible one, concerning the complex of theatrical performance. This kind of performance was still done in Aristotle's day, albeit not exactly as in Pericles's day. However, the Aristotelian concept of text excludes the entire complex of theatrical performance from the discussion. It is thus responsible for a two thousand-year reduction of the concept of drama to that of a written script.

But this reduction, which is doubtless one of the most problematic legacies of the Aristotelian *Poetics*, is connected with the very component of the theory that is the breakthrough in the history of meta-poetic thought. Both these effects, the progressive and regressive, are closely bound up with the model of the written text that Aristotle had in the back of his mind.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Basic Concepts in the *Poetics* and Their Relation to the Problem of Writing

### 2.1 "Completeness"

The difference between an oral and a written work is that the former is primarily an action, while the latter is an object. In more abstract terms one can say that the oral work is an event in time whereas the written one is a substance in space. This distinction should be kept apart from the traditional distinction between arts of space and arts of time, having Lessing's *Laocoon* as its source (see Lessing 1957).



Of course, a written text too can be rightly conceived as a temporal structure: it consists of a line of successive signs, and its reception needs a temporal continuum. However, an oral work is intensely subject to the structure of passing time. It exists as a movement through a concrete present, on the one side of which lies a past that is no longer accessible and can be reconstructed only by memory; on its other side lies a future which is not yet accessible, and we do not exactly know what it will contain. An oral work is a section of that endless stream, and it is subject to the circumstances of a given space and time. So although it contains constant and recurrent elements, its mode of existence is that of an event.

Once the work has turned into a script, time becomes space. The text isolates one section from the endless duration of time and makes of it a fixed and repeatable unit. One performance becomes a standard for endless repetitions, during which one can easily view any given point of the text in any given order, or view the whole text in one gaze. In that respect the text is conserved as something persistent in time, like a spatial object, hence as something complete.<sup>28</sup>

None of Aristotle's forerunners spoke of a text as something complete. All the qualities and effects that they discussed were always conceived as parts of a general discourse between the poet and his audience. Sometimes it was a discourse aimed at pleasing and distracting the mind (Homer), and sometimes it was aimed at educating (Plato, Aristophanes), but poetry was ever conceived in the framework of that discourse. It was never discussed as a separately existing autonomous text. In such a discourse the concept of text as a completeness in itself has no function at all, in fact it does not even exist. What exists is a social and political system that determines the status and function of the poet in relation to his audience, be it in the aristocratic society of the Homeric epic, the educational system of the ideal Platonic state, or the political theater of Aristophanes. This concept of poetry thus refers rather to a kind of behavior, to an action, something closer to the Aristotelian *praxis* than to *poiêsis*, creative activity, and therefore it does not refer to its products, namely texts, either.

The oral poet can start his poem at any point according to the demands of the Muse, the audience, or the specific needs involved in each of the social functions of poetry. One can indeed disagree with the right to stop the poet in the middle of his poem in order to make him recite a different one. When Penelope in the *Odyssey* does so, Telemachus says:

Why, my mother, do you begrudge this excellent singer  
his pleasing himself as the thought drives him? It is not the singers  
who are to blame, it must be Zeus who is to blame [---]. (Ibid. I, 346 ff.)<sup>29</sup>

But even here what is claimed is only the poet's right not to be subject to anybody but the god; Telemachus says nothing about the right (or the duty) to start or to end at points which are not arbitrary. He is concerned with the poet's freedom of action, not the completeness of the text. Aristotle is the first to demand of the poet a definite starting point and ending point based on a commitment to the completeness of the text: "A well-constructed plot, therefore, cannot either begin or end at any point one likes" (*Poetics* 7, 1450b31-2). This completeness is determined by means of the object of the text, namely the action told of: "A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is [---] complete in itself" (ibid. 6, 1449b24-5).

Aristotle speaks about action as something with inner completeness, and which can be clearly defined and demarcated within the flow of time. This demarcation is drawn by means of the concepts of causality and change, which are central aspects in the beginning, middle, and end, the essential components of completeness. Completeness is thus defined in terms of the represented world, but our very competence to isolate from the world events with a certain degree of completeness in fact depends on our ability to turn facts into narratives, which is after all a linguistic competence. So the very fact that the narrative is told in a definite and limited text, that is, a written one, makes us regard it as an object complete and enclosed in itself.

Usually the Aristotelian concept of completeness is linked to the model of the living organism, which Aristotle frequently uses in the *Poetics* as in his other writings. But even the possibility of attributing animal qualities to the text would apparently not have arisen had not an earlier concept existed of the text as an object, since the concept of organism, however broadly it may be used, can always represent only objects, not activities.<sup>30</sup>

In this respect it is interesting to examine Aristotle's comparison of epic with drama from the standpoint of the performing time (*Poetics* 4). Tragedy, according to Aristotle, is better than epic, because it has *megethos*, namely a definite size. Epic, on the other hand, has no definite size, and it can be as long as that of Homer, or as short as that of Hesiod. The size of tragedy is determined by one cycle of the sun, in the course of which the play should begin and end, considering that it is performed outdoors and depends on natural light. The size of the epic is not linked with any given size in the world, because it is performed in different conditions, which are usually indoors and independent of natural light. It can more easily attain any length, or be cut short.

Here Aristotle speaks about theatrical and rhapsodic performance conditions, but he does not mean by this any essence; he uses the term

only as a way to determine the size. The attempt to define a standard of size is a clear product of the model of the written text. This always has a definite size, it can be viewed as a whole, and its reading time is entirely controllable. Oral poetry, on the other hand, has none of these qualities.

In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle speaks about two stylistic patterns: free running (*eiromenê*) and compact and antithetical (*katestrammenê*, *ibid.* III, 9, 1409a24-6). These are two different kinds of syntax. One consists of sentences as closed units, the other of an unlimited concatenation of units. The periodic style is structured in a way that makes it possible to foresee its ending. In the other style that foreseeing is impossible:

By 'free running' style I mean the kind that has no natural stopping-places, and comes to stop only because there is no more to say of that subject. This style is unsatisfying just because it goes on indefinitely—one always likes to sight a stopping place in front of one: it is only at the goal that men in race faint and collapse; while they see the end of the course before them, they can keep going. (*Ibid.* 1409a29-34)

The demand that the end should be visible, and the image of reception as a race, in which the athlete can control his resources as long as he sees the goal, are all products of the concept of written text. The discussion is indeed about oral speeches; the standards, however, are based on visual reading, or better, on the preference for the reading experience, which involves the closed graphic space, to that of listening, which involves an unlimited time that is uncontrollable by the listener. In that respect Aristotle requires that the oral discourse behave like the written one.

## 2.2 "*Mimêsis*"

Viewing the literary work as a written object is linked not only with the Aristotelian concept of completeness, but also with the conception of poetry as imitation, *mimêsis*, and the introduction of this conception as a replacement for the older one, namely poetry as "ars metrica", as Aristotle propounds in the first chapter of the *Poetics*.

Defining poetry through verse and meter is typical residue of the oral conception. Here verse not only aids memory, it also marks the poetic discourse as a different and distinct kind of discourse, hence the shift from regular discourse to poetry. But this marking of the poetic discourse does not involve its demarcation: the verse does not determine the boundaries of the poetic work, it only makes it possible to recognize every separate segment as belonging to poetry or not. In other words, this conception

does not require contact with the complete text in order to recognize it as poetry.

Instead of this conception Aristotle defined poetry as art of *mimêsis*. Before him, *mimêsis* applied only when a person behaved like someone else or "acted" him, or when an object had been produced that was related by similarity to an already existing object or person, that is, a sculpture or a painting. Speech was conceived as *mimêsis* only insofar as it imitated other speech; the subject of the speech, however, was not conceived as imitated.<sup>31</sup> *Mimêsis* did not mean "speaking about", "telling about", or "singing about". For that reason Plato terms *mimêsis* only those sections of the poem which consist of direct speech; but if no character is heard speaking and the poet speaks in his own voice, it is *haplê diêgêsis* (simple narration: *Republic* III, 392d). A poet who practices the latter style should not be expelled from the ideal state, because he uses his own speech and does not imitate. This speech can be judged according to the same standards as every other person's speech—the concepts of truth and falsehood, good and bad, and it should be entirely subject to the moral responsibility of the speaker. In short, this kind of speaking does not create any demarcated or autonomous text; it is subject to the same laws to which every human behavior is subject, and it is an integral part of the general linguistic behavior of the speaker.

Aristotle's choice is to demarcate one speech unit of that kind from beginning to end, and to subject it to laws specifically suited to that *mimêsis*, namely those of probability, not of truth. This choice is possible principally because Aristotle identifies the speech not with the speaker's behavioral complex but with the written object he has produced, which is now separate from the continuum of his speech and behavior. In that respect his conception of the literary text is more similar to that of a painting. Just as the painting is conceived as one complete unit which is all *mimêsis*, so the written text functions as a complete unit which is all in all imitation of actions.

If the model for the pre-Aristotelian concept of imitation was the art of acting, in which one appropriates foreign behavior, the Aristotelian model of imitation is that of painting, the production of a complete text, which refers to a complete set of objects and events in the world. No wonder then that in the first chapter of the *Poetics* Aristotle starts the discussion with that model:

Just as colour and form are used as means by some, who [---] imitate and portray many things by their aid, and the voice is used by others; so also in the above mentioned group of arts. (Ibid. 1447a19-21)

### 2.3 Poetry as "Art"

The conception of the poetic text as an object makes it possible to see the creative process of poetry as *tekhnê*, namely "art", which is a necessary assumption for the entire *Poetics*. Plato, as mentioned, did not believe that poetry required real knowledge. In his more generous moments he would attribute poetry to a certain divine inspiration, *mania* (the *Ion*, 523d-524e), and in his less favorable moments he regarded it as mere deception (*Republic* X, 598b-c). But both views are to a great extent products of the oral conception of poetry.

An orally composed text cannot be exactly repeated, or even quoted, and one cannot trace the exact process that led to its composition. The understanding of the special composing technique of oral texts was the outcome of long study, which was begun in the 1930s by Milman Parry, and continued by his assistant, Albert Lord, who reproduced the process through analysis of the Homeric text and its comparison with live performances and recordings of Yugoslavian epic poems (Lord 1968). But the oral poets themselves were unconscious of these techniques, which were scientifically reproduced, just as native speakers of a language cannot be conscious of their grammatical choices. The art of oral composition is closer to "knowing how" than to "knowing that", to use Ryle's distinction (2002).

So it is no surprise that the ancient poets attributed their poetry to divine powers speaking through their throats, like the Muse, or the Dionysian madness. The sources of oral poetry are, as it were, concealed from their poets, and these explanations express a certain mystery, which could not have been traced otherwise. At places where these answers did not seem sufficient, however, the tendency was to attribute to the poet a kind of mechanical competence, skill, exercise, training, or taming, which has always been regarded as inferior to real knowledge.

The act of writing makes it possible to meet the text again, and see it not as a speaker but as a recipient; it can be quoted, which allows separation of the speaker from the spoken words. Writing also makes possible an intensive use of meta-language: a written sentence can be subject to discussion, quotation, conversation, argument, and even to mere reading.<sup>32</sup> Aristotle's belief that *poetics* is a *tekhnê* and that it can be taught is close-knit with his conception of poetry as productive of written texts. One cannot understand Aristotle's categories of poetic creation without assuming that the poet writes and organizes his text on paper, and that he is able to spatially overview it.

All the creative processes about which Aristotle speaks are in a way circular: the first stage is the overall scheme of the plot, then come the

naming of the characters, the creation of episodes, etc. But at every stage of composition one has to keep in mind a full view of the *muthos* of the play, the scheme that includes the beginning, the middle, and the end (*Poetics* 17). In the oral composition beginning and end are more or less parallel to the creative process itself: the process is subject to the continuum of performing. This is quite far from Aristotle's view.<sup>33</sup> His is a generative model, in which the entire text is born from one complete embryonic idea that develops like a tree from a seed. This model is possible only if the text is conceived as a written object and not as an oral production.

Indeed, in this respect rhetoric is apparently much more suited to oral composition because it is a communicative act measured according to its results, and not, like poetry, a process of producing objects. Poetry clearly belongs to the Aristotelian category of *poiësis* just as rhetoric belongs to *praxis*. On the face of it the principles of writing are more suitable for poetry than for rhetoric, but behind the discussion of the rhetoric activity one can also recognize the concepts of written text. The text that is to be produced that way is certainly much less autonomous than the poet's; however, the biological metaphor, conceiving the speech as a living creature, leads at last also to the analysis of speeches as objects, and not as events. On the other hand, at points where the oral aspects of the speech are highlighted, namely in a discussion of its performance, Aristotle is very brief, and he confesses that the performance seems to him an entirely secondary aspect of rhetoric. Even speeches are treated as written texts.

## 2.4 "The Pleasure Proper for Tragedy"

Just as the transition from an oral to a written conception is evident on the part of the addresser, the poet, so it is on the part of the addressee, or the addressees. In the epic and the drama the addressee is always a group, a community, be it the aristocratic king and his court, as in the old epic, or the citizens of the democratic *polis*, as in the classical drama.

The pre-Aristotelian conceptions of poetry took the audience as a whole as the addressee of poetry. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Dionysus descends to Hades in order to revive the poet who will give the best advice to the state, the entire state is conceived as the addressee (ibid. 1420-21). This is expressed in several remarks about the function of poetry, which is always didactic, educative, and political. The poet improves the citizens, giving them

The skill of a talented teacher  
To make men better by counsel sage. (Ibid. 1009-10)<sup>34</sup>

And he is conceived as a teacher of adults:

For children have tutors to guide them aright;  
Young manhood has poets as teachers. (Ibid. 1054-55)

The instruction of the poet involves preservation and transmission of definite social norms. He teaches "a religion of mystical piety" like Orpheus, "magical methods of healing" like Musaeus, agriculture like Hesiod, and warfare like Homer (ibid. 1030-35). In all these activities the entire community is conceived as the addressee, because they constitute a vocal communication between the poet and the audience as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

Plato is of the same mind. Although he is less favorable to poetry than Aristophanes, his criticism is based on the same assumptions. He believes that the poet has an educative and instructive function in the service of the community; the difference lies only in the method of education he believes in.

At this point too Aristotle differs from all his forerunners: when he speaks of the effect of *mimēsis* in general, and of tragedy in particular, he refers to the addressee as a single person, not a group. This single person encounters the hero of the tragedy or epic, identifies with him, and is anxious about his fate. Both the pleasure from the *mimēsis* in general, which is conceived as the pleasure of learning (*Poetics* 4, 1448b12-18), and the tragedy's "own proper pleasure" attained by means of fear and compassion (*Poetics* 14, 1453b10), are experiences of an individual.

To explain the tragic effect in this way, no large theatrical event is needed; the individual man in the audience can experience it for himself. And indeed, Aristotle says explicitly that the important effect of tragedy, that which causes pity and fear, is involved in the plot and not in the theatrical performance, hence it could as well be attained outside the theater:

The plot, in fact should be so framed that, even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity at the incidents. (*Poetics* 14, 1453b3-5)

The attention paid to the individual response is clearly connected with the fact that the tragedy turned into a written text. True, within the large theatrical event too one can attain the response of *katharsis* which Aristotle regards as the aim of tragedy. But whatever the exact meaning of this problematic concept, all explanations seem to agree at least in regarding it as a personal not a collective response. Only the existence of a text that can be read individually can lend the individual such a central

place in the analysis of the aesthetic response to plays which were supposed to be performed before an audience of thousands.

In the *Problems* Aristotle raises a question, which reveals most clearly this image of intimate reading:

Why is it that some people, if they begin to read, are overcome by sleep even against their will, whereas others wishing to be overcome by sleep are kept awake by taking a book? (Ibid. XVIII, 1, 916b1-3)

This is the only place where Aristotle explicitly and concretely speaks about silent and intimate eye reading. The *Problems* as we know is a late text, and although it does contain genuine Aristotelian parts, the authenticity of this quotation is not sufficiently certain. Nevertheless, this text no doubt reflects something of the Aristotelian image of the relationship of poetry and its recipient. This intimate image of the act of reading can easily explain the important place of the individual emotional response in Aristotle's *Poetics*.<sup>36</sup> The Aristotelian revolution, which legitimates the individual emotional response to the text, is without doubt partly a product of the shift to the use of written literary texts and the intimacy it allows regarding the text.<sup>37</sup>

## **2.5 *Opsis* and *Hupokrisis*: the Problem of Performance**

For oral poetry a distinct concept of "performance" carried no significance. Instead of the duality of text and performance, the archaic conception of poetry distinguished a divine source (the Muse inspiring the poem) from the poet who produced it. Within the creative act there was no distinction between the poet's activity as "author" and as "performer". This model continued to exist in Platonic thought although the historical circumstances were quite different. For Plato the poet was the *rapsôdos*, who knew written texts and recited them. Ion, the most typical Platonic poet, is presented as an "expert" on Homer's epic. But neither in his own conscience, nor in Socrates' view, is he conceived as a mere actor or performer. He is absolutely a poet; the written text is conceived only as an additional source of inspiration, one more station on the way between the Muse and the poet.

The possibility of writing only determines a new intermediary stage between the Muse and the poet, since the same things that one poet has acquired directly from the Muse could be preserved in Homer's text and become sources of inspiration for another poet. To explain this, Plato develops the model of the poet and his divine source as a less direct communication than the dual relationship implied in the Homeric epic



(*Ion*, 533d-534e). He bases his model on the parable of the magnetic stone: it draws nails and metal pieces and loads them with the same force so that they can draw other pieces, and so on. The same is true for divine inspiration, the "*mania*". It is not a dialogue between the god and a certain chosen person, like the poet in the archaic tradition, but a chain of inspiration, beginning from the divine source and connecting all other inspired persons: the first poet, who is directly inspired by the muse, the later poets and *rapsodoi*, who get their inspiration from him, and finally the audience, who are likewise swept up by the same spirit of inspiration. This is a shift from the Music-Apollonian model, which is basically aristocratic and detached, to the Dionysian one, which is more popular and wherein the divine inspiration does not seek one chosen representative but is spread through the entire community. The spirit is one of devotion and madness, not Apollonian detachment.

As a result, a certain condensation exists between the situation of the audience and that of the poet, since both are subject to the same power, which leaves no room for a distinction between composer and performer. None of the carriers of the divine inspiration is a real composer or a real performer. Each of them responds to the inspiration he gets and takes it further. The fact that some stations along this route can consist of written texts is in that respect entirely secondary: the written text has no separate or special status in relation to the vocal stations; they are all parts of one and the same chain.

Where everyone is both producer and recipient, the concept of performance as a distinct activity is meaningless. A poet is anyone who forms a link in the chain, so every participant is fully responsible for the poem he has transmitted. In the *Republic* the very dealing with subjects that do not comply with the norms of the state makes the poet a *persona non grata*. Even in his later dialogue, the *Laws*, where he is much more favorable to poetry, Plato treats the subject no differently. For example, when he speaks about the chorus of old men in which every citizen should take part in old age, he regards the texts spoken by the chorus as a direct transformation of the experience of its members. He thus speaks of the educational value of the chorus of old people because they can share their rich experience with the audience. The idea that a chorus as such is subject to a certain script which must be performed is not considered. The text uttered by the chorus is conceived as directly reflecting the experience of every one of its members.

Only if the script acquires an especially significant status as the final structuring of the work is a kind of watershed created, dividing "text" proper from "performance". Everything leading to the final structuring of

the written script will be conceived as text proper, and what comes later will be regarded as performance. Plato, because of his unfavorable attitude to writing, cannot accept this severance. He may regard the written script as blocking the free stream of inspiration, as he claims in the *Phaedrus*, when he says that the text is dumb because it cannot speak for itself when asked. On the other hand he may regard the text as transparent, like uttered words, as he does in the *Ion*. In neither case does the possibility exist of distinguishing text from performance.

This distinction is implied in Aristotelian thought as a part of Aristotle's view of the text as an object. In this respect one encounters in the *Poetics*, apart from discussions of the text "in itself", terms like *opsis*, the visual staging of tragedy, or *skeuopoios*, the "accessory producer", who is in charge of the visual staging, and *hupokrisis*, which is the art of acting in general; in the *Rhetoric* it is the art of vocal delivery of speeches.

Aristotle seems to have no clear-cut position on this problem. On the one hand he regards the poet himself as responsible for the staging, at least from the historical viewpoint. For example he attributes to Sophocles the invention of scenery (*Poetics* 4, 1449a17) although he says in another place that staging is the least poetic activity, or the remotest from the art of the poet, belonging more to that of the *skeuopoios*, the accessory producer (*Poetics* 6, 1450b16-20). According to a remark in the *Rhetoric* (III, 1, 1403b24), in the past the poets themselves staged their works, so that the distinction between text and performance is a matter of historical development, and it may have emerged at a certain point. However, nowhere does Aristotle fully identify the performance with the work itself, like Plato, and nowhere does he fully separate them as two autonomous arts, as is common today. Aristotle's solution is a hierarchical grading of the components of the text, locating the performance at the bottom.

Aristotle is well aware that voice and vision are highly effective. Moreover, this effect is closely connected with the generic identity of tragedy and *mimêsis*, since he deems the stage production one of their "parts" (*Poetics* 6, 1450a12-14) and voice is one of the media of *mimêsis* in general (*Poetics* 1, 1447a20-21). However, he regards the essence of tragedy and poetry in general as those components that can be written down and preserved in a script, that is, primarily the *muthos*, plot. This is the "soul, so to speak, of tragedy" (*Poetics* 6, 1450a38) and the component which mostly excites our souls. Other components, even if they are highly suggestive, are conceived as external in a way:

The tragic fear and pity may be aroused by the spectacle; but they may also be aroused by the very structure and incidents of the play—which is the better way and shows the better poet. The plot in fact should be so framed

that, even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity at the incidents; which is just the effect that the mere recital of the story of Oedipus would have on one. To produce this same effect by means of spectacle is less artistic and requires extraneous aid. (*Poetics* 14, 1453b1-7)

Later on Aristotle easily replaces the claim about the "extraneous" quality of the stage production by a claim about a certain vulgarity in the employment of such effects:

Those, however, who make use of the spectacle to put before us that which is merely monstrous and not productive of fear, are wholly out of touch with tragedy. (Ibid. 1453b7-10)

However, whether Aristotle uses the distinction between "belonging to the art" and "external to it" or that between "good taste" and "vulgar taste", in both cases the borderline between the possibilities is always that between what is included in a written script and what is not.

Indeed, Aristotle does not say this explicitly, since at face value he distinguishes the experience of **seeing** the Oedipus tragedy on stage and **hearing** its plot; he does not speak about **reading** the text of the play. But one cannot understand the long discussion about the place of the theatrical production in the hierarchy of layers without assuming that in fact he identifies the text with what is written on paper, whereas regarding the visual and vocal elements he has no clear-cut position, and in any case their status is conceived as different from that of the "text" proper.

Another point that necessitates a sharp distinction between text and performance is historical. Most of the works discussed by Aristotle belong to the golden age of Athens, more than eighty years before the *Poetics* was written. What had been preserved from that tradition and what could be attributed to Euripides and Aeschylus was precisely the written texts. Their theatrical productions were not preserved, certainly not in their original form. Aristotle knew only the performances of his own time. Clearly, the existence of a written text makes a historical discrimination between the work of the poet, which is preserved unchanged for years, and the work of the actors and producers, which always belongs to its own time, regardless of the author.<sup>38</sup>

But if in the considerations of the *Poetics* the assumption of the written text is concealed, in the *Rhetoric* it is plain. Here the distinction is not between **seeing** actions and **hearing** about them, but between **hearing** a speech and **reading** it. The *Rhetoric* indeed includes some discussions about performance that parallel those of the *Poetics*, and the comparison of the two is explicit. The Orator's capacity to use his voice in order to arouse

emotions is conceived as alien to his art, just as the theatrical effects are alien to the real aims of tragedy. Moreover, even the term Aristotle uses for the vocal production of the speech, *hupokrisis*, is, as mentioned, a theatrical one.<sup>39</sup> In the field of rhetoric there is no problem of historical perspective: Aristotle does not speak about speeches which were written eighty years earlier, and most of the speeches he mentions are approximately of his own time. Moreover, a speech, more than a poem, always belongs to the time and circumstances in which it has been delivered. Nevertheless, Aristotle treats the transformation of the speech from a written text to a vocal event with the same reservations.

From the point of view of the real interest of the speech, it does not need the art of delivery:

Still, the whole business of rhetoric being concerned with appearances, we must pay attention to the subject of delivery, unworthy though it is, because we cannot do without it [---]. [W]e ought in fairness to fight our case with no help beyond the bare facts; nothing, therefore, should matter except the proof of those facts. Still, as has been already said, other things affect the result considerably, owing to the defects of our hearers. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1404a2-9)

The *Rhetoric*, more than the *Poetics*, leaves room for pragmatic considerations, because it deals with convincing people who are not always clever or wise, and therefore it must make use of all the means that can aid it in attaining its goal, regardless of their logical weight. If the theatrical performance is conceived as an unnecessary ornament, the delivery of speeches is conceived as a necessary evil. But both cases would not have been thinkable had there been no previous identification of the "essence" of the text with what can be conveyed by writing.

## 2. Aristotle on Spoken and Written Language

### 2.1 The Voice and the Letter

We have seen that Aristotle's model of the poetic work is based on the image of the written text, but so far we have only examined the assumptions implied in his discussion. The question now is to what extent these assumptions comply with what Aristotle explicitly says about language and the relationship between writing and voice.

In the opening section of *De Interpretatione* Aristotle describes the elements of language:

Now spoken sounds are symbols [*sumbola*] of affections [*pathêmata*] in the soul, and written marks [*ta graphomena*] symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are the first place signs of—affections of the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of—actual things—are also the same. (Ibid. 16a3-8)

From the beginning of the section it is clear that Aristotle regards voice as the basic component of language. Voice is related to external reality as signifier to signified; writing, on the other hand, is not an autonomous sign system, it is the signifier of sounds, which are the genuine signs. In this respect writing is a kind of meta-language, and its objects are linguistic entities, which have no external existence.

But in the later part of the section letters and sounds are given identical status: both are signs, so they are not subject to natural necessity. People can choose whatever signs they like—vocal and written alike—in order to represent one and the same thing within reality. All the verbal signs are presented here as arbitrary, interchangeable, and not subject to any natural necessity but to convention only. As such they are opposed to the extra-linguistic world, the "affections in the soul", which are always self-identical, because they are subject to the laws of nature.<sup>40</sup>

In the *Poetics* 20 (1456b19-22), when he analyzes the structure of *lexis*, style, Aristotle defines the units as *stoikheion* which means letters, but unlike the *graphomena* in *De Interpretatione*, they are not necessarily written signs. This term denotes all kinds of units that are successively ordered, hence it suits written letters, but at the same time it also refers to their vocal denotata.

And indeed, in the course of the discussion in the *Poetics*, Aristotle speaks at one and the same time about letters and sounds, and he calls the specific sounds by the names of specific letters. Thus, in spite of the theoretical declaration about the primacy of sound, the actual concept of the linguistic unit that Aristotle uses is one that consists of both sound and writing. Moreover, even if this concept referred to sound only, it would be understandable only within a written language. This is because the sounds are defined by means of letters, and the model of successive sounds is derived from the written line, rather than from the vocal experience, which is not necessarily linear, nor is it discretely articulated.

The conception of poetic language is of course not identical with that of language in general, but in this case the general tendency is similar, only more extreme. When Aristotle defines the basic materials of poetry he speaks about sound:

Words are imitations and the voice the most mimetic [*mimêtikôatos*] of all our parts. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1404a22)

Just as colour and form are used as means by some, who [---] imitate and portray many things by their aid, and the voice is used by others; so also in the above-mentioned group of arts, the means with them as a whole are rhythm, language and harmony—used, however, either singly or in certain combination. (*Poetics* 1, 1447a19-24)

The central component of the medium is thus the voice, and it is parallel to forms and colors.<sup>41</sup> Voice, in Aristotle's view, is divided into three aspects: rhythm, language and harmony. At this stage Aristotle refrains from giving special status to language, beyond its being one of these three components. Harmony is the aspect of voice that is connected with music, and later in this same chapter Aristotle also calls it *melos*, melody. Rhythm is the aspect of voice connected with intonation and meter, and therefore also with dancing.

The verbal aspect, then, does not appear separately but is connected in various ways with music and dance. Indeed, Aristotle also discusses kinds of imitation consisting of language alone, but typically they are not recognized as an established genus. As Aristotle says,

There is further an art which imitates by language alone, and one which imitates by meter, either one or a plurality of meters. These forms of imitation are still nameless today. (*Poetics* 1, 1447a28-30)

In a description of the established genre system, language cannot be isolated from harmony and rhythm, and it must be conceived as part of the voice. This is a clear remnant of the oral conception. However, later on in the *Poetics* this conception is not consistently preserved. When Aristotle begins to separate and discriminate the individual genres it becomes clear that he does not regard these vocal elements as firmly linked to their inner essence, but just as qualities of their material. Aristotle's conception of poetry, which is focused on the concept of *mimêsis*, defines poetry by means of its object, and the object of poetry determines its form. Voice, belonging to material and not to the form, cannot be conceived as an essence, but rather as an accident.

Hence, that Aristotle regards voice as a starting point apparently does not mean that he regards it as a primary principle. This double viewpoint is due to his method, which takes as its starting point opinions approved by experience; it then refines them until it attains the primary principle, from which everything can now be deductively and scientifically derived. In other words, it is a combination of inductive and deductive processes.

The fact that voice is situated at the beginning of the discussion of *mimêsis* does not mean that Aristotle regards it as a primary principle, from which everything can be derived, but as an empirical starting point, belonging to opinion. This can be easily connected to the inferior status of performance discussed above. Voice, the sensible manifestation of poetry, is the starting point for an inductive process of investigation. But later Aristotle shifts to the idea, from which he starts a deductive process, deriving its various manifestations down to the level of voice and vision, which are now at the lowest level.

## 2.2 Vocal Style and Writing Style

In the *Rhetoric* the reference to the options of reading or listening are much more explicit than in the *Poetics*. As we said before, in the *Rhetoric* the assumption of the written text is not hidden but quite open. Eye reading is presented here as an option opposite to vocal performance. And at this point Aristotle introduces new distinctions, which lead more directly to the conception of a written text.

Aristotle's professional discussion of the art of delivery is condensed. He devotes a few lines to the pitching of voice according to volume, height, and rhythm, declaring that every combination of these elements must comply with a certain emotion. But he does not explain anything beyond this, and from that point the art of delivery is in fact absorbed in the art of style:

Dramatic ability is a natural gift, and can hardly be systematically taught. The principles of language [*lexis*] can be so taught, and therefore we have men of ability in this direction too, who win prizes in their turn, as well as those speakers who excel in delivery—speeches of the written kind owe more of their effect to their language than to their thought. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1404a15-19)

These lines are not easy to understand. What is the meaning of the statement that delivery is an artistic element only insofar as it involves *lexis*? Is it a distinction between two kinds of acting, vocal acting and mime? Aristotle does not introduce enough material for the development of such a distinction; it is also difficult to understand the need for such a distinction, considering his unfavorable attitude to the art of performance. A different explanatory direction should apparently be considered. He speaks here not about the difference between two kinds of acting, but between the potential of delivery incorporated in the style and the actual delivery. His claim is that delivery as such is not an art, but if the writer

stylizes his text in a way lending it dramatic intonation, it is an art even if not acted. Therefore he concludes with a remark on written speeches, which draw their effect more from style than from thought. In fact he speaks here about written speeches, whose effect of vocal delivery is imprinted in their stylistic structure, and is recognizable also in their written form.<sup>42</sup>

Imperceptibly we have moved here to the most extreme phase in the shift from the oral to the written conception. Here even the clearly performative components of the text are described as written ones. This shift is further affirmed in the later discussion.

The distinction between the text and its performance assumes a completely different aspect; it turns into a distinction between two kinds of texts, one intended for vocal performance, the other for eye reading. Thus it finally becomes a distinction between two styles, and Aristotle discusses their suitability for the different genres of speech.

It should be observed that each kind of rhetoric has its own appropriate style. The style of written prose is not that of spoken oratory, nor are those of political and forensic speaking the same. Both written and spoken have to be known. To know the latter is to know how to speak good Greek. To know the former means that you are obliged, as otherwise you are, to hold your tongue when you wish to communicate something to the general public.

The written style is the more finished: the spoken better admits of dramatic delivery—alike the kind of oratory that reflects character and the kind that reflects emotion. Hence actors look out for plays written in the latter style, and poets for actors competent to act in such plays. Yet poets whose plays are meant to be read, *are* read and circulated. Chaeremon, for instance, who is as finished as a professional speech-writer; and Licymnius among the dithyrambic poets. Compared with those of others, the speeches of professional writers sound thin in actual contest. Those of orators, on the other hand, look amateurish enough when they pass into the hands of a reader. This is just because they are so well suited for an actual tussle, and therefore contain many dramatic touches, which, being robbed of all dramatic rendering, fail to do their own proper work, and consequently look silly. The strings of unconnected words, and constant repetition of words and phrases, are very properly condemned in written speeches: but not in spoken speeches—speakers use them freely, for they have dramatic effect. [---]

Now the style of oratory addressed to public assemblies is really just like scene-painting [*skiagraphia*, "shadow-sketch"]. The bigger the throng, the more distant is the point of view: so that in the one and the other, high finish in detail is superfluous and looks bad. The forensic style is more highly finished; still more so is the style of language addressed to a single



judge, with whom there is very little room for rhetorical artifices, since he can take the whole thing in better, and judge of what is to the point and what is not; the struggle is less intense, and so the judgement is undisturbed. This is why the same speakers do not distinguish themselves in all these branches at once; high finish is wanted least where dramatic delivery is wanted most, and here the speaker must have a good voice, and above all, a strong one. In epideictic oratory that is most literary, for it is meant to be read; and next to it forensic oratory. (*Rhetoric* III, 12, 1413b3-1414a17)

The example of scene-painting<sup>43</sup> may serve our purposes in several respects. Beyond repeating the analogy between vocal delivery and stage production mentioned above, it also clarifies more concretely the difference between the styles. Aristotle uses the word "finish" (*akribeia* = exactness) without explaining it. But even if *skiagraphia* is not used as a theatrical term but just as rough painting, it still refers to a sketch with conspicuous contrasts producing an effect from the distance, as opposed to fine lines, detailed structuring and softer colors, suitable for paintings that are intended for a closer view.

Moreover, what is intended for close view exposes to scrutiny its own making; one can recognize the brushwork, the shaping of the line, and so on. What is viewed from the distance does not need such a level of finish, which cannot be made out in any case. In that respect the vocal style is similar to scenery. It must have very strong effects. Aristotle speaks about ethical and emotional styles. In the *Poetics* 6 (1450a37-b2) he compares the relation of *êthos* and *muthos* with the relation of color and line.<sup>44</sup> Naturally, the style meant for vocal performance will behave more according to the principals of color, of what elicits an immediate response. But the dominance of color also has two distinct levels. The deliberative style is in that respect the rougher one, because of the size of the assembly to which the political speech is directed (which can number about 5000 members). The judicial speech is directed to smaller groups, the juries, and Aristotle mentions also the possibility of a single judge, which is not the typical case for a democratic society. At any rate, convincing a smaller and more selective group demands paying more attention to the way of speaking.

The opposite of these two styles, the deliberative and the judicial, is the epideictic. Epideictic speech is not meant for debate, and its basic purpose is more "aesthetic". It has not only to praise its subject, but also to demonstrate the orator's speaking capacity. So its stitches must be finer, albeit still visible, to enable the audience to appreciate the art invested in

it. A speech of this kind can be presented also in more intimate circumstances, as shown in Plato's *Symposium*.

A further aspect of epideictic speech, which also connects it with writing, is that it is less dependent on specific circumstances. Eristic speech, whether deliberative or judicious, is always linked to a given circumstance, responding to a certain opponent and addressing a specific audience. Epideictic speech can address both a small and a large audience (for example, Pericles's *Epitaph* was addressed to a very large audience),<sup>45</sup> but here the size of the audience is not significant in the same way, because that kind of speech is more universal. It can attain its effects outside its immediate context as well, and it also strives to break through this limited framework. The advantage of the written speech is that it can distribute its ideas among a broader public too, that is, its addressees are also those who are not present, and who are to come in the future, years after the actual moment of delivery. In its distribution therefore it covers a far larger public than any of the other speeches, but in its linguistic behavior it addresses a small and intimate group. Epideictic speech is thus the most suitable for written style.

The analogy between epideictic speech and poetry is remarkable here. Aristotle's way of describing epideictic speech is quite apt for poetry too: on the one hand the universality of the audience, and on the other hand the intimacy between the actual audience and the text, which, as we have noted, is a typical quality of written texts. Here Aristotle explicitly depicts these qualities, links them with writing, and defines a specific style that consists of them.

The standard for the difference between the eristic and the written style, according to Aristotle, is the ineffectiveness of its opposite in a given situation. The written style, when used in political or judicial debate, seems pale and ineffective; it does not appeal to the audience. On the other hand the eristic style, when written word for word, looks shallow and primitive. Various stylistic patterns, which are of great value in the vocal performance, like repetition and asyndetic structure, are monotonous and senseless when written down.

A question that Aristotle does not raise, but which can interest us, concerns the style of drama. He describes the spoken style in terms of drama, and notes that this is the style aspired to by actors, because of its emotional and ethical effects, and that poets seek out actors capable of performing it. But Aristotle also thinks that drama does not need performance and can attain its effects through reading, and he nowhere states that dramatic dialogues, when read, seem silly or ineffective like eristic speeches when read. An intermediary category thus seems in order,

which Aristotle does not explicitly introduce; however he doubtless has it in mind, and this is a *mimêsis*, an imitation of a speech or a debate.

An imitation of this kind should have qualities of natural speech; accordingly Aristotle says, for example, that the tragic poets have chosen the iambic meter:

The iambic, we know, is the most speakable of meters, as is shown by the fact that we very often fall into it in conversation, whereas we rarely talk hexameters, and only when we depart from the speaking tone of voice.  
(*Poetics* 4, 1449a25-27)

So drama is an imitation of living speech, but in contrast to eristic speeches, which look silly if one only reads their script, *mimêsis* stylizes these speeches, so that they continue serving the drama, but are also suitable for reading.

Aristotle does not develop this question, but according to his theory this is probably what he would have believed. For our purposes the most important point is that whether the style is a written or a spoken one, in either case the object to which these styles are attributed is always a written text. That is, even the oral speech is no longer conceived as a behavior but as an object.

At this stage the written text becomes a standard even for something which is oral *par excellence*, and the distinction between oral and written style is reduced to a distinction between two written styles: writing oriented to oral performance and writing oriented to eye reading. This is the farthest stage in the transition from the oral to the written conception of the text.

At this point perhaps the comparison with Plato's view should be summarized. Plato in the *Phaedrus* feels very clearly the opposition between speaking and writing, but he describes both poles in terms of speech. For him writing is no more than a recorder, a petrified copy of what has been orally spoken—therefore writing has no positive aspect; it is merely a deterioration of living discourse. Aristotle, as we see it now, stands at the opposite pole. Like Plato, he is conscious of the difference between these two modes of linguistic activity, but contrary to him he describes both modes in terms of writing. Therefore living speech is conceived as an actualization of something that has already potentially existed. What it is that existed before living speech is a matter for psychology. But even if we transform the discussion into psychological terms, the image of the "source" of speech seems largely derived from that of the written text. This, as we saw above, can be structured for various performances: eye reading, speaking, or stage production.

## INTERIM DISCUSSION: THE TEXT AND ITS DIMENSIONS

In the last chapter we traced a complex historical-philosophic process, in which poetry, which was conceived for years as a kind of behavior, is identified more and more as a product of an action, as an object, a text. As a result, ethical categories like the Platonic ones, which are applicable only to actions and behavior, are no longer applicable to poetry. Through Aristotle's treatment poetry, being an entity, is revealed increasingly as subject to ontological categories. In the following chapters we shall examine the Aristotelian writings, mainly the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, as treatises on that same entity, actually as the oldest model of a **Text-Theory**.

For this discussion the subject has to be mapped through its various aspects as they are formalized in the Aristotelian system. The theory of **causes** (*aitiai*) is a fairly simple and coherent starting point. For Aristotle every entity is subject to four **causes** which determine the dimensions of its being. Each of these factors determines a different kind of questions in regard of that object. Knowing and understanding this object actually means having the capability to answer these questions. They arise in the framework of the "material", the "formal", the "efficient" and the "effective" cause. With regard to the concept of "text" the answers to these questions may appear as follows:

The material cause is language, and its units are the materials of which the text consists. In the *Poetics* this is called the medium (*en heterois*: the various things "in which" or "by which" the imitation exists, *ibid.* 1, 1447a16). Just as in painting the medium is shapes and colors, in poetry the medium is voice, which contains language alongside harmony and rhythm. Likewise oration: language is the material shaped by the orator, and through it he expresses his ideas in order to convince the audience.<sup>46</sup>

Form, or the formal cause, refers in Aristotle to the objects about which language speaks. In poetry the objects depicted by language are actions or plot. The structure of actions (*sustasis pragmatôn*) is "like the soul" of tragedy, and thus its form (*Poetics* 6, 1450a38; this is true, of course, about every poetic text, not just tragedy). In the *Rhetoric*, what one talks about, that is, the general subject of the oration, is an argument or a claim. Here there are actions too, but they are in the background. The form of the speech is an argument, the structure created by the relation of the

claim to the various proofs or means of convincing. In any case the formal cause will be the *logos*, whether in the sense of story or plot as in the *Poetics*, or in the sense of argumentation as in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>47</sup>

The efficient cause is the "agent" that realizes the text. In poetry this is expressed by the "mode" (*heterôs* = in various ways, *Poetics* 1, 1447a16). The **mode** differs from the **medium** since it concerns not the material of which the text consists but the very act of its production. The distinction between the "dramatic" mode and the "narrative" or the "mixed" broadens in a way the concept of the efficient cause and adds to it the performing artist and the way of performing. In any event the "mode" focuses on the speaker existing actually or implicitly behind the text, be it the poet himself or, in the case of a dramatic imitation, the actor, the voice borrowed by the poet for his production. In the *Rhetoric* the situation is simpler since the voice behind the speech is distinct, being the personal voice of the orator himself, or the voice of the person for whom the speech has been composed.

Finally, the effective cause concerns the effect of the text, or its potential to attain that effect. The effect of the text is connected with the addressee. In poetry the aim is to cause pleasure, whether the general pleasure of identifying the object of imitation (*Poetics* 4, 1448b7-17), or the pleasure specific to a given genre—for instance, tragic pleasure, emanating from purification through pity and fear (ibid. 6, 1449b28-29). In the *Rhetoric* the aim is to convince, to affect people's views, beliefs and emotions, and to influence them, through the speech, to make a decision compatible with the speaker's intention (ibid. I, 1-2). One may convince a jury that the person prosecuted is guilty or not guilty; convince the assembly that a certain operation will be useful or useless, or in a broader and more general sense, strengthen emotions or beliefs already existing ("convincing the convinced") through an epideictic speech, such as Pericles' *Epitaph*, or impress the audience by demonstrating the orator's speaking talent, as in the oration competition in Plato's *Symposium*. In any case, the effective cause always concerns the audience and the addressee.

Surveying these four causes in regard to the text, one may find a division into two pairs of causes, each creating a different dimension. We identify a special relation between the formal and the material cause, which is readily detected in other Aristotelian contexts too. These are two diametrically opposed elements, which at the same time are interdependent as they cannot be realized or even understood separately. As for the text—the semantic dimension can be detected here. The relation between the linguistic layer as material (*lexis*) and the objects as form (*logos*) can

actually be paralleled by that between signifier and signified, or between language and meaning.

As in the pair Matter and Form in Aristotelian metaphysics, and signifier and signified in linguistic theory, a dynamic relation exists between two contrary and interrelated elements. Moreover, a dimension is created here in which various conceptions and patterns of hierarchic and layered structures can be detected: this is the semantic dimension. In the Aristotelian writings there are several variations of the conception of the text as a hierarchic structure of layers. These structures always begin with form (plot or argumentation) and proceed in some type of gradation to the layer of verbal performance, which is the most material stratum of the text. All these hierarchic structures belong to the semantic dimension and are set along the axis between Form and Matter. The semantic dimension is thus one realm of discussion related to the text.

The other pair, the efficient and the effective causes, is textually expressed by the relation between speaker and audience, that is, between addressor and addressee. This is a different dimension emphasizing the aspect of the text as an occurrence, something which happens, an object created by somebody and directed to somebody else. This occurrence in the most general terms may be conceived as an act of communication, and may therefore be called the communicative dimension of the text.

These two dimensions may be viewed as two intersecting lines, the text being their point of crossing.

	Signifier: material cause	
Addressor: efficient cause	Text	Addressee: effective cause
	Signified: formal cause	

Table 1-1

We depicted the semantic dimension as a vertical pole and the communicative as a horizontal one, and this is not accidental. Whatever our image of the semantic dimension, in Aristotelian terms it is conceived as a hierarchic structure, and as we shall see later, the relation between deep and surface structure can be detected here and may be pictured as vertical according to the terms signifying it.

The horizontality of the communicative dimension has its rationale too: its two ends are linked to the concrete world—the addressor and addressee, who are human beings, not pure forms, abstract ideas or

semantic structures. The relation of addressor and addressee is conceived as a concrete action rather than a hierarchic structure: it is an occurrence. Discussing it directs us thus to a different domain in Aristotle's thinking.

These two dimensions also determine the nature of the relation of the text to what is beyond it—the context. The text is always a partial and closed unit, located in a broader reality, a linguistic-semantic context, endless in space and time.

The vertical dimension, that of semantic relations, leads us to a system of relations between a single utterance and language as a whole, what De Saussure calls the **langue/parole** relationship ("language/speech"; De Saussure 1983, pp. 19-20 [chapter IV]). The text is a "parole": a given utterance in a given time, but it is deeply related to an entire hyper-chronic system of codes, laws and possibilities—the "langue". This is of course mainly a linguistic structure, but in the Aristotelian world, where language is conceived as the matter of the text, the concept of "langue" may belong to a different realm: the general idea, the *eidōs*, expressed by the system of genres and generic rules. Here are contained the rules of tragedy, comedy and epic, the rules of rhetoric with its various genres, among them the reservoir of themes typical for each kind (the topics, *topoi*). All these things concern a generalization from the concrete text to a kind of abstract hyper-chronic and eternal reality. So the relation of *logos* to *lexis* seems to resemble, at least in one of its various meanings, the modern relation of "langue" to "parole".

The second dimension, the communicative, is based on the relation between addressor and addressee, and takes the text as the interrelation of two partners. If this is further broadened it leads in fact to the historic context of the text as part of a larger body of texts, which in a certain process of development came into being and determined the general concept of the genres (tragedy, epic, etc.). Although the genres, according to Aristotle, are eternal and fixed like ideas, their concrete manifestations belong to a specific historic reality. So the genre also has a historic dimension: it comes into being, it develops, and further developments are to be expected in the future. All these issues are raised by Aristotle as questions regarding tragedy. This realm of questions belongs to what in structuralist *poetics* was called the relationship between **text** and **system**. Broadening the communicative dimension beyond the single text thus brings us to the historic context of poetry and rhetoric. This issue is also treated by Aristotle although it is not at the center of his discussion.

All this can be tabulated:

	Text		Context
Semantic dimension	Signifier: material cause	Signified: formal cause	"Langue": the genre as a set of rules
Communicative dimension	Addressor: efficient cause	Addressee: effective cause	System: the genre as a historic reality

Table 1-2

This table maps the various issues of text theory as they are manifested in Aristotle. This structure can also aid us to map our following chapters as outlined in the preface above:

The next chapter (3) discusses the semantic dimension, the vertical pole between the material and the formal cause. Chapter 4 considers the communicative dimension, the horizontal pole between addressor and addressee. The two subsequent chapters concern the two edges of that dimension: chapter 5 the addressor and chapter 6 the addressee. Chapter 7, the last, treats the various questions arising when texts are grouped into genres and historic eras, that is, the relation of text and context.





## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SEMANTIC DIMENSION: HIERARCHIES AND LAYERS IN THE TEXT STRUCTURE

#### 1. Between Form and Matter

In his book *The Verbal Work of Art* Roman Ingarden (Ingarden 1965 [1930]) develops a theory of the structure of the literary work, which he describes as a system of interrelated layers. This theory brings to mind several questions in respect of Aristotle as well. Ingarden himself rises to this challenge, and in a later article he analyzes the *Poetics* from the viewpoint of his own theory (Ingarden 1961-2).

In Aristotle too, a layered structure can be clearly detected, and he devotes considerable space to discussing it. He does so in *Poetics* 6 right after the definition of tragedy. He enumerates six "parts" of tragedy: plot (*muthos*), character (*êthos*), thought (*dianoia*), speech (*lexis*), music (*melos*), and stage performance (*opsis*). Ingarden views this discussion as a step towards a theory of textual layers; however, he does not eschew some observations:

[N]evertheless, he neither develops a general theory from them [the Aristotelian "parts"], nor explains their common structural bond; and he does not clarify the role that each stratum plays in relation to the others and to the work as a whole: in short, he does not elaborate a general theory of the strata of a literary work. (Ingarden 1961-2, pp. 168-9)

These observations seem problematic. Ingarden's interesting interpretation fails precisely because of his own theory: he proves not that there is no text theory in Aristotle but that Aristotle did not construct it according to phenomenological principles, as he himself would have preferred. But Ingarden's discussion of Aristotle's theory of layers actually disconnects Aristotle from Aristotelian thought. In fact, one can easily examine the Aristotelian rationale behind the list of "parts", since precisely in this matter Aristotle goes into far more detail than is usual in the *Poetics*. If we

listen to him properly we may find that he does suggest a consistent theory of layers; however, the way these layers interrelate is not mental, as in Ingarden's phenomenological conception, but is based on an ontological principle concerning the hierarchy of Form and Matter.

The Aristotelian theory of textual layers cannot be understood in isolation from general Aristotelian philosophy. The principle of the sixfold division should be carefully examined. First, the six must be divided into three groups according to the three aspects which served in the first chapters of the *Poetics* as the principle of classifying *mimêsis*: the medium of imitation (*Poetics* 1), the objects imitated (*Poetics* 2) and the mode (*Poetics* 3).<sup>48</sup> The division into the elements of tragedy accords with these same aspects, but in a different order. From the aspect of the imitated objects, tragedy has three elements: plot, character, and thought; from the aspect of medium it has two: language and music; from the aspect of mode it has one single element, the stage production, which corresponds to the dramatic mode.

Aristotle's discussion of these elements in the *Poetics* is broader and more detailed than are other parts of the composition. This broadness is partly due to his enumerating the elements in two different lists. The first follows the order in which they are derived from the principles so far presented in the *Poetics*; the second is a gradation of the elements according to their importance.

This hierarchic structure looks like a series of grades on the axis between Form and Matter. The higher element on the hierarchy is always conceived as formal in relation to the lower, and the lower is always conceived as material in relation to the higher. Since the triple division into aspects—objects, media and modes—preceded the division into the six ontological layers, each of these aspects also determines an ontological layer. The elements' inner organization within the ontological layer rests on more or less similar principles. Thought, character, and plot all belong to the layer of objects, so they generally belong to Form, the aspect of meaning and significance. Nevertheless, they can also be graded according to similar principles among themselves: within the specific domain of Form are elements which are more formal, and others that are more material. After all, no element in the experienced reality can be viewed as Form or Matter in itself: everything is conceived as matter in relation to certain things and as form in relation to others.

Let us start the discussion from the head of the hierarchy, the most formal pole, namely the layer of objects.

### 1.1 The Layer of Objects: Plot, Character, Thought

The most important question raised here, and also the one most intensively treated by Aristotle, is what is prior to what: plot to character or character to plot. Of course, Aristotle determinately believes in the priority of plot, and views it as "the first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of tragedy" (*Poetics* 6, 1450a37). But still a question remains: Aristotle usually does not invest such effort in arguing issues which seem simple and compatible with natural intuition. His argument for the priority of plot is clearly polemic—but against whom or against what is he arguing? Who is it who believes that character is prior to plot? What are the assumptions which make such grading possible?

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it wasn't surprising to find theories which grade character higher than plot, such as that of Edward Morgan Forster (Forster 1974 [1927]),<sup>49</sup> but the basis for that conception and its like is usually a specific interest in psychology and a belief that the character's inner life is what really matters for literature, and depicting external actions is insufficient. An assumption of that kind is alien to Aristotle, and is far from being self-evident in Greek thought and in the Greek world in general, where concepts like "inner world" in our sense are quite rare.<sup>50</sup>

When Aristotle speaks of *êthos*, "character", he does not refer to any "inner world"; he means a fixed, defined and declared principle of behavior, which dictates preference or choice of certain kinds of action. Moreover, Aristotle speaks of the possibility of composing a tragedy "without character". Such a possibility would have been unthinkable had he meant psychological motives, since a motive, explicit or implicit, is also part of the action. A story without motives would be almost like a story without actions, which is absurd in Aristotelian terms. But a story "without character", for Aristotle, means a story about actions which are not accompanied by declarations of their underlying principles of choice. When Antigone says "my nature is to join love, not hatred" (Sophocles, *Antigone* 523), she determines a certain principle of choice. The story could have been told or performed without that declaration: we would have seen and understood the actions; we just would not have heard a formalized expression of the heroine's principle of choice. "Character", for Aristotle, largely means the verbal expression of the principle of choice; it means neither the motive in itself nor the inner world.

We may return now to the addressee of Aristotle's argumentation: who in his cultural milieu might have claimed that character is the most important aspect? The argument seems to be against the rhetoric tradition, or at least against an automatic application of rhetorical principles to poetry. In the *Rhetoric* the stratification of elements is different: there,

when Aristotle grades the various means of convincing—*êthos*, *logos* and *pathos*, he really states that character, *êthos*, is the strongest means of persuasion (*Rhetoric* I 2, 1356a14). The story, *diêgêsis*, which is the parallel of plot, is presented in the *Rhetoric* as a secondary element: it should not determine the structure of the speech but should be disconnected, and its parts used separately for the various points in the speech (*Rhetoric* III, 16).

When Aristotle considers the possibility of a tragedy without character, he examines this possibility as against the contrary one—"a series of characteristic speeches" without narrative structure (*Poetics* 6, 1450a14). Both possibilities are no mere hypotheses: just as a tragedy without declarations of character can be imagined, so can declarations of character in a rhetorical context not integrated into any structured narration of events. In fact, that is how most speeches look: every speech of praise or blame for a certain person is a depiction of character, but in this case the character is not secondary to the narrative; on the contrary, it is the dominant factor, and the broken narrative elements are used only as proofs for the claims about that character. This is the case with a great many juridical speeches, which strive to present a "character testimony" whether for defense or accusation. A clear example is Socrates' *Apology*, which is first and foremost the depiction of an *êthos*.

So in the stratified structure of the speech, character lies on a much higher level than story, while in tragedy story is at the top and character is secondary. This does not mean that the situations are exactly opposite: the status of character in the *Rhetoric* still differs from that of plot in the *Poetics*. To compare the two disciplines one has to refer to the third component of the world of objects also, that is, thought (*dianoia*). While character is the declaration on a certain principle of choice, thought is the very argument which applies a principle of choice to given circumstances, and which proves that a certain action is good or bad. The concept of thought refers to the complex of rhetorical elements in tragedy. Thought is its argumentative system. In the *Rhetoric* the argumentative element is at the top of the hierarchy; after all, convincing, which is the end of rhetoric, is attained mainly through argumentation. Character, which determines the speaker's reliability, is one of the most important means of convincing. Story is a secondary element, since the business of a speech is not to narrate but to gather separate facts which can support the argument. Also, if there is a story in the speech it is never presented in the right order; the principle combining its elements is always argumentative, that is, example, generalization or rhetoric inference (*enthumêma*), etc.; it does not use the narrative principles of necessity and probability.

So the stratum of Form, that of represented objects, also encompasses a hierarchy of what is conceived as structural outline and what is conceived as filling materials, that is, of the principle which determines Form and the secondary and auxiliary principle. This grading is not absolute but is subject to the definition of the discipline. According to the definition of rhetoric and its end ("observing in any given case the available means of persuasion", *Rhetoric* I, 2, 1355b28), the form is determined by the objects of speech, which is the argumentation, that is, thought. On the other hand, according to the definition of poetry as "imitation of actions", its objects are actions and actions are what determine its form.

For the highest formal principle, the super-principle, Aristotle uses the term *arkhê*, and presents it as parallel of soul:

We maintain, therefore, that the first essential [*arkhê*], the life and soul, so to speak, of tragedy is the plot; and that the characters come second. (*Poetics* 6 1450a38)

"First essential" is a possible translation of *arkhê*, but it does not cover all its meanings. The term may be used as something between "beginning" and "cause": all causes are also beginnings, but not every beginning is a cause. *Arkhê* is

That from which a thing first arises, e.g. as a keel of a ship and a foundation of a house, while in animals some suppose the heart, others the brain, others some other part, to be of that nature. (*Metaphysics* V [*Delta*], 1, 1013a5-7)

It is also

That from which a thing can first be known; for this also is called the origin of the thing, e.g. the hypotheses are the origins of demonstrations. (Ibid. 1013a15)

*Arkhê* then is a certain element out of which the whole came into being, or by which the whole is supported. It may be a part in the concrete sense, like a ship's keel, a building's foundations, the brain or the heart; it may be a part in the abstract sense, like the basic assumptions from which the conclusion is inferred. The plot of tragedy is a part in that sense.

But alongside the concept of *arkhê* Aristotle introduces something else, this time by way of comparison: "soul, so to speak" (*hoion psukhê*). So the plot is a first essential in the literal sense of the concept, but also soul in the metaphoric sense: it resembles soul, its function and status are like those of the soul.

Soul, for Aristotle, is the Form of the body, and in that sense it is its principle of life: it is the power which sets it in motion, activates and nourishes it: it is its functional structure. So clearly, for tragedy and for products of human *poiêsis* in general, one can use this concept only metaphorically. Tragedy is not a living creature, therefore it does not set itself in motion and does not grow from itself. What builds tragedy is outside it (the poet), therefore its *arkhê* must be one of its parts rather than its dynamic principle. Actually the *arkhê* of tragedy resembles more a ship's skeleton than an animal's heart. On the face of it Aristotle could have used the metaphor of the ship as an inner structure supporting the rest of the elements, hence could have explained his point much more clearly. But he chooses the metaphor of soul, which points to competence of self motion.

Why does Aristotle—so accurate and cautious in his formulations—choose precisely this metaphor? Perhaps because a plot is a dynamic structure; it is not a mere architectural construct like a ship's skeleton, neither is it an architectural idea which helps the architect to construct the building; here the building in itself has a quality of dynamics and movement. The plot is a structure of changes, of developing things. Its inner relations are those of growth, motion, and action.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, motion within the text is formalized and is not free: actually it is a fictive movement, or rather, an imitation of movement. Aristotle takes the liberty of speaking about soul, but he cautiously presents it as a metaphor: "soul, so to speak" (literally "like a soul"). This is the only sense in which one can speak of soul in relation to artificial objects. The other elements, in the present case "character" and "thought", cannot be likened to "soul" in relation to tragedy: they are a certain kind of "body", of filling material, activated and controlled by the soul.<sup>52</sup>

As stated above, in the *Rhetoric* the hierarchy is different, but in this case Aristotle does not exert the same effort to defend the hierarchic structure, probably because the point is not controversial: the end of rhetoric having been defined as to convince, argumentation and proofs clearly determine its basic structure; the other components are secondary. In the *Poetics*, as stated above, Aristotle makes a special effort to defend his specific view of the hierarchic structure, probably because other possible hierarchic structures still had their supporters, and he had to contend with them.

It was important for Aristotle to stress the difference, since rhetoric exercises of composing speeches for mythological characters were quite popular, for example, the speeches in defense of Helen by Gorgias and Isocrates. In tragedy too this practice is widespread. The speeches are of

course incorporated in the structure of plot and characters, but not always. In Euripides many speeches are relatively autonomous, in particular the accusation and defense speeches for Helen in the *Trojan Women*, which are clearly similar to these exercises in rhetoric.<sup>53</sup> Aristotle claims that the rhetorical aspect of tragedy is not central; tragedy may include very similar components to those of rhetoric, but they are still subject to a different system of rules. The spectator does not go to the theater to hear the speeches of familiar mythological characters, or to refer to their *êthê*, but to see the way the poet constructs his story according to its own inner logic and system of probability.

## 1.2 The Layer of Media: *Lexis* and *Melos*

The next layer in the hierarchic system is simpler: this is the layer of media. If the layer discussed above is parallel to Form, the layer of media is that of Matter. In poetry this layer includes language and music; in rhetoric it is verbal only:

Fourth among the literary elements is the diction of the personages, i.e. as before explained, the expression of their thoughts in words, which is practically the same thing with verse as with prose. (*Poetics* 6, 1450b13)

The status of language in the hierarchy is the same for poetry and rhetoric; although Aristotle speaks of poetic diction, he stresses that *lexis* "is practically the same thing with verse as with prose". He does not try to isolate a specific phenomenon from the realm of language and define it as peculiar to poetic diction.

In light of the definition of language it should be asked what the realm of meaning conveyed by words is, since the stratum of meaning, the object of poetry, contains three quite different realms: plot, character, and thought. These determine three sub-layers, of which only one is presented as directly connected with *lexis*, namely that of thought, *dianoia*. Language is thus conceived mainly as a means to convey arguments: "The thought of the personages is shown in everything to be effected by their language" (*Poetics* 19, 1456a36).

The fact that Aristotle deals here with tragedy is decisive for his conception, since it excludes any other function of language, particularly that of narrating: in tragedy, as in drama in general, dialogues are only between speaking characters; language is not narrative. Later Aristotle acknowledges that the poet is required to create through plot the same effects that language creates in the realm of thought, that is, "every effort



to prove or disprove, to arouse emotion (pity, fear, anger and the like), or to maximize or minimize things" (*Poetics*, 19, 1456b1-2). He goes on:

It is clear, also, that their mental procedure must be on the same lines in their actions likewise, whenever they wish them to arouse pity or horror, or to have a look of importance or probability. (Ibid. 2-4)

But right after that Aristotle stresses the difference between constructing plot and constructing thought:

The only difference is that with the act the impression has to be made without explanation [*phainesthai aneu didaskalias*]; whereas with the spoken word it has to be produced by the speaker. (Ibid. 5-8)

The language of tragedy or drama in general is thus argumentative and not narrative, since its direct and immediate objects are arguments or views. Unlike the epic, where language has a narrative function also, in drama it has no such function so the actions are revealed without verbal mediation. This does not mean that the actions are presented as physical operations on the stage; in Greek theatrical practice the decisive activities took place off-stage anyway. Moreover, in light of Aristotle's position on the matter of stage production, as we saw in the preceding chapter and will discuss further, this does not seem to be his meaning. When Aristotle speaks about the direct impression, he means that we can understand the action directly from the argumentative discourse which constructs the script of tragedy. Aristotle says that the theatrical production is not needed to attain the special pleasure in tragedy (*Poetics* 14, 1453b4-6); in fact, for an action to be perceived no special stage devices are necessary: it is enough to listen to the dialogue.

It is important to note then that language is directly connected only to the argumentative element of tragedy. Indeed, the other components of the layer of objects are also expressed somehow in language: at a certain point Aristotle states that *êthos* is "that which reveals the choice of the agents" (*Poetics* 6, 1450b8), so character can easily be part of the argumentative element of language, and can be presented through it.

Speech in tragedy contains narrative elements as well, as is clear from the tragic texts and from the theatrical practice of the time. In the *Poetics* Aristotle does not refer to that possibility, but in the *Rhetoric* he devotes a special discussion to *diêgêsis*, the narrative element of oration (ibid. III, 16). In any case, in drama the narrative elements are of secondary status.

Situations in which the stratum of language is directly connected with plot exist only in epic poetry:

Given both the same means and the same kind of object for imitation, one may either speak at one moment in narrative and at another in an assumed character, as Homer does; or one may remain the same throughout, without any such change; or the imitation may represent the whole story dramatically, as though they were actually doing the things described. (*Poetics* 3, 1448a20-24)

Beyond the dramatic option, two additional options are presented here: a story can be narrated throughout in a mediator's voice, or it can be narrated in a mixture of a mediator's and the speaking characters' voices, as practiced mainly by Homer. Either way, language also constructs the stratum of plot. However, in general Aristotle does not speak a lot about narrative language; his discussions of epic do not refer to that point, nor is there any reference whatsoever to a special use of a narrative voice.

Language as presented in the *Poetics* is thus a sign system connected mainly with the argumentative aspect of the meaning stratum. The case of the *Rhetoric* is quite similar, since here language naturally serves for conveying arguments, and here too the stratum of actions, *pragmata*, is not directly and consequently expressed since the status of narration is secondary. Indeed, in the *Poetics* the actions are the principal element, but if we compare the relationship of language and actions in drama and oration, a similar kind of remoteness may be found. In drama too actions are secondary elements from the viewpoint of verbal realization, but unlike in rhetoric they are visually presented on stage, hence their relatively secondary status in language; in rhetoric, on the other hand, actions are a kind of background material, and are presented in the course of argumentation not as a narrative continuum but only scattered, according to the local needs of the specific argument.

Had Aristotle dealt more with other genres he might have discussed other realizations of language as well, but perhaps it is no accident that in the *Poetics*, just as in the *Rhetoric*, the salient aspect of language is precisely the rhetorical one, that is, its capacity to convince and attain agreement. Language is conceived more as a force for changing and influencing reality than as a tool for conveying information.

Since the structure described is hierarchic, it is no wonder that words are lower in status than meaning. This may be explained by the relation of language to Matter. Like Matter, language has a kind of ambiguity in its status: it is an indispensable component, but it is not conceived as determining the essence of the complete product.

Aristotle does not state outright that language is lower in status than meaning, but this can be inferred from the way the linguistic dimension is introduced into his discussions. The *Rhetoric* deals with language in its

third book; the subject is not tackled in the first two. This fact alone cannot of course indicate anything about the status of language, but the significant point is that the logical structure of the two first parts is whole, with no space left for a discussion of language. These two books discuss systematically all the argumentative aspects of rhetoric in accordance with the definition of the discipline as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (ibid. I, 2, 1355b27).

That the definition speaks of "observing" (*thôrésai*) the means, not of performing them, is no accident. The two first books follow that definition consequently, in a way which, at face value, leaves no space for the third book.<sup>54</sup> To include the verbal aspect in the *Rhetoric*, the basic assumptions had to be changed. Aristotle accomplished this by means of a new preface, presented at the beginning of book III, which adds a new element to the aims of the art of rhetoric:

In making a speech one must study three points: first the means of producing persuasion; second, the language; third, the proper arrangement of the various parts of the speech. We have already specified the source of persuasion. [---] Our next subject will be language. (Ibid. 1403b5-15)

In the first two books the formulation "the means of producing persuasion" covered the entire scope of rhetoric. In the program set out at the beginning of the whole composition (book I, 1-2) there is nothing beyond it. At the beginning of book III there is, as it were, a rethinking of that same assumption. All that has been discussed earlier is formalized as one section of three, while the other two refer to the verbal stratum: the issue of style, *lexis*, refers to the small parts of language, while "the arrangement of the various parts" refers to the larger units. Language thus becomes an integral part of the discussion only as an afterthought, when a great deal of the theory has already been formulated without any reference to it.

In an *à propos* note Aristotle explains this situation by the state of the art: in the introductory chapter of *Rhetoric* III, while speaking of the art of performing, he notes that the rules of that art have not yet been sufficiently formalized since "even the study of language made no progress till late in the day" (ibid. I, 1403b35). So the theory of style is a relatively new art, and at least in Aristotle's mind it takes its first steps now and joins the existing theories of poetry and oration as a secondary partner.

In the *Poetics* the situation is similar in general outline, but not in the details. Aristotle determines the status of language already in the opening chapters: in the first he presents it as a medium and in the sixth he grades it within the hierarchy of the parts of tragedy. But the real discussion of

language begins at a later stage, and hesitantly—no less than in the *Rhetoric*.

In *Poetics* 19 Aristotle discusses thought (*dianoia*) and style (*lexis*). The discussion of thought, as shown above, already points at a close link between thought and language. But when Aristotle moves on to the discussion of language itself, he mentions another part of language, concerning ways of expression (*skhêmata tês lexeôs*, 1456b8)—the definition of verbal functions like command, request, statement, etc. Aristotle says that it has to do with the actor's more than the poet's art. He does not believe that the knowledge of such things is relevant to poetry: "Whether the poet knows these things or not, his art as a poet is never seriously criticized on that account" (*Poetics* 19, 1456b14-15).

Here Aristotle argues against Protagoras' criticism of Homer. Protagoras claimed that in the words "Sing of the wrath, Goddess" (*mênin aeide thea*, *Iliad* I, 1.) Homer uses the imperative, although according to the context this is a request rather than a command. This pedantic criticism is rejected, and with this rejection Aristotle decides to drop this field of investigation: "Let us pass over this, then, as appertaining to another art, and not to that of poetry" (ibid. 1456b20).

This explicit resolution notwithstanding, in the following three chapters (20 to 22) Aristotle does go into a short but systematic discussion of language. As in the *Rhetoric*, here too the discussion is actually a kind of afterthought. The content is partially similar to that of the broader discussion in *Rhetoric* III, but it seems slightly detached from the general context of the *Poetics* since there is no specific reference to tragedy, and very little to poetry in general.

Aristotle does not integrate the discussion of style into the book's general line of thought. The reason is not only the novelty of this field of discussion, as he states in *Rhetoric* III 1, but the very hierarchic structure of the textual strata: in both discussions, that of the *Poetics* and that of the *Rhetoric*, language is conceived as a kind of "terminus": the text is created first from its structures of meaning, and only after they have been accomplished in the poet's mind are they transformed into a verbal structure.

Language is indeed Matter, inasmuch as it is given its Form by the poet. It may be nice, "with pleasurable accessories" (*hedusmenô logô*, *Poetics* 6, 1449b25), but the value of the text, whether poetic or rhetorical, is not determined by it; it has already been determined within the semantic strata. The text cannot exist without language since language is the medium to convey values already shaped and determined in the semantic and formal layers. The values that language can add to poetry are

ornamental only. Aristotle does not point to any real and explicit connection between ornamental and semantic values: language is conceived as neutral, as a raw material which must be shaped into a structure chosen by the artist. Being a medium, language has its location in the hierarchy of strata already determined: it will always be secondary to the end; it will never be an end in itself, and will never determine the text's end according to its own needs and potentials.

Another issue which should be considered is music. Music too is included in the stratum of media, and is presented together with language as one of the parts of tragedy. Of course, it has no parallel in rhetoric, where language is the exclusive medium. As in the stratum of meaning, so in that of medium can one speak of an inner hierarchy. Here language seems conceived as positioned above music. Music is defined as "pleasurable accessories" (ibid.), so it contributes to language as an ornament, exactly as language contributes to the narrative structure; but like style, music too is detached from the semantic aspect of language.

In our discussion above on the stratum of meaning we saw that its inner hierarchy is reversible: within one and the same stratum, plot can be located at the top of the hierarchy in case of poetry, while in rhetoric argumentation and character are on top. The inner hierarchy of the stratum can therefore be changed in the passage from rhetoric to poetry and vice versa. Can a similar phenomenon also be detected in the stratum of media?

In principle it can, but we don't know enough about Aristotle's views on music, or about ancient music in general, to support this possibility.<sup>55</sup> Here note only that Aristotle himself speaks of the possibility of music without words (*Poetics* 1, 1447a14-15). Moreover, in the *Politics* he even speaks of music as imitation:

Rhythm and melody supply imitations [*homoiômata*] of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance [---] and the other qualities of character. (Ibid. VIII, 5, 1340a19-20)

So a complex containing music and words which are not graded by their importance may be assumed to exist. However, in light of Aristotle's definition of music in tragedy as "the greatest of the pleasurable accessories" (*Poetics* 6, 1450b16), it seems that for him, when there is a combination of words and music, words, as semantic potentials, will always lie on the higher level.

### 1.3 The Layer of Modes: Performance

The last issue to be discussed is performance. In poetry this is the stage production, which Aristotle calls *opsis* (vision, sight); in rhetoric this is vocal delivery, called *hupokrisis*, (playing, acting). That way he creates a span which can actually cover all poetic genres.<sup>56</sup>

The issue of performance raises a special problem: about language we could admit that it is indeed located low in the hierarchy, but is still indispensable since a poetic work cannot exist without it; as for performance, even its exigency for the work is questionable: one can easily imagine an unperformed text. Moreover, performance is deeply connected to the efficient cause of the text, exactly as the stratum of objects is connected to the formal cause and the stratum of medium to matter. True, the efficient cause is vital for coming into being, but if the object's components are graded from Form to Matter it is difficult to include it in that grading since it is not a part of the object. The cobbler is not a part of the shoe, in the sense that the leather of which the shoe is made and the pattern according to which it is shaped can be conceived as its parts. As we saw in the previous chapter (section 2.5.), the conception of performance as a separate entity is a direct outcome of adopting the concept of writing while shaping the image of the verbal work of art. The point to be examined here is the status given to performance in the hierarchy of text elements.

As stated, among the parts of tragedy, performance (*opsis*) is located last and lowest. In rhetoric, delivery (*hupokrisis*) is presented as the third part of the art of oration: the first concerns the logical structure and the second style (and organization of parts).

In both contexts, of the *Poetics* and of the *Rhetoric*, the conception is clearly ambiguous. True, at the start performance is presented lowest and least vital; however, later it is presented as belonging to a different art which is neither *poetics* nor *rhetoric*. So performance can be understood also as entirely alien to the text. Three independent considerations lead to the low evaluation of performance: [a] to what extent is it necessary; [b] to what extent is it subject to the laws of the art (whether *poetics* or rhetoric); [c] what is the quality of its effects. Let us now examine these considerations one by one.

The first claim is that performance is unnecessary. The special effects of the text (convincing in case of rhetoric; pity and fear in case of tragedy) are not conditioned by the performance. They are possible also in a narrated or read text, and they are basically due to plot (in tragedy) or argumentation (in rhetoric). Performance is only a technical means to

convey them. Unlike language, which is an integral part of the text and indispensable, performance is a separate entity and not necessary.

The indispensability of a given textual level is an essential standard for determining its importance, which is directly related to the extent of its necessity. When Aristotle considers the relation of plot to character, he considers the possibility of a tragedy without character and without plot. A tragedy without character may seem less successful, but it will still be a tragedy. On the other hand, a "series of characteristic speeches" (*Poetics* 6, 1450a28), that is, a text containing character but no plot, will never be a tragedy, even if the speeches in themselves are of high quality. Leaving out plot means giving up the generic identity; character may be left out but generic identity will still be preserved.

Regarding performance a similar line of argumentation is presented: leaving out performance does not change the generic identity of tragedy; an unperformed tragedy is a tragedy in every respect; it is the same with an oration. Since the special effects of tragedy and oration may be preserved even without performance, performance must be lower in the hierarchy of strata. It is not necessary for the textual identity.

Another standard concerns the relation of the given stratum to the art and its rules, and the extent of its dependence on the specific artistic competence. In other words, the question is to what extent does performance belong to the art of *poetics* or of rhetoric respectively.

The distinction between extra-artistic (*atekhnos*) and intra-artistic (*entekhnos*, *Rhetoric* I, 2, 1355b36) is repeated in Aristotle in several contexts, and almost in every case it has an evaluative overtone: the extra-artistic is usually evaluated through the standard of the art from which it has been excluded, and from that viewpoint it is naturally located low in the hierarchy. The question raised is always the following: if it does not belong to that specific art, namely to *poetics* or rhetoric, to which art does it belong? Is it a different one? Of what kind should it be?

The status of the theatrical production is lower than that of the dramatic text since it is remoter from the art of *poetics*:

The tragic fear and pity may be aroused by the spectacle; but they may also be aroused by the very structure and incidents of the play—which is the better way and shows the better poet. The plot in fact should be so framed that, even without seeing the things take place, he who simply hears the account of them shall be filled with horror and pity at the incidents; which is just the effect that the mere recital of the story of Oedipus would have on one. To produce this same effect by means of the spectacle is less artistic, and requires extraneous aids. (*Poetics* 14, 1453b18)

How can the theatrical effects contribute to the vital dramatic effects? Aristotle does not raise this question in the *Poetics*, but in the *Rhetoric* he raises it in a comment while analyzing the concept of pity:

Further, since it is when the sufferings of others are close to us that they excite our pity (we cannot remember what disasters happened a hundred centuries ago, nor look forward to what will happen a hundred centuries hereafter, and therefore feel little pity, if any, for such things): it follows that those who heighten the effect of their words with suitable gestures, tones, appearance, and dramatic action generally, are especially successful in exciting pity: they thus put the disasters before our eyes, and make them seem close to us, just coming or just past. Anything that has just happened or is going to happen soon, is particularly piteous: so too therefore are the signs of suffering—the garment and the like of those who have already suffered; the words and the like of those actually suffering—of those, for instance, who are on the point of death. For all this, because it seems close, tends to produce pity. (*Rhetoric* II, 8, 1386a28-b5)

Unlike in the declared position of the *Poetics*, Aristotle presents here the theatrical production not as a mere ornamentation and not as a realization of something which has already been fully thought out, but as an element which has a contribution of its own in attaining the special effects of the genre. One of the conclusions of the analysis of the concept of pity is that this passion can be raised especially from things which seem close to the eye, and as a result of their very closeness. This concrete presence can be realized by means of a theatrical production, and make the subject be experienced not as a story of the old days, that is, from an epic remoteness, but as something taking place here and now; that way it will spark a higher emotional response. This effectiveness is due to theatrical realization, but not solely: the same principle works also when concrete objects related to the sufferance are used.<sup>57</sup>

Aristotle's remark that theatrical performance is especially effective for arousing pity is interesting from another aspect too. According to one of the components of Aristotle's definition, pity cannot be directed at someone who is too close, otherwise it may become a self pain:

The people we pity are: those whom we know, if only they are not very closely related to us—in that case we feel about them as if we were in danger ourselves. (*Rhetoric* II 8 1386a17-19)<sup>58</sup>

The object of pity must be similar to us, but not too much. The theatrical performance is effective due to the combination of similarity, distance and concreteness. A character on stage is never immediately close to us. Since he or she is a part of a story, he or she belongs to a different



world, a mimetic world, which is clearly separate from the world we live in. On the other hand, the concrete reality of the characters inhabiting that world is especially strong because it is physically represented on stage. The *Rhetoric* accordingly conceives the theatrical concreteness of sufferance as a vital and essential component of the effect of pity; the *Poetics*, on the other hand, admits that effectiveness only half-heartedly.

True, the *Poetics* says that the effect of pity and fear can be also obtained through the theatrical performance. But this way is not good since it is based on an element which is not an essential part of the text. That is, a sign of the poet's success is that the majority of textual effects are concentrated in the plot. Under these conditions the effects of the stage performance are superfluous anyway. If, on the contrary, they did prove vital the situation would become worse still as it would show that the plot was not sufficiently effective in itself, and needed to be supported by another source.

In *Poetics* 18 Aristotle classifies the kinds of tragedies and enumerates four: one complex, one of suffering, one of character and one of spectacle.<sup>59</sup> These kinds differ in their dominant component, that is, the textual layer responsible for most of their effects. In the complex tragedy most of the effects are aroused by the plot and its structural components, reversal and recognition. In the tragedy of sufferance the effects are also aroused by the plot—not, however, by its structural components but by a rather material one, that of sufferance, which is conceived as a specific event, and therefore not a structural pattern. In the tragedy of character the source of effects is *êthos*, which is not narrative, but still belongs to the stratum of objects. In the tragedy of spectacle, *opsis*, the effects are caused by the visual aspect, that is, the layer of theatrical performance. Aristotle's examples include *Prometheus Bound*, which makes especially intensive use of outstanding stage elements (among other things, two characters and the chorus as a whole are lifted by the "machine"). Other examples he mentions are not known to us now, but their subjects, as a whole, call for special emphasis on the stage production: "all plays with the scene laid in the nether world" (*Poetics* 18, 1456a2), which seem to require intensive use of daemonic stage paintings, and the myth of Phorkys's daughters, which requires monstrous masks.

Aristotle presents these kinds of tragedy as four options that every poet has to master, that is, at face value they are of equal status. However, the evaluative overtone implied in this division can hardly be overlooked. The relationship between a "complex" and a "simple" plot is explicitly presented as gradual (*Poetics* 10), and the three last kinds are clearly variants of the "simple" structure. To this, two other points should be

added, where Aristotle grades plot as higher than character (ch. 6) and stage production (chs. 6 and 14), so the evaluative overtone is clearly present in the fourfold division as well, even if not explicitly declared.

When there are two options of creating the tragic effect—plot or performance—and what is actually chosen is the second and inferior one, Aristotle doubtless sees this as bad taste: for him, actors are more powerful than poets because of the low level of the audience, exactly as the success of the demagogues is due to the corruption of the orders of state (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b5). Moreover, the effect created by performance is not always proper for tragedy but often cheap and simplified, displacing the true one:

Those, however, who make use of the spectacle to put before us that which is merely monstrous [*teratôdês*] and not productive of fear, are wholly out of touch with tragedy; not every kind of pleasure should be required of tragedy, but only its own proper pleasure. (*Poetics*, 14, 1453b8-14)

In many cases the effect of performance is not a real alternative to that of the tragic plot, or even its significant amplification, but on the contrary, its falsification. The passions of pity and fear contain a certain rational element: they are responses to a state of affairs concerning what happens to the feeling subject, what is expected to happen to him and what the dangers and risks awaiting him are.<sup>60</sup> All these concern a correct reading and deciphering of reality. The frightening and monstrous (*teratôdês*), on the other hand, do not concern a conception of reality and its deciphering, but are closer to mere reflexes and nervous reaction. Similarly, in rhetoric the passions can be caused by the way reality is depicted, that is, the way of argumentation. They can also be conveyed through the volume and vibrations of the voice. In this case the orator infects the audience with his own passions, genuine or spurious, and here too he ignites an automatic reflexive response, not mediated by reason.

These ways of arousing emotions are usually fast and immediate, but precisely for that reason also lower, simpler, and often not really relevant. It could be argued, of course, that this means only a malpractice of these effects, and not a necessary outcome of their essence. But since also from other viewpoints Aristotle deems performance inferior, the final conclusion inevitably is that "delivery is—very properly—not regarded as an elevated subject of enquiry" (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1404a1).

Aristotle's viewpoint about performance is perhaps the source of relegation of theater art to the margins for several centuries and its constant reduction to literature. As stated in chapter 2 above, this is the price the theory of literature had to pay for the textualization of poetry. Once poetry was conceived as a text and not an event, attention was

directed to elements previously hidden. But this same change also tarnished the meaning of very important elements, which suddenly became regarded as dubious and vulgar additions to the text.

### 1.4 The Hierarchic Structure of the Layers

Despite the differences between the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* in content and aims, the concept of text underlying them seems similar: the text is a hierarchic structure of layers. At the top of the pyramid is located the *arkhê*, the element closest to the idea of the genre, whether plot or argumentation. The verbal realization in both cases is more material, therefore deemed lower, and the vocal-theatrical realization, namely performance, is the most material layer, therefore also the lowest in the hierarchy.


		<i>Poetics</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Form</p> <p>Matter</p> </div>	Objects:	Plot, Character, Thought	Thought, Character (passions ---), Narration (questions --)
	Means:	Language, Music	Language
	Mode:	Theatrical performance	Vocal delivery

Table 2-1

The relation of means to object is like that of Matter to Form. The performance also, whether vocal or theatrical, is like matter in relation to the unperformed text of the two foregoing layers. What exists in the lower layer is always regarded as material in relation to the upper layer, and the upper layer is regarded as form in relation to the lower.

This hierarchy in its general outline is rigid and irreversible. The world of meaning will always be like Form related to language, and performance will always be like Matter in relation to the mere verbal text. However, there is a relative flexibility within the borders of the single layer: the relation of the components of the objects layer to meanings, for instance, can change from genre to genre. In the rhetoric genre the *arkhê* will be the realm of logical thought, and character and then narration are subject to it.

In poetry plot will be the *arkhê*, and character and thought will be subject to it.

A final comment on the hierarchy brings us back to the beginning of the discussion about *Poetics* 6: the discussion of the six layers set out there is quite long, among other things because the parts are listed twice: the first time they are inferred from the assumptions made earlier, the second time they are graded according to their importance. If the order of parts in the first list is compared with that of the second, they seem almost the exact opposite of each other: the order in which the various parts are introduced, the "order of discovery", is the inversion of the "order of being", that is, the hierarchic order later presented.

On the face of it, one can infer the parts from earlier assumptions in any order whatsoever. However, the fact that the order chosen is precisely this is not accidental. The reason is that the parts are inferred not only from abstract assumptions but from beliefs and appearances, which at the present stage of the discussion still have no scientific basis. In that respect the "order of discovery" is indeed the reverse of the "order of being", since our cognition begins through sensation (*aisthêsis*) with the contact with Matter, and only after several stages of processing does it grow into the cognition of ideas. Such also is the primal description of the parts of tragedy: even before Aristotle justifies one order or another, he chooses the theatrical production as his starting point. From the various details included in the definition of tragedy Aristotle begins with the assumption that the tragic imitation is "in a dramatic, not in a narrative form":

As they act the stories, it follows that in the first place the spectacle must be some part of the whole; and in the second melody and diction, these two being the means of their imitation. (*Poetics* 6, 1449b33-35).

The assumption that "acting people" (*prattontes*) create the imitation means that it is carried out by actors. This is the meaning of the "dramatic mode". For one who watches a tragedy, this is his first contact with it: he first of all sees the theater stage, since this is the reality by which he is surrounded. Later on he also hears speaking and music, and watches the activities done on stage. The world of meanings is constructed through the information attained that way:

But further, the subject represented also is an action; and the action involves agents, who must necessarily have their distinctive quality both of character and thought, since it is from these that we ascribe certain qualities to their actions, and in virtue of these that they all succeed or fail. (Ibid. 1449b37-1450a4)

The term *prattontes* changes now its denotation: no longer does it refer to the persons who perform the act of imitation, namely the actors; now it refers to those who accomplish the action which is imitated, namely the characters. As for the order of discovery, what is heard on stage is decoded as expressions of thought or character, and the assumption is that thought and character are natural motives for actions. We understand actions in accordance with the thought and character expressed, and of course, we experience thought and character on stage before we experience the actions, which is also the order of reality: they are the causes, action is the effect. Throughout the drama we are exposed to accumulating information about thought, and only at the end of the process of watching, in the last scene, do we attain a complete image of actions, which is the product of the wholeness of things seen and understood: this is the plot. So while watching the tragedy we proceed from its material manifestations to its idea.

Aristotle introduces the details in this order without explanation. Later on, when he explains the order of their importance, the reverse order of discovery is no longer discussed. Nevertheless, the mirror image of these two orders should be examined. It expresses one and the same structure viewed from two different points. This is a clear example of Aristotle's methodology, which combines two processes that in modern concepts cannot abide together: induction and deduction.

Induction (*epagôgê*) is the primal stage which is earlier in time, and which concerns collecting observations. Deduction (*sullogismos*) begins when the data have already been gathered, and we distinguish among them principal and secondary. At this stage we can formalize the idea and derive from it all that is subject to it. In the Aristotelian system one can thus meet every fact twice: first in the course of the inductive gathering and secondly in the course of the deductive derivation.

The primacy of the inductive process notwithstanding, it is clear that for Aristotle pure scientific knowledge is precisely that which is made possible at the stage where we fully command the idea and are able to move from it to the world. In the discussion of the parts of tragedy the grading from Form to Matter—based on that very process—is therefore detailed and elaborate; on the other hand the process of inductive discovery, implied in the first listing, remains no more than a hint and Aristotle does not tackle it.

But this preference also means a decision taken at an intellectual crossroads: had Aristotle been interested in the opposite direction, namely the order of discovery, he would have created a more phenomenological model, like Ingarden's, with which we opened the present chapter. In such

a model the starting point is the observing conscience, and the layers are structured on one another as a process of reconstruction: it begins with the sensual and real contact with the text, and upon it several layers of meaning and understanding are built. This thinking direction is not realized or developed here, but we can recognize it as a possibility based on, and supporting, Aristotelian thought.

## **2. "Deep Structure" and "Surface Structure": Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis**

The discussion so far has dealt with the various textual layers only from the hierarchical viewpoint, that is, their deep-structure relationship, their vertical organization. But a text, whether drama, poem, speech or narration, exists on a temporal axis also, and is set out along it in a certain order. In the previous section we discussed the order in which the spectator can experience the various textual layers; but this order is not fixed and incorporated in the text's structure, since it may also be reversed, and the element last to be experienced, like plot, can prove the first in order of importance.

But there is another order too, a fixed one, compatible with the way the spectator experiences the text and with it the inner structure. This is the consecutive order of time and of performing, that is, the way taken from the beginning to the ending of the text. The relation of beginning, middle and ending varies on each of the textual layers. This is a temporal order existing on the level of the medium, but it is also related to other textual levels. Certain textual levels overstep that line: character and thought, for instance, are not structured in consecutive order. On the other hand certain semantic levels, like plot, are organized in a consecutive structure as well, and the question to be asked is if there is any accord between that structure and the textual verbal continuum.

Aristotle only hints at these questions. He offers no systematic discussion of the relation of the plot continuum to the text continuum, what the Russian formalists used to call "fabula" and "sujet" ("story" and "plot": Tomashevsky 1965). He makes only some random references to this issue.<sup>61</sup> But the question is much broader, since other textual levels also exist in entirely different dimensions, such as character and thought. Thus a constant tension prevails between elements fully organized on the consecutive line of language, and others organized on different layers, whether consecutively organized in themselves or not.

How do elements, which are basically not consecutively organized, become parts of a continuum? How is the linear-consecutive division of

the text connected to its divisions on other dimensions? In Chomskian terms this may also be understood as the problem of the relationship between "surface structure" and "deep structure" (Chomsky 1968).

Aristotle does not analyze this issue fully and systematically; but he refers to it at several points, which makes it possible to learn something about his conception. Aristotle himself makes that distinction by means of the terms "according to quality" (*hôs eidesi*) and "according to quantity" (*kata to poson*), mentioned in *Poetics* 12 (1425b14-15). But the distinction cannot be understood without examining the strange status of the entire discussion appearing in that chapter.

Up to *Poetics* 11 inclusive, Aristotle discusses the elements of tragedy in the sense we have discussed so far, that is, as semantic layers. From *Poetics* 13 onward he resumes the discussion in the same spirit. *Poetics* 12, however, is exceptional. On the face of it Aristotle summarizes there the topics discussed so far and turns to a new subject, although he does not go deeper into it than some terse remarks:

The parts of tragedy to be treated as formative elements [*hôs eidesi*] in the whole were mentioned in the previous chapter. From the point of view, however, of its quantity, i.e. the separate sections into which it is divided, a tragedy has the following [---]. (Ibid. 1425b14-15)

Later Aristotle introduces the common division into the segments of tragedy: "*prologos*", "*parodos*", "*epeisodion*", "*stasimon*", "*kommos*", "*exodos*". He does not return to that division anywhere else in the *Poetics* except for applying "*epeisodion*"; but then, as we shall see, he does so in a slightly different sense.

A theory exists that chapter 12 is a late addition, intended to insert into the *Poetics* also the conventional terms about tragedy, but this theory is controversial.<sup>62</sup> Be that as it may, *Poetics* 12 is not a natural logical stage in the course of Aristotle's argumentation. Despite these considerations, the way it is combined with the general course of the *Poetics*, that is, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative divisions, should be noted.

This distinction refers to a double meaning of the Aristotelian concept of part (*meros*). On the one hand it means something like "element" or "aspect", that is, a component of the whole which is not entirely separable from it, like the tragedy's plot, characters, etc. On the other hand the term is also used in its simple and mechanical meaning: the separable part, the segment. The elements differ in essence, and in combination they create a new whole, just as sound and meaning together create the word. The segments do not differ in essence. They are all constructed more or less of the same elements, and they differ only in their boundaries. They can, in

fact, be disconnected from the whole and recognized separately. Their combination in constituting the whole is quantitative (two chapters, three scenes, a single act), therefore the division based on it, Aristotle states, is "according to the quantity".

The "*parodos*", the "*prologos*" and the "*epeisodion*" are defined by Aristotle mainly through their relation with the continuum, and they are clearly separable. Their definitions stress especially their location and their boundaries:

The prologue is all that precedes the parade of the chorus; an episode all that comes in between two whole choral songs; the exodus all that follows after the last choral song [*khrou melos*]. (Ibid. 1452b19-20)

Beyond this spatial mapping these definitions do not contain a single reference to essence, aim or function.

This discussion comes after a detailed introduction to the parts of plot. In *Poetics* 11 Aristotle speaks of the parts "reversal" (*peripeteia*), "recognition" (*anagnôrisis*) and "sufferance" (*pathos*). On the face of it these are not layers or aspects: they are units of a continuum, since they refer to events in time. But these events are defined according to neither their timing nor their boundaries in time, but to their essence. Their location within plot is subject to the probability and necessity leading to them, and their significance in the text is subject to their impact on other events. It is meaningless to talk about "reversal" without assuming both an earlier situation and a later one that followed the event. The very definition of "reversal" implies assumptions about the complete plot. In that sense these are not segments or quantitative parts; these are in fact units defined "according to quality".

As stated, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative division can be understood as the distinction between deep structure and surface structure. The division according to quantity takes place on the text surface, on the overt front, whether written or vocally performed; the division according to quality takes place on deeper textual layers—the levels of meaning.

A new aspect is added here to the hierarchic system presented above: the hierarchic system marked the layers independently of their mode of realization. The only dimension expressed in the hierarchy was the closeness to or remoteness from the *eidōs*, and the location on the ladder between Matter and Form; but the second distinction introduces another aspect by expressing the relation among the dimensions of the various layers. This is the relation between the length dimension of the verbal text, which is connected to Matter, hence to quantity, and the dimensions of the



other textual layers, which are connected to Form, hence to quality. The questions to be asked are how is the text constructed qua Matter? Is its structure subject to that of the other dimensions? And if it is, how?

The *Poetics* presents these two organization patterns as separate and detached, as may be seen in the following diagram. The *Poetics*, in principle, develops mainly the division "according to quality", that is, the deep structure. True, three of its chapters are devoted to a discussion of language (*Poetics* 20-22), but mainly as regards texture; they do not deal with issues of structure or with great units of any kind, quantitative or qualitative.

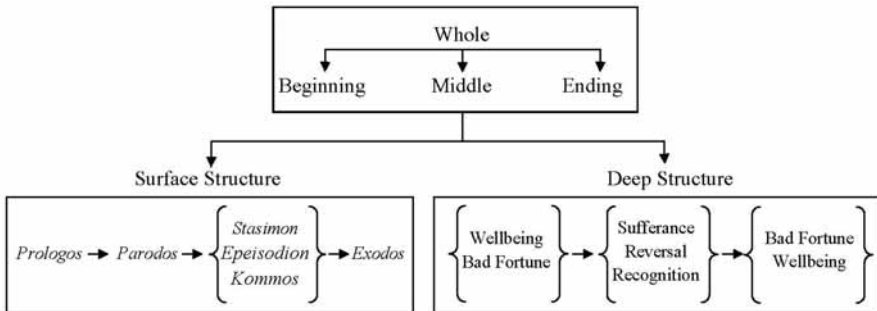


Fig. 2-1

Besides the clear preference for the qualitative discussion, and the almost complete neglect of surface structure, the *Poetics* does not point to any connection between the verbal texture and the division according to quantity. Although at face value these are small and big units of the same thing, they are actually discussed as entirely different and remote things. The term *lexis*, style, refers only to the verbal texture, and has no structural meaning. Terms like *parodos* or *exodos* designate a certain structure of the verbal continuum, but Aristotle does not point to any link between them and the discussion of *lexis*.

Moreover, the discussions of verbal texture and quantitative division are not related to the discussion of deep structure. There is no reference to the function—that is, a reflection in deep structure that a segment of surface structure may have, or the reverse: the way an essential function is realized on the surface structure is hardly discussed. In any case, no dynamic or transformative relation can be discerned here that could shed light on the connection between surface structure and deep structure.

In that respect the *Rhetoric* can contribute much to making up the deficiency of the *Poetics*. In the *Rhetoric* too the distinction between surface and deep structure can be found, but here each of the domains is

discussed separately: the deep structure in books I and II and the surface structure in book III. And in the *Rhetoric* the relation between the levels is closer and more clearly explained. The relation of language's big structures to its small units, which the *Poetics* entirely omits, is systematically presented in the *Rhetoric*:

In making a speech one must study three points: first, the means of producing persuasion; second, the language; third, the proper arrangement of the various parts of the speech. (Ibid. III, 1, 1403b5-7)

Aristotle stresses in one and the same passage both the relation of the layer of meaning (the means of persuasion and their sources) to the surface structure (style and organization of parts), and the distinction (in the surface structure itself) between units of texture and units of structure. One issue is style—the small verbal units; a separate one, which follows it, is the organization of parts and structure of the big units.

The two first books of the *Rhetoric* analyze oration according to "quality", while the third analyzes it according to "quantity". But unlike the distinction introduced in the *Poetics*, here there is also a significant relation between the two levels, and the surface division wholly reflects, and is determined by, the qualitative structure. Here also one of the greatest disagreements between Aristotle and the ancient rhetoricians is raised: for the old writers, dividing and sub-dividing was one of the most important activities, and they coined many terms to designate kinds of segments:

If we make such distinctions we shall end, like Theodorus and his followers, by distinguishing narration proper from 'post-narration' and 'pre-narration' and refutation from 'final-refutation'. But we ought only to bring in a new name if it indicates a real species with distinct specific qualities; otherwise, the practice is pointless and silly, like the way Licymnius invented names in his *Art of Rhetoric*—'secundation', 'divagation', 'ramification'. (*Rhetoric* III, 13, 1414b12-15)

Aristotle does not elaborate this point, and our knowledge of the theories of the old rhetoricians is quite limited. We can only guess the meaning of his criticism according to the context and to other references to the disagreement between him and his forerunners. According to his conception all those divisions take place on the level of surface only; they are not functional and they do not reflect any deep structure, so they are entirely mechanistic. For the old writer every part has a special aim for which it strives, independently of the others. The various parts are

autonomous, and the speech is a combination of such units, each operating separately for its own ends.

For Aristotle there is no constant need concerning any specific part, and certainly the parts do not exist independently. The complete oration has one end, and its various parts are textual manifestations of the means to attain it. But the oration is not a conglomeration of the parts. In that sense the formal division of the speech—the surface structure—should be likened to a two-dimensioned plane, upon which one can see reflections of three-dimensional objects existing in the deep structure. What determines the parts and their location is the deep structure of the whole text.

Since the deep structure is subject to the assumption that the aim of rhetoric is "observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (ibid. I, 2, 1355b27-28), the oration presumably must have two necessary units: one which introduces the issue to be convinced of, and the other which contains the various means of persuasion used for that purpose. So the basic division of the speech is this:

You must state your case and you must prove it [---] since any proof must be a proof of something, and the only use of a preliminary statement is the proof that follows it. Of these two parts the first part is called the statement of the case [*prothesis*], the second part the argument [*pistis*]. (*Rhetoric* III, 13, 1414a30-33)

Since this double division is based on the logical structure of the speech, no wonder that it follows dialectics, where a parallel division exists: that of "problem" (*problêma*) and "proof" (*apodeixis*, ibid.).

These then are the necessary units; the other parts mentioned by the old rhetoricians, even those actually found in orations, are not real units in the Aristotelian division, since they are not derived from the inner structure of the object. For him the terms one should find must indicate "a real species with distinct specific qualities" (ibid.). The parts must be inferred from the idea, from the basic definition, and not express a mechanistic segmentation.

However, some units exist that have no necessary status of an *eidos* but are still needed because of the special circumstances of delivery, the various genres of speech, the special ends of specific speeches, or the inner logic of argumentation. Among these are the opening and the epilogue. They are not necessarily derived from the logical structure of the oration, and they would not be needed were the audience an ideal one. But audience are always characterized by the lowest intellectual common denominator: the art of rhetoric preconceives the audience's limitations, and the secondary division is aimed to overcome them. This division

refers, in fact, to the communicative situation and connects it to the issue of deep and surface structures.

The introduction, *prooimion*, is thus aimed to attract the audience's attention to the subject, and to prepare them for it. Very often the function of the introduction is actually to clean the area of prejudices which may be held by the audience. The epilogue is necessary because of other limitations of the audience: after a long and detailed argumentation has been presented, it can become a burden for the audience's memory, and sometimes the wood may not be seen for the trees. The epilogue is meant to summarize the main points of the argumentation in a short and perceptive way, so that the audience may be able to "take it home".

But some of the functions the old rhetoricians ascribed to the introduction do not necessarily belong to it, since they can be attained at any point in the oration. An example is attracting attention: this is needed, in fact, all through the speech, but least of all in the introduction; at the beginning of the speech the hearer is still fresh and curious, and needs less artificial means to be attracted.

Another point can be seen here: not every element which was usually conceived as a "part" was actually a consecutive text unit. There are parts which are sub-units of broader elements. For instance, narration, questioning and refutation are all sub-units in the unit of proof, and are not necessary in themselves. Of course, a proof must exist—but it need not necessarily be manifested by these or other means. Moreover, and perhaps for that very reason, these parts have no organization or location of their own, nor the status of a complete unit: both their sequential structure and their location within the text are entirely subject to the needs of the complete oration.

Especially typical of this is the discussion of the narration, *diêgêsis*, in the context of rhetoric. This discussion is interesting since it presents a conception entirely opposite to that of *muthos*, the story of tragedy in the *Poetics*. True, in both cases the organization of actions (*sustasis pragmatôn*) is discussed, but the emphases are opposite: in the *Poetics* the emphasis is on the completeness and wholeness of the plot, which is attained through the inner organization around beginning, middle and end, and not by any other principle. Even the connection of actions through a character does not afford unity. In the *Rhetoric*, on the other hand, what gives the text its unity is the case to be proved, and it is no use telling a story with beginning, middle and end. Sequence and chronology are not requisite, but the opposite: the story has to be dismembered, and its various details introduced only according to the local needs of the argumentation.

So the elements which determine a single function within the deep structure will not always be manifested by one consecutive and chronologic text unit. The end product of the surface structure is a manifestation of various combinations of deep structures concerning the logic of the speech, the nature of the facts discussed and the relationship between addressor and addressee.

The structure of the text is layered, and its various levels are layered between its formal structure and the verbal matter. However, the dynamics in presenting the relation between the levels may vary at different places in Aristotle's writing. The most dynamic model is formalized in the discussion of the parts of the speech in the *Rhetoric*. Every unit in the speech's surface structure is presented as a reflection of a unit of the deep structure, so a process of transformation of the deep structure can also be imagined: it begins with the definition of the end of the speech and it becomes gradually detailed, until its realization on the surface structure.

As a result, various interesting phenomena in the relation of the level of language to that of meaning are discovered, and sometimes even quite close ties which Aristotle has not fully noticed. For instance, the discussion of fable and parable (*Rhetoric* II, 22) is closely related to that of metaphor (ibid. III, 4, 11). Fable and parable are discussed as means of convincing, that is, in the framework of the logic of rhetoric. One of the means of convincing is the example (ibid. II, 20), which is divided into two kinds: historic and hypothetic (invented). The hypothetic example is divided into a narrative fable (such as the Aesopean), where a wholly imaginary story becomes analogous with an entire situation in reality, and a parable, where a certain aspect of the situation is compared with an imaginary aspect, without embedding it in a full narrative context. Aristotle introduces the element of parable by referring to the Socratic way of speaking:

The illustrative parallel is the sort of argument Socrates used: e.g. 'Public officials ought not to be selected by lot. That is like using the lot to select athletes, instead of choosing those who are fit for the contest; or using the lot to select a steersman from among a ship's crew, as if we ought to take the man on whom the lot falls, and not the man who knows most about it'. (*Rhetoric* II, 20, 1393b4-8)

Here the speaker creates two hypothetic situations which are based on a principle similar to that of the real situation being discussed, but the hypothetic choice expresses the speaker's criticism of that principle: on the face of it, nomination of a jury by lot instead of according to their potentials does not seem so absurd: first and foremost it is a real practice,

secondly it is a process of nominating a large body of representatives in an equalitarian society; but in comparison with selecting a steersman on a ship, or an athlete in an Olympiad, the unfitness of the method is exposed. Yet despite the use of an imaginary option, this option is not presented as part of a narrative world but as abstract and autonomous.

This is not far removed from the use of a metaphor or simile, and quite similar to Aristotle's description of the metaphor:

Metaphors must be drawn [...] from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related—just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblance even in things far apart. (*Rhetoric* III, 11, 1412a10)

The metaphoric relation of resemblance passes here naturally through the common genus of the things to be compared. Creating a metaphor needs a good acquaintance with the general categories of things, so it needs a philosophical mind.

In spite of the striking resemblance between the analyses of metaphor and of parable, Aristotle does not explicitly point out that resemblance, or even hint at it by using a common term. This seems to be because of a certain compulsion of his system of thought: a metaphor, after all, exists within language; Aristotle conceives it as a certain way of ornamenting speech by exchanging a term for a parallel one. A parable, by contrast, is an idea, or rather an exemplifying of an idea. The difference in terms used for each of them indicates that for Aristotle these are two distinct spheres: the realm of language—Matter, is distinct from the realm of meaning—Form. But in fact, at this point only one step remains for binding these edges together. As the parts of the oration have been clearly presented as the transformation of a deep structure into a surface, not much more is needed to show that a metaphor is also the transformation of a parable, which is in fact the verbal manifestation of an analogy of genus.<sup>63</sup>

Aristotle discusses separately two more verbal elements: the proverb (*gnômē*) and wit (*asteia*). The proverb (*Rhetoric* II, 21) belongs to the deep structure of the speech, and is a kind of inference based on a universal and well known truth. Wit (*Rhetoric* III, 10-11) is a phenomenon belonging to the realm of language, and it means expressing an idea through an opposition or a sharp parallel. Actually the two phenomena are greatly similar, but the first, the proverb, is explained through its logical structure and is conceived as a means of convincing, while the other, wit, is explained by its stylistic structure and is conceived as a purely stylistic technique. But Aristotle gives no clue to the possibility of deriving one from the other; in this context style is conceived as something separate

from meaning, and even the most complex verbal processes are still conceived as ornamentation, not as part of the argument.

This disconnection is especially salient in the small linguistic unit, where style is indeed conceived mainly as an ornament, hence as separate from the world of meaning. When Aristotle deals with the bigger units of the surface structure, the segments, the connection between the deep structure and the surface structure becomes clearer to the eye. As we have seen, this connection is salient in the discussion of the *Rhetoric*, where the parts of the speech are presented as clear transformations of deep structures: Aristotle discusses the concepts of introduction and epilogue and defines them as segments of the text continuum, that is, as "quantitative" parts, but at the same time he analyzes their function in the process of convincing, that is, from the viewpoint of quality and deep structure.

In the *Poetics*, as stated above, the two levels of discussion are disconnected. However, precisely here a connection exists which cannot be found in the *Rhetoric*: a term which is used consequently on all the levels, and thus it preserves its identity in passing between deep and surface structures.

The term "*epeisodion*" is introduced in *Poetics* 12 as a textual unit from the quantitative viewpoint, and is defined as "all that comes in between two whole choral songs" (ibid. 1452b20). But at the same time the term is used also as a unit of the deep structure, as a textual parallel of an event. In *Poetics* 9 Aristotle speaks of an episodic plot: "I call a plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of its episodes" (ibid. 1451b32). So an episode is conceived here as a unit of an action, which can be causally connected to other actions.

Again, at another point Aristotle speaks of "episode" as the realization of a single unit within the plot outline:

His story, again [---] he should first simplify and reduce to a universal form, before proceeding to lengthen it out by the insertion of episodes [*epeisodioun*]. (*Poetics* 17, 1455b18-23)

Later in the same chapter he speaks about episodes in another sense: not only the realization of units within the general outline but also the addition of units which do not necessarily belong to it:

In plays, then, the episodes are short; in epic poetry they serve to lengthen out the poem. The argument of the *Odyssey* is not a long one. A certain man has been abroad many years [---]. Matters at home too have come to this, that his substance is being wasted and his son's death plotted by suitors to his wife. Then he arrives there himself after his grievous

suffering; reveals himself and falls on his enemies; and the end is his salvation and their death. This being all that is proper to the *Odyssey*, everything else is an episode. (*Poetics* 17 1455b18-23)

This "else" defined as "episode" contains not only the realization of the units of the general plot outline but also passages which are not included in it, such as the long digression created by Odysseus' story told to Alkinoos.

The term episode in the *Poetics* has more than one meaning. However it is important to stress that all are conveyed by one single word. This may be the only hint in the *Poetics* that what exists on the surface structure can be a transformation of certain elements from a deep structure which is transfigured from an abstract outline to a verbal and theatrical text.<sup>64</sup>

This connection is possible only for the larger units of language, the segments; language in its smaller particles is conceived more as Matter in its primal and unshaped sense, and therefore the relationship of Form and Matter is fully realized here. Matter in itself is not a metamorphosis or transformation of Form; it is a basically distinct entity, an unshaped given, in which Form is coined.

The surface structure is a structure of material already shaped; it is not primal matter. It is language organized into meaningful units. This is perhaps the reason why in large verbal units there are far more signs of transformation from deep structure to the surface. The small particles, on the other hand, are conceived by Aristotle as rather dumb data, seeds which are still to be poured into a mold. These seeds may be more or less "ornamented" or brilliant. But the "*lexis*" qualities of language are always properties of small particles; they are not conceived as belonging to the complete text. This is also the case with phenomena like metaphor or wit, although their relation to deep structure is clear. In Greek literature we know cases of "metaphoric clusters" and big metaphoric structures which are related also to the plot, such as the theme of blindness and seeing in *Oedipus the King*. The conception of language as material is thus a certain limitation, which prevents the thorough explanation of certain phenomena; however, these phenomena do exist in Greek literature, and are also implied in several points in Aristotle's writing.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE COMMUNICATIONAL DIMENSION

#### **1. Addressor and Addressee: the Communicational Situation**

Having discussed the semantic dimension of the text, we move now to the second dimension, the communicational. This discussion will focus on the real situation in which the text exists. This situation must be understood as inter-subjective or interpersonal: a single person or a group are the addressor who generates the text, and a single person or a group are the addressee to whom the text is addressed and who are supposed to decode it, understand it and respond to it. These roles are of course not fixed or essential: the person who happens to be an addressee of a certain text can be the addressor of another and vice versa.

In the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* Aristotle makes many comments about the speaker, the listener and their roles, but he hardly ever depicts an explicit and comprehensive scheme in which both participants are located, and which shows their relationship and their relation to the text.

The first to portray a model of that kind is Plato in his dialogue *Ion* (533d-534e). In an argument in which Socrates suggests the theory of poetical "*mania*", Plato constructs the first unified and complete model comprising the poles of both addressor and addressee. This is the parable of the magnet, which describes divine inspiration through the image of magnetic power passing from one object to another. The source of that inspiration is God, and from him it passes to the poet, then to the *rhapsôdos* (the performer) and finally to the audience.

The conception of poetry as a divine gift is in itself an ancient tradition, but one of this model's innovations is that it points to one single principle as an explanation of both creative and receptive processes. The explanations prior to the Platonic model would disconnect these two processes and discuss each separately. The traditional theories of poetry conceive of the poet as inspired by a divine source, which has nothing to do with the recipients' response. The theory suggested by Plato is of course different from the Aristotelian: it is relevant to the present discussion in that it suggests for the first time what we are looking for in this study: a

unified and comprehensive model which leaves space for both addressor and addressee.

The only point in Aristotle where a reference can be found to the overall communicational situation (and not to one of its components separately) is in the *Rhetoric*. When Aristotle discusses the "intra-artistic" (*entekhnoi*) modes of persuasion, he presents them as ordered on a continuum between two poles:

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself. (*Rhetoric* I, 2, 1356a2-4)

True, Aristotle's aim is less to depict a model of communication than to present a comprehensive classification of the modes of persuasion. This must rest on a division which looks natural and primal, and the sum of whose parts appears undisputedly "whole". For instance, the threefold temporal division into past, present and future becomes the basis of the distinction of judicial, deliberative and epideictic oration (*Rhetoric* I, 2); the distinction of high and low, noble and ignoble, becomes the principle distinguishing comedy and tragedy, or heroic and comic epic (*Poetics* 2). By this same method, here too Aristotle bases his classification on a distinction which seems comprehensive and natural. He presents a model of speaker and listener as two poles connected through an utterance, an argument—actually a text—going on between them. For Aristotle this distinction comprehends all the components of the speech act.

There is thus the *legôn*, the speaker; the *akroatês*, the listener; and between them the *logos*, the speech (or "the speech itself", *en autô tō logô*):

**Speaker → {Speech itself} → Listener**

For Aristotle each of these three components determines a certain group of persuasion modes. On the face of it this is only a method of classifying into three compartments. But from the classificatory principle itself much can be learnt about Aristotle's view of the communicational situation. According to that principle the kinds of persuasion modes are divided into

***êthos* → {*logos*} → *pathos***

The mode of persuasion related to the orator is the presentation of his *êthos*, namely his system of moral preference; the modes related to the

listener are the ways to lead him to a certain emotional standpoint; the modes related to the argumentation itself are the proofs and the logical structure of the oration. Later, when Aristotle discusses the function of *êthos* as mode of persuasion, he adds more important details:

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses. (Ibid. 1356a4-13)

Note that he does not speak about the character of the speaker himself, or the audience's prejudice regarding that character, since they have nothing to do with the contact created between orator and audience at a given point of time and space. Aristotle does not strive to enumerate all the components of the speech event, but only those which are reflected in the speech itself. The communication act itself with all its components should therefore be distinguished from the communicational functions, manifested by the reference of language to given components of that situation. Thus the ethical function in the speech, that is, the complex of ethical arguments presented in it, is related to the component of the speaker in the communicational situation.

What does this function mean? Help here may be rendered by what Aristotle says later in the *Rhetoric* about the element of *êthos* in the speech (ibid. II, 1-18) and also by what he says about *êthos* in tragedy (*Poetics* 6, 15), since in all these contexts the concept of *êthos* is quite consistent.

In the previous chapter we discussed *êthos* as one of the textual layers. As we have already noted, *êthos* in general, according to Aristotle, is the constant principle underlying our various choices and preferences as to our actions, therefore in a certain sense it is the cause of our actions:

[A]nd the action involves agents, who must necessarily have their distinctive qualities both of character and thought, since it is from these that we ascribe certain qualities to their actions, and in virtue of these that they all succeed or fail. (*Poetics* 6, 1449b36-1450a2)

But in the framework of verbal arts the meaning is slightly different: *êthos*, character, is the verbal manifestation of the principle of choice, a declaration of the moral tendencies:

Character in the play is that which reveals the choice [*proairesis*] of the agents—hence there is no room for character in a speech on a purely indifferent subject. (Ibid. 1450b7-11)<sup>65</sup>

When Aristotle speaks about the existence or inexistence of character in the text he means the character's verbal manifestation. So he can speak about a tragedy "without character", and weigh it against a tragedy "without plot". He does not mean the tendencies implied in the hero's actions (for instance, our impression of Oedipus as impulsive and irascible because he murdered Laius on the road), but what is explicitly expressed in the hero's speeches.

Moreover, character is not a psychological concept, referring to reflective impulses and responses; it is not parallel to the concept of "motive". It is an ethical concept, always concerning a certain decision or choice. So verbal manifestation of character means a clear formalization of the principle of choice or preference, such as "I prefer to die and not to live as a slave"; or the contrary, "I prefer the slave's life to a heroic death".

In drama character is manifested when the poet lets his character make declarations of that kind, beyond the actions he lets him do. In the *Rhetoric* these declarations are not of characters belonging to a fictional world but of the orator himself. If the orator declares his preferences, his *êthos* is expressed. If he does not make such declarations his speech is "without *êthos* [character]". Aristotle regards the manifestation of *êthos* as a central and important means, since the speaker's *êthos* decisively influences the reliability he can attain for his argument and intentions. Since manifestation of *êthos* is a rhetorical means of persuasion, the kind of *êthos* expressed is clearly important as certain kinds of moral choice may cause disbelief rather than belief. In tragedy the *êthos* must be suitable (*khrêstos*, *Poetics* 15), that is, in harmony with the requirements of the genre, which in tragedy means being earnest, noble. In an oration, the *êthos* reflected should be good sense, excellence and good will.<sup>66</sup> The orator has to construct all these manifestations of *êthos* as integral parts of his speech, and of course, not to count on the audience's prejudice and previous knowledge.

When the orator speaks about other characters, he is supposed to manifest their *êthos* too. In most cases the *êthos* of the described character infiltrates the speech through the orator's viewpoint and his acceptance or rejection of it. So all these ethical descriptions actually manifest the

speaker's character, which is the most important means of evincing reliability.

Let us pass now to the hearers:

Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile. It is towards producing these effects, as we maintain, that present day writers on rhetoric direct the whole of their efforts. This subject will be treated in detail when we come to speak of the emotions. (*Rhetoric* I, 2, 1356a13-19)

So the pole of the addressee concerns the emotional aspects of the oration. To convince, the orator must lead his audience to an emotional situation fitting the decision he wants them to take. If the speech aims to lead the audience to an accusation in a trial or to wage war, he should lead them to a state of anger; if the orator aims at a decision of acquittal or making peace, he should arouse emotions of conciliation, friendship or love.

Aristotle believes that emotional manipulation is the main expertise of the earlier rhetoricians, like Thrasimachus in his book *eleoi* (*compassions*). Aristotle usually criticizes his forerunners, as is quite obvious in the quoted passage. They disregarded the ethical aspect and over-evaluated the emotional aspect, which they deemed exclusive. Aristotle strives to present a more balanced theory of rhetoric, where each component is given its proper weight.

Aristotle seems to believe that a model which situates the speaker before the hearer and determines the method of persuasion suitable for each of them is a way to balance things and give them the proper weight. Although Aristotle is somewhat reserved as to the proper status of *pathos*, he does devote an 18-chapter discussion to that subject in *Rhetoric* II. This is more or less as long as his discussion on *logos*, namely the argumentative methods of persuasion. *Êthos*, on the other hand, despite the declaration presenting it as the most important means, earns a quite narrow space in the *Rhetoric* (ibid. I, 9), and even that not in a discussion of means of persuasion but in a catalogue of topics (*topoi*) for eulogies.

Aristotle's objection to the exclusive status of *pathos* seems to be a moral one. He regards the use of *pathos* as kind of distraction or even distortion: influencing the judge's emotion is like "wrapping a carpenter's rule before using it" (*Rhetoric* I, 1, 1354a25). It may look strange therefore that Aristotle finally devotes such a large space to *pathos*. Something implicit—not explicitly claimed—seems to inhere in what Aristotle says at several other points: for him the emotions aroused by

rhetoric are not supposed to distort the rational decisions; these are indeed emotional positions, but they respond to real data about the world. In order to change, shape, or amplify an emotion, one has to use facts, conclusions, or examples, that is, logical thinking processes, which are basically not different from the argumentation and proof themselves.

A similar idea is implied in the *Poetics* too: pity and fear are undoubtedly central emotions in the tragic effect. For Aristotle they function most effectively when they result from the plot and its probable and necessary structure. If they result from other sources they become problematic. But as said before in the discussion of performance (chapter 3 above), emotionally the theatrical production may be effective no less than plot. We know quite well the responses of terror aroused by the Erynies in the *Eumenides*, or the terrifying mythological creatures of *Prometheus Bound*. Yet -

[T]o produce this same effect by means of the spectacle is less artistic, and requires extraneous aid. Those, however, who make use of the spectacle to put before us that which is merely monstrous and not productive of fear, are wholly out of touch with tragedy; not every kind of pleasure should be required of a tragedy, but only its own proper pleasure. (*Poetics* 14, 1453b7-11)

Aristotle finds a contrast between pity and fear, which are aroused through perception of distinct situations, and terror aroused by the "monstrous" (*teratôdês*): this is a kind of sensuous reflex, that is, an immediate response to a terrifying stimulus, which does not go through reason.

Pity and fear are described to a great extent as rational processes. Pity refers to somebody similar to us, and fear to something which may happen to us. Similarly, and in more detail, are the emotions described in the *Rhetoric* II, 2 and 18. Terror, the response to the "monstrous", on the other hand, cannot be reduced to any rational or cognitive process; it is instead a nervous reflex. Aristotle objects to the ancient rhetoricians' tendency to generate emotional drift by constructing tearful situations (such as introducing weeping wives and children) and by various manipulations undermining self-control.

Like *êthos*, *pathos* too can be explained in itself, not only in relation to the audience. This is especially clear in tragedy, where a great deal of the *pathos* is a component of plot, concerning painful acts executed among the characters. Indeed, *pathos* in tragedy is defined as acts of wounding, killing, or causing pain. Nevertheless, also here the main end of *pathos* is

after all the emotional impact on the audience, whether they are supposed to be convinced by a speech or led by a tragedy to a cathartic experience.

In Aristotle's communicative model the addressor is connected mainly with the ethical function of the text, and the addressee with the pathetic function. It may be interesting to compare the Aristotelian with the structuralist model, which received its most accomplished formulation from Roman Jakobson.<sup>67</sup> In general this model is parallel to the Aristotelian. In both models the addressor and addressee are situated on either side of a message:

### **Addressor – Message – Addressee**

But in Jakobson the functions attached to these components are almost opposites: the addressor is associated with the "emotive" function of the utterance and the addressee with the "conative" one.

The emotive function means the emotional shading imparted to the utterance beyond its explicit information:

The so called EMOTIVE or "expressive" function, focused on the ADDRESSER, aims a direct expression of the speaker's attitude toward what he speaks about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion whether true or feigned; therefore, the term "emotive" [---] has proved to be preferable to "emotional". The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. They differ from the means of referential language both by their sound pattern [---] and by their semantic role. (Jakobson 1960, p. 141)

As for the conative function,

Orientation toward the ADDRESSEE, the CONATIVE function, finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative, which syntactically, morphologically, and often even phonemically deviate from other nominal and verbal categories. (Ibid. p. 142)

Imperatives like "Go!" "Drink!" and vocatives like "O Athenians!" are direct expressions of the orientation to the addressee. But this same orientation can also be manifested indirectly and without any grammatical inflection: "It is cold outside" may in a certain context be parallel to "Close the window, please!" and so on.

There is a formal parallel between the Aristotelian and the structuralist method, since both take specific components of the communicative situation and through them determine the various functions of the utterance. But in their content, these functions are almost opposites. In the



Aristotelian conception the emotional aspect of language is focused entirely on the listener, and in the structuralist conception it is focused on the speaker. To understand this difference one has to bear in mind that Aristotle's model is entirely under the sign of the conative function, since his model aims at classifying the means of persuasion, which are all naturally "conative". So the means of persuasion become a basic assumption, a roof laid over the entire model. The conception of language as something aimed at convincing, that is, at affecting the listener, is a basic assumption true for all parts of the Aristotelian model.

The inner structure of that model refers mainly to the division of labor among the components of the speech for that goal: all of them, ethical, logical and pathetic alike, are aimed, each in its own way, at realizing the end of persuasion. In the structuralist model, on the other hand, the utterance has no definite aim from the start; there is no basic assumption as to the function it has to realize. The functions can change according to the changing dominance of various components in the communicative situation.

This difference is quite understandable because Jakobson's model concerns verbal behavior in general while Aristotle's, on the face of it, is rhetorical only. But let us not be misled by that. The difference we examined above, the dominance of the conative function, and its bonding with the emotional aspect, is a general difference, and it is true for non-rhetorical contexts as well. This is also the situation in the *Poetics*, and in fact it could be said that this orientation is typical of Greek literature in general.

Within the Aristotelian context it is perhaps easy to explain the dominance of the conative function through the relation between the communicative situation and the Aristotelian system of the four causes: the addressor is connected with the efficient cause, since he is the one who transforms the utterance from potentiality to actuality; the addressee is connected with the effective cause, since the utterance is directed at him or her. Within the Aristotelian system the effective cause is closer to the essence, since it is decisive as to the structure and form of the object. The efficient cause is indeed responsible for the object's existence, but it is not regarded as part of its real essence. So in the Aristotelian conception the form of the utterance seems conditioned more by the addressee, who is the end, than by the addressor, who is the producer.

This is also why functions that at face value are independent of the addressee, *êthos* and *logos*, are shaped in relation to the object of the convincing, which is the addressee. And on the contrary, the speaker's attitude, the *êthos*, will never be conceived as the speech's object. Aristotle

is not interested in the speaker's *êthos* in itself, but only as a means to affect the audience. And the speaker's emotions are even less interesting: they are entirely irrelevant to the speech, and are not related to any of its ends. But since the end of the speech is to convince the audience to make a certain decision, and since we know that decisions are greatly conditioned also by the emotions of the persons who make them, the addressee's emotions—the *pathos*—are significant for the shaping of the speech.

The situation of the *Poetics* is not essentially different: although it does not ascribe to poetry an end of persuasion in the rhetorical sense, it still views its end as arousing certain emotions in the hearer, whether the general feelings of pleasure from the very imitation (ibid. 4) or the more specific emotions suiting tragedy, namely pity and fear (ibid. 6, 13 and 14). Therefore the *Poetics* too is oriented to the addressee, although it conceives the addressee differently from the *Rhetoric*.

As in the *Rhetoric*, in the *Poetics* too there is no emotive or expressive function connected with the addressor. True, at a certain point the addressor's emotions seem perhaps to carry some weight in the work:

As far, as may be, too, the poet should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages. Given the same natural qualification, he who feels the emotions to be described will be most convincing: distress and anger, for instance, are portrayed most truthfully by one who is feeling them at the moment. (*Poetics* 17, 1455a31-32)

But the weight ascribed to the addressor's emotion is not due to a specific interest in these emotions in themselves but to their capacity to influence the audience's emotions. The emotional impact on the audience will be more effective if a parallel emotion on the addressor's part lies behind it. But poetry is not conceived as a way to express the author's emotions: it has no expressive function. If it deals with emotions, it does so only as means to amplify its rhetorical power, to arouse emotions in the audience.

Aristotle's conception of poetry, then, does not take into account the poet's emotion. From the standpoint of the image of poetry as shaped in the modern world, at least since romanticism, this may seem questionable; however, this position is consistently maintained in the *Poetics*. Lyrical poetry is one of the most notable absentees from the *Poetics* and from the concept of *mimêsis* in general. It is included neither in the definition of *mimêsis* nor in the classification of genres and the history of poetry. This lack may be understood if we note that Aristotle's concept of language also is entirely devoid of an emotive component (in Jakobson's sense), while the rhetorical component is abundantly present.<sup>68</sup>

Stressing the rhetorical element at the expense of the emotive is widespread in antiquity, far beyond Aristotle. Even including lyrical poetry in the overall image of Greek literature, it still has many more rhetorical than emotive elements. In the lyrical corpus itself, poetry of the personal kind, like that of Sappho or Archilochus, is not the most typical model. Even among the speaking characters in tragedy this speech model is not salient. Most characters, even in the cruelest distress, speak rhetorically rather than expressively. Sophocles' Philoktetes, with his painful exclamations, is exceptional. Typical is Medea, who at the climax of sorrow and madness addresses the Corinthian women to win their sympathy by analyzing the situation of women in society. The typical model of Greek literature in general is the rhetorical, where the "I" is shaped in ethical not pathological terms, and the "you" is treated in terms of persuasion and controlling.

## 2. The Communicational Situation between *Praxis* and *Poiêsis*

So far we have depicted a unified and general Aristotelian model of the communicational situation. It is now time to note the differences between the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* in that respect. These differences center on the distinction between the two spheres of human activity, *praxis* and *poiêsis*. We have stated already that the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* differ on these two spheres (chapter 1: 3, 4 above). *Poiêsis*, the activity of producing objects in the world, is the basic activity of the *Poetics*. *Praxis*, the activity of generating and processing situations in the world, is the sphere of the *Rhetoric*. The *Poetics* discusses the production of poetic texts, the *Rhetoric* discusses the generating situations of belief and conviction. True, in poetry too one can imagine situations of change caused by the texts, but the art of *poetics* as such concerns producing the texts, not causing these changes. The opposite is true for the *Rhetoric*. *Rhetoric* indeed produces texts of speeches, yet its activity is not that, but persuading people through them.

This difference between *poetics* and rhetoric also influences the status acquired by the communicative situation generally in these arts. As *praxis*, rhetoric always takes place in a given situation, either changing or preserving it. Without taking that situation and its components into account, persuasion is impossible: one can persuade only specific people in specific circumstances. For that matter, one has to outline clearly the speaker, his addressee and of course the circumstances. Referring to the various components of the act of communication is also an essential part

of the utterance used for persuasion. It is no coincidence, then, that the most comprehensive depiction of the communicative situation can be found in the *Rhetoric*, since that situation, in its very essence, is especially relevant to the art of rhetoric. Note, however, that Aristotle is not interested in that situation itself—only in how it is reflected in the orator's speech. This, for instance, is the source of the distinction between "intra-artistic" (*entekhnoi*) and "extra-artistic" (*atekhnoi*) means.

Of the modes of persuasion some are technical [intra-artistic], others non-technical [extra-artistic]. By the latter I mean such things as are not supplied by the speaker but are there at the outset—witnesses, evidence given under torture, written contracts, and so on. By the former I mean such as we can ourselves construct by means of the principles of rhetoric. The one kind has merely to be used, the other has to be invented. (*Rhetoric* I, 2, 1355b36-39)

Right after that Aristotle divides the intra-artistic means of persuasion into the three kinds discussed above: those connected with the speaker, those with the listener and those with the argument itself. A complex situation is presented here, and on the face of it a double message seems to be implied. Aristotle thinks about a full communicational situation, consisting of various components. Many of these are extra-linguistic and concern the circumstances in which the speech is delivered, hence are entirely independent of the orator. Aristotle takes into account this full situation, but he still reduces the orator's art to what he can invent by himself—to his verbal capacity.

But having thus reduced it, Aristotle immediately broadens the art of rhetoric at another point: this very verbal activity reflects the full communicational activity, not only the declared subject of the oration. The intra-artistic means are defined thus through their connections with various components of the communicational situation, that is, language in relation to the speaker, the listener and the subject matter. It could be said that the verbal stratum of the oration relates to all the components of the communicational situation.

The situation in the *Poetics* is wholly different. True, the relation between poet and audience is also a communicational situation, but it is not part of the text. The poetic text is not meant to express either the situation or its implications. Poetry, unlike rhetoric, is not required to relate to the communicational situation. This is clear from the concept of *mimêsis* developed by Aristotle: the end of *mimêsis* is to create a piece of reality which may seem as autonomous and independent as possible. So the mimetic utterance cannot be "context dependent", since by its very

nature it cannot be a message addressed by a specific person to somebody else. In that respect drama is indeed the most developed kind of *mimêsis*, since in drama there are no speaker and audience incorporated in the text; it is a direct presentation of characters, their speech and their actions.

Aristotle believes that even in epic poetry, which on the face of it has a speaker, the lesser his role the more successful the effect:

Homer, admirable as he is in every other respect, is especially so in this, that he alone among epic poets is not unaware of the part to be played by the poet himself in the poem. The poet should say very little in his own character, as he is no imitator when doing that. Whereas the other poets are perpetually coming forward in person, and say but little, and that only here and there, as imitators, Homer, after a brief preface brings in forthwith a man, a woman, or some other character—no one of them characterless, but each with distinctive characteristics. (*Poetics* 24, 1460a5-11)

Unlike in rhetoric, the communicational situation itself and the reference to it are not part of the poetical text, whether drama, where it is absent by definition, or epic, where it can exist in principle, but must be as reduced as possible for the epic to attain its mimetic end.

Another reason for the exclusion of lyrics from the *Poetics* may be detected here. No matter whether the "lyrical I" sounds emotional, rationally rhetoric, or ethically philosophic, the reference to it will be opposed to the mimetic principle. Imitation should concern directly only an action, *pragma*, not a speaker. If it needs a mediating entity it should hide it as much as possible.

Similar things can be said of the other pole of the communicational act, the audience. In this case it is more difficult to examine the issue clearly, and there are fewer explicit formulations of it. As stated before, poetry is conceived as dominated by the conative function, that is, aimed at the effect directed at the addressee. But the status of the addressee in poetry differs from that in oration. In the *Rhetoric* the specific addressee is a dimension which has to be taken into account in the text, and given a direct or indirect expression. The long discussion of passions and characters (*Rhetoric* II, 1-18) is intended to guide the orator on how to construct his speech in accordance with the changing character and inclinations of the specific audience he meets: what kinds of argument will be effective for a young audience? What will be effective for old people? What will be effective for people in a state of fear or reconciliation? The specific assumptions about the nature and state of the addressee are taken into account within the verbal text.

The business of poetry is different: it does not address a specific audience in specific circumstances, but a kind of ideal and conceptual audience. Poetry does not strive to attain a specific result, that is, to have the audience make a specific decision. It aims at arousing emotions, but not at using these emotions for any other end. The emotions aroused are the end itself, and this end is fixed in relation to every poetic genre: tragedy aims at pity and fear, comedy at laughter, and so on.<sup>69</sup> The emotions striven for by poetry are not subject to the communicational situation but to the generic rules, so the assumptions of poetry about the audience must be much more general.<sup>70</sup> The conception of the audience of poetry is somehow similar to that of the audience of epideictic oration, since this kind of oration is not meant to lead the audience to a specific decision either; its aim is a more general kind of emotion and agreement, together with appreciation of the speaking talent of the orator himself. But this point of osculation between epideictic oration and poetry only stresses the difference between poetry and rhetoric in general, since even if epideictic oration has no punctual and specific end, it still addresses its audience directly, and this addressing is inherent in both its language and its structure: in its language—since epideictic oration still includes the pattern of direct vocation, like "O Athenians", in its structure—since here too the same argument will be presented differently before different audiences: as Socrates says in *Menexenus*, it is not the same to praise Athenians in Athens and to do it anywhere else (ibid. 235b).

In poetry the audience are entirely absent from the verbal stratum, since they are not directly addressed; true, the text includes certain assumptions about the audience, but only general ones, never specific concerning distinctive groups. The addressee of poetry is beyond the range of direct and immediate reference; he exists as a border concept.

It may thus be said that while in rhetoric there is a textual expression for each component of the communicational situation, in poetry the communicational situation is mostly outside the scope of the text's direct reference. The text creates a separate and autonomous world which is not the world of the communicational situation:

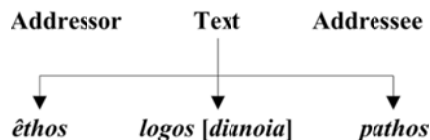


Fig. 3-1

The elements of rhetoric which point to components of the communicational situation exist in poetry too, yet not as indications of a real speaking situation but as internal parts of an autonomous world imitated by the text. The *êthos* exists there as properties of the represented characters; the *logos* exists there as the internal argumentation system used by the characters (what Aristotle calls in the *Poetics* *dianoia*, thought); even the *pathos* is conceived as part of the plot and not the communicational situation:

A third part is suffering [*pathos*]; which we may define as an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as murders on the stage, tortures, wounding, and the like. (*Poetics* 11, 1452b11)

The use of the term *pathos* here is ambiguous, since it signifies both passion, as in the *Rhetoric*, and a certain kind of painful event, as in the *Poetics*. At face value, this is one term used for two different concepts, but actually the shifting from one to the other is not coincidental. Only by turning the *pathos* into an action can it be introduced as an inner component of the plot, hence as an element in the text and its world, and not as a component of the communicational situation.

But in the *Poetics* too there is room for *pathos* in the sense of the *Rhetoric*, that is, as passions of pity and fear. At this point Aristotle has a delicate shift of thought hidden in the definition of tragedy, without further explanation or detail: "arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions" [*di' eleou kai phobou perainousa tên tôn toioutôn pathêmatôn katharsin*] (*Poetics* 6, 1449b26-7).

This ambiguity opened the door to intense hermeneutic activity. Delving into the abundance of interpretations of this enigmatic sentence is pointless; the relevant question for us is where to locate the "catharsis", in other words, who is supposed to undergo it: is it an event occurring to characters in the plot, or is it an experience undergone by the audience? Most commentators tend to connect catharsis with the audience and view it as the "proper pleasure" of tragedy. However, there are some important readings, like that of Else (1963: 230-232), which see here a statement about the inner structure of the tragic text. In light of what we detected in the *Poetics* as the tendency to introduce the communicational theory into the text, this reading has a justification of its own.

One of the traps in the text is the term *pathêma*. Was it chosen intentionally as something distinct from *pathos*? The term *pathos* is presented in the *Poetics* as a kind of event, so is *pathêma* supposed to signify a kind of emotion (pity, fear)? Both terms seem to encompass this double meaning; *pathêma* especially, in its common usage, tends to

signify a harsh event rather than an emotion.<sup>71</sup> It is quite possible that Aristotle believes that within the tragic plot something happens which is similar to the audience's experience. But he does not explain or go into detail, and the result is an enigmatic expression lying on the hazy border between the text and its recipient.

Transferring the communicational situation from a context of *praxis* to one of *poiêsis* makes Aristotle ascribe to the poetic text a striving for autonomy by both poet and audience. The poetic text thus has no clear footprint of the situation in which it was created, on the part of either the poet or the audience. At the same time the *Rhetoric* views the oration as part of a communicational event, so it carries the imprints of all the participants of that communicational event, and gets its meaning mainly through that situation.

But the fact that Aristotle ascribes such autonomy and separateness to the poetic text does not mean that he has nothing to say about the communicational situation which generates poetry. His claim is only that the poetic text as such does not reflect that event. The accomplished text bears no sign of the communicational situation, and is a separate entity. Still, it is created by someone and for someone. Even if these are not explicit parts of the text, it does not mean that there is nothing to be said about them. True, Aristotle does not ascribe to these questions the status of a separate and autonomous subject in its own right, but he has numerous comments to make about it, which may clarify how he views the poet and the audience.





## CHAPTER FIVE

# ADDRESSOR, AUTHOR, POET: PERSONAL TALENT AND CREATIVE MEMORY

### 1. The Author

#### 1.1. The Sources of Poetry

The author of the text, its producer, is the poet or the orator. They belong to two different disciplines, rhetoric and poetics, which also causes a difference in their status and function. The main function of the producer of rhetorical texts is practical: he is usually a statesman, a politician, and the rhetorical text serves certain ends determined in the framework of his public activity and is produced as part of that activity, as *praxis*, in the Aristotelian term. The poet, on the other hand, deals with *poiesis*, which means production in the broad sense, namely producing objects of any kind whether material objects or verbal texts. The poetic verbal text, unlike the rhetorical, strives for a kind of autonomous status.

On the face of it, at this point rhetoric and poetry seem to split into two entirely different extremes, but actually this split is not absolute. After all, the orator needs some of the poet's skills, as Aristotle himself assumes when discussing *lexis* in the third part of the *Rhetoric*. From what he says there, the orator does not differ from the poet as to his function as producer of texts. In the Aristotelian image, the poet is accorded certain qualities in common with the orator and with other text producers. That image can serve us as a starting point, since it clearly shows the place of the Aristotelian conception within the long cultural tradition regarding this question.

The traditional Greek answer to the question about the sources of poetry and status of the poet is that implied in the Homeric epics. The poet is chosen by the gods, and the gods—the Muses, Apollo or others—are those who speak through his mouth. Therefore every opening of an epic song includes the traditional invocation to the Muse that supposedly grants the text to the poet.

This conception is not all of a piece but separates into several approaches. A significant question, for instance, is to whom among the gods is the granting of poetry ascribed. Is it the Muse, Apollo or Dionysus? The specific nature of the granting deity greatly determines the image of the poet and of poetry. Another significant question is what the exact quality of that divine "gift" is: is it the specific poem composed at a given moment, or the very talent of composing?

The latest variant of the traditional approach, namely that which conceives the entire poem as the god's gift, is the model presented by Socrates in Plato's *Ion*. He speaks there of the divine madness as a channel for composing poetry. This model also shifts the divine source of poetry from the Music-Apollonian to the ecstatic Dionysian pole.

But along with this conception, Greek thought upholds a different tradition, also with Homeric roots although it is marginal in Homer: if the gods bestow the talent for composing poetry, not the texts themselves, poetry can be regarded in a certain sense as a profession, a craft (*tekhnē*), and the poet as a supplier of certain services. So Penelope regards the poet Phemius in the first part of the *Odyssey* (337-344), while Telemachus, who sharply objects, represents the usual Homeric approach (346-359). Solon too in one of his poems presents the poet as a kind of professional, together with the physician, the sailor, the fisherman and other professionals.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, there is no professional activity which is not accomplished under divine patronage, but this only means that the profession has a divine patron, not that the actual professional activity is conditioned by the god's full involvement and control.

Aristotle's *Poetics* is the culmination of the development of that professional conception. Its basic assumption is that poetry is an art based on rules which can be learnt and taught. The conception which explains poetry through a divine source may liken the poet to a prophet or an oracle, which are the channels through which gods address human beings. As such the poet is conceived as an exceptional person in his surroundings: his activity in transmitting divine messages is not similar to other human activities. The "professional" approach, on the other hand, regards poetic activity as one of the normal human pursuits, so the poet is no different from any other professional.

Two phenomena, one linguistic the other historical, can exemplify the transition from the archaic to the "professional" conception. First, the term *poiētēs*, which means poet for Aristotle, replaces the more archaic word *aoidos*. *poiētēs* derives from the verb *poiein*, which means to make, produce or create. Such a transition could not have taken place as long as the poet was regarded as a medium transmitting the god's words.<sup>73</sup> The

historical change is that producing poetry has become part of a competitive activity, although that competition is part of a ritual. A competition cannot be held unless poetry is conceived as the outcome of skill and dexterity. The poet who depends on divine inspiration cannot compete with anybody, since his activity is not controlled by himself. Once poetic production begins to be competitive, its professional quality becomes decisive.<sup>74</sup>

The transition from an activity of inspiration to one of competition is one more step toward rhetorical activity. It allows an easier comparison of them, since rhetoric, in its political and practical way, also takes place in competition-like situations. Aristotle himself understood this very well:

It is those who do bear them [the vocal qualities] in mind who usually win prizes in the dramatic contests; and just as in drama the actors now count for more than the poets, so it is in the contests of public life owing to the defects of our political institutions. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b32-35)

Aristotle does not express great sympathy for this kind of activity, and for him the dramatic contests, like the political, vulgarize poetry and rhetoric alike. But his negative approach does not alter the fact that there is a certain analogy between the two disciplines, which obliges the poet and the orator to cope with similar problems. This similarity is of course possible only thanks to the change in the conception of the poet, and his definition as a craftsman and professional.<sup>75</sup>

This common denominator of the two disciplines allows us now to define the differences between them in a new way. The differences, as we shall see, are sometimes quite fine. The orator is mainly a man of *praxis*, the poet one of *poiêsis*. This is the difference between the public person and the creator. But the orator, as a side effect of his activities, is a creator too, but he differs from the poet in that he creates **arguments**, while the poet creates **imitations**. This difference is almost self-evident, but it allows recognition of various points of resemblance between the disciplines. The realms of difference only highlight the points of resemblance in matters of text composition and handling the verbal materials. But not surprisingly, the issue is dealt with mainly from the poet's viewpoint, since the poet, by his very definition as *poiêtês*, is a producer of texts.

In Aristotle the conception of the poet as a craftsman is a basic assumption, which makes possible the composition of the *Poetics*. He argues very little in favor of that conception and against opposing ones. Only at one point does he refer to this assumption directly:

Hence it is that poetry demands a man with a special gift for it [*euphuous*], or else, one with a touch of madness in him [*manikou*]; the former can easily assume the required mood [*euplastoi*], and the latter may be actually beside himself with emotion [*ekstatikoi*]. (*Poetics* 17, 1455a33)

The former, with the gift of nature, are characterized by the word *euplastoi*, which means something like well-formed, and probably refers to the gift of self-forming, the ability to assume several identities, to mold themselves for several emotions. The other possibility is *ekstatikoi*, which means ecstatic, tending to uncontrolled emotions, subject to external powers. Assuming that the aim of poetry is to create imitations, or to shape a model of reality in its various aspects, it requires the ability to create a variety of emotions; therefore the natural gift which enables one to identify with and represent such a variety seems more efficient than the tendency to be swept along uncontrolled on emotions of a certain kind, as in the case of ecstasy.<sup>76</sup>

Note that Aristotle does not deny the ecstatic hypothesis as a causal explanation for the creative process; he recognizes that there are poets who create that way, but his definition of poetry pushes poets of this kind aside and places at the center a different kind, skilled and professional. If poetry is defined as *mimêsis*, imitation, it seems that the poet most likely to realize that definition will be one who is not subject to stormy moods, but is mentally and creatively flexible and can adjust easily and quickly to several kinds of emotion.

What then is the function of the ecstatic poet? Aristotle does not elaborate, but his theory implies that this person is not really a poet in the sense of *poiêtês*, since he does not imitate. He may be expressing himself, a conduct that later generations would by no means disregard; however, since poetry means imitation he would not have been regarded as a poet. Perhaps lyrical poets are such, but the genre of lyric poetry is not discussed in the *Poetics*: for Aristotle it is not *mimêsis*, therefore not poetry.

One could of course object to this, and perhaps even grumble about the offhand way Aristotle excludes an entire cultural system from his discussion because it does not conform to his initial definition. But since this kind of poetry is excluded from the *Poetics*, the work leaves no room for the ecstatic poet either, who is more suited to that kind. He may perhaps be located in the vague domain of music and lyrics, which Aristotle does not precisely demarcate, but which lies just over the border of the *Poetics*. However, as we shall see in section 1.3 below, the ecstatic poet can mark the very end of a scale which makes it possible to determine the differences between various temperaments and mimetic styles.

## 1.2. Talent and Training

*Poetics* as an art of imitation requires a certain kind of professional training. What is this training, and what are the natural gifts it demands? Aristotle calls the source of poetry "natural causes"; these are a set of natural qualities common to all mankind:

Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns first by imitation, and it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation. [---] Imitation, then, being natural to us—as also the sense of harmony and rhythm [--], it was through their original aptitude, and by a series of improvements for the most part gradual on their first efforts, that they created poetry out of their improvisations. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b6-23)

Aristotle names two basic instincts implanted in the human being: imitation and harmony. On harmony he does not elaborate beyond that remark, but the instinct of imitation is explained and described in detail. There is a clear tendency to shift the emphasis from the rhythmic to the representational model of poetry. The conception which identified poetry with rhythm and meter was traditional and widely prevalent in Aristotle's day, so he may assume that it need not be explained, and the central place of the instinct of harmony in poetry requires no proof.

The instinct of imitation, on the other hand, is the basis of a philosophic poetic conception which Aristotle tries to promote. That instinct is described here in its general aspect (man "is the most imitative creature"), in the aspect of its developmental function ("he learns first by imitation"), and in its function in the balance of needs and passions of the adult human being ("to delight in works of imitation").

The fact that imitation, like harmony, is a universal quality explains why people like and need poetry. It explains the entire span of activities around poetry from its production to its consumption, hence encompassing all the participants of the communicative situation, from the addressor to the addressee. The instincts of imitation and harmony make everyone a suitable participant in this situation. But whereas all can consume poetry, only few can produce it. The poet is the one whose instincts of imitation and harmony are especially developed ("through their original aptitude").

How does this natural gift become a real ability to create poetry? Aristotle describes a situation of a gradual development, its first step being improvisation. Improvisation—*autoskhediasma*—is an action done without planning, according to local circumstances. The meaning of the Greek *skhedios* is a close location, close neighborhood, so the meaning of

the term is approximately "something created on the spot". The earliest activities manifesting this gift will naturally be of this improvisational quality, since their very primacy does not admit an earlier plan. But how can these activities give birth to poetry?

Aristotle points at an intermediate phase between rude improvisation and art, namely habit: "some, who (whether by art or constant practice) imitate and portray many things [---]" (*Poetics* 1, 1447a19-20). He distinguishes thus two grades of professional expertise: art (*tekhnê*) and constant practice (*sunêtheia*). This scaling is presented also in the *Metaphysics* I, 1, as we saw above in chapter 1, but at the present stage Aristotle presents the two possibilities as equal in status: among the imitation processes taking place in general, one can identify those of both art and habit. In sum, three stages of creation are defined: creation out of improvisation, habit and art.

Improvisation can develop to the stage of habit, which is a skillful and repetitive action, and then to the stage of art, which is a systematic body of knowledge referring to the rules and causes of the activity, not only to the skill in performing it. Aristotle does not present improvisation as equivalent to the other possibilities, since once imitation takes place as a systematic activity—whether art or habit—the stage of improvisation is no longer relevant: habit can exist side by side with art, as in the example of the simple mason working with the architect (*Metaphysics* I, 1), but one who improvises no longer has a place in this system. Improvisation is a more "primitive" mode of action, based on chance more than planning, and it is pushed aside once the possibility of higher levels of activity has been opened. Hence improvisation cannot be regarded as a real option of creative activity, but only as a childish practice, or a practice of beginners, who for one reason or another have had no opportunity to learn from their forerunners' experience.

*Tekhnê*, art, is the fourth of the five cognitive stages in Aristotelian philosophy. Habit, *sunêtheia*, is not a term used by Aristotle to represent a cognitive stage. Plato uses it to argue that rhetoric is no real art (*Gorgias* 465b), and therefore he deems it a lower practice. Aristotle locates this term beside art, and thereby legitimizes it. Unlike Plato, he does not present it as a fixed stage, essential for that realm of activity, but as a possible cognitive stage, a stage in the process of professionalizing, which can be attained and even surpassed.

In any event, in the Aristotelian grading of cognitive levels the concept prior to art is experience, *empeiria*. *Sunêtheia* and *empeiria* are thus at the same cognitive stage, differing only in their emphases: *empeiria* in Aristotle

refers to experience as a general concept relevant to every field; *sunêtheia* refers to skillfulness and practical experience.

Moreover, although on the cognitive level the two concepts are in principle equivalent, the very scaling of levels of knowledge does not precisely match the scaling of grades of professional expertise. Thus improvisation, the lowest stage of the professional scaling, has no exact equivalent in the scaling of knowledge: in the latter we find under the stage of *empeiria* two different stages: *aesthesis* and *mnêmê* (sensual perception and memory). This of course is no clear-cut parallel, since although improvisation has something of the primacy of sensual perception, the two have very little in common: whereas Aristotle conceives perception as a simple and undivided component of knowledge, improvisation cannot be regarded as simple; it consists of a series of perceptive and creative activities, even if they are combined by chance. Therefore it can be paralleled in a certain way also to memory, which is the simple and rude combination of perceptions.

The stage of *tekhnê* is the highest in the hierarchy of practical skills although in the cognitive hierarchy it is a transitional stage: it is indeed the highest stage with empirical quality; above it is purely theoretical knowledge—*epistêmê*. The relation of the two hierarchies can be summarized:

Knowledge	Practical skill
Science ( <i>epistêmê</i> )	---
Art ( <i>tekhnê</i> )	
Experience ( <i>empeiria</i> )	Constant practice, habit ( <i>sunêtheia</i> )
Memory ( <i>mnêmê</i> )	Improvisation ( <i>autoskhediasma</i> )
Perception ( <i>aisthêsis</i> )	

Table 4-1

Mimetic activity is possible in the framework of the two stages of *tekhnê* and *sunêtheia*. The relation of the stages is quite clear in the field of building, where, as shown above, Aristotle distinguishes the simple mason from the architect. But that distinction is not applicable in the field of poetry. What then is the nature of poetry created by *sunêtheia*?

Aristotle probably means here the archaic forms of poetry, which began from an improvised starting point (songs of mockery). Also the



ecstatic poet, discussed above, acts in a "habitual" way in the broad sense of the word: he is unable to explain his actions, but they have a certain kind of consistency which allows them to attain an expected and given kind of product. In any event, it is clear that the *Poetics* discusses mainly the poet whose skills have already passed through the two earlier stages, improvisation and habit, and have attained, or strive to attain, an artistic level.

A more specific aspect of the process of "professionalizing" can be learned from an additional remark of Aristotle: discussing the relationship between character and plot in tragedy, he states that the plot is on a higher level, and he supports this assertion with a series of arguments, one of them concerning the order of poets' development:

A further proof is in the fact that beginners succeed earlier with the diction and characters than with the construction of a story; and the same may be said of nearly all early dramatists. (*Poetics* 6, 1450a35-7)

According to the professional development depicted here, the specific assignments of poetic composition are divided among the various developmental stages: at the earliest stages the poets become adept at style and character alone, and only at the advanced stage do they master plot and structure. The argument seems strange, and at face value the reverse could also be reasonably argued. But Aristotle thinks as he does because he believes that the plot is the superstructure of the entire text whereas style and character are local phenomena, thus less structured. The basic assumption of this argument is that at the earlier stages of development poets learn how to master the local units, which do not require a global structure. The details of character and style need no preconceived plan; a basic rhetorical skill suffices for attaining certain effects in them, even if they are not conceived out of an overall structure but are attained through improvisation or habit. Plot, on the other hand, requires planning and organization at the highest and most comprehensive level; its construction is impossible without the knowledge required to integrate all the details of style and characterization, and to make them significant and functional in the overall structure. So for Aristotle, the ability to construct a plot is the climax of the development of poetic talent and skill.<sup>77</sup>

### 1.3. Character and Temperament

So far we have discussed the poet's skills from a developmental viewpoint, that is, on a diachronic axis. But there are elements in these skills which are not only developmental stages but parts of the natural

data, the permanent elements within the developing talent: first, the natural tendencies of the poet split into two basic kinds: the "grave" and the "light":

Poetry, however, soon broke up into two kinds according to the difference of character in the individual poets; for the graver among them would represent noble actions, and those of noble personages; and the meaner sort of actions of the ignoble. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b24-27)

This division determines mainly the generic distinctions between higher and lower modes of imitation, but it is based on a distinction between two human temperaments in naturally gifted persons: those who tend to seriousness, gravity (*hoi semnoteroi*) and those who tend to lightness of spirit (*hoi eutelesteroi*). Naturally the former choose to imitate actions of good and respectful persons (*tas kalas*), the latter actions of mean or low person (*tas tôn phaulôn*). This way, says Aristotle later in this section, a constant opposition is created between the high and the low: tragedy vs. comedy, hymns of praise vs. songs of mockery, heroic epic vs. mock-epic.

It is important to note Aristotle's effort to define that opposition through its aesthetic, not its ethic, dimension. When he explains the meaning of *phaulos* he uses a narrow definition which focuses on the aesthetic dimension of lowness only:

As for comedy, it is [...] an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any or every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the ridiculous, which is a species of the ugly. (*Poetics* 5, 1449a33-35)

The lowness of the genre's object has nothing to do with wickedness, damage or pain, but merely with an aesthetic quality, causing it to be taken lightly, to be laughed at.

The opposite of the low object, the *spoudaios*, that is, the serious, the elevated, is not so explicitly explained. But according to the same principle it can be said that these are people not better from the ethical viewpoint, but such who stimulate a certain kind of respect and admiration. The definition of the qualities of the poets who stand behind this distinction can clarify its clearly aesthetic dimension. *Semnos* in Greek is something respectable, serious, solemn, while *eutelês* means something simple, trivial, hence also lighthearted.

Does Aristotle discuss here the character of poets as human beings? On the face of it yes, since he points to a certain correspondence between

action and characters and the poets. But the examples Aristotle himself gives refute that argument. Later on he argues:

Homer, just as he was in the serious style the poet of poets [---] so also was he the first to outline for us the general forms of comedy by producing not a dramatic invective, but a dramatic picture of the ridiculous. His *Margites* in fact stands in the same relation to our comedies as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to our tragedies. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b34-1449a1)

Had Aristotle meant the diverging of human character, it would have been a self-contradiction: first he states that people imitate their objects according to their own character, and later, in his only example, he presents a poet who is supposed to be at one and the same time the founder of high and low poetry. It would have been senseless to claim that Homer, as a person, was at one and the same time noble and mean.

But nor would it be true to infer from this that in the quoted passage Aristotle does not distinguish among poets but only among poetic styles. The formulation is absolutely clear: Aristotle speaks about a certain kind of poets who tend to imitate a certain kind of people. The text does not claim that certain poetic styles imitate corresponding people, since poetry as such has no moral character of its own. Moreover, poetry is the product of imitation, not the element performing that imitation; when Aristotle says that poetry "imitates" a certain object, he means that poetry is or includes an imitation of that object, not that it performs the imitation. In the present context he speaks explicitly about the act of imitation, not about its product. The issue is not poetry as such but its production, that is, the people who create it; the difficulty cannot be solved by excluding the poets. The problem must be tackled otherwise.

The diverging Aristotle points to is not that of human characters as discussed in the *Ethics*; it exists already in the framework of the natural talent and quality of artistic tendency. What determines the poet's choice is not his character as a human being but a certain temperament or compound of his creative skills. That's why Aristotle uses the terms *semnos* and *eutelês*, which have no ethical connotation and are not used as an ethical qualification, but have a more aesthetic quality, like that presented above, between solemnity and lightness. But since it is a certain tendency of the talent, and not an ethical choice or preference, it is not impossible that one whose talents are very much developed could be liberated in one way or another from the restrictions imposed by his temperament as to the choice of his objects of imitation, and develop a scale of possibilities broad enough to imitate high and low objects alike.

When Aristotle explains the difference between natural gifts and madness, and states that the first are *euplastoi* and the others *ekstatikoi* (*Poetics* 17, 1455a34-35), he adds a point which may also shed light on the present issue: beyond the fact that natural gifts can diverge as to the tendency for high or low imitation, they may also diverge as to the variety of human types and action they can represent. The *euplastos* is he who is able to adjust to that variety. Since it is quite reasonable that there is no perfect talent able to represent all kinds of emotion, Aristotle divides the talent into two general tendencies, each connected with a different kind of emotions and actions. But there is no obstacle to a genius like Homer being able to adjust to the full scale of emotions.

The categories of madness and ecstasy, on the other hand, restrict the poet to the limits of the specific emotion typical for him. If we understand the relation between natural gift and madness as a graded continuum, and not as a clear-cut dichotomy, we can say that usually the poet tends to represent his objects according to his personal tendencies, whatever they may be. But the greater his poetic talent, the better he may exceed his specific character and be able to imitate a broader range of human possibilities. Being bound to a certain kind of objects is also a deficiency of the talent. True, being bound to a general category of character, like the elevated and the trivial, still makes possible the production of great poetic works like tragedies and comedies, but the more focused and specific the poet's restriction, the more ecstatic will he be deemed.

Indeed, the strong suggestive power of the ecstatic tendency cannot be ignored: the specific emotion delivered through it is persuasive because of its "truth", as Aristotle says:

[H]e who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing; distress and anger, for instance, are portrayed most truthfully by one who feels them at the moment. (*Poetics* 17, 1455a31-3)

But from a certain point, that power becomes a restriction because it prevents the poet from convincingly representing a broader variety of characters. The persuasive power is thus manifested through channels of rhetoric rhythm and meter, but this does not suffice for producing what is for Aristotle the real imitation: representation of a world with actions and a variety of people each with a character of his own.

At this point it is interesting to read the closing lines of Plato's *Symposium*: when all the guests are already drunk and sleepy, Aristodemus, the narrator, hears a disconnected conversation.

He noticed that all others had either gone home or fallen asleep, except Agathon and Aristophanes and Socrates, who were still awake and drinking out of an enormous bowl, which they kept passing round from left to right. Socrates was arguing with the others—not that Aristodemus could remember very much of what he said, for, besides having missed the beginning, he was still more than half asleep. But the gist of it was that Socrates was forcing them to admit that the same man might be capable of writing both comedy and tragedy—that the tragic poet might be a comedian as well.

But as he clinched the argument, which the other two where scarcely in state to follow, they began to nod, and first Aristophanes fell off to sleep, and then Agathon, as the day was breaking. (Ibid. 223c-d)

Plato deviates here from his usually declared approach to poetry: not only is it not de-legitimated, it is positively conceived as an art, and in the original he explicitly uses the term *tekhnê*. So Plato, surprisingly, views poetry as an activity performed according to rules, which he nowhere else ascribes to poetry. And since poetry is subject to rules, one can derive from the same system the rules of tragedy and comedy.<sup>78</sup> This would have been impossible had poetry been a matter of madness, as Plato presents it in *Ion*, since in that case the poet would always be subject to specific data of character, or, in Plato's words, to a specific Muse:

Therefore, since their making is not by art, [---], but is by lot divine—therefore each is able to do well only that to which the Muse has impelled him—one to make dithyrambs, another panegyric odes, another choral songs, another epic poems, another iambs. (*Ion* 534 b-c)

The passage quoted from the *Symposium* is one of the most "Aristotelian" in Plato's corpus. It shows exactly how comedy and tragedy as such, that is, ideal comedy and tragedy, derive from one and the same idea. They are not subject to separate Muses, so he who is acquainted with one of them must be acquainted with the other. He speaks thus of real knowledge, and he also uses the terms "*epistasthai poiein*", to know how to create, which links poetry with no less than *epistêmê*, namely science in the strictest philosophical sense.

However, the situation depicted is obviously an idealization of the data of reality. In real life people do not act according to pure knowledge, therefore they diverge as to their various temperaments and each is an expert in something according to his specific temperament. This is clearly exemplified in the way the two great representatives of comedy and tragedy are depicted—Aristophanes and Agathon. Both tend to agree from the rational viewpoint, but the physical tiredness outweighs them and they

follow the argument with difficulty and finally fall asleep. Only Socrates, with his ideal knowledge and self-control, remains awake and clear-minded as ever. The divergence of poets into "experts of tragedy" and "experts of comedy" seems to be an outcome of this kind of heaviness, of being attracted to something according to the physical temperament and not the ratio.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the many differences between Aristotle and Plato, at this point there is a resemblance in their ways of thinking. In the *Symposium* Plato exemplifies the problematic discussed later by Aristotle. Indeed, had all poets been giants like Homer, they could have composed all the genres. But being regular people, talented but tending to specific kinds of objects, they are more like Aristophanes and Agathon, that is, each tending to a specific writing style, and their professional gift is formed and delimited by their specific personality.

## 2. The Creative Activity

### 2.1 The Invented and the Ready Made

Aristotle's conception of the development of the poetic talent is expressed, among other ways, in his comment on the order of acquiring the various skills:

[B]eginners succeed earlier with the diction and characters than with the construction of a story; and the same may be said of nearly all the early dramatists. (*Poetics* 6, 1450a35)

This formulation implies a certain identity between the process of development of the single poet and of poetry as a whole: all the early poets behave like beginners. It should be noted, therefore, that to describe the creating process of the individual work, Aristotle presents a model which differs entirely both from the historical processes of the genre and from the processes of personal history, whether identical or not:

His story, again, whether already made or of his own making, he should first simplify and reduce to a universal form, before proceeding to lengthen it out by the insertion of episodes. (*Poetics* 17, 1455a35-b1)

The earlier citation seems to imply that style and character are the most accessible elements (hence easily obtained by beginners as well as by the early poets), while plot is complex and its construction requires development and ripening. But when Aristotle speaks of composing the

individual text he reverses that order: the composition begins with the structure of the narrative, and only later does it go into detail, like creating episodes and developing the characters.

The model of the development of the single poet as well as of poetry as a whole is portrayed in **inductive** terms: it starts with the details and after synthesizing them it finishes with the overall structure; the model of the growth of the single text, on the other hand, is portrayed in **deductive** terms: it starts with the overall structure, and goes into detail in an analytic process.

In Aristotelian philosophy the inductive process (*epagôgê*) is the beginning of knowledge, since the human comes into contact with details (sensual perceptions); the general concepts are more complex structures which he creates by combining these details. The deductive process (*sullogismos*), on the other hand, is the beginning from the logical viewpoint, but it is always based on a prior inductive process, and therefore it is chronologically the second. In any event, the general process of advancing knowledge in Aristotle is an unceasing fluctuation between induction and deduction.

When Aristotle describes the process of composition, that duality is sharply manifested. From the deductive viewpoint the outline of the plot structure is indeed the first step of the process, like an axiom in geometry. But this first step assumes the existence of some prior steps, since that axiom must have been discovered somehow. But as in science, once the scientist has attained his basic assumption the way he has found it no longer matters, only the logical validity of inferring the details from that general assumption. Aristotle seems to view the process of poetic composition in a similar light. The starting point for him is when the poet already has a story with a plot, and he shapes it according to necessity and probability. The question about the source of that story is therefore external to that process. The "inductive" activity of searching, finding or inventing the materials becomes irrelevant once the first assumption, namely the plot outline, has been determined.

This way of thinking is quite salient in Aristotle's formulation of the starting point of the composition process: the poet can take his story either "already made" (*pepoiêmenous*) or "of his own making" (*auton poiounta*). The question about the source of his objects, whether borrowed or invented, is outside the poetic process *per se*. The poet's activity starts only after that problem has been solved one way or another.

On the face of it, Aristotle is wholly indifferent as to whether the plot is traditional or originally created by the poet. This indifference is manifested elsewhere also: in his discussion of the relationship of history

and poetry he states that a poet must not necessarily stick to traditional legends, although most of the tragic poets do. Just as the comic poet invents his plot first and only then names his characters (that is, gives them specific identities), so it seems to be in tragedy too: the poet can invent an entire story without mentioning a single known person:

[---] Agathon's *Antheus*, in which both incidents and names are of the poet's invention (*pepoiêtai*); and it is no less delightful on that account. (*Poetics* 9, 1451b21)

Here too the question of the sources of plot is presented as secondary. For Aristotle it makes no difference if the story is invented by the poet himself or is a traditional one. The pleasure it causes will be the same, since the source of pleasure is the persuasiveness of the plot, that is, the degree of necessity and probability in its structure, which can be equal in an original or traditional story. The indifference as to the sources of plot is here strongly focused on the audience's response and on the effects of reality. However, the same approach can be detected as regards the process of composition: it may be the same with a traditional or an invented plot.

But a closer examination of Aristotle's writings may show that this indifference is not unequivocal. In an earlier article (Zoran 1998) I examined the problem from the viewpoint of the audience and the effects of the work. As I tried to show there, there still is a significant difference between the effects of an invented or a traditional (in that case historic) plot. That difference is evinced mainly in the generic needs: historical plots are more fitting for tragic needs, since they serve better the effects of pity and fear.<sup>80</sup> New plots, on the other hand, serve better the needs of comedy, which requires effects of caricature, laughter and mockery.<sup>81</sup>

Here I wish to examine the problem from the poet's viewpoint: is there really no difference between a poetic process based on ready-made themes and one based on free invention? This could be put otherwise too: in fact, Aristotle presents here a model of a process, in which the creative function means shaping a given object. The way of acquiring that object is conceived here as a preliminary action which is not part of the creative process *per se*. But as a result there is no systematic discussion of the questions whence the poet draws his themes, what it means to invent, and even—what it means to use ready-made objects.

A present-day reader may suppose that the answers somehow have to do with the concept of imagination. But Aristotle's conception of imagination is essentially different from ours, which has been shaped mainly by romantic thought. We tend to regard imagination as a creative



capacity, the ability to invent things which have not preexisted; Aristotle regards it mainly as a reconstructive capacity, the ability to have a mental image of objects, even when they are not physically perceived. As we shall see later, imagination has a certain function in the process of composition, but that function has nothing to do with invention or with any other question concerning the sources of the work.<sup>82</sup>

What, then, does Aristotle say about the source from which the themes of the text are drawn? In the *Poetics* that question is, as it were, beyond the scope of discussion, and is not even regarded as part of the process of composition. But a clue to a solution can be found in the *Rhetoric* and in the theory of *topoi* he develops there.

In the *Rhetoric* the problem of invention is much more acute and important, since the rhetorical situations—whether judicious, political or public—are much more varied than the theatrical or poetic situations. A festival exists as a repetitive pattern, it does not exhibit changing circumstances like the discussions taking place at the assembly or court. Nevertheless, since the orator, unlike the poet, has to be ready for action in changing and unexpected circumstances, he must be skilled in quick responses and instantly availing successful arguments. He must therefore be equipped with a tool which may allow him to scan quickly and efficiently the variety of possible situations and apt arguments, and select them quickly and effectively. How he is supposed to do this requires a more systematic discussion of the *Rhetoric*.

## 2.2 The Concept of *Topos* in the *Rhetoric*

To solve the problem of accessibility of arguments, Aristotle develops the concept of *topos*, which literally means place, and actually has come to mean topic or commonplace. This concept has undergone various metamorphoses in the history of philosophy, so it is important to note its original and exact meaning. The meaning "place" is used here literally, and not metaphorically as may seem from later uses of the term.<sup>83</sup> In Aristotelian usage, and later in that of the Greek and Roman orators, it is indeed a kind of "place" in which the proper arguments are located, and from which one should draw them. Quintilian, for instance, defines the term ("locus" in its Latin version) as "the area in which arguments lurk and from which they have to be drawn out" (V,10,20). Cicero depicts the concept very close to a contour which creates a kind of hollow frame, where several things of the same structure can be located.<sup>84</sup>

To properly understand the Aristotelian notion we must then stick to its ancient meanings, although they too are quite different from Aristotle's

refined definitions. In all its ancient uses, the concept of *topos* serves as a kind of spatial model of memory. This point is important, since the tradition of antiquity ascribes the creative gift to memory much more than to imagination, and grants it a far more important place than is usual nowadays. For instance the ancient Muses are presented as daughters of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. This weight of the concept of memory in the poetic process probably goes back to the oral tradition, where memory was an essential tool for the poet. Be that as it may, the theoreticians of antiquity—even in its literate phases—present memory as a kind of container or delimited spatial zone. Aristotle has a much more subtle conception: his image is less one of storage than of spatial organization.

Beyond the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle devotes to this problem an entire book from the *Organon*, the *Topics*, where he provides an especially clear explanation of the concept:

You should try, moreover, to master the heads under which other arguments mostly tend to fall. For just as in geometry it is useful to be practiced in the elements, and in arithmetic having a multiplication table up to ten at one's fingers' ends makes a great difference to one's knowledge of the multiples of other numbers too, likewise also in arguments it is a great advantage to be well up in regard to first principles, and to have a thorough knowledge of propositions by heart. For just as in a person with a trained memory, a memory of things themselves is immediately caused by the mere mention of their 'places', so these habits too will make a man readier in reasoning, because he has his premises classified before his mind's eye, each under its number. It is better to commit to memory a proposition of general application than an argument; for it is not very difficult to get a supply of first principles and hypotheses. (Ibid. VIII, 14, 163b22-34)

The example of the multiplication table is especially revealing. The multiplication table is a "place" in as much as its various lines contain lists of numbers organized according to several parameters. One who already knows the table has no need to calculate time and again seven times five or three times four; one simply "locates" the numbers on the table preserved in one's memory, and uses them to perform one's calculations. That way, in fact, one can perform any act of multiplication. The same with arguments: one can speak of certain parameters, which will be in this case thematic: for instance, the efficient or the beautiful, their aspects and their contraries. Within each parameter the speaker locates the premises he needs, and uses them to construct his argument.

If, for instance, the speaker wants to prevent or delay a certain action, he may use the *topos* "that is good, the opposite of which is evil or the

opposite of which is advantageous to our enemies" (*Rhetoric* I, 6, 1362b19). He has to add an assumption about the possible profit of the action to the enemy's state, and the necessary conclusion must be that the action may cause damage to his own state. For each argument the orator has to choose a certain *topos* which may serve as a premise, add assumptions drawn from the concrete situation, and so be able to attain the conclusion he aims at.

The *topoi* in the *Rhetoric* are thus a reservoir of possible assumptions which the orator has to integrate with his arguments. The *topoi* dealt with in the *Topics* are the assumptions to be used in a dialectic disputation. Each field of thinking uses *topoi* of its own. Just as the multiplication table is a catalogue of arithmetical *topoi* on which every calculation has to be based, and just as the geometrical axioms are the *topoi* of geometrics on which every theorem is based so the basic premises of every discipline are its *topoi*, since they serve as the basis for more complex structures in that discipline. Here we can already see the possibility that in the discipline of *poetics* too *topoi* may exist, in this case of typical plots or events, constituting a kind of reservoir like the reservoir of assumptions in every other discipline. But before passing on to that, we should examine an important distinction Aristotle makes between various kinds of *topoi*.

Assuming that every discipline has a system of *topoi* of its own, Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of topics: special (*idia*) and common (*koina*). The special topics are those which belong to a specific discipline only, as the geometrical axioms belong to geometry only. The common topics are those which do not belong to one specific discipline, but can exist everywhere. Such, for instance, are the assumptions about possibility and impossibility, greatness and smallness, etc.

But the distinction of special and common is somehow ambiguous, and Aristotle uses it in two ways, which are indeed not contradictory, but not fully overlapping either. The result is a third, middle category. On the immediate and restricted rhetorical level, the difference between special and common has to do with the three rhetorical genres. The special topics are those which belong to one of these kinds, like the basic judicial assumptions for judicial rhetoric, the basic political laws for deliberative speech, etc. On the other hand, there are common topics, which belong to each of the rhetorical genres: assumptions about possible and impossible, about the various emotions and how to kindle them, topics which every orator has to master, no matter what kind of rhetoric he uses, and which in fact are also applicable outside rhetoric proper. But at this stage of the discussion Aristotle moves to another, more comprehensive distinction:

We may now be said to have in our hands the commonplaces [*topoi*] for the various subjects that it is useful or necessary to handle, having selected the propositions suitable in various cases. We have, in fact, already ascertained the commonplaces applicable to enthymemes about good and evil, the noble and the base, justice and injustice, and also those about types of character, emotions and states of mind. Let us now lay hold on certain facts about the whole subject, considered from a different and more general point of view. In the course of our discussion we will take note of refutative and demonstrative commonplaces, and also those used in what seems to be enthymemes, but are not, since they are not deductions at all. Having made all this clear, we will proceed to clarify objections and refutations, showing how they can be brought to bear upon enthymemes. (*Rhetoric* II, 22, 1396b29-1397a5)

Here Aristotle summarizes the discussion of special and common topics as the reservoir of rhetorical assumptions, and suggests a new category opposite to both of them, which he names "general topics" (*katholoi*). These are also topics suiting enthymemes of "all subjects"; in a certain sense they are common topics, since they do not suit specific kinds of rhetoric, but at the same time they do not resemble the ethical and psychological topics discussed at the first books of the *Rhetoric*. If we examine Aristotle's examples for these topics, we shall realize that these are patterns of argumentation more than specific assumptions; here the distinction between special and general is closer to that between "formal" and "material". These are topics with a logical and structural quality rather than a thematic one.

In the course of an argumentation one can sometimes recognize an assumption's generality which is not due to a fact common to several rhetorical disciplines but to a common logical structure. An instance is the assumption that there is nothing without a cause, so if a proper cause has not been found, neither does the thing itself exist. This is not a single and isolated assumption, but a line of argumentation. According to such a line, a man who is accused of a certain deed can defend himself by the argument that he had no motive for doing it, and so it is quite probable that he did not do it. The topic, in this case, is not a single assumption within the argument, but the entire structure of argumentation.<sup>85</sup> There are thus three kinds of topics: special, common and general.<sup>86</sup>

### 2.3 Topics and Their Parallels in the *Poetics*

General topics of the kind discussed above are typical mainly of rhetoric and dialectics, since these are formal disciplines which deal with general structures and not with specific contents. Nevertheless, topics of

varying grades of specificity can be found in every discipline. Assuming that a discipline like *poetics* contains topics too, it allows speaking also of general topics, dealing with plot structures, as opposed to special ones, dealing with the realization of given episodes.

In the *Rhetoric* or the *Topics* many chapters consist simply of lists of topics, but the *Poetics* is not structured like that, and in fact the term *topos* is not mentioned in it. Yet this does not point to the absence of that concept. Understanding Aristotle's use of the concept, one can easily find in the *Poetics* too several discussions based on the method of topics. The clearest example may be chapter 16, which sorts and evaluates various kinds of recognition.

Contrary to other parts of the *Poetics*, that discussion has not been intensively addressed in scholarship. It is preceded by an important discussion of *êthos* (chapter 15) and followed by an important discussion of the process of composition (chapter 17). Chapter 16 contains nothing more than a pedantic catalogue of kinds of recognition. It may spark a relatively less fruitful discussion than the others, but if we view this chapter as a list of *topoi*, of the kind that fill the chapters of the *Rhetoric* and the *Topics*, this chapter may attract our attention to an important aspect of the *Poetics*.

Recognition (*anagnôrisis*) for Aristotle is the stage of the plot at which a change from unknowing to knowing takes place, a change which causes a general reversal in the existing state of affairs and creates a new one. For instance, when Iphigenia (in *Iphigenia in Tauris*) learns that the man she is about to sacrifice is her brother, and in parallel, when Orestes learns that the priestess who is about to sacrifice him is his lost sister, there is a plot reversal: the same people who were alien to each other, and whose relations were those of victim and murderer, prove to be brother and sister, and they start to collaborate and rescue themselves from the land of Tauris. The question is how to realize the recognition and present it as a concrete event, how to motivate it and how to give it the volume of a theatrical episode.

When Aristotle presents the narrative plan of *Iphigenia* he mentions this point generally, and states that there are several ways to realize it:

On his coming he was arrested, and about to be sacrificed, when he revealed who he was—either as Euripides puts it, or (as suggested by Polyidus) by the not improbable exclamation, 'So I too am doomed to be sacrificed, as my sister was'; and the disclosure led to his salvation. (*Poetics* 17, 1455b9-12)

Aristotle presents here one fixed functional unit—the recognition, and hints that it can be realized in various ways.<sup>87</sup> At this point the poet has to refer to the *topos* of recognition and find there the mode of realization that is most suitable for his text. Aristotle hints at two possibilities, that of Polyides, who in a lost tragedy on that subject has Orestes speak the sentence quoted above, and that of Euripides, in whose play Iphigenia hears that her unknown victim comes from Argos, and she wants to send through his friend a letter to her brother. This possibility is listed in Aristotle's catalogue of recognition topics:

The best of all discoveries [recognitions], however, is that arising from the incidents themselves [---] like that [---] in *Iphigenia*; for it was probable that she should wish to have a letter taken home. (*Poetics* 16, 1455b16-19)<sup>88</sup>

Aristotle also goes into finer details and discusses separately two processes of recognition: Orestes' recognition of Iphigenia, and Iphigenia's of Orestes. This discussion indeed poses special problems for the commentator, but this cannot change our statement: at a certain point while constructing the plot the poet refers to the list of topics and chooses the one fittest for his needs. The process of composition may be depicted as a movement on two axes: the axis of plot, which advances along a route of time and causality, and an axis vertical to it, the axis of *topoi*. At each point along the plot axis the poet can refer to the corresponding axis of *topoi*, and gather from it the material he needs.

But the *topoi* discussed so far are on the episodic level, that is, given the plot continuum as a whole the poet refers to those topics and uses them to construct the episodes. But topics can be discussed at a higher degree of generalization too. As in the *Rhetoric*, which defines general topics determining the line of argument, so in relation to the structure of plot one can find more general topics as well. These are not exhausted with the episodic realization of a certain plot function, but concern the entire line of events, its direction and structure.

Chapter 14 of the *Poetics* has a catalogue of the most general possibilities of structuring a plot, which divides according to the order of two functions: the terrible deed and the knowledge (actually: "sufferance" and "recognition"). Such organization naturally requires four categories, "since the deed must necessarily be either done or not done, and either knowingly or unknowingly" (ibid. 1453b36). Hence Aristotle determines the following possibilities: [A] a situation of full knowledge, which divides into two: [A1] Intending to do and doing, like Medea killing her children; [A2] Intending to do and not doing, like Haemon who attacks his

father with a sword but finally gives up and withdraws; [B] a situation of unknowing, also splitting into two: [B1] Doing unknowingly, and only later finding out the victim's real identity, like Oedipus who kills his father and realizes it only too late; [B2] Intending to do unknowingly, but after learning the real state of affairs giving up. So in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where Iphigenia intends to sacrifice Orestes not knowing that he is her brother, but abandons her intention when she finds out.

At the last possibility we return to the problem previously discussed, but from a different viewpoint. Now it does not concern the episodic realization of the specific function, but finding the way in which that function will merge with the overall structure of plot. Unlike the preceding list, this one concerns several possibilities of constructing the general line of plot, so it is parallel to the general topics. The poet chooses a *topos* not as a punctual insertion of a given unit into the plot continuum, but as the very structure and direction of that continuum. This general choice too is conceived by Aristotle as the choice of a single possibility out of a given catalogue, and these possibilities concern not the narrative functions in themselves but their order and organization. These are the general topics of plot structure.

But a new question arises here. The possibilities listed in the catalogue are explicitly hierarchically graded. Unlike the *Rhetoric*, where the various topics are listed in succession but are entirely equivalent in status and value, and the orator has to choose them from his imaginary shelf according to the specific needs of the given speech, in the *Poetics* the topics are numbered and organized according to their value:

The worst situation is when the personage is with full knowledge on the point of doing the deed, and leaves it undone. It is odious and also (through the absence of suffering) untragic; hence it is that no one is made to act thus except in some few instances, e.g. Haemon and Creon in *Antigone*. (*Poetics* 14, 1453b38-1454a1)

Aristotle believes that this possibility, A2, is so bad that it actually is unreal. It lacks everything that can give rise to a real tragic emotion: it has no real "sufferance" since the act is not accomplished, nor any reversal or recognition, since everything is known from the beginning. It thus lacks the elements which raise pity and fear. Aristotle probably rejects this possibility also because according to his causal narrative conception it lacks probability. One of Aristotle's explicit assumptions is that if somebody wants to do something, can do it, and there is no external hindrance, he will do it:

[I]f a man had the power and the wish to do a thing, he has done it; for everyone does do whatever he wants to do whenever he can do it, there being nothing to stop him. That, further, he had done the thing in question either if he intended it and nothing external prevented him; or if he had the power to do it and was angry at the time, or if he had the power to do it and his heart was set upon it—for people, as a rule, do what they long to do, if they can; bad people through lack of self-control; good people, because their hearts are set upon good things. (*Rhetoric* II, 19, 1392b19-24)

In light of this conception of acting, Aristotle will clearly regard the aforementioned combination as absurd, and he indeed notes its rarity. The real instance he mentions is indeed very marginal. It features in the messenger's speech, but it is not part of the plot scheme of *Antigone*, and it does not determine the structure of the tragedy.<sup>89</sup>

The other three possibilities are all real, and they have precedents in the best of poetry. Nevertheless, Aristotle chooses to grade them also. The possibility of knowing and doing (A1), like Medea killing her children, is second, since it has sufferance and is tragic, although it has no reversal and recognition: it is a "simple" plot, and as such is less effective than the "complex" one.

The two next possibilities are both of "complex" structure, concerning a reversal caused by a transition from a state of unknowing to one of knowledge ("recognition"). Both are thus better than the former ones, but between them too an order of value is determined. In second place is the plot of *Oedipus the King*, where the deed is done and the recognition comes only later. At the top of the list is *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where there is an intention to do but the deed is not done due to the recognition. This grading is quite surprising since it seems to contradict the primacy of the tragedy with the bad end, declared in the preceding chapter (*Poetics* 13). No less strange is the demotion of *Oedipus* to the second grade, again contrary to Aristotle's preference declared again and again in the *Poetics*, and also to the preference of later generations.

What then is the reason for the preference of *Iphigenia*? Aristotle's choice is not described in detail at that point, but the reason may be conjectured. He generally prefers the complex structure, namely that which is based on reversal and recognition, over the simple structure, in which only the component of sufferance is emphasized. It is quite reasonable that in the complex plot also he would prefer the variation in which reversal and recognition are almost exclusive, and where sufferance is restricted to the necessary minimum (intention only), over the variation in which reversal and recognition do exist, but the relative weight of sufferance in stimulating the emotional effect is still great. Sternberg



(1973, pp. 47-49) says that reversal and recognition are principles with a more structural quality, while sufferance is more thematic: reversal and recognition are focal points determining the structure of the entire plot, while sufferance may also be a single event. Along that line of thought Aristotle would presumably prefer effects caused by structural qualities over thematic effects.<sup>90</sup>

A similar grading, yet even more emphatic is presented in chapter 13 of the *Poetics*. There Aristotle examines various possibilities of organizing the plot from the aspect of relation between characterization and direction of events. At the top of the list he puts the combination of an average character (not perfect and not a villain) and a process of deterioration, and in the second place the combination of a similar character and a plot of amelioration. Other possibilities are vigorously rejected.<sup>91</sup> And finally, the list of the kinds of recognition in chapter 15 also contains kinds which Aristotle deems better and others worse.

In fact, in all the passages in the *Poetics* which can be understood as lists of topics there is a grading of options; some are rejected outright. In that respect these lists are different from the lists in the *Rhetoric* or the *Topics*, where there is no grading: all the topics are equal in status, and all are possibilities equally open to the orator or dialectician.

Topics, by definition, must be equally accessible to their user (whether poet or orator), so they don't need to be graded. Doesn't the grading in the *Poetics* hint that these are different phenomena? Indeed in the *Poetics* the handling of topics is quite different from that in other writings, but still, these are topics and not something else. The reason for the difference is simple: in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* the author has to choose a certain topic according to the aim of his work. But in the *Rhetoric* the aim of a speech is determined according to the specific circumstances in which it is delivered, while in the *Poetics* the aim of the poetic work is determined according to its genres. The aims which the *Poetics* mentions when discussing tragedy are those peculiar to tragedy, namely to spark pity and fear as effectively as possible. All the topics are thus graded according to their potential to realize that aim. It does not say that they could not have been graded differently, had they been subject to different genres.

So when Aristotle considers, for instance, the relations between characterization and the direction of plot he also takes into account an additional possibility which is a combination of the two existing ones: a double plot, which combines amelioration of the good characters' fortunes with deterioration of the bad ones'. The example is that of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus succeeds and the suitors and other enemies are severely

punished. Aristotle rejects that structure because it is not suitable for tragedy. But unlike other possibilities, which he has entirely rejected, here he also determines which genre is appropriate for that structure: comedy. And the example he gives from Homer's highly respected work hints that he believes that outside tragedy this structure is more than acceptable. This shows that the system of plot possibilities expressed through the topics is very broad, and one of the reasons for grading them is their generic suitability. But this grading may change from one genre to another, according to their various ends.

In the *Rhetoric* these possibilities are not marked beforehand since the relation between the text and its emotional ends is different: the emotional ends of rhetoric are much more specific and context-dependent than those of poetry: exoneration or conviction in court, creating public sympathy for a certain politician, deterrence from certain political projects, and so forth. The emotions the orator has to stimulate depend on his specific aim and the specific situation. They are not fixed and defined through the rhetorical genres, and therefore the orator has to know all the possible kinds of emotion and may use them all.

In the *Poetics* the situation is different, since the single work has no end of its own, and it does not strive to generate new situations: poetry is not *praxis* but *poiêsis*. As in acts of *poiêsis* in general, the end is inherent in the kind of product, not in the specific product. The end of tragedy as such is to attain *katharsis* through pity and fear, whatever that means; the end of comedy is not explicitly defined in the *Poetics*, but it would be quite reasonable to say that it aims at different emotions, like laughter, mockery, and so on. The definition of every poetic genre contains a note on the kind of emotional effect it strives to attain, so that the principle of choosing topics is a function of genre much more than of specific circumstances. Hence, in the framework of discussing a given genre, like tragedy, Aristotle can present his list of topics graded beforehand according to the generic end.

Yet these preferences are not unequivocal, since in the framework of one and the same genre one can find several methods of grading. An excellent example can be found in the lists of topics discussed above: heading the list of topics in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Poetics* is the deteriorating plot in which the main character is not good and not bad, like *Oedipus the King*. The list of topics in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, concerning the relation between the terrible deed and the knowledge, is topped by a tragedy like *Iphigenia in Tauris*, that is, a plot of amelioration. This difference could seem to be a contradiction, since one and the same tragic pattern is graded in one list at the top and in the other in second place.

This contradiction cannot be solved if we assume that it is a grading of kinds of tragedy. The concrete decision about a specific tragedy is not taken in isolation and before the genre as a whole, but always in the context of other data and other decisions already made, or about to be. A good tragedy is not one in which each decision leads to the topic defined as best for tragedy as a genre: in that case there would have to be one single tragedy which is the best; all the others will be worse than it, or perhaps even superfluous. But this is not the case: actually, even *Oedipus*, which Aristotle deems the best, does not consist of topics which are separately deemed best in each of the lists: in the grading of chapter 14, which concerns a central structural problem, it is placed only second.

The best tragedy thus is not a combination of decisions which are the best in themselves but the best possible combination of decisions which are partially good in themselves, but each is the best possible for that specific tragedy. The best decisions for *Oedipus* won't be the best for *Iphigenia*, and vice versa.

Just as there is no single pattern for a speech but a variety—speeches of praise and blame, of claim and defense, speeches recommending caution and speeches recommending audacity, so tragedy too is not all of a piece. In spite of the relative determinacy of the effects it strives at, there is a broad range of narrative possibilities, hence a variety of means to attain the generic end. In each decision about a means, one has to take into account the decisions already made; and each decision made prescribes the following decisions to be taken. Decisions are not made separately and in reference to the general kind only, but in reference to a specific text and to certain circumstances determined by other decisions already taken, and which can differ for each text. The *Poetics* is not essentially different from the *Rhetoric* in respect of the author's freedom within the generic rules, but the span and nature of his freedom are differently defined.

The present discussion yields a special model of the creative process, in which the work's thematic and structural possibilities are ordered in the author's mind as a classified list of topics. At each point in the process he has to refer to the list to decide which topic to use to shape and formalize a certain episode or a narrative course. The creative decisions he must make vary. Some are framework decisions, concerning the entire narrative structure, such as complex vs. simple plot or ameliorative vs. deteriorative direction; others can be more local and focused, like the way a certain scene should be shaped.

All decisions, general and local alike, are made with reference to an organized reservoir of possibilities presented by the topics. Skillfulness in poetic composition thus means close acquaintance with this system of

topics and good proficiency in making use of them. In this respect the *Poetics*, the *Rhetoric* and the *Topics* do not differ in principle, although they do in respect of the intensiveness of their use and their need of topics.

In rhetoric and more particularly in dialectics, part of the proficiency of using the topics concerns adeptness in scanning the system and speed of retrieving them. Dialectics concerns dialogues actually taking place among people. The more proficient the speakers, the more efficient they may be in selecting the proper arguments for their conversation. In rhetoric the speaker is confronted with his rival, and a great part of the speech has to refer to the present circumstances, to what was said before or is about to be said after. Hence alacrity and proficiency of using the topics are a clear function of his ability. But the orator, unlike the dialectician, also formalizes the text of a speech, and that speech can remain as a written text after it has been actually spoken. Being a text, the speed of scanning and retrieval is less important for a speech.

In that regard the poet is the most "textual" author of the three. He has no need of a mechanism which may allow him to respond quickly to arguments uttered in real time, since composing poetry is not a function of the immediate situation. The effect of a poem does not depend on the speed of its composition. This is probably the reason why Aristotle does not explicitly mention the concept of topics in the *Poetics*: as we have seen above (in chapter 2), Aristotle views the poet not as an oral but as a writing composer, and composition of such kind does not need a mechanism of quick retrieval. Still, what is actually described in the *Poetics* is a system of topics.

Aristotle explicitly mentions topics only concerning formal disciplines, like rhetoric or dialectics, the aim of which is proficiency in dealing with every kind of subject whatsoever; they do not deal with a specific field of subjects. In such a discipline speed and agility in retrieving topics are necessary components. Nevertheless, Aristotle claims that each discipline has its special topics, and these are its peculiar assumptions. But in no discipline that he treats does he actually use the term *topoi*. On the face of it books like the *Physics*, *On the Soul* or the *Politics* also have special topics, but since these are disciplines referring to one specific field of interest, structuring by way of topics is not essential for them. The physician or the natural scientist is not required to be proficient in quick retrieval of arguments.

For Aristotle, topics turn out to be an important factor in disciplines aimed at producing verbal products. Such are dialectics, rhetoric and—one may add—also *poetics*. True, the ways these three disciplines use topics differ, and as said before, in the *Poetics*, just as in the *Physics* and *Politics*,

Aristotle does not explicitly mention the word *topoi*. Nevertheless, *poetics* being a verbal art—the art of composing texts, it is very important to note how it is based on topics and how it handles them.

The close connection of topics to the arts of language and of text composition clearly recalls the structuralist model of language as organized on two axes, the axis of choice and the axis of combination (Jakobson 1960). The axis of combination is a verbal continuum, on which units of language combine as words, sentences, paragraphs. At each point on that axis a certain decision has to be made. That decision directs one to the intersecting axis, the axis of choice, on which the possibilities of language are organized. This is the vocabulary of synonyms, sounds, syntactic possibilities and so on. This is the place in the speaker's conscience where the entire linguistic inventory is organized and sorted.

Typically enough, the structuralists associated the axis of combination with time and the axis of choice with space, or at least simultaneity (Jakobson 1980). The parallel between the spatiality implied in the concept "axis of choice" and that implied in the concept of *topos* is more than salient. The logical structure of Aristotle's theory of topics is astonishingly reminiscent of the theory of the two axes of language.

The difference between the two theories centers on what is conceived as the real content of the choice. The structuralist method claims that the choice is mainly of linguistic possibilities: from words and grammatical forms to syntactic and semantic structures. The theory of topics, on the face of it, is not about language, but refers to certain assumptions about the world. But as we see, the method works mainly in linguistic contexts: dialectic conversation, public oration or poetry. Hence, in Aristotle the axis of combination is always manifested by a verbal text, while the axis of choice refers to the objects, contents and semantic aspect of language.

In the theory of the axes of language the structure is slightly different, since both axes refer to language's semantic and grammatical aspects. This is an important difference which should not be overlooked; still, it does not change the principal logical structure common to both theories.

The theory of topics has been presented here as an attempt to answer the question how Aristotle conceives the source of composition, and what the word "invention" means in that context. For him invention is not creating out of nothing but a correct and efficient use of the system of topics inherent in the author's and speaker's conscience. Invention is not a product of imagination. That, as stated above, is reserved for a different need; the ability to invent in fact depends on the broadness of the inventory of information accessible to the author, and on his ability to enact it efficiently.

But if this is the nature of invention, how does Aristotle explain the concept of "ready-made"? One may try to answer that question through the distinction Aristotle makes in the *Rhetoric* between intra-artistic (*entekhnōi*) and extra-artistic (*ektekhnōi*) means of convincing. For him extra-artistic means are various operations done in court or assembly and objects presented there, which may support the orator's point: testimonies, documents, interrogations, oaths and so forth. Intra-artistic means are the system of arguments the orator uses to support his point: enthymemes, examples and logical proofs in general (*Rhetoric* I, 2, 1356a1).

Aristotle regards the facts and objects constituting extra-artistic proofs as part of the anyway-given circumstances of the rhetoric situation, be it a trial, a political debate or whatever. He views the art of oration as the ability to navigate among these circumstances by means of argumentation, proofs and explanations. When the judicial situation is in favor of the orator, and he has efficient findings to hand, his rhetorical talent is anyway not urgently necessary, since the facts speak for themselves. Aristotle thinks that rhetoric is needed only in cases where the facts do not sufficiently speak for themselves and may be variously interpreted. He says, "The one kind [extra-artistic] has merely to be used [*khṛēsasthai*], the other [intra-artistic] has to be invented [*heurein*]" (ibid.).

The opposition between inventing and using may emerge as slightly different after the above discussion: inventing the intra-artistic means calling for constructing them through the system of topics, that is, locating their components in the system. The verb *heurein* which we translated as **inventing**, means in its primary sense **finding**. The orator's art and inventiveness are manifested in his ability to correctly enact his system of topics. To attain the extra-artistic means, on the other hand, it is enough for the orator to reach for what is accessible in the rhetorical situation. To do this, Aristotle believes, one does not need any special rhetorical skill: everyone can do it.

Now we can transfer this distinction, slightly altered indeed, to the *Poetics*. The poet too can get his stories in these two ways: invention, namely enacting his inventory of topics, or taking something ready-made, namely adopting materials existing outside that inventory which are accessible to everyone.

In this light it could be said that the real meaning of **invention** in Aristotle is first and foremost the masterly use of memory. The entire system of topics is nothing but efficient organization of the contents of memory. As noted above, there is nothing to wonder about: although Aristotle formalizes a very sophisticated conception, he is absolutely consistent in ascribing the creative potential to memory, not to

imagination. In that respect Aristotle is still faithful to the archaic tradition, which views the Muses as daughters of Memory.

## 2.4 The Outline of Events and Its Realization

Aristotle's distinction between intra-artistic and extra-artistic elements shows that despite the essential difference between the contexts of the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, the latter implies the same distinction by assuming that the process of supplying the narrative materials is extra-artistic in a certain way, since from the artistic viewpoint it makes no difference if the plot is invented or ready-made. That is, the narrative materials are something the poet has to "use" after taking possession of them; even if he is the one who invented them, it is not that invention which makes him a poet. The quality of the art is measured by the way the poet uses his narrative materials. That is, the artistic activity starts only once the poet, on the basis of the materials he has gathered, begins to structure the outline of events.

The outline of events is characterized by not including distinct identities or specific events, but only general formulations about types of persons and events. The poet should construct that plan with constant heed to its realization potential. It must meet the test of staging, since that may show up clumsy stitches or weak links which do not appear through reading or listening alone.

At the time when he is constructing his plots, and engaged on the diction in which they are worked out, the poet should remember to put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the vividness of an eye-witness as it were, he will devise what is appropriate, and be least likely to overlook incongruities. This is shown by what was censured in Carcinus, the return of Amphiaraus from the sanctuary; it would have passed unnoticed, if it had not been actually seen; but on the stage his play failed, the incongruity of the incident offending the spectators. (*Poetics* 17, 1455a22-28)

Aristotle brings as an example the lost play *Amphiaraus*, which failed on stage because the theater production brought to light an improbability in the construction of the plot. Amphiaraus is probably presented leaving a temple without having entered it. Aristotle recommends learning from this fault, in order to foresee problems of that kind which Carcinus missed.

This argument brings to mind the theory of cybernetic cycles with the broadly used concept of **feedback**. The information obtained from the stage production returns, as it were, to the author, nourishes anew his

creative resources, and is integrated into his subsequent artistic activity. But the model presented here is not one of feedback in the full sense. The poet is not expected actually to consult his audience; he is supposed merely to imagine the production as concretely as possible, in order to foresee the audience's possible responses.

Imagination, which was found to be a secondary factor in the process of inventing and providing the narrative materials, here proves a central factor. Imagination, in Aristotle, means the ability to reconstruct a sensual perception even if its object is not present.

[I]magination is held to be a movement and to be impossible without sensation, i.e. to occur in beings that are percipient and to have for its content what can be perceived, and since movement may be produced by actual sensation, and that movement is necessarily similar in character to sensation itself, this movement cannot exist apart from sensation or in creatures that do not perceive. (*On the Soul* III, 3, 428b11-15)

Imagining is a kind of perception, and as such it is a responding, not an initiating activity. It is thus a reconstructive potential, not a creative one. Imagination in that sense is enacted when the poet is required to mentally observe the entire production from the audience's viewpoint: the poet "should [...] put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes" (ibid).

On the first reading Aristotle seems to speak of imagination in a similar sense to that used nowadays, at least in the sense of mentally realizing the world of the poetic work. But actually, when he speaks of plot and actions, he does not mean their objects, that is, the events which the plot is supposed to represent, but structuring these events as a play, as the activity taking place on stage. These must be the actor's actions, not the character's, otherwise the example from *Amphiaraus* would not be understandable. The probability it speaks of is explicitly that of theatrical production, not that of the represented world.

The problem may have been raised by the convention of the three gates of a theatrical stage. Amphiaraus supposedly appeared from a gate representing the sanctuary, while in the preceding episode he left the stage through a different gate (representing the town, the palace, or the like). In a stage production such a mistake can easily be made, since the gates are conventional representations of exits to various areas of the extra-scenic world, but actually they lead to one and the same place, the off-stage space. From the audience's viewpoint this is bound to shatter the theatrical illusion; for them the off stage-space is the continuation of the represented world, and if a character leaves through the gate representing the town and returns through the gate representing the temple, it ruins the spatial



probability. The audience needs an explanation of how the character has moved from one place to another, and that movement requires a certain representation, be it theatrical or verbal, so that the actions presented on stage seem to take place in a real world, not in an artificial one.

Imagination is thus used to construct a mental model of the action, which must be as concrete as possible in order to realize its theatrical implications. It is used to prevent Carcinus' dismay when his drama was rejected after its actual production. Through a detailed imaginary reconstruction, the poet has to provide himself a constant quasi-feedback, to take full control of the plot's probability, and to be able to find out and correct mistakes prior to the production and independent of the real audience.

In other words, the construction of the logical outline of the plot cannot be one-directional: in constructing its highest layer, the poet has to take into account the lower ones. The hierarchic structure notwithstanding, the various layers are created interdependently. One cannot construct the higher levels of plot independent of the lower ones, which are supposed to realize it. Imagination is something like a mental movement between the layers, which may conduct a test production up to the level of ideas before the actual production.

A similar circularity may be detected in shaping the characters' emotions and behavior. Here, however, not imagination but the capacity for emotional empathy is at the center. The standard, as before, is the poet's power to convince.

Given the same natural qualifications, he who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing; distress and anger, for instance, are portrayed most fruitfully by one who is feeling them at the moment. (*Poetics* 17, 1455a29-32)

To be convincing the poet is required to position himself in his characters' place, and the more he does it, the greater will be his convincing potential. Although psychologically this discussion concerns an entirely different potential from the previous one—here emotion and there imagination, in both cases the issue is the ability to mentally reconstruct something, so the argument is basically similar.

The rhetorical assumption is that emotional convincing is caused by a certain identity between the poet and the character he represents. The first formulation of that assumption appears in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*.

The poet should feel happiness while creating his poems. Otherwise, how will he, in his grief, bring happiness to others? (Ibid. 180)

In Aristotle, one who speaks out of rage causes rage in the audience; likewise with other emotions. This does not mean that the poet has to expose his own feelings to be convincing. On the contrary, he should neutralize his emotions as much as possible. The poetic gift means, among other things, the poet's ability to adopt, internalize or realize to the greatest extent emotional situations and possibilities. Therefore the good and convincing poet can identify with various characters and shape a great number of them. He is more apt for that task than the ecstatic poet (*ekstatikos*), who is borne along by his own emotions, and is therefore not free fully to reconstruct the emotions of others.

As in the preceding discussion about imagination, here too the emotional empathy required of the poet is not an end in itself. Both imagination and emotional empathy are means directed to the audience. Poetry has no interest in the products of the poet's imagination or his emotional life in themselves. Both are used to convince and ignite the audience's emotional response; they are exploited for the rhetorical needs of the work.

So much for to the general outline of the plot. Once it has been sketched it must be realized in respect of characters and scenes. In the general plan the characters have no proper names, only generic definitions: "a certain man", "a certain girl", and the like. The proper names of the mythical heroes are already transmitted in tradition, so they are not part of the poet's creative process. In such cases preparing the outline means suspending specific reality: the poet turns well known characters like Iphigenia and Orestes into "a certain girl" and "her brother", thus isolating the pure structure of probability and necessity and focusing on it alone.

But Aristotle does not believe that this is always the case: more than tragedy, precisely comedy, in its way of composition, reveals the real logic of composition:

In comedy this has become clear by this time; it is only when their plot is already made up of probable incidents that they give it a basis of proper names. (*Poetics* 9, 1451b11-14)

In constructing comic plots one does not suspend the identities of already known characters, but really speaks about general types, archetypes of characters. The specific identities they get later are not taken from tradition, but given only for that specific text. This difference between tragedy and comedy is interesting in itself, but it is a matter for a separate discussion.<sup>92</sup> In any event, for Aristotle the process of composing a comedy offers the basic model of creating *mimêsis*; the process of

composing a tragedy, on the other hand, also requires reference to traditional data, so in a certain sense it is less typical.

Another generic distinction lies in the manner of composing episodes: every plot outline, whether tragic, comic or epic, is subject to the same principles of probability, hence they are similar in nature; however, the way they should be developed into episodes is quite different. Tragedy consists of a restricted number of episodes, all of them reflecting the central line of the plot:

This done, the next thing, after the proper names have been fixed as a basis for the story, is to turn it into episodes. One must ensure, however, that the episodes are appropriate, like the fit of madness in Orestes, which led to his arrest, and the purifying, which brought about his salvation. (*Poetics* 17, 1455b12-16)

The episode must thus belong to the causal structure of the plot: the madness explains Orestes' capture by the Taurians, and therefore it justifies an episodic realization. So also the purification rite, which is the pretext used by Orestes and Iphigenia for leaving the country in order to escape. Other events, on the other hand, do not need that episodic realization: "the fact, however, of the oracle having bidden him to go there, and the object in going, are outside the plot of the play" (ibid. 1455b7-8). There is of course no need to scenically realize elements which are outside the general plan or the action proper.

Unlike tragedy, the epic is characterized by the huge span of episodes it can contain. If we examine the plot outline of the *Odyssey*, as Aristotle does at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Poetics*, we may learn that it is short and restricted no less than that of *Iphigenia*. But the rules of the genre guide the poet to realize it in a much more detailed way. An example is the elaborate relating of all Odysseus' travels to Alcinóos—events that are superfluous from the narrative outline's viewpoint; or telling repetitively and minutely his chain of recognitions on his way home, or the long series of harsh acts of revenge against the suitors. These two last series, in terms of the outline, realize only two single functions: he "reveals himself" and he "falls on his enemies; and the end is his salvation and their death" (*Poetics* 17, 1455b21).

The starting point of every act of composition is thus the construction of the outlines. This is common to all genres: tragedy, comedy and epic. But the next step, the realization, varies from genre to genre. Every genre has rules of its own, which determine exactly how to carry out the transformation from the general plan to the accomplished text.

## 2.5 The Performance and the Boundaries of "Artistic" Activity

The last issue to be examined is performance. Here we witness the second boundary Aristotle sets for the art of poetry. In fact, he believes that the art of the poet as such has attained its end in his composing the last line in his text, just as it began only after his gathering the narrative materials. As in the first case, here too this does not mean that the poet as a human is not involved in these activities. Just as he can be the inventor of the plot, so he can—but doesn't necessarily—present his own text. In past times, says Aristotle, the presentation was indeed the poet's task:

Indeed, it [the art of performing] was long before it found a way into the arts of tragic drama and epic recitation: at first poets acted their tragedies themselves. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b23)

So performance, whether the vocal delivery of a speech or the theatrical production of a tragedy, can actually be done by the poet or orator; but this does not make it part of the art of poetry or oration. For Aristotle the status of performance is rather ambiguous.<sup>93</sup> The implication for the art of poetry is that even if the poet actually deals with the performance (just as the orator delivers his own speech), the act of performing is not deemed by Aristotle an integral part of the art of poetry or oration but as an annexed skill; all the more when the performance is the task of others, whether actor, designer (*skeupoios*), or, in the case of rhetoric, the people for whom the speech was composed. Hence Aristotle writes:

The spectacle, though an attraction, is the least artistic of all parts, and the least to do with the art of poetry. The tragic effect is quite possible without a public performance and actors; and besides, the getting-up of the spectacle is more a matter of the designer than the poet. (*Poetics* 6, 1450b16-20)

The limit of the authority of poetic art is thus the production. Even if the poet himself is the producer, the art of producing does not belong to his special artistic realm.

Two borderlines of the arts of the poet and orator are thus marked here, both based on the same principle: the business of the arts of language in general is to take a certain realm of meaning and shape it in a way which can be produced in the framework of one complete act of communication. Yet Aristotle does not define the art of language as following that process in full, but limits it to the middle segment of the course: true, there are preliminary activities which are indispensable without being artistic

themselves. Collecting the themes for a poem, or the research needed for a speech are necessary, but Aristotle does not regard them as integral parts of the art. The artistic activity starts at the stage when the general background data are accessible to the author as narrative circumferential data; the "art" is the way of handling these materials. The artistic treatment continues up to the stage when a kind of "score" is created, an exact system of performance directions. Performance itself is again beyond the borderline, this time from the opposite side: from the poetic viewpoint it is post-artistic.

Limiting the poetic process by these two borderlines leaves no room for the question of invention. It presents the creative process over a range in which the origins of plot are pushed aside as secondary. A closer examination may show that this is due also to the secondary state of imagination in the Aristotelian conception of poetic composition. This may at the same time be a general quality of the ancient Greek concept of poetry: the Muses are daughters of Memory, and the main force directing the poets is memory rather than imagination. However, Aristotle develops in the *Rhetoric* and in his books on dialectics a dynamic theory, which organizes the orator's inventory of assumptions in a system of "places", *topoi*, which afford him a quick and efficient use of his memory.

The aim of the present chapter was to grasp the Aristotelian conception of poetic creation through application of the dialectic theory of topics to the field of *poetics*. That application presents a model of invention which is based not on imagination but on memory. It makes it possible to read several sections of the *Poetics*, which seemed quite technical, in a new light, and it suggests a systematic understanding of Aristotle's model of composing through a certain conception of "creative memory".

# CHAPTER SIX

## SPECTATORS, LISTENERS, READERS

### 1. Historical Audience, Audience as Judge, "Implied Audience"

When Aristotle speaks about the addressee of the poetic text, he means both the actual audience of a given text or production and the implied audience imagined by the poet while composing his text. The implied audience is an abstract entity, not concrete, so it always has a general and classificatory quality. But the identification of the implied audience with a given genre raises a question which marks a principal difference between the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. In the *Poetics* the addressee and the poetic genre addressed to him fully correspond; the very idea of the poetic genre implies several assumptions about the audience. For example, the audience of tragedy is supposed to feel pity and fear. The experience of *katharsis* is inferred from the poetic genre, and it is supposed to be relevant for the audience as a whole.

In the *Rhetoric* the situation is different: no correspondence exists between the various genres of rhetoric and the kinds of addressee; on the contrary, these are two different issues. The audience is divided into various groups—old and young, wise and foolish, aristocrats and simple folk; each kind requires the use of different means of conviction. The kinds of speech are not divided according to the kinds of audience or defined through a specific effect which they are supposed to generate (except for the general effect of convincing, which is the basic assumption for every rhetorical activity). The business of the orator is to construct his speech according to the specific kind of audience he meets in a given situation. So in the *Rhetoric* the audience is conceived as a variable factor dependent on circumstances, while in the *Poetics* the audience is conceived as homogeneous, unchanging and universal.

Conceiving the audience as a constant factor practically means pushing it aside. And indeed, in the *Poetics* the active role of the audience is quite restricted, and sometimes even disregarded. There is of course a connection between the audience and the aim of the work—creating a special kind of pleasure. But the audience as such are never asked what

really pleases them. In determining if the end of the work has indeed been realized, the audience are the lowest authority.

This duality regarding the audience may perhaps be explained through an example from the practical arts (the Greeks did not distinguish fine arts from practical ones). Think of a carpenter who makes chairs. He works according to his professional knowledge, and this knowledge determines what a good chair is, how to produce it, and what the standard for evaluating it is. In that respect the Aristotelian carpenter is no different from the Platonic craftsman who works according to the ideal example. The idea of the chair includes its end—comfortable sitting—and is defined in keeping with that end. The carpenter does not produce chairs in reference to a specific customer, or to a specific requirement addressed to him by the customers. Indeed, the way to discover and understand the idea is, among other things, a dialogue with customers and users, but once the idea has been revealed and the constant and general end of chairs has been determined, a need (according to that philosophy) to consult customers ceases to exist.

The craftsman can produce his chairs again and again according to the knowledge accumulated by himself and his forerunners. Customers' involvement in the production process may only divert the craftsman from the general idea. It may make him prefer comfort to health, for example, by producing very soft upholstery. On the other hand, a requirement that does not deflect the craftsman from the idea may be superfluous because, if it is justified, it must in any case be implied already in the concept of the ideal chair. Be that as it may, from a certain point onwards the customer's voice carries no weight.

True, a chair is a useful object which naturally tends to repeat itself, while a work of poetry tends to be unique and ever new. But Aristotle is not interested in that uniqueness. For him the philosophy of poetic composition is no different in principal from the philosophy of producing chairs: in both cases there is a system of general concepts which constitutes the standard of production, whether concerning safe and healthy sitting or pleasure and artistic response.

The audience's actual response, as described in the *Poetics*, may sometimes express this kind of general concepts, as exemplified by the discussion on the audience's rising up against the violation of the probability principal in Carcinus' *Amphiaraus* (*Poetics* 17, 1455a26-9, see ch. 5: 2.4 above). But the audience can equally make demands that are clearly extra-artistic: for various shortcuts or artificial happy endings; mistaking terror for fear, emotional effects attained through stage technology, and so on. Therefore the poet must always distinguish the

implied audience, which is part of the basic poetic plan, from the actual historical audience, which must be treated with suspicion.

The image and function of the actual audience closely resemble those of the judge. Note here that in the Greek *polis* judicial matters were decided by a large body of people, something like a jury, and not by professional judges, so the analogy between audience and judges is by no means metaphoric. Nor is this analogy a compliment to either audience or judges. When Aristotle talks about the art of performing he says:

It is those who do bear them [the qualities of voice] in mind who usually win prizes in the dramatic contests; and just as in drama the actors now count for more than the poets, so it is in the contests of public life, owing to the defects of our political constitutions [*tên mokhtherian tôn politeiôn*]. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b33-35)

Although poetry and rhetoric are presented here through their lowest manifestations, the analogy in general calls attention to Aristotle's conception of judging. For him the addressee of any rhetorical activity whatsoever should be conceived as a judge:

The use of persuasive speech is to lead to decision [*krisin*]. [---] This is so even if one is addressing a single person and urging him to do or not to do something, as when we advise a man about his conduct or try to change his views: the single person is as much your judge [*kritês*] as if he were one of many; we may say without qualification, that anyone is your judge whom you have to persuade. [---] Our principle holds good of epideictic speeches also; the audience for whom such a speech is put together is treated as a judge of it. (*Rhetoric* II, 18, 1391b8-17)

The term used by Aristotle for judge, *kritês*, is derived from the verb *krinô*, to make a decision. Aristotle uses the word as a general term, referring to everyone who is supposed to make a decision—juridical, political or in favor of a poetic text. When Aristotle distinguishes the rhetorical genres, this precisely is his starting point: the addressee of rhetoric is always a judge, and the generic distinctions are determined according to the objects being judged. These objects differ according to a triple distinction between times—past, present and future:

The hearer must be either a judge, with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer [*theôron*]. A member of the assembly decides about future events, a juryman about past events while those who merely decide on the orator's skill are observers. (*Rhetoric* I, 3, 1358b2-6)



Judges of the future are members of the council: "it is about things to be done hereafter that he advises, for or against" (ibid. 14-15). In the council public and political projects are discussed: going to war, making peace, building a bridge—all are plans supposed one way or another to shape the future.

Judges of the past are magistrates in court, dicasts: "one man accuses the other, and the other defends himself, with reference to things already done" (ibid. 16-17). Bodies of dicasts (*dikastêrion*) are supposed to decide if a certain action has been done, or, if it has been done, if it was right or wrong. This is the narrow meaning of judge, and to this kind of judge the second genre of rhetoric, the juridical, is addressed.

The third kind of judge is those of the present, that is, addressees of the epideictic speech. Unlike judges of the past and the future, who are nominated public bodies, judges of the present are simply the audience, that happened willingly or unwillingly to hear the speech or to read it years later. These are ceremonial speeches about praise or blame "since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time" (ibid. 18-19).

But the concept of present has an additional meaning, concerning not the object of the speech but also the speech as such, that is, the orator's talent for speech ("those who merely decide on the orator's skill", ibid. 5-6). This kind of judging, which is ascribed to "observers", also suits the audience of tragedy and comedy, since this audience too are supposed to judge the way the poet deals with a myth more or less known to the public. This kind of judging is of course competitive too, since theatrical performances were always competitions. This is the literal basis for the analogy between audience in theater and judges in court.

Of all rhetorical genres, the epideictic speech is the closest in quality to poetry. The decisions which the audience of that kind of oration is supposed to make, whether sympathy for the character presented or appreciation of the orator's skill, are closest in nature to the attitude of the audience of poetry to the epic or dramatic characters and to the poetic work as such. These decisions are similar also in their practical implications: while juridical or political oratory aim at a specific practical decision on a given matter, epideictic oration and poetry have no such aims.

The audience of theater or poetry in general are not asked to support a specific attitude or action; they are supposed only to attain a general kind of emotion, arising from their conviction of the authenticity of the representation, and to experience a certain emotional relief, the *katharsis*. But they are also supposed to enjoy and appreciate the work's artistic

quality, and sometimes reward the poet who has surpassed the others in achieving the artistic effects. In that respect this audience is quite similar to that of epideictic oratory, who are supposed to judge the orator's rhetorical skill.

So the role of the audience in poetry and the function of a judge are in some way analogous; and a certain continuum can be observed from the practical decision required in judicial and political oratory, through the more aesthetic and ethic "decision" in epideictic oratory, to the purely aesthetic and emotional response poetry strives to attain. Generally, the aesthetic response of the audience of poetry (that is, the standpoint aimed for by the work, that of the "implied audience") is the least relevant to political and judicial decisions. Epideictic oratory, in that respect, is an intermediary entity, bridging these two extremes.

We shall now set out to examine in more detail the general assumptions implied in the idea of the poetic text regarding the role of the addressee. These assumptions concern three levels of contact with the text: primary contact with the textual material (language in our case); then deciphering and understanding; and finally the emotional response. Each level presents a complex of problems, difficulties and needs, and each determines a different aspect of the concept of poetic pleasure and of the aim of poetry.<sup>94</sup>

## 2. Sensual Level: Contact with Textual Materials

This level is less important with regard to Aristotle's special view. But he takes it into account so it cannot be ignored. The first contact of the audience with the medium and its materials, and also the acts of deciphering and understanding them, are both the basic levels of textual response. These two stages are the lowest common denominators of artistic pleasure. Aristotle believes that both levels are based on the natural causes of poetry:

It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation. [---] Imitation, then, being natural to us—as also the sense of harmony and rhythm, the meters being obviously species of rhythms—it was through their original aptitude, and by a series of improvements for the most part gradual on their first efforts, that they created poetry out of their improvisations. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b5-24)

Aristotle points to a pair of natural data common to all human beings: the instinct of imitation and the sense of harmony. Those especially blessed with these two gifts had a special inclination towards poetry, and they developed it into an art. But also those who were not gifted with that creativity, that is, the majority of people, contributed to the development of poetry because they still are able to enjoy an act of imitation, and the need and ability for this enjoyment is the basis for the poetry-consuming public.

Together with the imitation instinct Aristotle mentions the second natural cause, namely the sense of harmony and rhythm, which is less elaborated and not explained. This difference in elaboration is probably due to the sense of harmony being the traditional explanation for the origin of poetry, hence it is regarded as self-evident. In Plato's *Laws* the sense of harmony is conceived as the exclusive source of poetry. Aristotle does not want to deny this cause and replace it by a different one; he preserves it, and only gives it a different status. What is generally accepted apparently needs no explanation. The other natural cause, the imitation instinct, is Aristotle's significant innovation in this issue, and is also the basic and special assumption of the entire *Poetics*.

The sense of harmony, then, is not more "notable" from Aristotle's point of view. Yet perhaps for that very reason it is the basic level of contact with the text, prior even to understanding; harmony and meter are aspects of language as mere voices, vocal materials, not as meaning and significance. The second level, on the other hand, concerns the meaning of the text and the way we understand it.

Contact with the materials is also the lowest level in the hierarchy of Aristotelian grades of knowledge, and it is the parallel of the level of *aesthêsis*, sensation, the basic and primary contact with the material world. As Aristotle puts it, the very contact with the sensual world causes pleasure:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all our sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things. (*Metaphysics* I, 1, 980a23-27)

Our first pleasure from the act of imitation is thus the sensual pleasure of its very perception. Contact with the materials of imitation causes pleasure even before the object of imitation has been recognized. In poetry

the first and most basic expression of this pleasure is the ability to identify and enjoy harmony and rhythm. But Aristotle refers to this level in other ways as well; for example, when he speaks of the imitation of an object which was not known before, that is, an imitation which cannot lead to identification, he says that in this case the pleasure concerns the very contact with the material aspect of the imitation:

[F]or if one has not seen the being before, one's pleasure will not be in the picture as an imitation of it, but will be due to the execution or coloring or some similar cause. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b18-30)

Aristotle thus recognizes the existence of a basic level of pleasure which is prior to meaning and concerns the "raw" qualities of the text. This view can be supported also by his verbal use: the word "execution", *apergasia*, means performance and finish, especially the exact laying of colors. The word "colors", *khroia*, means also surface, casing, skin, complexion. That is, the external appearance of the object can be nice and cause pleasure even independently of imitation.

Another example concerns the art of painting: "The most beautiful colors, laid on without order will not give one the same pleasure as a simple black-and-white sketch of a portrait" (*Poetics* 6, 1450b1-2). On the face of it, this is the opposite of claiming the importance of pleasure from "raw materials" of imitation, since Aristotle says here that a mere sketch, which is an imitation of structure, is more enjoyable than colors as such, which are local surfaces without any structure of their own. But Aristotle does not deny here the ability of colors as such to cause pleasure; he only claims that the pleasure they cause is less than that caused by a structured sketch. Contours are the outlines of a represented object, therefore their dominant aspect is representational; colors are just filling materials, so the pleasure they cause is independent of their representational function and is due only to their material existence.

Aristotle recognizes the existence of a basic pleasure from the mere texture. It is lower than other kinds of pleasure, since texture is material without meaning (rhythm, meter, color, etc.). In contrast to texture, structure carries meaning. It is conceived as the form of imitation and is determined by the object imitated. In a painting it is the sketch, in poetry it is the plot.

Aristotle does not analyze the causes of the basic level of pleasure. He takes its existence for granted; also in the section from the *Metaphysics* quoted above he refers to this kind of pleasure as a basic assumption, as a natural axiom which requires no explanation. Nor is this kind of pleasure peculiar to poetry or to imitation in general. It is the pleasure caused by a

lovely landscape, a beautiful building, a handsome person or a nice voice, and it concerns proportion, coloring, good execution etc., regardless of any potential of representation.

Precisely in the *Rhetoric*, which does not concern imitation, can a clue to the explanation be found. Perhaps all these phenomena produce a sense of harmony and order, independent of any representational or even rhetorical end:

[U]nrhythmical language is too unlimited; we do not want the limitation of meter, but some limitation we must have, or the effect will be vague and unsatisfactory. Now it is number that limits all things; and it is the numerical limitation of the form of a composition that constitutes rhythm, of which meters are definite sections. (*Rhetoric* III, 8, 1408b27-29)

People feel comfortable when they are able to identify a kind of order and structure in things. For this reason Aristotle also prefers the periodic to the continuous style. When he describes the latter, which is based on a syntactic chain with no natural ending, he says: "This style is unsatisfying just because it goes on indefinitely—one always likes to sight a stopping-place in front of one" (ibid. III, 9, 1409a31-32).

The principles of order and completeness, which Aristotle speaks about when discussing the plot outline, that is, the central structure of the representation, are valid also for the raw materials of the text before representing anything, that is, before being imitations or poetry. This kind of pleasure is common to fine art, crafts and even natural objects. The pleasure caused by the act of imitation, which is peculiar to representational arts, whether poetry or painting, begins at the level of deciphering and understanding.

### 3. Epistemological Level: Contact with the Meaning

Aristotle explains the epistemological level of the audience in terms of learning and acquiring new knowledge, and the pleasure caused by it is mainly that of learning:

[T]o be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it. (*Poetics*, 4, 1448b13-15)

Aristotle emphasizes that he speaks of learning on its most basic level, not the philosophic one, but perhaps more the childlike one: man "learns at first by imitation" (ibid. 8). Learning gives pleasure because it satisfies a certain human need. The *Rhetoric* puts it like this:

Learning things [*manthanein*] and wondering at things [*thaumazein*] are also pleasant for the most part; wondering implies the desire of learning, so that the object of wonder is an object of desire; while in learning one is brought into one's natural condition. [---] Again, since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant—for instance, painting, sculpture, poetry—and every product of skillful imitation; this latter, even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant. (*Rhetoric* I, 11, 1371a31-b7)

Aristotle thus views the reception of information like a biologist dealing with metabolism. He regards knowledge as a certain human need: its absence causes a kind of disturbance whereas its fulfillment restores an original state of harmony. Absence of knowledge is wondering, which concerns the drive to acquire knowledge and fulfill the want. Learning is the process whereby this desire is satisfied: human conscience absorbs information to the point where the need is no longer felt. Then the state of wondering ceases, and conscience returns to the state of natural equilibrium.

For Aristotle, wondering is the beginning of all knowledge: "for it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize" (*Metaphysics* I, 2, 982b12-13). On the face of it, it could be argued that wondering cannot cause pleasure since it is a situation of want, therefore something chaotic; only learning, which means cessation of this situation, gives pleasure. One could similarly say that hunger is not enjoyable but only eating, which means fulfilling the lack. But this kind of analogy presents mind and mental activities either as a system striving for a static situation of full satisfaction, or as a ceaseless desire to be filled with information. But this is not the way Aristotle puts it: wondering and learning are presented here as two combined situations and not as separate concepts, or as a pair of contraries. Their relationship is not similar to that between hunger and nutrition, but to that between appetite and eating.

Just as hunger does not cause pleasure, neither does satiety. Aristotle uses the term "flat" (*epipolaios*) for situations of epistemological satiety, of self-evident knowledge, which is uninteresting as it does not respond to any wonder. Likewise wonder alone is a chaotic experience, and it makes one feel uneasy. When Aristotle speaks of rhythms he says, as quoted above, that unrhythmical speech has no "numerical limitation". This lack of limitation is connected with the dominance of a chaotic and unordered element, and therefore it is like a situation of wonder raised beyond the need and not properly satisfied. Rhythmical speech is easier to digest, since it raises phonetic expectations and fulfills them in regular order—it cancels the chaotic aspect of wonder. Wonder and learning cause pleasure

only if they are combined from the start. Wonder gives pleasure only if it predicts learning, and learning gives pleasure only if it follows wonder. Pleasure is caused by the delicate balance of the two.

Furthermore, Aristotle speaks of **learning**, not of the **content learned**. Pleasure is caused by the very process, not by its outcome. Therefore pleasure transpires from imitation:

[E]ven if the object imitated is not itself pleasant; for it is not the object itself which here gives delight; the spectator draws inferences ('That is so-and-so') and thus learns something fresh. (*Rhetoric* I, 11, 1371b7-10)

The pleasure of imitation is independent of the attitude to its object. In the *Poetics* Aristotle puts it even more sharply:

[T]hough the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representation of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b9-12)

Aristotle's examples of learning and pleasure here are most simple, and as he himself stresses he speaks of processes of primal learning common to all people, and not of philosophical learning. Nevertheless, he describes this process in logical terms: people love imitations because it gives them the opportunity of logically inferring (*sullogizezthai*),<sup>95</sup> (*Poetics* 4, 1448b16-17). The relation between logical inferences and the simple forms of learning discussed by Aristotle deserves note.

Generally speaking, learning is the process by which we acquire new knowledge on the basis of existing knowledge. It can proceed either by inference—*sullogismos*, which is the deductive way, or by "gathering"—*epagôgê*, which is the inductive way. As stated above (ch. 1: 2) Aristotle believes that knowledge has five grades: sensation (*aisthêsis*), memory (*mnêmê*), experience (*empeiria*), craftsmanship (*tekhnê*) and science (*epistêmê*). In the present context, when he speaks of a basic process of learning which needs no philosophical background, the relevant grades of knowledge will apparently be the lower ones. On the basis of these assumptions we shall try to reconstruct the process which Aristotle presents as the most simple artistic perception, that of recognizing a portrait:

[T]he reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning—gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-so. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b15-17)

First there is here an element of sensation, since the observer sees a picture with all its colors and forms. Then there is an element of memory, since besides the concrete picture seen, the observer must also recall a face or a figure he has seen in the past and link it with the perception of the picture. The inference of the identification will thus be based on the two following assumptions:

1. *I see a picture with form X.*
2. *I remember Y, whose figure also resembles X.*

And the conclusion:

3. *Therefore the form X in the picture is a likeness of Y.*

The act of identification is thus translated into the structure of an inference. The assumptions it applies are based on the elementary grades of knowledge: sensation and memory.<sup>96</sup>

Aristotle uses the example of painting for this case, since it consists of simple, iconic, signs. Poetry is a more complex art: its simplest signs too—words and sentences—cannot be understood through mere sensation since they are linguistic signs which require deciphering. The sounds heard become meaningful through a series of elementary inferences of the sort presented above, and these meanings must be combined into a story, which also needs understanding and deciphering. The story causes pleasure, among other things because it reminds us of similar matters experienced in reality.

In both cases—painting and poetry—the very process of recognizing the object of imitation is identical; the difference lies in the quality of the basic component in each of the inferences required. In painting the components are simple and primary; in poetry, on the other hand, even the basic particles are complex and themselves require a deciphering process. The effect of pleasure, however, is similar, and it is attained once the spectator identifies the similarity and the representational relationship between a given system of signs and a certain known object.

This is the most general structure of mimetic pleasure, since neither the specific identity of the imitated object nor our attitude to it is relevant in that respect. We enjoy the very act of recognizing. This recognition can take place on various levels. For instance, recognizing the object of a portrait is clearly of a lower kind than recognizing the probability of a story: in recognizing the object of a portrait we just match two sensual data, while in recognizing the probability of a plot we match a complex concept created by a combination of data ("the structure of actions") with a



complex and abstract concept constructed from acquaintance with the laws of reality ("the probable and the necessary").<sup>97</sup>

To enjoy a text one needs deciphering competence, and to create a good imitation the poet must take into account the structure and limits of that competence. Consider for instance the discussion of the concept of wholeness: for the plot to be experienced as complete the poet has to take into account certain conditions of cognition and of visual perception which make this completeness apparent and visible. If completeness concerns the relationship between the parts and the whole, the object must be of a size that allows a view of both the whole and the parts:

Beauty is a matter of size and order, and therefore impossible either in a very minute creature, since our perception becomes indistinct as it approaches instantaneity. (*Poetics* 7, 1450b37)

Recognition of the parts necessitates space and time to make possible a certain tarrying on the object: an object which lacks these dimensions and does not facilitate this tarrying will be perceived as a mere point—indeed as a whole, but its very wholeness will not be perceived since the particles and the principle of order won't be perceptible. But too large an object cannot be beautiful either:

[O]r in a creature of vast size—one, say, 1000 miles long—as in that case, instead of the object being seen all at once, the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the beholder. (Ibid. 1450b39-1451a2)

Too large a size in space renders tarrying beyond human capacity, and again, it does not allow us to recognize the whole since its limits are imperceptible: one can perceive only the parts. Aristotle adopts this model, based on visual perception, for the literary text as well:

Just in the same way, then, as a beautiful whole made up of parts, or a beautiful living creature, must be of some size, but a size to be taken in by the eye, so a story or plot must be of some length, but of a length to be taken in by the memory. (Ibid. 1451a3-6)

In poetry and verbal arts the act of memorizing substitutes space for tarrying. We cannot surround the text with our eyes like an object, but we can experience a certain model of the text preserved in memory. This model should not be too big, as memory would be unable to contain it, nor should it be too small, for then it would be impossible to tarry on it.

In the previous chapter (5) memory was discussed at length from the addressor's viewpoint. Memory required by the addressee, as discussed

here, is a lot simpler; however, as in the previous discussion it is conceived as a competence for a "spatial" survey, making it possible to view simultaneously various details which are not so perceived in reality. Therefore memory has an important role in perceiving a verbal text. The aim of Aristotle's requirement of size (*megethos*) is to adjust the work of art to human perception in order to make its completeness apparent.

Completeness is an absolute term, since it depends on the internal relations among the work's components. To be beautiful, every object must contain completeness. But the concept of proper size depends on the spectator's habits and competence, and concerns the object's adjustment to a size suitable for human perception.

By introducing the term "size" Aristotle also introduces the spectator. Yet he seems unhappy with it, and later tries to make the concept of size independent of human perception, that is, to push the spectator aside. He tries to present "size" as an absolute concept, based, like "completeness", on the internal relations of the object's components, independent of the spectator.

His first reservation is this:

As for the limit of length, so far as that is relative to public performances and spectators, it does not fall within the theory of poetry. If they had to perform a hundred tragedies, they would be timed by water-clocks, as they are said to have been at one period. (*Poetics* 7, 1451a6-9)

The concept of size, then, does not regard the audience as a concrete community watching a real performance: as Aristotle puts it, all these aspects are extra-artistic. If the concrete performance raises a certain problem of size, it should be solved by the formal and external means that were used to measure the time of juridical speeches. But in that way every unit of time could be limited, independently of its content. So this would be incidental size, based on the concrete public and real performance, but entirely neutral as regards the art of poetry itself.

At the next stage Aristotle tries to include in his definition of size more intra-textual considerations, and reduce the role of the audience:

The limit, however, set by the actual nature of the thing is this: the longer the story, consistently with its being comprehensible as a whole, the finer it is by reason of magnitude. (Ibid. 9-11)

In this case the limit is not the sensuous perception or the concrete scenic activity, but the audience's ability to perceive the structure. The size which makes the drama possible as a complete unit is no more an incidental

continuum referring to the overall needs of the theatrical production, but depends directly on the ability to present the specific plot convincingly.

Yet even here Aristotle seems not content with his use of the audience's perception, although in this definition it concerns the structure and the purely poetical elements alone. So he presents a third definition, which excludes the audience entirely and determines the size according to the very nature of the object:

As a rough general formula, a length which allows of the hero passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from bad fortune to good, or from good to bad, may suffice as a limit for the magnitude of the story. (Ibid. 12-15)

This definition is based wholly on the internal relations among the narrative parts: the proper size is thus the minimal size that can contain all the necessary elements of plot.

Notable here is Aristotle's immense effort invested in attaining a definition which is independent of the audience and the spectator, even in their more abstract conception as "implied audience". For that need "the rough general formula" means largely the text independent of its addressee.<sup>98</sup> This is a very extreme version of the concept of *poiêsis*. In discussing a product of *poiêsis*, the addressee exists only as a border-concept: it should be included only if there is no other choice, and excluded the moment it is possible.

In the *Rhetoric* too Aristotle refers to the capacity of perception, as in the passage partly quoted above:

This style [the free-running] is unsatisfying just because it goes on indefinitely—one always likes to sight a stopping-place in front of one: it is only at the goal that men in a race faint and collapse; while they see the end of the course before them, they can keep going. (Ibid. III, 9, 1409a31-9)

But in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle has less difficulty admitting the dependence of his professional requirements on the audience. The art of rhetoric is not *poiêsis* but *praxis*, so the "actual nature of the thing" depends in one way or other on the audience, who must be convinced by the rhetorical process.

#### 4. Emotional Level: *Philanthrôpia* and Catharsis

So far we have discussed the nature of the audience's perception and response which the poet is supposed to take into account when he constructs an imitation in its broadest sense. But to make this discussion

possible, and to be able to present his concept of *mimêsis* and mimetic pleasure convincingly, Aristotle also had to argue for the independence of that pleasure of the object of imitation and the contents of learning. As stated before, the pleasure concerns the process, not the content. The clearest example of this position is when Aristotle's states:

[T]hough the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representation of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b 10-12)

This pleasure clearly concerns the accuracy of projection, not the objects in themselves.

But a further question must be posed now: why do a considerable number of poets prefer precisely objects which raise a kind of unpleasant emotion, such as sorrow or fear? After all, it could be said that to imitate objects which are pleasant in themselves is still preferable! In the *Odyssey*, for instance, Penelope addresses the poet Phemios in that way:

Phemios, since you know many other actions of mortals  
And gods, which can charm men's hearts and which the singers celebrate,  
[---] leave off singing this sad  
Song, which always afflicts the dear heart deep inside me.  
(*Odyssey* 1, 337-341)

Still, these expectations notwithstanding, poetry deals over and over with materials which in themselves are far from pleasant: death, murder, suicide, incest, and so on. The repeated presentation of such objects expresses not only indifference to their exact nature but also an intentional choice to use precisely them. A partial explanation for this inclination can be found in Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*:

For if some [of the lowest animals] have no grace to charm the sense, yet nature, which fashioned them, gives amazing pleasure in their study to all who can trace links of causation, and are inclined to philosophy. Indeed, it would be strange if mimic representations of them were attractive, because they disclose the mimetic skill of the painter or sculptor, and the original realities themselves were not more interesting, to all at any rate who have eyes to discern the causes. We therefore must not recoil with childish aversion from the examination of the humbler animals. Every realm of nature is marvelous: and as Heraclitus, when the strangers who came to visit him found him warming himself at the furnace in the kitchen and hesitated to go in, is reported to have bidden them not to be afraid to enter, as even in that kitchen divinities were present, so we should venture on the

study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful. (Ibid. I, 5, 645a7-23)

Aristotle's explanation for this inclination is thus closely connected with the principle of learning, which in itself is connected with imitation: if the aim is to study and understand "lowest" creatures, the pleasure of the learning is stronger than the disgust they elicit. So here too, the assumption that we enjoy these creatures even when they are represented in works of art supports our desire to study them in themselves. This argument has a certain explanatory force, but it is still based on the same *a fortiori* structure used in the *Poetics*. Yet here too the question may be raised as to what drives one to deal particularly with these creatures, and not other, nicer ones? And in parallel again: what drives poets to present especially incidents of disaster and sorrow?

The special attractiveness of this kind of subjects, as well as its questionable nature, no longer has anything to do with the mere pleasure of imitation, which is purely cognitive; its connection is with the emotional resonance caused by imitation. To understand this issue we must move from cognitive theory to the theory of emotions.

If we start from the lowest common denominator underlying mimetic activity, the poetic text must first comply with a certain attitude of the audience, which Aristotle calls *philanthrôpia* (*Poetics* 13). This is a kind of border, keeping out every kind of emotional response which is unfitting for a text. Absolute injustice, wicked men succeeding, good men suffering, unnecessary meanness, cruelty, terror—all these cause responses of contempt and revulsion. At a certain point Aristotle ascribes these feelings to something which he calls *míaron*, something filthy, disgusting, contaminated (ibid. 1452b36). Elsewhere he uses the word *teratôdes*, terrifying, monstrous, a term referring more to physical fright (ibid. 14, 1453b9). Both terms designate something which is beyond human acceptability. The boundaries of human acceptability are signified by the term *philanthrôpia*.

There is a parallel—by no means accidental—between this principle and the classicistic "poetic justice". But the concept of poetic justice is constructed of ethical assumptions (although they are transferred to an aesthetic context); the concept of *philanthrôpia*, on the other hand, is based on emotional assumptions: the standard is the ability to contain the object and accept it in the framework of elementary human identification. Even hard and cruel circumstances do not necessarily violate this principle, as long as a certain kind of empathy is involved.

It is interesting, by the way, that all the great tragedies tend to get very close to that limit—almost challenging it—but do not cross it. Some plays

failed only because they tripped on this thin string. A typical example is Euripides' *Hiding Hippolytus*, a lost version of his *Hippolytus*, which he tried to correct later by the version known to us, originally called *Hippolytus the wreath bearer*. Euripides' *Medea* is of course the most typical example of the delicate play around this border: even in the worst manifestation of the heroine, there is still a kind of emotional attachment between her and the audience, which makes it possible to contain her.

Crossing this border may cause the tragedy to fail, but too safe a distance from that line is no remedy either. *Philanthrôpia*, the ability to contain the object of the work, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. A disaster happening to a villain cannot be the basis for a tragic action, although in principle it complies with *philanthrôpia*:

Nor, on the other hand, should an extremely bad man be seen falling from good fortune into bad. Such a story may arouse the human feeling [*philanthrôpon*] in us, but it will not move us to either pity or fear. (*Poetics* 13, 1453a1-4)

In this case the plot is far from the delicate border, and it enters the safe range of what seems to be juridical justice, a kind of balance between crime and punishment which does not raise any emotional response relevant to tragedy.

On the same grounds Aristotle also rejects the "double plot" in tragedy. For him a tragic plot must be of a single direction, either of deterioration or of amelioration. Of course, a plot may and actually should be complex, namely at a certain point change its direction, and a movement which was supposed to lead to amelioration or deterioration is reversed in an instant and leads in the opposite direction. But Aristotle definitely rejects the "double plot", which contains both amelioration and deterioration for different groups of characters:

After this comes the construction of plot which some rank first, one with a double story (like the *Odyssey*) and an opposite issue for the good and the bad personages. It is ranked at first only through the weakness of the audience; the poets merely follow their public, writing as its wishes dictate. But the pleasure here is not that of tragedy. It belongs rather to comedy, where the bitterest enemies in the piece (e.g. Orestes and Aegisthus) walk off good friends at the end, with no slaying of any one by any one. (*Poetics* 13, 1453a31)

True, here Aristotle does not use the term *philanthrôpia*, which he introduced several lines earlier, but it is clear that without this concept his statement would not be understandable. The double plot is not bad in

itself; it is only unfitting for the needs of tragedy. The example he presents for that kind of plot is the *Odyssey*. Odysseus succeeds in rescuing his home, and the suitors who threatened it are all severely punished.<sup>99</sup> But this discussion, like the entire *Poetics*, contains not a single reservation about the *Odyssey* as such: Homer is almost above any criticism. The reservation about the double structure is basically generic: this structure is not effective from the tragic viewpoint, and therefore cannot be transferred from epic to tragedy.

Why then are playwrights tempted to use this kind of plot in tragedies? Aristotle's answer is that "the poets merely follow their public, writing as its wishes dictate" (ibid.). What are these uncontrolled wishes? Aristotle does not go into detail, but from the context it seems to be the demand for a full realization of the element of *philanthrôpia*. Only surrender to this demand can explain the preference for the double ending, where the tendency to balance overpowers the tragic tendency.

Aristotle's comment connects this kind of plot to comedy, but his hypothetical example, where Orestes makes peace with Aegisthus, seems strange: had Aristotle meant to illustrate a double ending he could have thought of a plot where Orestes triumphs over Aegisthus without being punished by the Erynies. Nor is this possibility by any means hypothetical: it is the plot of Sophocles' *Electra*. Unlike Euripides' *Electra* and Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, Sophocles' tragedy on this subject has indeed a double ending. The hypothetical example of peace between Orestes and Aegisthus is actually contrary to Aristotle's intention, since it unifies the plot's direction and leads to a happy ending for both characters. This is entirely different from the double ending of the *Odyssey*!<sup>100</sup>

The only way to understand the example is to regard the audience's demand for *philanthrôpia*, rather than the double ending in itself, as the argument's focus. The comedy takes place well within the safe borders of *philanthrôpia*. From the beginning it contains no acts of murder or injustice, and indeed, all disagreements may be solved within it. This holds mainly for the Maenandric "new comedy", which Aristotle seems to have in mind.<sup>101</sup> It may be otherwise for the Aristophanic "old comedy". But still, even Aristophanes does not challenge the border of *philanthrôpia*, simply because this is the nature of comedy. So even if the comic poet surrenders to the spectators' demand, and offers them a double ending, or a balanced and comforting one (even if his decision is unjustified in itself), he will not violate the rules of the genre. In tragedy, on the other hand, that would be a direct violation of the tragic rules. Actually the discussion does not focus on the structural effect of the double plot but on the emotional implication of the surrender to the demand for *philanthrôpia*. In the case

of tragedy this is in polar contrast to the generic requirements, which is not the case with comedy or epic.

*Philanthrôpia* is thus the general standard for the emotional responses raised by the text. This standard is bi-directional: on the one hand it sets a kind of boundary of acceptability, behind which a story cannot be told. On the other hand it determines a kind of transitional zone, where *philanthrôpia* exists without the other generic requirements. If the text responds only to the requirement of *philanthrôpia*, the problem raised is not unacceptability but mainly banality. Over-obedience to that requirement may lead the text to a kind of pale appeasement, which will not make a real story possible since even Orestes and Aegisthus, instead of taking an action, will rest in peace.<sup>102</sup>

*Philanthrôpia*, then, signifies the boundaries of imitation: it determines on the one hand the borderline of acceptability, and on the other hand the zone of banality. But beyond this it reflects on the body of imitation and not only on its borderlines. When Aristotle speaks of the "dreadful" act in tragedy, he classifies all the possibilities existing within a systematic logical range.

In a deed of this description the parties must necessarily be either friends, or enemies, or indifferent to one another. Now when enemy does it on enemy, there is nothing to move us to pity either in his doing or in his meditating the deed, except so far as the actual pain of the sufferer is concerned; and the same is true when the parties are indifferent to one another. Whenever the tragic deed, however, is done among friends—when murder or the like is done or meditated by brother on brother, by son on father, by mother on son, or son on mother—these are the situations the poet should seek after. (*Poetics* 14, 1453b15-21)

The possibilities dismissed by Aristotle—acts between enemies or indifferent people—are not rejected explicitly on *philanthrôpia* grounds but the concept is significant here as well, albeit in a different dimension: the suffering in the rejected options is emotionally neutral. When enemies or indifferent people harm each other there is no emotional meaning, not in the action nor in the intention. We can have pity only for the suffering as such, that is, the mere incident of death, injury or pain. But as long as the incident is not part of an intentional action done within a personal relationship, it is just neutral, anonymous, and in a way also insignificant from the narrative viewpoint. Even a most shocking disaster is perceived as an accident far away, reported in a journalistic message.

Aristotle's preferred actions, those between lovers, are effective for many reasons, but the important point for him is that they do not allow any emotional disengagement. Both previous possibilities—"between enemies"



or "between indifferent persons"—allow identification with one party and disengagement from the other. Only between lovers is there no emotional refuge. We cannot identify with the victim on account of the aggressor (as in the *Trojan Women*) nor with the aggressor on account of the victim (as in the slaying of the suitors in the *Odyssey*). None of the parties in this incident allows emotional disengagement because they are closely connected. The aggressor actually attacks himself, and the pain he inflicts is on himself. In this case the *philanthrôpia* is differently expressed, but still it creates a kind of human commitment to and among the characters, whereby pity and fear may be elicited in keeping the aim of tragedy.

Other situations can be imagined where the emotional commitment causes different attitudes. The *Odyssey*, for instance, does not intend to create pity and fear, but a different variety of emotions, which are differently divided among the various participants of the actions. In comedy too the emotions generated will be different.

Certainly, dead bodies and base animals are by no means pleasant, but when involved in a narrative structure with human interest they may be extremely powerful. Whether it is the body of Yocaste, who has just committed suicide, or of Hippolytus, from whom Aphrodite has exacted cruel vengeance, the unpleasant assumes a human face and becomes a story about suffering. The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, ends with more dead bodies and blood than all Aeschylean and Euripidean tragedies, but here the unpleasant is simply neutralized by our indifference to the suitors. Even the disgust they have generated by their behavior is neutralized as they are a group and not a single person. Hence even their most cruel end cannot overshadow the pity and fear we feel for Odysseus, the lone man.

In comedy too *philanthrôpia* of that kind can be assumed. Base animals which are unpleasant in reality can be effectively brought into a comic plot: Tirgaius' immense beetle in *Peace* or the frogs from the Acheron in *Frogs* are animals which become comic elements precisely because of the human context in which they are presented.<sup>103</sup>

But what is this emotional elicitation, and why is it regarded as bringing pleasure? After all, intensification of emotions like fear and pity can be a hard and even painful experience! Here Aristotle himself is unclear, and the post-Aristotelian exegetic tradition busies itself more with this issue than with any other aspect of the *Poetics*.

Although the question is generally one of aesthetics, Aristotle's answer is part of his definition of tragedy. The concept of catharsis, purgation, is presented in that definition as the experience caused by the intensification of pity and fear:

A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action [---] with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. (*Poetics* 6, 1449b24-28)

At this stage of the discussion there is no reason to enter the complex of interpretations of this vague statement. For the present context, even if the concept is not fully explained, I would like to make some remarks toward finding a place for it in our textual model. First, is catharsis an emotion presented in the text, or one which is supposed to be experienced by the audience? There is no final answer to this question. However, following the detailed analysis so far of the audience's function in Aristotle's thought, despite his ambiguous attitude to the audience and his evident attempts to ascribe as many qualities as possible to the text itself, independently of the audience, catharsis may still be viewed as an expected response by the audience, at least as much as pity and fear may be viewed as such, and not as inherent qualities of the work itself.

And what is that "purgation" implied in the concept? Should the audience be purged of the very presence of pity and fear, or should these emotions themselves be purged? These are actually two traditions of interpreting the term. The understanding that the audience should be purged of pity and fear is based on medical tradition, especially the homoeopathic; the understanding that the emotions of pity and fear should themselves be purged is based on the ethic tradition, and supported mainly by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The medical understanding is characteristic of renaissance interpretations, and it prevailed as long as homoeopathic tenets, namely the healing principle must be of the same nature as the disease, dominated medical practice. In the age of the enlightenment this position was displaced by the ethical understanding, but at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century its popularity became restored because of the Freudian use of the term; this use seems to dictate the understanding of the term still today.

Medical or psychoanalytical beliefs in themselves are not reasonable support for understanding Aristotle's ideas. Of course, Aristotle's ideas need not really comply with ours. However, Freud's own understanding would not have been possible without the philological work of Jacob Bernays of 1858, who interpreted the term according to ancient Greek medical practice (Bernays 1970). The last word in this debate remains to be uttered, and I will not aim for it here. Still, for our purposes it seems to me that the medical understanding has some advantages: it can shed interesting light on the disagreement between Aristotle and Plato, and this very disagreement illumines our subject.

Plato, the harsh critic of poetry, dealt with the problem of the audience's response. His terms are not deeply different from Aristotle's, but as expected, his conclusion is the opposite.

If you would reflect that the part of the soul that in the former case, in our own misfortunes, was forcibly restrained, and that has hungered for tears and a good cry and satisfaction, because it is its nature to desire these things, is the element in us that the poets satisfy and delight, and that the best element in our nature, since it has never been properly educated by reason or even by habit, then relaxes its guard over the plaintive part, inasmuch as this is contemplating the woes of others and it is no shame to it to praise and pity another who, claiming to be a good man, abandons himself to excess in his grief, but it thinks this vicarious pleasure is so much clear gain, and would not consent to forfeit it by disdaining the poem altogether. That is, I think, because few are capable of reflecting that what we enjoy in others will inevitably react upon ourselves. For after feeding fat the emotion of pity there, it is not easy to restrain it in our own sufferings. (*Republic* X, 606 a-b)

The medical understanding of the concept of catharsis makes it possible to read the Aristotelian theory as a reaction to Plato's statement. Plato is allopathic; he believes that passions are bad and sick phenomena under any condition, and the only way to control them is to oppress them harshly and totally by means of reason. Aristotle on the other hand is homoeopathic, and he believes that the way to control and overcome passions is by reasonable activation of them.

Therefore the emotional response to a poetic work, which Aristotle deems therapeutic, is the most dangerous for Plato: the spectator believes that the emotions raised by the work refer to an alien situation, to a strange person, so he deludes himself that regarding his own affairs he is in full control. But "what we enjoy in others will inevitably react upon ourselves", and these "borrowed" emotions ultimately subvert the absolute domination of reason.

Both thinkers refer to the same situation, but they reach entirely contrary conclusions. This polar difference is due to several aspects of their philosophies, but in the present context I would like to highlight just one of them.

When Aristotle speaks of the emotions involved in the cathartic experience, it cannot be ignored that these emotions are raised by an artistic text. His statement about catharsis is an integral part of the definition of a poetic genre; in the *Politics* too he mentions catharsis explicitly when discussing the sacred music. In Plato, on the other hand, things are not as clear. The immediate spur for his statement, like

Aristotle's, is the discussion of poetry and poets. But in his explanation for the damage caused by poetry he does not refer to any experience which belongs especially to poetry. He speaks of the difference between the response to one's own disasters and the response to **others'** disasters. True, these "others" are introduced to the spectator by means of a poem or a drama, but this circumstance actually carries no weight: also if these "others" were neighbors, citizens of a foreign town or distant relatives, the argument would be no different. The point of the argument is the difference between one's own experience and that of others. The literary text and the performed drama present an opportunity to be introduced to some of these others, but for Plato there is no essential difference between others met on stage or in the street.

For Aristotle, the others met on stage or in poetry have a special mode of existence which makes them different from others met in the street or the market. Aristotle's others exist in a world of imitation—*mimêsis*, which has laws and practices of its own. The special effects of tragedy are essentially possible only within imitation.

Had we met the tragic characters in reality, pity and fear would have developed in an entirely different direction. They would have imposed practical responsibility on us, such as calling the police or ordering an ambulance; or they would have developed into reactions of mourning or panic. But catharsis means an emotional response taking place within a closed and fully controlled situation, which makes it possible to stay in one's own emotional world without any practical implications for the real world. The therapeutic potential of poetry can be realized only if the spectator is free of any real commitment to the characters, even to himself. Aristotle speaks of a simulation of reality, not of reality itself; in such a simulation the significant question is not if the story told has really happened, but if it could have happened, as he characterizes the concept of *mimêsis* (*Poetics* 9, 1451a37-8).

In Plato such a thing cannot happen. He also has a concept of imitation, but for him it is just a kind of forgery and lie, degrading reality to the level of a falsehood or trivializing it by duplication. He does not determine any autonomic domain where imitation is acceptable and possible. There is only one reality and it is wholly subject to the categories of truth and falsehood, good and bad; nothing is exempt from these distinctions. Therefore imitation is pushed to the far margins of the world, remote from what is conceived as true or as good.

In Winnicott's psychological terms, for Aristotle imitation is a domain of **transitional space**, a domain not defined as true or false, inside or

outside, good or bad. And it is realized by means of objects, literary texts, poems or paintings, all conceived as **transitional objects**.

This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work. (Winnicott 1970, p. 16)<sup>104</sup>

This conception of the autonomous intermediate area can be applied easily and very naturally to Aristotle's theory of text and *mimêsis*.

Thinking of Aristotle in Winnicott's terms, one finds more and more formulations exactly suiting the definition of transitional space. Aristotle says, for example, that it is not important whether the story is "already made or of his own [the poet's] making" (*Poetics* 17, 1455a35). And Winnicott says:

Of the transitional object it can be said that it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question: 'Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?' The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated. (Ibid. p. 14)

The reasons for stating this are very different from one another, the statements, however, are strikingly similar.

Aristotle also speaks of various kinds of speech for which there is no truth value, like questions, commands, etc.:

Every sentence is significant (not as a tool but, as we said, by convention), but not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity. There is not truth or falsity in all sentences: a prayer is a sentence but it is neither true or false. The present investigation deals with the statement-making sentence; the others we can dismiss, since consideration of them belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or poetry. (*De Interpretatione* 4, 17a1-6)

Since poetry for Aristotle means *mimêsis*, represented events and characters can be included in this category too. Again, Aristotle says this in a logical-linguistic context and is interested mainly in statement-making sentences, but the view of poetry as non statement-making utterance, implied in the passage, fully complies with the description of transitional space.

In Plato this is unthinkable. His world is absolutely double-valued and dichotomous: either I or the other, either inside or outside, either truth or

falsehood. There is no transitional space between these options, no domain where both can be suspended for a while, can exist without decision. Furthermore, in Plato's conception of language, no utterance is not subject to truth or falsehood. Even single words which are not parts of a statement, or even of a mere sentence, must be right or wrong (*Cratylus*). For him imitation is not the creation of an autonomic world with its own laws but a direct transfer of characteristics between men or objects, which exist side by side in the same world. There is no "rest area" for the soul, no place where it is exempt from resolutions; the soul must make decisions at every step.

This difference can be easily explained through the main assumption of this study: the concept of text and textuality in Aristotle. In chapter 2 above this assumption was presented through a comparison between Aristotle and Plato, claiming that Plato's view is based on the image of poetry as an oral activity, while in Aristotle's theory the image of poetry is that of a written text. The present issue seems to be a direct implication of that comparison: Aristotle can more easily regard poetry as an autonomic world, because it is incorporated in a text; for Plato, on the other hand, poetry being a behavior it is always a behavior of **someone**. It is incorporated in its very creator or performer. He is the one who imitates, in his body or existence. No object buffers the imitated from the imitator. The same is true for the spectator or the auditor: in Plato's view he absorbs poetry the way he absorbs impressions from the outer world, not as one who carries near a transitional object. In other words, conceiving poetry as a transitional object is possible in a theoretical system which regards the work of art as an object; it is almost impossible in a theory which views poetry in terms of behavior, therefore as subject to the laws of ethics.

Returning to the issue of catharsis, we see now that whatever may be the exact meaning of the concept, it can be understood only as a response to the world presented in a work of art, to characters and events told in a text; it cannot be understood as a general emotional experience, independent of its textual existence. This quality distinguishes Aristotle's catharsis from the Platonic concept of artistic experience, but also from Freud's use of the term in his early theory. There he used the term "cathartic experience" for the revival of a traumatic childhood experience regardless of any textual medium.

This textual understanding of the cathartic experience sends us back to the previous levels of response, the cognitive and the sensual: catharsis cannot be understood separately from these other kinds of response. They are not three distinct kinds of pleasure but a single system of mutually dependent layers. That is, the levels of human response—cognitive or

emotional—are not clearly and definitely distinct; quite the reverse—they are mutually related. This is the last point we must examine now.

## 5. The Interrelation of the Three Levels

The response to an artistic imitation has three levels, as noted: the level of the materials of imitation; the level of meaning, that is, the pleasure of identifying the objects of imitation; and the level of the pleasure connected to the emotional attitude to these objects and the emotional processes taking place as a result. These three levels can also exhibit a certain structural interconnection. In our discussion of the cognitive level we said that Aristotle has in mind a kind of biological model based on the assumption of homeostasis: a situation of balance which is broken and rebuilt. This assumption is explicit when Aristotle speaks about wondering and learning, where the pleasure is connected with a need and its fulfillment.

It is quite easy also to apply such a general model to the emotional effects of tragedy, as presented by Aristotle. Pity and fear are kinds of stimuli which break the balance like wonder, and the work leads them in a controlled way to a certain point where they are relieved. The catharsis is perhaps a certain emotional parallel of the state of homeostasis, returned by the act of learning.

This is even clearer from the mention of catharsis in the *Politics*, where Aristotle explicitly states that people who are unquiet can join the ritual choirs and become relieved as through pity and fear:

For feelings such as pity and fear, or, again, enthusiasm, exist very strongly in some souls, and have more or less influence over all. Some persons fall into a religious frenzy, and we see them restored as a result of sacred melodies—when they have used the melodies that excite the soul to mystic frenzy—as though they have found healing and purgation [*katharsis*]. Those who are influenced by pity and fear, and every emotional nature, must have a like experience, and others in so far as each is susceptible to such emotion, and all are in a manner purged and their souls lightened and delighted. The melodies which purge the passions likewise give an innocent pleasure to mankind. Such are the modes and the melodies in which those who perform music at the theater should be invited to compete. (*Politics* VIII, 7, 1342a4-17)

Disturbing and rebuilding the balance is thus a structure repeated in various ways in the descriptions of pleasure on the levels of cognition and emotion. If we follow the dynamic conception of pleasure we can say that catharsis is the last stage of that dynamics, the stage at which the organism

which has lost its balance regains it. This balance can be conceived in both cognitive and emotional terms, since it is always based on the tension between suspense and relaxation: suspense by means of wonder or pity and fear, which is resolved when the wonder finds its solution, the story which strove for a certain ending reaches it, the fear attains its climax and is relieved and there is nothing more to fear.

This structure is salient in the relationship between the cognitive and the emotional level, but it can also be recognized on the basic level of the contact with the materials. Aristotle's remark that we enjoy in general all kinds of sensual perception (*Metaphysics* I, 1) sees sensual perception as a basic human need, like food and air. Beyond the use of the senses for orientation in the world, their very activating and the process of perceiving the world cause pleasure, since they fulfill a human need.

Aristotle speaks about the pleasure arising from the very act of imitation, caused by harmony, balance between the colors and the sense of order. He also hints at a certain human need to perceive the sensual data ordered by number, size, harmony, and so on. This aspect of the need of art is much more emphasized in Plato, mainly in the *Laws*, which presents harmony and rhythm as gifts of the gods, and as our way to organize the chaos of sounds and motions into which we are born:

You may recollect that we said, at the opening of our discussion, that all young creatures are naturally full of fire, and can keep neither their limbs nor their voices quiet. They are perpetually breaking into disorderly cries and jumps, but whereas no other animal develops a sense of order of either kind, mankind forms a solitary exception. Order in movement is called *rhythm*, order in articulation—the blending of acute with grave—*pitch* [*harmonia*], and the name for the combination of the two is *choric art*. We further said that, in their pity for us, the gods have granted us companions and leaders of our choirs in Apollo and the Muses, to whom you may remember, we added Dionysus as the third. (Ibid. II 664e-665)

Aristotle does not seem to ascribe such importance to that aspect, because for him the ideal level of artistic organization is that of imitation. In this organization data of the experienced world are given not only order, but also meaning. Precisely this meaning, the mimetic meaning, is what Plato opposes in art; however, this is the core of Aristotle's conception.

But when Aristotle speaks about catharsis in the *Politics*, in the passage quoted above, he parallels the cathartic effect of the "sacred melodies" to that of pity and fear. Music is neither a message to be deciphered nor an imitation whose object must be recognized. The pleasure of music more resembles that of the basic contact with the materials of the text. So the mimetic pleasure, which is based on an



emotional contact with the objects of imitation (through pity and fear), is paralleled here precisely to the pre-mimetic and pre-semantic pleasure—that of music. While the *Poetics* is dominated by the concept of *mimêsis*, the *Politics* opens up new possibilities which are not purely mimetic.

In any event, the three levels of artistic pleasure can be explained through a similar model of lack and renewal of equilibrium. They are not disconnected but have delicate links of interdependence. So, even the cathartic effect will be impossible if not accompanied by a constant consciousness of the pleasure of imitation. For that reason a performance in which the audience entirely identify with the plot and forget that it takes place in a theater cannot have a cathartic effect either. Even in the midst of the emotional storm the spectator may not forget that he is in a play (what the illusionistic theories actually demanded). He must go on enjoying the very act of imitations and its materials also.

Only the constant consciousness that one is watching an act of imitation, namely a play which at a certain point must end (the end of the text)—only this consciousness enables him to control the emotions, channel them in a cathartic direction, relieve them at the end of the play and leave the theater purified without dragging them into his biographical reality as disquieting and uncontrolled elements.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### TEXT AND CONTEXT: GENRES AND THE HISTORICAL VIEWPOINT

#### 1. From the Text to Its Contexts

In the discussion of the textual layers we graded the various elements on a scale between Form and Matter: the Form of tragedy—plot—is defined as its *arkhê*. *Arkhê*, as the *Metaphysics* defines, is like a ship's keel or an animal's heart (ibid. V, 1, 1013a5), that is, the *arkhê* is one part of the object so it is no less concrete than any other part. It differs from other parts only in its centrality, the other parts being dependent on it. The animal's heart and the ship's keel are on the same level of existence as the nail or the sail. The inner grading of the parts is due only to their interdependence, but they do not differ in their concreteness.

This is quite understandable if we view Aristotle's overall world view, since unlike Plato, Aristotle believes that the idea is immanent to the world of objects and nowhere else (such as the world of ideas). Nevertheless, existing inside objects does not necessarily mean clinging to a specific object. True, an idea can be traced within every object, yet it is not one of its "parts" but a complex of elements within the object that determines its belonging to a certain species and its generic definition. This generic definition is the constant element which deviates from the object's singularity since it is independent of its own existence; its validity stays unaltered from before the object came into being and after it has passed away.

As for the object's inner stratification, its *arkhê*—plot in tragedy, keel in a ship, heart in an animal—comes into being together with the object and passes away with it. But beyond this there is also the *eidos*, the idea of the genre, which is independent of the existence of these or other particulars and is eternal.

Hence an element existing beyond the particular text, a kind of universal, common to many different texts, can be discussed. True, in Aristotle there is no separate world of universals existing outside the sensuous world of particular objects. Nevertheless, at least in one sense the

universal is transcendent, since it surpasses the boundaries of the particular and specific object; although it is manifested in each of the particulars, it is in itself a principle valid for all the members of a given group, independent of the existence of this particle or that.

Moreover, when dealing with a given subject—whether biology, medicine or poetry—the professionalism of our engagement is recognized by its contact with the universal of the species. As Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* (I, 2, 1356b11), medicine is not concerned with what will cure Socrates or Callias but with what will cure a human in a certain kind of distress. So actually in every field: knowledge of the particular and expertise in producing specific particles is not the business of an art. This may be one of the ways to learn it, since just as knowledge is based on gathering several particles on the way to the universal principle (an inductive process), so real expertise can be based on imitating a certain model or occasional improvisation, but it becomes a profession only when it refers to the species, not just to the single particle.

The poet, through his concrete activity, creates a specific poem about a specific subject; however the standard for his work, his knowledge about that particular, the determination of his work's end and method—all these are based on the definitions and qualities of the general species. The particular as such has, in fact, no role in that process. Even if he deals with the particular, the poet does so with reference to its generic qualities and to the relation between it and the species.

Here also lies the difference between *tekhnê* and *epistêmê*. *Epistêmê*, science, is engagement in universals and genres. It is not interested in the particular as such, beyond the need to accumulate particulars as a way to understand the universal. *Tekhnê*, art, is interested in the particular, since being a productive engagement what it produces will always be a specific object. The knowledge and the expertise *tekhnê* needs derive from the universal, but the actual engagement is always in the domain of particulars.

Focusing on the implications of the foregoing on the literary text, one can parallel the Aristotelian principles to the modern structuralist distinction between **langue** and **parole**. The text is always a "parole", a concrete and specific utterance, but this utterance cannot be produced or understood without being conceived as part of the general system of language, its grammatical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules. The "langue" is language in general with all its rules.<sup>105</sup>

Aristotle's generic concepts, that is, the generic rules of tragedy or comedy, and also the rules of imitation in general, are actually the "langue" of the poetic discourse. The concrete text—the tragedy *Oedipus the King* or the comedy *Clouds*—is the "parole". In these terms we can

state that Aristotle's *Poetics* is mainly "langue"-oriented. It believes that all the values of a poetic work inhere in its general properties. The singularity of a certain work is meaningless, and it cannot even be defined (although in later aesthetic theories it becomes a decisive factor). Even when Aristotle uses a specific work as a model, as he frequently does with *Oedipus the King*, the *Odyssey* or *Iphigenia in Tauris*, he always explains the work's status as a model in its perfect conformity to the rules of the genre. He never links its value to a singularity of any kind, nor of course to any deviation from the generic rules. The best work is also the most "disciplined". Even the conception of the "exemplary work", which is typical of post-Aristotelian thought and is the basis of classicism, is alien to Aristotle. He does not believe in works with some special status: there are rules and laws, and certain works incorporate these better than others.

Another point which distinguishes the Aristotelian concept from the structuralist is that it is "generic" in nature. The structuralist concept of "langue", as the word implies, rests on a model of the grammar (although it is also applicable to semiotic systems which are not natural languages); in any case, the concept of genus is quite secondary in that respect. Aristotle's conception, which like his general world view is based mainly on the biological way of thinking, is clearly generic. All phenomena, cultural and historical too, are conceived as species, kinds, and families on the lines of biological taxonomy. A text is thus related to the groups of texts around it; these constitute the genre to which the text belongs. The genre is subject to a defined system of rules, and any text belonging to it is necessarily subject to them too.

These relations exist in three dimensions. There is an **achronic** dimension, where the text is conceived as existing outside the axis of time: it concerns all the various generic rules, and the texts subject to these rules are equivalent irrespective of when they were composed. But there is also a **diachronic** dimension, in which account is taken of the temporal axis and the process by which the generic rules pass from the condition of an ideal potential to one of historical reality. This process can be traced through a series of texts with partial realizations of the generic qualities, which are organized in a certain developmental order, whereby only the later ones fully realize the generic qualities. And finally there is a **synchronic** dimension, namely the relations among various texts belonging to a single stage in generic development, one condition in the diachronic chain. Nevertheless, these texts diverge in several ways, so a picture forms of the state of poetry at a given point of time, a "synchronic system".<sup>106</sup>

We may present the distinction of the questions at stake through the following diagram:

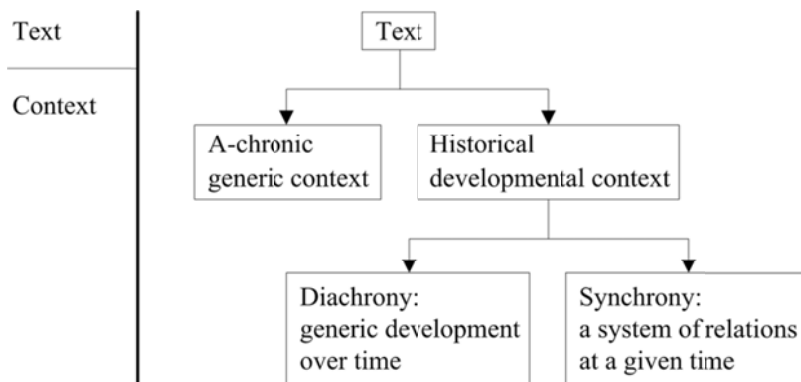


Fig. 6-1

## 2. Genre and Generic Context

### 2.1 Natural Genres and "Generic Clusters"

To understand the Aristotelian concept of genre, one should consider a modern distinction between two meanings of the concept: a genre may mean the principle determined in the scholar's mind to order and organize the information gathered; this is the theoretical genre. A genre may also be conceived as a historical concept which can be detected in the course of time as an actual pattern of behavior, containing a generic conscience and an overall organization of activities and rules, explicit and implicit.

These concepts are not literally used by Aristotle, but the above distinction is implied in his theory: particulars can be grouped into a common category according to both principles: as abstract principles of conceptual order and as concrete structures of historical events and entities. For Aristotle a genre is a real entity objectively existing in the world. True, it is gradually revealed in the course of history, but it is not solely a category of thinking. However, Aristotle is wholly conscious that certain categories of thinking exist which do not represent real genres but only consciousness and its need to order information.

For instance, regarding the sophistical terms for the parts of a speech, Aristotle is sharply critical:

But we ought only to bring in new names if it indicates a real species with distinct specific qualities; otherwise, the practice is pointless and silly, like the way Lycimnius invented names in his *Art of Rhetoric*—'secundation' [*epourôsis*], 'divagation' [*apoplanêsis*], 'ramification' [*ozoi*]. (*Rhetoric* III, 13, 1414b15)

Aristotle is not interested in abstract and theoretical classifications; for him a classification is meaningful only if the group it refers to manifests something really existing, an *eidos*.

That said, Aristotle himself does not always refrain from using this kind of classification. He sometimes formalizes categories that do not specify pure essence, since he needs more abstract categories as intermediary concepts for defining and discussing the essential genres.

In the discussion of the kinds of poetry Aristotle sometimes assembles texts according to a certain identification principle, but which does not always form a definite genre—sometimes not even a group which has a proper term in language. Nevertheless, he uses this practice consistently. In the opening of the *Poetics* he presents a group of texts which, he says, despite their evident common denominator still have no name:

There is further an art which imitates by language alone [*hê de epopoia monon tois logois*], and one which imitates by meters, either one or a plurality of meters. These forms of imitation are still nameless today. We have no common name for the mime of Sophron or Xenarchus and a Socratic conversation; and we should still be without one even if the imitation in the two instances were in trimeters or elegiacs or some other kind of verse. (*Poetics* 1, 147a29-b11)

A few lines later Aristotle adds Homer to the group, but excludes Empedocles, and he criticizes the habit of identifying poetry with meter:

Homer and Empedocles, however, have really nothing in common apart from their meter; so that, if one is to be called a poet, the other should be termed a physicist rather than a poet. We should be in the same position also, if the imitation in these instances were in all meters, like the *Centaure* (a rhapsody in a medley of all meters) of Chaerephon; and Chaerephon one has to recognize as a poet. (Ibid. 1447b18-22)

Aristotle speaks here of a large group of texts, some of which have not survived, but it is enough to examine the known ones to see its unusual diversity. It includes texts of various genres, from Platonic dialogues to Homeric epic. For Aristotle the list indicates a single category, since all its members have one common denominator: they are imitations through language only.

In this case Aristotle argues against the common principles of classification: the identity of the group is determined not by the specific linguistic quality, that is, the kind of meter: Homer and Empedocles composed in the same metric pattern, but they did it for different purposes. The common denominator is that language, whether metric or not, is used as the exclusive means for imitation. A definite group can be recognized here, but Aristotle says that up to the present it has no name (*anônumos*). That is, neither language in general nor common verbal usage recognizes this common denominator insofar as to express it by a specific term.

So there is a significant gap between the Aristotelian analysis and the common generic classification. But this gap should not be a problem since Aristotle does not undertake to justify the traditional classification or any other traditional use of language.<sup>107</sup> The interesting question is why Aristotle does not tackle this cluster, or suggest a title for it, if he ascribes such importance to it.

But in fact, when discussing that group Aristotle does use a certain term: *hê de [epopoîia] monon tois logois*, = "the *epopoîia* using words only". The term *epopoîia*, as Aristotle himself uses it, is supposed to represent that group. Linguistically it works well: *epos* means speech or speaking and *poiia* means work or product, so the combination "speech-work" seems quite suitable. But Aristotle states that the group has no name. The reason, perhaps, is that *epopoîia* in its usual Greek use, like *epos*, means epic poetry like the Homeric, but not various rhapsodies, and for sure not the Socratic dialogues.

Yet Aristotle does not tackle that term or try to integrate it into his generic system. For him, what determines the general genus is imitation, *mimêsis*, and the species are tragedy, comedy, epic, and so on. The *epopoîia* mentioned is a kind of intermediary genre: it is no species in itself, but no genus either, since it is defined only through its matter, language. Real species are determined through Form and End. The common quality of all imitations is Form, the logical pattern of creating an object on the basis of its resemblance to a certain origin. The various genres are defined through the intersection of formal and material qualities.

In fact this group lacks not only a name in ordinary language, but also a systematic Aristotelian generic definition. Aristotle presents here two modes of text grouping, and in this context the term "text" is indeed fittest also for Aristotelian thought. If in the framework of the definition the metric qualities are considered, texts may differ in being composed in hexametric or elegiac meters, but on the other hand the same group can include both the *Odyssey* and Empedocles' *Katharmoi* since both are composed in hexameters. But Aristotle asserts that the qualities of Matter

cannot be the basis for a generic definition, and a certain formal grouping must be added, so he creates the formal cluster of imitations, which includes verbal texts, plastic art works, and even musical compositions.

The boundaries of imitation are actually the very differences determined between the *Odyssey* and the *Katharmoi*. But even within the genus itself, within imitation, discriminations through Matter are again needed. First, imitation through shapes and colors is distinct from imitation through voice; and within vocal imitation various aspects are distinct: words, harmony and rhythm. Oddly, throughout the *Poetics* no clear and exclusive definition of the field of *poetics* itself is to be found. That field has various relations with other uses of voice (music and dancing), yet Aristotle offers no definition of *poetics* as such. The Aristotelian view of the relation of poetry to the other arts needs a special discussion—here we can suggest only this: for Aristotle, poetry is the intersection of the genus **imitation** with the means **language**, with or without other vocal components.

The first cluster of texts thus presents one aspect of the intersection: an imitation using solely language without other means. It may be called a "generic cluster", a group of texts with a certain common element, but not necessarily with a single effect (*dunamis*) as is required from a real genre. In this cluster are philosophical dialogue, epic poetry and various rhapsodies, each aiming at a different effect. The common denominator is solely their using the same means, that is, they have a common Matter.

The concept of generic cluster is important for understanding Aristotle's discussion, although he himself does not apply it explicitly. In his later discussion Aristotle presents two more clusters of that kind:

So that as an imitator Sophocles will be on one side akin to Homer, both portraying good men; and on the other to Aristophanes, since both present their personages as acting and doing. This fact, according to some, is the reason for plays being termed **dramas**, because in a play the personages act the story. (*Poetics* 2, 1448a26-29)

So one and the same text can belong to two clusters. Sophocles' texts belong to the group of sublime (*spoudaios*) imitation and to the group of dramatic imitation. Such a cluster therefore is not exclusive. Incidentally, a third cluster can be seen here, this time one with a proper name: together with "imitation through words only" there is dramatic imitation—*drama*, an imitation through words and other sounds which also includes theatrical activity.

Aristotle notes that this cluster, unlike the preceding, does have a name: "this [---] is the reason for plays being termed dramas, because in a play the personages act the story".<sup>108</sup> But by that he does not define drama



as a genus or a species. This cluster, unlike the others, has a name of its own probably because of the social and cultural context of theatrical productions; all the texts in this group require the existence of a theater, actors, a chorus and so on, and all are produced as parts of the dramatic competitions during the Dionysian rites. At face value this is enough for having a common term in language; but Aristotle hardly refers to the dramatic competitions—only once in the *Poetics* and once in the *Rhetoric*, and in both they are mentioned dismissively, as something disturbing the proper realization of the dramatic genres.<sup>109</sup> So although the grouping of dramatic texts, like the grouping of narrative ones, is quite reasonable, Aristotle does not regard these groups as natural genres.

In the same discussion Aristotle mentions another generic cluster, one which deals with sublime (*spoudaios*) actions of sublime people. He does not treat it as worthy of a common term, and in fact there is none for this group. Only in modern times have the concepts "high mimetic" (Frye 1957) and "elevated style" (Auerbach, 1968) been coined. The common quality of this group is that its members imitate objects of a certain kind, that is, their similarity lies in Form. They differ in Matter and Mode: one can speak of high and low in theater, in epic and also in painting. This cluster too cannot be regarded as natural genre, but here the reason is the lack of a material aspect: it is defined solely according to Form.<sup>110</sup>

For Aristotle, the definition of a genre in its natural sense must be based on the concepts of a close genus (*genus proximum*) and a specifying difference (*differentia specifica*). The genus is determined already in the basic assumptions of the *Poetics*, and it is imitation as such. The specifying difference must refer to the intersection of aspects, which can separately determine only clusters, not natural genres. The number of these aspects cannot be infinite. They must refer to four components of the text in accordance with the four Aristotelian causes: Formal, Material, Efficient and Effective. Groups of objects which can be defined according to all four are genres in the proper sense, since they refer to a common generic idea.

Actually, the only genre which is fully defined in the *Poetics* is tragedy, and to understand the conception of genres, it is important to examine that definition:

A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in dramatic, not narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. (*Poetics* 6 1449b25-29)

The *genus proximum*, as just stated, is imitation, so tragedy is a kind of imitation, different from other kinds by the combination of the four aspects named in the definition. It has: a Form of its own (imitation of serious and complete objects, with magnitude); Matter of its own (language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought separately); an Efficient cause of its own (the performance is dramatic, not narrative); and an Effective cause of its own (causing catharsis by means of pity and fear).

The generic clusters, namely the groups of narrative and dramatic imitations, and of serious and low ones, are not genres in the proper sense of the term. They exist within one common genus—imitation; they are possible only within the boundaries of that genus, and they cannot cross the border of that genus (therefore, as noted before, Empedocles, in spite of his hexameters, cannot be a poet since he does not imitate), but they are not bound together in a necessary and essential way. In that sense these groups are theoretical clusters reflecting viewpoints which may be useful for the classification, but in themselves do not manifest essences. An essence is a combination of Form and Matter, and as long as their definition does not include a combination of these two components they are not natural genres, nor in fact genres in the cultural and historical sense.

But Aristotle needs them not only as intellectual devices to prepare the generic definition, but also to point to some basic elements within the generic system. In that sense they have a certain reality in the world: if they do not point to **essences**, at least they point to **tendencies**. For instance, having discussed the high mode (common to Homer and Sophocles), Aristotle points to a kind of historical genetic connection among all the genres with the same kind of objects:

Homer, just as he was in the serious style the poet of poets, standing alone [...] through the dramatic character of his imitations, so also was he the first to outline for us the general form of comedy by producing not a dramatic invective, but a dramatic picture of the ridiculous; his *Margites* in fact stands in the same relation to our comedies as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to our tragedies. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b34-39)

The clusters based on Mode and Matter, on the other hand, determine, for Aristotle, certain stages in the development of poetry: the dramatic forms of tragedy and comedy came into being simultaneously, in one single stage, just as the earlier stage included both the heroic epic and the mock epic. These pre-generic relations express what modern theory regarded as system-relations, some of them synchronic and some diachronic.

In short, the pre-generic clusters are very close in spirit to the modern theory of text and system, precisely because they do not reflect necessary essences. The *epopoia*, which "is still nameless today" and which Aristotle discusses in *Poetics* 1, is the closest concept in Aristotle's writing to that of an artistic literary text. That Aristotle identifies "artistic" quality solely with imitation is due to his aesthetic standards, and of course, different standards can be imagined too; but whatever the standard for "artistic", an "artistic text" according to that definition will be every verbal text complying with that standard. Likewise the dramatic text, discussed in *Poetics* 3; in both clusters the element of textuality is especially salient.

But for Aristotle these clusters are not enough; he needs concepts of natural and essential genres as well, because they are vital for his way of thinking. The foundation of his discussion is the biological model, which classifies things according to species, families, breeds. The generic dynamics, which we conceive as historical, is discussed by Aristotle, as we shall see later, mainly in biological terms, hence the genres must be as close as possible to biological species.

The literary genre is also the grammatical reservoir of the text. It is the codex of rules and laws for constructing texts. It is also an *eidos* which became real at a certain stage of history, underwent a process of growth in which it passed from potentiality to actuality, until it ripened, and sometimes also waned. The genre as *eidos* is a constant and eternal potential, but its realization is in historical time.

On the basis of these assumptions Aristotle designs a map of genres. According to the logic of imitation, he states, such a map must be three-dimensional: imitations differ in their means, objects and modes. The means, the media, are the materials of which the imitation is coined; the objects imitated determine the structure of imitation, hence they are its formal cause; the modes refer to the ways of performing the imitation, so they comply with the efficient cause. Each of these aspects determines a categorization of its own, and in that framework some generic clusters can be found. Only the combination and intersection of these categories can lead to the full definition of a genre.

## 2.2 The Generic End: Classification According to Components and According to Dominanta

A question is raised here concerning the effective cause. This is explicitly referred to in the definition of tragedy, and also the opening sentence of the *Poetics* promises, in a way, to deal with it ("the species and their respective capacities [*dunamis*]"). So the effective cause is one of the

criteria for distinguishing genres. Why then does the effective cause not determine a classificatory category of its own, like the three other causes?

Moreover, had Aristotle accorded a wider space to teleological classification, it might have clarified some of the vagueness around the concept of catharsis: other types of ends could have been recognized, possible alternatives to catharsis, or to pity and fear (for instance, catharsis through laughter). In any event, we could have obtained a clearer context for a concept nowadays understood through speculation rather than explicit knowledge. But Aristotle does not suggest a systematic classification of ends, in contrast to his systematic treatment of means, objects and modes. Only after intersecting these categories in accordance with the specific genre, as in the definition of tragedy, is the special end of that combination determined.

The reason for this can only be conjectured. It might have been reasonable to classify ends only if it were possible to distinguish among them, the other aspects being identical. That is, if all the characteristics of the genre in terms of means, object and mode were preserved, and at the same time various possible ends could be distinguished, the category of ends could be intersected with the other categories. Imagine a genre with components identical to those of tragedy, but instead of catharsis through pity and fear it leads to a different kind of catharsis, for example, through laughter or admiration, or to an entirely different end, such as a didactic or rhetoric one.

Actually, such a possibility is unthinkable: the first three categories being determined, the end is necessarily connected with them, since all three are in fact measures combined to attain the mentioned end. Any change in the end would necessarily require a change in the measures: were the end to attain catharsis through laughter, the objects could not be serious people but low ones; were the end the arousal of admiration (instead of pity and fear), perhaps the dramatic mode would not be the fittest but the epic, which is more remote. The end is always what determines the dosage of the other components; it is not an independent component, which can be added to or subtracted from the others. Therefore the distinction between various ends is largely the outcome of the other components: every combination of qualities from the first three categories has a specific end; and conversely, the various ends differ in the measures taken by the text to attain them, which are to be found in the three first categories.

The second reason why Aristotle seems not to focus on the distinction between ends is that the end is not a real part of the object. Different ends cannot be dichotomously distinguished in the same sense as textual

qualities, like mode (dramatic vs. narrative) or grade (serious vs. low). Moreover, the end is not manifested by the existence or inexistence of a certain component, but sometimes only by its intensity. Hence the distinction according to ends requires an entirely different methodology.

To understand this point, let us examine another Aristotelian discussion of genres, that of the rhetorical kinds in *Rhetoric* I, 2. The subject to be classified here is also verbal texts, but not imitations. The method is indeed very different from that of the *Poetics*, which makes it possible to learn in more detail about some issues which are not clear enough in the discussion of the poetic genres.

Unlike in the *Poetics*, Aristotle does not base his discussion on an intersection of various levels of classification; here he distinguishes the genres on a single level, and his starting point is precisely the End, which is mentioned twice in his discussion: first as a title for a series of more specific distinctions, and secondly, in a slightly different sense, as one distinction among others.

The first mention of End is connected with the statement that the classification is done in accordance with the various kinds of audience:

Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to the speech. For of the three elements in speech-making—speaker, subject, and person addressed—it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object. (*Rhetoric* I, 3, 1358a36-b2)

Aristotle starts his discussion with a reference to the communicational situation, analyzed above (chapter 4). The situation in general refers to three kinds of causes: the efficient cause—the speaker; the formal cause—the subject; and the effective cause—the addressee, the hearer. Later Aristotle abandons the efficient and formal causes, and chooses as his starting point the hearer only, that is, the element of the situation which is closest to the end. The assumption is that the differences among the ends of speech genres correspond to the differences among various kinds of audience.

Aristotle then breaks up the concept of hearer, to determine the various kinds of orations accordingly. For this he must first determine what is common to all kinds of hearer, thereby finding the quality that is to be divided according to the genres. Common to hearers of rhetoric is that all of them are required to make a certain decision or judgment:

The hearer must be either a judge [*kritês*], with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer [*theôron*]. A member of the assembly decides [*krinôn*] about future events, a juryman [*dikastês*] about past events, while those who merely decide on the orator's skill are observers.

From this it follows that there are three divisions of oratory—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. (Ibid. 1358b2)

The conception of the addressee as judge has been discussed above (chapter 5: 1). The point to be emphasized here is the division into three times—past, present and future. This triple model ensures that the division is absolute, since logically no time can be imagined which is not contained in one of these possibilities. The use of such an absolute model guarantees, so to speak, that the classification too will be exhaustive.

This is where the term "end" is used a second time, here in a more specific and substantial sense:

Rhetoric has three distinct ends in view, one for each of its three kinds. The deliberative orator aims at establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action; if he urges its acceptance, he does so on the ground that it will do good; if he urges its rejection, he does so on the ground that it will do harm; and all other points, such as whether the proposal is just or unjust, honorable or dishonorable, he brings as subsidiary and relative to this main consideration. Parties in a law-case aim at establishing the justice or injustice of some action, and they too bring in all other points as subsidiary and relative to this one. Those who praise or attack a man aim at proving him worthy of honor or the reverse, and they too treat all other considerations with reference to this one. (*Rhetoric* I, 3, 1358b21-29)

Here the term end (*telos*) is applied slightly differently, and it is connected to the hierarchy of the objects of the speech: true, first the end of the speech has been connected to the hearer, and there are three kinds of hearers according to the three kinds of issues to be judged. So in every kind of speech a dominant argument can be identified in accordance with its special end. And true, the end of every speech is to persuade a certain judge to make a particular decision. But if that judge is concerned with the past, the dominant decision will be if the deeds were right or wrong, while the rest of their qualities, even if mentioned in the speech, will not be decisive. If the judge is concerned with future things, the main end of the speech will be to convince him that a certain course of action is proficient or harmful. Other things may be said too—that it is right or wrong, honorable or dishonorable—but the main point for the decision will be its proficiency. And in the epideictic speech too, the focus will be the beauty or honorability of the object.

The meaning of "end" in this context is not the existence or inexistence of a certain component in the text, but a kind of hierarchy between the components. Each of the three genres can include all three elements; a

political speech can prove that a certain thing is right or wrong, or honorable or dishonorable, but these will be subsidiary arguments. As Aristotle says later:

So too, deliberative orators often make any concession short of admitting that they are recommending their hearers to take an inexpedient course or not to take an expedient one. The question whether it is not unjust for a city to enslave its innocent neighbors often does not trouble them at all. (*Rhetoric* I, 3, 135834-39)

The end, then, is determined not by the mere existence of a certain component but only by the status imparted to it in the speech. In political oration proficiency is necessary for the realization of its end. Other issues like justice or beauty may be joined to the argument if they can support the already determined end, but the orator will make no extra effort to prove that his suggestion meets these criteria, and sometimes he will even deal with them entirely indifferently. The end, in this case, owes to the hierarchic structure of components, therefore to the dominant one. Every speech contains components of all three genres, but the specific end determines their hierarchy.

Above (chapter 3: 1.4) we similarly compared the hierarchic structure of the speech with that of poetry from the viewpoint of the relation among the components of plot, character and thought. In poetry, plot or story are likened to soul; they are the end, and the rest is subsidiary. In rhetoric, on the other hand, the argumentation, that is, thought, is the central component since the speech is to persuade. Character is an important means of persuasion but not the main one, and the narrative is secondary in any respect.

This comparison is implicit in the relationship between the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*; it is not formulated by Aristotle himself. Its structure, however, is similar to that of the comparison between the various kinds of rhetoric, which Aristotle explicitly formulates: when the material, formal and efficient causes are similar, the difference in the ends cannot be manifested by a difference of the specific components in each of the genres, but only by the difference in the hierarchic order of the elements. Such a classification cannot be based on a concrete *differentia specifica*, like voice vs. shapes and colors as medium, or high vs. low as objects. The assumption is that all genres have similar components and they differ only in these components' relative status. This depends on the end, and it needs an explanation. Indeed, when the other conditions are the same, a special classification can be made on the basis of the various ends and their implications, just as in the *Rhetoric*; but when, as in the *Poetics*, there is

also a real difference in matter, form and mode, it is more efficient to begin from there, and not from the relative order of identical components.

Moreover, the genres depicted in the *Rhetoric*, differing in a single aspect only—the effective cause, are in fact a kind of a-temporal "shelf" of possibilities available to the orator. In the framework of this division no genetic-historical question can be asked: how and when these genres came into being, how they developed or how they were discovered. The discussion of generic classification according to dominance is thus very clear cut, but it has no historical implications. A discussion from the genetic viewpoint and an examination of the historical process of the genres' coming into being and revelation is possible only in the framework of classification according to qualities and categories, as accomplished by Aristotle in the *Poetics*.

### 3. Classification and Coming into Being

#### 3.1 Biological and Cultural Entities; Ontogenesis and Phylogenesis

Genres, as noted, exist in time and are involved in processes of coming into being. These can be discussed on two levels. The first is the level of particulars: the individual members of the group which come into being, grow and decay. Biological growth can be a model for this. But processes of production too, not only of growth, can be similarly explained; but in these cases coming into being happens not through an inner potential of the object but through a kind of external efficient cause: the cobbler makes the shoe, the smith makes the sword, and so on. All these are cases of **ontogenesis**, the individual's coming into being.

From the ontogenetic viewpoint there is no principal difference between natural and artificial objects in their coming into being: in both cases it is a passage from potentiality to actuality. The idea of a chair and the wood of which it is made are both potentials of the chair. The business of the carpenter is to actualize these potentials. In the case of a natural object the idea exists as a seed or an embryo, and its actualization is through a process of natural growth. The relation between potentiality and actuality thus looks different and is differently organized in time, but as long as it concerns an individual's coming into being, the occurrence of the process is equally determined in both cases.

The second level on which change and coming into being can be discussed is the **phylogenetic** one, which concerns the history of the species. A situation can be assumed in which a certain species does not exist actually but only potentially, and a process can be imagined in which



that species comes into being. Here an essential difference between biological and artificial species is revealed.

In biology Aristotle does not deal frequently with that possibility, mainly because it lies beyond the scope of our experience. But the conception of biological species as eternal also makes this possibility superfluous; and finally, even if it were a real possibility, it would be difficult to explain it in terms of actions: what, from the biological aspect, can make a certain potential species come into being? From the cultural viewpoint, and with regard to cultural objects, this is easily answered: new kinds of objects come into being due to need and invention. But this cannot explain the generation of natural objects, since the cause for that must be inner.

The idea of biological evolution is alien to Aristotle and he does not imagine it: for him the species have no history; they are eternal. Yet even in the realm of biology a situation can be imagined in which a certain species does not exist. There are pre-Socratic theories with kinds of evolutionary conception, such as those of Anaximenes and Empedocles, who speak of archaic ways of life which have passed away, and of a certain kind of balance and equilibrium created when the species known to us nowadays became established in the world.<sup>111</sup> In principle one can imagine, even in a non-evolutionary theory like the Aristotelian, a situation in which a certain biological species has not yet been fully actualized. But this is only a theoretical possibility; Aristotle nowhere raises it. For him all the biological species as such are actually existent.

However, in the non-biological realm the question of species' coming into being is an actual one. Human-manufactured objects have always been invented at a certain point, started to exist and began a line of development. Contrary to biology, the history of artificial species is often documented, at least partially. Just as the practice of writing or building, and various everyday articles, have an inventor, which makes it possible to speak of their history, literary genres also have a history of their own. In historical memory there is a time—remote but concrete—when tragedy did not exist but only epic; at a certain point on the time axis, tragedies and comedies started to be composed, and also later, a series of changes in them can be detected until these genres reached their present state, namely the *Poetics'* time. If biological evolution is mostly beyond the scope of human memory and experience (since it can be reached only in theory), generation of the artificial species is a process, entirely—or chiefly—contained within the range of human memory and experience, and is accessible to Aristotle as it is to everybody else.

Recall, however, that Aristotle's tools for understanding these processes are quite restricted. So even if it is clear that he distinguishes between

generation of individuals and species, the theoretical model used to explain these processes is one: both are subject to the principle of potentiality and actuality. The Aristotelian system is at its best when it deals with animals. This of course is the thinking-model characteristic of Aristotle the biologist. The phylogenetic questions, on the other hand, are not treated in the system because the concrete knowledge of the time does not encourage questions of such a kind, and because the conception of ideas as eternal makes them problematic anyway.

When the biological model of potentiality and actuality is transferred to the realm of artificial objects, it loses its elegance. It does not concern an idea existing within the object and activating it as an inner capacity, but an external mediation. That is, even in issues of individual generation, this process seems less clear and convincing.

Things become even more problematic when the genre as a whole is in question. In the historic realm, unlike the biological, the split between generation of individuals and of genres becomes a highly concrete issue. In Aristotelian philosophy the coming into being of tragic genre, democratic regime or legal systems is a real, actual, and legitimate question, much more than the generation of the canine or feline species. Thus a model is needed to explain artificial objects' growth process. In this realm the fact that an equivalent model serves to explain phylogenetic and ontogenetic aspects becomes a much harder problem.

The tools which Aristotle uses to explain the generation of individuals are very similar to those used to explain the growth of the genre. In both cases it is a process with a definite final end—actualization of an idea, and in both cases the idea is the same. The difference is only whether the idea is actualized within the lifetime of an individual or of a group of individuals. The difficulty thus is twofold: first the shift from the biological to the cultural model, and second, the shift from ontogenetic to phylogenetic model. It may be tabulated in this way:

	Biological	Cultural
Ontogenetic	Growth of the individual animal	Creation of the individual object
Phylogenetic	[Generation of the biological species]	Creation of the cultural species—genres, kinds of objects, etc.

Table 6-1

So the biological-ontogenetic model of the passage from potentiality to actuality, which assumes the existence of the idea as a kind of "genetic code", is transferred into the cultural-historical domain. The history of the genre is described in terms reminiscent of the history of the individual.<sup>112</sup>

But in the biological-ontogenetic lifecycle maturity is defined as the ability to create seeds and give birth to new individuals. After this potential has been actualized, the individual passes to a stage of old age and decay, while its offspring attain maturity. In the cultural-historical realm, on the other hand, there are no lifecycles and no similar situations of old age and decay.<sup>113</sup> So the model describes growth which finally attains a static stage. There is a situation in which the history of the genre comes to an end, in the sense that its development reaches its peak and the idea is fully actualized. At this stage the genre remains as it is, and keeps producing more and more individuals of a certain constant pattern. It does not undergo any further changes qua genre; nor does it decay or age, or produce new offspring as genres. It remains a constant mechanism endlessly replicating itself.<sup>114</sup>

This problematic is especially salient in the discussion of tragedy, the genre whose growth is described in the greatest detail. At a certain point the history of tragedy simply stopped:

It was in fact only after a long series of changes that the movement of tragedy stopped on its attaining to its natural form [= its own nature; *eskhe tēn autēs phusin*]. (*Poetics* 4, 1449a14)

The "natural form" is the structure fully fitting the idea. It is the ideal tragedy. Aristotle describes the development of that genre as a series of states, which will be discussed in more detail later. The latest state he mentions is dated more or less to Sophocles' time, and consists of the latter's addition of the third actor and establishing scenery. Other developments in the field of language he notes (the use of iambic meter and development of the spoken dramatic sections) are not associated with specific poets, hence are also undated, but as far as we know they are earlier. That is, the pattern of tragedy determined by Sophocles also reflects the "natural" form of tragedy. Sophocles died about 80 years before the composition of the *Poetics*. The innovations ascribed to him are to be found in all his tragedies known to us, even the earliest ones. Thus Aristotle refers to 130 years of intensive dramatic activity. This time span includes the complete works of Euripides and of other poets such as Agathon, and all the later ones, central and marginal, who were active until Aristotle's day. All this period he views as a plane landscape, a static situation in which the poetic patterns are unchanged.

Aristotle himself is aware of the problematic nature of this assumption, and he postpones its discussion:

If it be asked whether tragedy is now all that it need be in its formative elements, to consider that, and decide it theoretically and in relation to the theater, is a matter of another inquiry. (*Poetics* 4, 1449a7-9)

In fact he nowhere enters into this promised inquiry, and from the various formulations scattered around these lines it seems that for him tragedy has indeed become static.

The facts that Aristotle knew may be integrated in this scheme. Indeed, to judge from the patterns he traces in the *Poetics*, tragedy has not undergone any change in the structural and generic sense since Sophocles. But several points still bemuse him, and perhaps for that reason he is not content with his own conclusion. The tragedy Aristotle regards as the most perfect realization of the generic principles is, we recall, *Oedipus the King*. True, some of the greatest achievements of the history of tragedy—mainly Aeschylus' works—are scarcely mentioned in the *Poetics*. But even among the tragedies later than *Oedipus*, except Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* no single work is described in such exemplary terms. How is it then that after the discovery of the ideal way to attain the tragic effect no single work has been composed that applies this discovery?

The most important works were composed at times when the idea was in the process of realization or in its beginning; precisely at the time when it could flourish through its rich experience, no important tragedies were composed. Here one cannot but wonder about the possibility of applying philosophical theoretical conceptions to the real data of the history of genres.<sup>115</sup>

### 3.2 Essential and Pragmatic History

When Aristotle asks himself whether tragedy has reached its utmost development, he presents two possible levels for the answer: "to consider that, and decide it theoretically (*auto te kath'hauto* = in itself) and in relation to the theater (*pros ta theatra*)" (*Poetics* 4, 1449a8).

The problematic of performance should be clear from our discussion of textual stratification (chapter 3: 1.3 above). Aristotle does not consider vocal delivery and theatrical production essential parts of tragedy. But here the question is different: does the history of tragedy as genre concern its properties as verbal text only ("in itself"), or its overall theatrical existence, from stage production to public response?

On the face of it, this duality expresses both aspects of tragedy itself. But here the contrast is between two historical processes which can explain the development of tragedy in different ways: the discussion of tragedy "in itself" is echoed several lines later, when Aristotle describes how tragedy actually developed:

It certainly began in improvisation [---]. And its advance after that was little by little, through their improving on whatever they had before them at each stage [*hoson egigneto phaneron autês* = what was (clearly) found to be its own]. It was in fact only after a long series of changes that the movement of tragedy stopped on its attaining to its natural form [*eskhe tèn autên phusin* = has attained its own nature]. (Ibid. 1449a10-15)

There is thus a basic pattern which is tragedy's own nature, which may be concealed and unknown as long as it is unrealized. The development begins with improvisation (*autoskhediasma*), that is, an activity not subject to any law; but it becomes organized and structured, when it is gradually grasped which of the improvised activities belongs to its own nature and which not, and when the elements found to be natural are "improved" or developed.

The keyword here is *egigneto phaneron* ("became clear", "was found out"). This is a process of generation or coming into being described in terms of knowledge. The writers of tragedy develop every element which they know, or have learned to know, belongs to the nature of their object. "Knowledge", naturally, is about a certain content which is independent of the knower, and is subject to values as "true" or "false". The model of this process is cognitive, very much reminiscent of the inductive process of science.

Induction, *epagôgê*, means the process of gathering various details, in the course of which the common law underlying them is found out and their generic nature becomes manifest. This is the beginning of knowledge. The law is discovered through the accumulation of the various cases to which it applies, and the process ascribed here to the history of tragedy is strikingly parallel. The authors gather experience from various improvisations, to the point where they can sum up all the successful improvisations and understand their success through a certain law. For instance, after several attempts to present on stage a person "not preeminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some fault" (*Poetics* 13, 1453a8); and after this possibility has been considered against others, such as a virtuous man suffering misfortune, or a wicked one succeeding; and after enough experience has been accumulated to understand all these

possibilities—one can recognize the law that the most successful tragic effect is of tragedies with this "average" person. Hence all the qualities and rules of the genre are discovered through that kind of inductive accumulation.

The problem is that the natural scientist deals with laws pertaining to reality, not to himself. His business is to understand these laws and elucidate how natural creatures are subject to them. The dramatist has at one and the same time to **discover** and **obey** these laws. For Aristotle, "discovering" a poetic rule means that tragedy or a poetic genre in general has a constant idea eternally existing but being gradually unveiled in the course of history. But the cognitive terms describe only part of this process: the discovery of the law is a **descriptive achievement**, but also a **prescriptive commitment**. In respect of the history of the genre, the poet is something between a scientist and a legislator.

The biological terms Aristotle uses make it difficult to reach this understanding on the first reading. Aristotle appears to be speaking of a natural development, a kind of biological growth. At first glance our reading seems to stress precisely the cognitive aspect of this process. But let us recall the comments at the beginning of our discussion about the problematic of applying a biological model to artificial, cultural and historical objects. Despite Aristotle's biological terminology, he clearly does not believe that poetic genres grow from themselves like flowers, but are produced through human activity. This activity can be conscious to diverse degrees, and vary on the axis of improvisation, dexterity and art. But the specific *eidos* underlying the genre exists in relation to all these possibilities. The improviser hits or misses the *eidos* at random and unknowingly; the dexterous person obeys it without knowing and understanding it, and the artist understands it and acts consciously according to it. In all these cases a principle exists which can be known or understood on several levels of knowledge, but which can be actualized only through human activity. Only in biological contexts does the *eidos* affect the objects directly: the idea incorporated in the egg or the seed has an inner capacity to release itself from the state of potentiality and actualize itself. In artificial objects the idea has no such capacity: human agents actualize it, and this implies the possibility to do it consciously and knowingly as well.

True, the concept of knowledge and consciousness is not necessarily implied from the fact that human agents mediate between the idea and its actualization. An alternative model could also be imagined: not one of knowledge and *eidos* but of experience and activity. With such a model, every improvised attempt that brought about certain desirable outcomes

has been developed, and any that did not have been abandoned. In this model experience is measured not in relation to a certain knowledge which is being revealed, but to a certain end which the doer undertakes. The various actions are examined according to their capacity to attain that end, but the end is not conceived as something being discovered: it is not part of a certain preexisting essence, but a manifestation of the will and intentions of the doers.<sup>116</sup>

But the Aristotelian method is clearly focused on the **idea**, not the **will**. The end of the work is not the manifestation of a will, it is implied in the idea. The idea, in turn, is something to be known, not to be wanted. It exists before the first tragedy, it cannot be shaped, and it is not subject to wishes or intentions, or even to a certain action. It can only be gradually unveiled, and its capacity of shaping the concrete work of poetry can develop according to the various stages of unveiling. But it can also attain a situation of full actualization, and an exhaustion of its potential. In such a situation it cannot go on but by duplicating itself again and again, like a biological species.

The second option, that of will, is of course non-Aristotelian through and through. It holds that human activity is subject not to an idea that can be discovered or clarified but to the doers' will. They determine the end for themselves and they find the means to attain it. By such a concept the end can be defined differently in any given circumstance, and accordingly the means can be altered. Moreover, the question if a certain genre has been fully realized cannot be raised: there will always be room for new ends and new means. On the basis of this concept limitless historical changes can be imagined; history is absolutely open.

The Aristotelian cognitive system, whose setting is eternal ideas, can explain history only in closed sections, that is, the processes through which a specific idea is transformed from potentiality into actuality; but in principle Aristotle's idea is ahistoric, and so is his entire system. Yet it is not ahistoric in the Platonic sense, which views change in time entirely as illusion: time and change are needed for letting the ideas be realized, but time is not historical in nature. Aristotle deals with historical objects, such as poetic genres, rhetoric genres or kinds of political regimes, but the time in which they are planted is not historical; it may be defined as meta-biological.

The range of historical memory which Aristotle tries to explain through his system is relatively short, and it lacks the perspective nowadays inherent in historical research. In addition to the present discussion it would be interesting to examine Aristotle's conception of history as reflected in the discussion of *Poetics* 9, where he compares the

historian with the poet. I have treated this discussion in more detail elsewhere (Zoran 1998); at this stage, note that the standard for the difference between poetry and history is their relation to philosophy. Aristotle conceives poetry as more philosophical than history, since it deals with the general, with kinds of events which could have happened, and not with what has actually occurred.

Aristotle's image of history is thus a series of consecutive particles without any structure or meaning. The business of the historian is to document them and write them down one by one; the business of the poet, on the other hand, is to tell things which comply with the laws of necessity and probability, not necessarily such that have actually happened. The poet can of course make use of historical events too, but when he does so he has to stress the principles of necessity and probability inherent in them:

And if he should come to take a subject from actual history, he is none the less a poet for that; since some historic occurrences may very well be in the probable order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet. (*Poetics* 9, 1451b29-32)

Since the peculiarity of poetry in relation to history is its being more philosophical, even if the poet deals with historical facts, he is not interested in their chronology but in a selective presentation of some of them according to philosophical principles.

According to this conception the principles acting in history, its laws, cannot be perceived in history as it is given. They can be perceived at certain points in some of the facts. The philosopher who wants to investigate history has to act like a biologist: the biologist gathers animals and plants as he finds them, and then he classifies them according to species. Not all the particles he has found at a certain place will be relevant for his research, only a selection. He has to exclude some and preserve only those which adhere to the principle he examines.

Likewise the philosophical historian, or the philosopher who is engaged in history, will choose, among the variety of facts in time, those which can be structured according to a certain generic pattern. Aristotle himself was a historian of that kind, as can be learned from his *Constitution of Athens* and the project on which this composition was based: gathering data about the constitutions of various states and examining their history. In the same spirit Aristotle's theory on the history of poetry can be understood: it is not an attempt to cope with the variety of materials offered by temporal historic reality, but to isolate several phenomena from the flow of events. This is salient, for instance, in Aristotle's absolute ignorance of lyrical poetry. His definition of poetry is



based on the concept of *mimêsis*, so it excludes several genres which were regarded as poetry in his time (as they are in ours).

So the *mimêsis* concept enriches the Aristotelian discussion, but it impoverishes it too. The parts of poetry omitted from its definition (and therefore from *eidos*) were dominant in the historical reality for at least 300 years—from the eighth-century Homeric epic to the beginning of drama in the fifth century. Historically that entire period is characterized by lyrical poetry. But since lyric is not included in the Aristotelian definition of poetry, it is not included in the description of the historical course of the growth of poetry either.<sup>117</sup> This historical course, for Aristotle, goes in a straight line from Homer to dramatic poetry:

Homer, just as he was in the serious style the poet of poets, standing alone not only through the excellence, but also through the dramatic character of his imitation, so also was he the first to outline for us the picture of the ridiculous; his *Margites* in fact stands in the same relation to our comedies as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to our tragedies. (*Poetics* 4, 1448b34-1449a1)

This is not a real explanation of how tragedy came into being, and Aristotle does not really claim that tragedy is a direct transformation of the epic; he only says that Homer sketched the outline of tragedy and comedy, which were to come later. Still, the disregard for the more than two centuries of lyric poetry in the time span between epic and drama cannot be ignored even in this cautious reading.

The history described here is purely conceptual, and it is aimed to show the process of actualization of the idea of poetic imitation, *mimêsis*. The first stage of imitation is what Aristotle calls pre-Homeric: poems orally composed which were never written down, hence are lost.

The latter class produced invectives at first, just as others did hymns and panegyrics. We know of no such poem by any of the pre-Homeric poets [*tôn men oun pro Homêrou*], though there were probably many such writers among them; instances, however, may be found from Homer downward, e.g. *Margites*, and the similar poems of others. (Ibid. 1448b27-30)

Invectives and panegyrics both refer to real people. At a certain point they are shaped in a fictional narrative pattern. Therefore the invective (*psogon*), addressed to the audience and people of the town, turns out to be the "ridiculous" (*to geloion*), the fictional funny story. Also the panegyrics and hymns, which were addressed directly to gods, heroes or winners of athletic contests, turned out to be stories about people who deserve praise, like the *Iliad*. The next stage of the development of the mimetic potential

is when the dramatic elements, which exist already in Homer, give birth to a full dramatic structure. This is the stage of comedy and tragedy. The dramatic imitation is thus the clearest realization of the idea of imitation, and there is nothing beyond: this is the ultimate actualization of the mimetic potential.

The problem we pointed out in the discussion of tragedy returns here: just as the generic history can reach a situation of full actualization without any further development, so the history of poetry in general can reach full actualization with the emergence of the ultimate genre. But this method has an additional price: to order the historical data so as to point to an actualization, they must be isolated and diluted. They must be classified in advance according to the end one supposes history strives for. When the history of the object "in itself" is dealt with, this concerns the object's definition, the idea, and choosing from the variety of historical data those which affirm and illustrate that idea.

Had this been the full picture, Aristotle would have remained at the stage of taxonomy, and could not have moved on to that of history. But matters are more complex, as we shall see.

### 3.3 Pragmatic Drive and *Eidos*: Hierarchic and Cybernetic Conception

Aristotle knows quite well that historical data are not just a conglomerate of possibilities to be classified: there is a dynamics in their temporal organization, there is a certain direction toward which they develop, and this is not necessarily in straight chronological lines. When Aristotle adds to the self principle ("in itself" *Poetics* 4, 1449a8) the exterior dimension of the theatrical productions ("and in relation to the theater [*pros ta theatra*]", *ibid.*) he probably means also this: the history of poetry concerns not solely the collection of written texts already composed and available to the philosopher at this point of time; it also concerns the concrete performances of the texts, at given times and places and before a given audience.

What has been presented here is a model apparently opposed to the history of poetry, and we have already observed that it is not clearly Aristotelian: Aristotle presents the history of poetry as a process of discovering the *eidos* of imitation and its specific genre, such as tragedy; here, on the other hand, a pragmatic process is implied, in which genres are not discovered but are being shaped in a constant movement of trial and error. The relation of audience to poets is circularly structured: the elements which are successful with the audience are strengthened and

those which are not are weakened—which does not necessarily depend on the idea.

Aristotle is aware of the historical reality of this conception, and also of its tension with the first one, therefore he argues at several points in the *Poetics* about the proper direction in which poetry has to go. He always points out the direction in which the idea strives, but he is fully aware that the relation among poets, performers and audience has a power of its own, and it can lead poetry to a different kind of decisions. In any case, Aristotle strongly argues that the right decision is that which accords with the idea.

One of the conflicts between the poet and the performers concerns the problem of "episodic plot", which Aristotle thinks is a bad choice:

I call a plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of its episodes. Actions of this sort bad poets construct through their own fault, and good ones on account of the players. His work being for public performance [*agônismata* = competitions], a good poet often stretches out a plot beyond its capabilities, and is thus obliged to twist the sequence of incident. (*Poetics* 9, 1451b33-1452a1)

What does this yielding to the actors mean, and why should an actor prefer an episodic plot? Actors apparently demand not certain plot structures, but plots with scenes of a certain nature, which may give them the opportunity to act at their best. Such scenes are probably rhetorical ones, the *agônes*, where monologues and single lines are thrown at each other. There are plays where this agonistic situation is an essential part of the plot, such as *Antigone*, but in some plays, especially by Euripides, special scenes are inserted with rhetorical *agônes*. A striking example is the argument between Helen and Hekabe in *The Trojan Women*: this episode is not the direct consequence of any of the previous ones, nor is the continuation of the play influenced by that scene. This is a purely rhetorical episode. In the modern view the insertion of such an episode is not a flaw, and the play still seems integral since its integrity is due mainly to rhetoric gradation and analogical structures, not to causal relations. Aristotle does not think so. For him it must be an episodic play, loosely structured, and the given episode is included only to please a certain actor and make it possible for him to perform an impressive rhetorical scene.

Aristotle thus opposes the poet's structural considerations to the performers' personal needs. In other places too they are presented as competing with the poets:

[J]ust as in drama the actors now count for more than the poets, so it is in the contests of public life, owing to the defects of our political institution. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b33-35)

In the end, yielding to the performers too is aimed at pleasing the audience and choosing what they will like most.

In the discussion about the audience (chapter 6: 4 above) we dealt in detail with the passage where Aristotle mentions the double-ended tragedy (*Poetics* 13). The ending is double because it is happy for the good persons and bad for the bad ones; Aristotle says that poets who use it are led by the audience's will, and construct their tragedy in a way more suited to a comedy or a certain kind of epic.

We discussed in greater detail Aristotle's conception of the audience's will—in other words the demand for *philanthrôpia*, a standard in which the audience's view is considered. Tragedy (or any other poetic genre) must never cruelly violate *philanthrôpia*: it should never arouse a heavy feeling of injustice (a good man fails, a bad man succeeds); but on the other hand it should never fully yield to that *philanthrôpia* as this might infringe the generic rules: in tragedy it may lead to the avoidance of a basic tragic principle such as *pathos*, sufferance, and to a kind of placation and equilibrium which may not allow the arousal of pity and fear. The discussion of the double ending concerns the tension between the audience's demand for an appeasing course and a proper reward to good and bad persons, vs. the demand implied in the *eidos* for a single tragic direction, and the preference for the bad ending. Although the audience's expectations have a certain weight, the decisive element is of course the *eidos*.

Sometimes there can be a conflict between the *eidos* and a certain poetic convention, which is not obviously opposed to it but simply different. In *Poetics* 17 (1455a55), for instance, Aristotle claims that there is no difference between plots "already made" (*pepoiêmenous*) and invented ones, "of his own making" (*auton poiounta*). In *Poetics* 9 he explains that a tragedy need not necessarily use traditional stories, which makes him tackle the fact that actually only comedy takes the liberty to invent, while tragedy always uses traditional, namely historical plots, although this is not dictated by any principal necessity. The connections of tragedy and comedy with the opposition of history and inventiveness are a matter for further discussion.<sup>118</sup> In the present context it is enough to state that Aristotle says that tragedy, in this case, obeys a demand which is not necessarily derived from its *eidos*. True, it is not opposed to it, but not obliged by it either. Aristotle thus recognizes a rule which determines the practice of tragedy although it is not derived from its inner structure. To

compromise between these two tendencies (the cultural-historical practice and the generic definition) Aristotle makes a special effort (somewhat forced and convoluted), to justify the historical plot after all through the *eidōs*:

[W]hat convinces is the possible; now whereas we are not yet sure as to the possibility of that which has not happened, that which has happened is manifestly possible, otherwise it would not have happened. (*Poetics* 9, 1451b16-19)

Elsewhere he gives an example of a case where precisely the audience's response could have led the poet to the right idea: watching Carcinus' tragedy *Amphiaraus*, the audience protested against the improbability of one of its scenes (*Poetics* 17; see the discussion in chapter 5: 2.4 above).

In all these examples we may recognize two forces affecting the text and the genre: the pragmatic and historical drives (audience, performers, tradition) as against the epistemological process concerning the unveiling of the *eidōs*. How does the dialogue between such contrary tendencies take place?

Against the epistemological process, which concerns a gradual discovery of an eternal and unchanging truth, a pragmatic process can be posed, cybernetic in nature: the poet improvises a text and it reaches the actors and the audience; their responses return to him by way of feedback, and join the cumulative experience of the poet and the genre, and determine the way they will further develop.

This cybernetic circularity is opposed to a hierarchic process, whereby one reaches an absolute truth through trial and error. These are two apparently opposed processes, yet for Aristotle the two work together in the course of history. How can they combine? He who explicitly presents a model of combination between a cybernetic cycle and a hierarchic process is none other than Plato. This may be made possible through the Platonic combination of the fixed and eternal idea and the dialogical process, which strives to attain it by trial and error. In any event, in the *Republic* Plato outlines such a process regarding acts of production, not only of understanding.

What do you mean?

That there are some three arts concerned with everything, the user's art, the maker's and the imitator's.

Yes.

Now do not the excellence, the beauty, the rightness of every implement, living thing, and action refer solely to the use for which each is made or by nature adapted?

That is so.

It quite necessarily follows, then, that the user of anything is the one who knows most of it by experience, and that he reports to the maker the good or bad effects in use of the thing he uses. As, for example, the flute player reports to the flute maker which flutes respond and serve rightly in flute playing, and will order the kind that must be made, and the other will obey and serve him.

Of course.

The one, then, possessing knowledge, reports about the goodness or the badness of the flutes, and the other, believing, will make them.

Yes.

Then, in respect of the same implement the maker will have right belief about its excellence and defects from association with the man who knows and being compelled to listen to him, but the user will have true knowledge.

Certainly.

And will the imitator from experience or use have knowledge whether the things he portrays are not beautiful and right, or will he, from compulsory association with the man who knows and taking orders from him for the right of making them, have right opinion?

Neither. (Ibid. X, 601d-602)

Here Plato distinguishes three kinds of art: using, making and imitating. The main tendency of the Platonic discussion is to prove that imitating art has none of the advantages of the other two kinds, and is actually outside the system of arts. To apply this model to the Aristotelian situation we have to set aside for a moment the Platonic attitude to imitation, and identify Aristotle's imitating art with the Platonic making art. For our purpose the central point is the combination of the cybernetic cycle with a hierarchic process. Between the **making** artist and the **using** artist is a cybernetic cycle: the user, from his knowledge of the usage of the object, explains to the maker what needs his tool is meant to satisfy. The dialogue between the maker and the user advances both toward the unveiling of the object's idea. This dialogical cooperation in the search for the idea brings to mind the dialectical process of learning.

In the Platonic model too it is clear that at a certain point the process must stop. The saddle maker can store and process all possible information about saddles as gathered through his own and the user's experience. There must be a certain ideal saddle which brings the process to an end. At face value the process seems endless since the ideal saddle itself can never be manufactured, but actually it is finalized since at a certain stage the optimal level of production is reached. The model in the background is unchanging, the saddle will remain a saddle forever, and it will always serve the same needs. The idea does not take into account the possibility

that the very needs or the materials of production may undergo radical changes. Neither the maker nor the user is meant to change the preconditions of their dialogue: they are not supposed to redefine the needs underlying the product or the very possibility of production.

This model, including its limitations, can be largely applied to Aristotelian thinking, and through it the way Aristotle imagined the genres' historical development may be understood. An interesting point which may be observed in the application of the Platonic model to Aristotle's thinking is that in Aristotle there is no parallel to the "using art".

In the Platonic model the maker and the user are of equal status and communicate on the same level.<sup>119</sup> In Aristotle there is no egalitarian dialogue between them, and their status is unequal. On one side there is the poet, and on the other all the performers. Among the performers Aristotle mentions only the actor, the chorus leader (*chorêgos*) and less frequently the designer, who makes the stage requisites (*skeupoiois*). They could have been conceived as users in relation to the poet, and as such they address to him their special demands. The actor, for instance, might have criticized the play's diction or its dramatic possibilities, and have preferred a certain style; likewise the producer could make demands of his own. But nowhere does Aristotle refer to the possibility of such a dialogue: the performers are not situated on the same level as the poet. They are not "users" in the Platonic sense, but inferior to the "maker", the poet in our case, and are presented as engaged in something less artistic, less dignified, rather vulgar.

True, the actor is sometimes the key to the play's success, but for Aristotle this is due to the limitations of the audience. In the only instance described where the actor strives to influence the poet's consideration, he makes the poet deviate from the right direction, and does not really contribute to the play. The requisites producer is not presented as having any significant relationship with the poet, and no possible dialogue between them is mentioned; the only possibility for such a dialogue is when the play depends on the spectacle rather than the plot. The effect of the "monstrous" (*teratôdês*), which can be attained by purely scenic means, is presented as having nothing to do with pity and fear, hence as a deviation (*Poetics* 14, 1453b7-11).

In both cases the audience actually determines the performers' superiority to the poet; but as we have seen, the audience is not regarded as the poet's partner for any dialogue, and in that sense there is no difference between Aristotle and Plato. For Plato the dialogue is conducted between two kinds of artists—the maker and the user, but the relation between the artist in general and the consumers of his art is not discussed.

In Aristotle, on the other hand, one can regard the conception of the audience as a profile of art consumers in general.

In the dialogue with the performers a certain possibility of knowledge could be imagined among the poet's interlocutors; but in the dialogue with the audience no professional knowledge whatsoever is on the agenda, only the audience's needs. In our discussion of the audience (chapter 6 above) we saw that the needs they address to the poet and their expectations of the plot may be wholly irrelevant. They can demand cheap excitement or mindless comfort, and be dismayed by the complexity of the emotional attitudes aroused by tragedy or other genres. As we have seen above (ibid. section 1), the dialogue with the audience is in fact virtual: the poet has an abstract image of "audience" incorporated in the *eidos*; the poet communicates with this imaginary audience, not with the real one.

This model can explain the composition of a single play, but can it explain the development of the genre? Such a virtual dialogue does not allow the proper experience to shape a poetic genre. On the contrary: this model is possible only after real experience has been accumulated, and the poet has gathered enough data to imagine the effect of what he considers to include in his play. But from the historical viewpoint of the generic development this model is insufficient. Here a living audience is needed; the experience obtained from their behavior is later internalized in the poet's working method so that he no longer needs to consult his real audience. However, this situation is impossible without some past contact with a historical audience. In other words, the composition of a single work can be understood in terms of "virtual cybernetics"; the formation of the genre as a whole is possible only in conditions of real cybernetics.

Therefore the best way to distinguish the generation of the particular work from the development of the genre is through distinguishing induction from deduction. As noted earlier, the process of the genre development resembles the inductive process, where the general rule is discovered through a series of concrete experiences; the generation of the single work, on the other hand, is rather deductive. The process begins with an idea, from which the poet composes the specific text by realizing the general patterns and filling them in with details.

There is, thus, a quite clear distinction between the model for the creation of the single work, the ontogenesis, and the model for the formation of the genre, the phylogensis. But these two processes are blended in a single realm: regarding the development of the single poet, this is quite similar to the growth of the genre: the ontogenesis of the single poet is structured similarly to the phylogensis of the genre. And perhaps also the reverse: the model for the formation of the genre, or of



poetry in general, derives from the model of the growth of the single poet, and is closely connected with it.

The primary states, in the development of both the human being and the genre, are described in equal terms. For instance, Aristotle speaks of the naturalness of the concept of imitation and says that imitation is inherent in man from childhood, and he learns his earliest lessons through imitation (*Poetics* 4, 1448b7); here he sounds as if he is speaking about the growth of an individual human being. But right after that he passes to terms of the primary state of mankind in general:

Imitation, then, being natural to us—as also the sense of harmony and rhythm [---] it was through their original aptitude, and by a series of improvements, for the most part gradual on their first efforts, that they created poetry out of their improvisations. (Ibid. 144820-24)

Similarly he says at another point:

[B]eginners succeed earlier with diction and character than with the construction of a story; and the same may be said of nearly all the early dramatists. (Ibid. 6, 1450a35)

The early stages of poetry are thus inferred from the situation of beginners in poetry. The thinking here is probably the following: the same capacities which are inherent in human beings from childhood, and are not the product of acquired culture, are universal, so they can be found in their purest forms among people who lived before the formation of culture. The conscience of uncultured or pre-cultured people is parallel, for Aristotle, to that of a child about to develop in the course of his or her life. This development begins with improvisations and unplanned activities, and through the cumulation of experience, one's own and others', it becomes structured and planned, until that individual attains sufficient expertise in his field, and also the field itself, in our case poetry or the poetic genre, becomes more or less determinate. From a different viewpoint this analogy between the individual and generic growth can also explain why historical processes are always described as closed and final. Just as the human being begins as a child and attains a state of maturity which holds until his old age, so the genre seems to grow up to a certain maturity, and then it ceases to grow.

### **3.4 Synchrony and Diachrony: Historical Eras and Processes**

The problematic of the Aristotelian conception of history is thus the relation between the text "in itself" and its performance; between

ontogenesis and phylogenesis, and between biological growth and artificial production. These three pairs of oppositions, each in its own way, pose problems and difficulties for the image of historical development, and largely determine its nature and boundaries.

However, even within these limits specific lines of development and a certain historical super-conception can be recognized. This conception will be a combination of the dimension of time and development and the map of genres as portrayed in the above discussion. This combination determines a division into two kinds of structures: those organized along an axis of time, and those organized across its breadth. Here the structuralist distinction between **synchronic** and **diachronic** systems can be readily applied.

Synchronic relations take place between the high and the low forms of imitation. Here the model is not that of stages in human development but of divergence of poetry according to several kinds of character, in the framework of each of which it can undergo a full course of development. Therefore, just as people can be divided basically into noble or ignoble in nature, so the patterns of poetic talent can be divided into the grave and light: the grave pattern means the tendency and capacity to portray noble characters and action, the light the opposite (see chapter 5: 1.3 above).

Both possibilities are realized in various ways at various stages of the development of poetry. At the stage where poetry is only a poetic response to a given reality, and is not yet a full imitation, this is manifested by the diversion to panegyrics and invectives. When poetry becomes mimetic and narrative, the noble possibility becomes the heroic epic and the low one becomes the mock epic. At the peak of imitation, when poetry becomes dramatic, the noble pattern is tragedy and the ignoble comedy.

The various modes of imitation, that is, narrative, mixed, and dramatic imitation, are organized in history diachronically, unlike the various objects of poetry, which are always synchronic. At each stage of the history of poetry (actually of art in general) it is divided into the high and the low pattern.<sup>120</sup>

The source of the divergence into high and low, as shown above, is a certain conception of the poet's character and temperament. As we have indicated, this does not mean character in the moral and practical sense, that is, a certain principle of moral choice, but a certain quality of the creative temper. This characterization is one of aesthetic choice and the specific nature of the poetic talent. These tendencies lead poets to refer to certain kinds of objects.

Aristotle views the poet's tendency to choose noble or ignoble objects as a natural quality, alongside his natural talent. The "modes", on the other

hand, are possibilities shaped within culture. He accordingly describes the beginnings of comedy and tragedy as follows:

As soon, however, as tragedy and comedy appeared in the field [*paraphaneisês*], those naturally [*kata tèn oikeian phusin* = according to their special nature] drawn to the one line of poetry became writers of comedies instead of iambs, and those naturally drawn to the other, writers of tragedies instead of epics, because these new modes of art were grander and of more esteem than the old. (*Poetics* 4, 1449a1-6)

Here one can clearly see the difference between the special nature of poets, which separates them into noble and base, and the cultural, stylistic and dramatic possibilities, which become available to poets through a cultural change. These possibilities appear in the world, as it were; they emerge and declare their existence, and since they are "graver" and "of more esteem" than the older ones, the poets immediately respond to them and begin to write according to the new mode, the dramatic in this case. But at the same time they continue to diverge according to their special nature: those with the low style choose comedy, and those of the noble style tragedy.

This description is outlined from the viewpoint of the individual poet: he comes with his natural capacities, while the generic possibilities are brought in from outside. Aristotle does not present these possibilities as the outcome of a process, as something which came into being through the poets themselves in a special effort and intention, but as something that suddenly entered their world. So he can draw a simple diachronic line between the panegyric songs, the epic songs and tragedy, and on the other hand invectives, iambic mock epics and comedy.

Aristotle does not say that they are directly connected, or that they are transformations of one another. The old forms do not cease to exist, but in each literary age new options are added, which are more and more mimetic. In the new era not only comedy and tragedy exist, but also—albeit not at the center—all the old forms, epic and mock epic, panegyric and invective songs, and also more archaic dramatic forms such as dithyrambs and satiric plays. So a synchronic coexistence of genres of various ages can be imagined. Alongside tragedy and comedy one can still compose in all other genres, but the fact that tragedy and comedy are "more esteemed" means that they are the dominant ones in this period.

Together with the variables of high and low, which for Aristotle exist at every synchronic stage, at every such stage there is also a system of relations between center and periphery. The center consists of the new and

"more esteemed" forms, the periphery of the old forms, which still exist but no longer develop.

According to this model, epic poetry stood at the center in the epic era, hymns and invectives on the periphery.<sup>121</sup> In old days only the pair of hymn and invective existed, and no older forms were preserved in the historical memory. This view is in principle true: even if the history of poetry did not really start at that point, the literary memory depends on writing so in a system of oral literature one can speak of neither epigonic nor marginal forms. An oral system has no center-periphery relations: what has been pushed out of the focus of attention simply ceases to exist.<sup>122</sup>

Aristotle does not speak of temporal differences within the system, although the synchrony he describes is not a full one. It is clear that for him tragedy had reached its peak about eighty years before his time; comedy, on the other hand, seems to have reached its peak in Aristotelian terms in the "new comedy", namely the work of Menander and others who are Aristotle's own contemporaries. But these phase differences do not feature in his theory.<sup>123</sup> Also, the epic and the mock epic are not of the same period, but Aristotle does not seem troubled by this. He conceives a synchronic system not in purely chronological terms but as a limited period of time during which a certain mimetic option dominated. Since there are three mimetic options, there are, in general, three literary eras.

### 3.5 Historical Change and the Passage between Eras

After determining the distinction between the eras in principle, we should examine the mechanism of the transition from one to the next. As already shown, sometimes Aristotle describes this passage as a kind of leap, not a gradual evolution. Tragedy and comedy suddenly emerge out of the nothingness. However, their basic elements have been foretold already in the epic, since Homer, being an epic-dramatic poet, "was the first to outline for us the general forms of comedy [---]" (*Poetics* 4, 1448b37). That is, epic poetry already contained the potential of these forms. Likewise hymns and invectives already contained the potential of the narrative forms. Every stage in the history of poetry is thus an actualization of possibilities already existing in the previous one.<sup>124</sup>

But how does this passage from potentiality to actuality take place? We noted above that Aristotle draws a kind of straight line from epic to tragedy, and ignores the long period of lyric poetry in between. However, when he discusses tragedy he adduces much material on how it has developed up to the generic patterns known in his time. In other words,

Aristotle ascribes importance also to the real development, to the real changes occurring on the new genre's way to actualization. Incidentally, none of the changes he describes supports or even refers to the thesis on the relation of tragedy to epic.

Since this is Aristotle's most detailed discussion of changes and shifts in the process of the shaping of a genre, it is worth examining his historical assumptions more concretely.

The number of actors was first increased to two by Aeschylus, who curtailed the business of the Chorus, and made the dialogue take the leading part of the play. A third actor and scenery were due to Sophocles. Tragedy acquired also its magnitude. Discarding short stories and a ludicrous diction, through its passing out of its satiric stage, it assumed, though only at a late point in its progress, a tone of dignity; and its meter changed then from trochaic to iambic. The reason for their original use of the trochaic tetrameter was that their poetry was satiric and more connected with dancing than it now is. As soon, however, as a spoken part came in, the very nature of the thing found the appropriate meter. The iambic, we know, is the most speakable of meters, as is shown by the fact that we often fall into it in conversation, whereas we rarely talk hexameters, and only when we depart from the speaking tone of voice. Another change was the plurality of episodes. (*Poetics* 4, 1449a17-29)

Aristotle describes several parallel lines of development in tragedy until it reached its present stage:

1. Number of actors: Aeschylus added the second and Sophocles the third.
2. Relation between chorus and dialogue: in tragedy's early stage the choral part dominated; from Aeschylus on, the dialogue became the dominant part.
3. Nature of stage production: scenery, established by Sophocles.
4. Magnitude of plot element: passage from "short stories" (*mikrôn muthôn*) to a larger magnitude. Aristotle notes that this is a late change, but no credit is given to a specific poet. Both the anonymity and our general knowledge of the history of tragedy support the assumption that here Aristotle describes earlier processes, perhaps pre-Aeschylean; he may describe an era which has no sufficient written documentation, and which he knows more from hearsay.
5. Nature of dialogic language: passage from "ridiculous" language (the trochaic tetrameter of the satiric drama) to "grave" diction

(iambic trimeter) used in the present. This change is not dated nor ascribed to a specific poet.

Of these five lines of development, not one attests to an actual relation between tragedy and epic. All concern the passage from archaic patterns, in themselves very remote from the epic, to tragedy. The statement about the increasing role of dialogue (no. 2) implies that tragedy grew from the choral songs, therefore it must be closer to the hymns and panegyric songs of the earliest stage of poetry.

The same applies to the passage from "short stories" to large plots. Had Aristotle spoken about a passage from epic to tragedy, it would have been the reverse: epic plots are ramified and long, tragic ones limited. The short stories which Aristotle presents as tragedy's early stage may well be small and fragmentary narrative episodes scattered in old choral songs, as we know from Pindar and Bacchilides, and also from tragic chorals and as probably used in Steisichorus' poetry. These short episodes do not prove an epic origin. Finally, the passage from ridiculous to earnest diction explicitly shows that the origin was the satiric play rather than any epic poetry.

Aristotle does not believe that tragedy developed directly from the epic, but only that the dramatic and narrative option inherent in epic poetry served as a model for the shaping of tragedy. Therefore the emergence and coming into being of comedy and tragedy are not the result of any transformation of epic poetry. Their origins are diverse, but the way poets embraced these new options turned them into more subtle forms, better facilitating the same achievement striven for earlier by epic poetry. A clear distinction is suggested here between the origins of a genre and the function it acquires having come into being.

This distinction is especially salient in the discussion of the passage from "ridiculous diction" to grave. Here the historical origin of tragedy is ascribed to satiric drama, whose grotesque and danceable nature determines its use of trochaic tetrameter, which is indeed bouncy. Tragic diction is graver and more composed, and that jerkiness of course does not suit it. To meet that need the iambic meter was "naturally" found. Aristotle stresses the "naturalness" of this solution, although he knows that precisely this solution is questionable and needs explanation. According to his basic assumption, tragedy's gravity originates in the heroic epic, so the combination of heroic severity with the dramatic mode is probably the genesis of tragedy.

But precisely on the basis of this assumption the choice of iambic meter may seem strange, for if the trochaic tetrameter does not suit tragedy the first alternative should be heroic diction. Had the dactylic hexameter,

the pattern of epic diction, been chosen, it would have been only natural. But actually Aristotle chooses an apparently opposite solution: the chosen meter, the iambic, is the usual diction of invectives, and later of the comic epic. Aristotle himself says:

Instances [of comic poetry], however, may be found from Homer downwards, e.g. his *Margites*, and the similar poems of others. In poetry of invective its natural fitness brought an iambic meter into use; hence our present term "iambic", because it was the meter of their "iambs" or invectives against one another. (Ibid. 1448b29-33).

Aristotle does not mince words to note the association of the iambic meter with the tradition of invective and comic epic. He explicitly separates the heroic poetic tradition from the low iambic. If precisely this pattern has been chosen for tragedy, and not the expected one (the heroic meter), a special explanation is needed: what does "naturally" mean, for that matter? The naturalness of that choice lies of course not in that iambic meter is associated with the tradition of invective, but in that it reflects the most natural way of speaking, the way people actually speak.

The line Aristotle traces in this historical discussion is the development of mimetic effects, with the assumption that tragedy is more mimetic than epic. In the choice of proper tragic diction the main consideration must be, for him, the mimetic probability of language. The epic pattern is not suitable for it because of its heaviness and solemnity. That is the way only "when we depart from the speaking tone of voice"; to represent the natural use of language and to shape a real dialogue, the choice of the iambic meter is the best.

Here a zigzag historical process can be detected, where the development of the high genre, which is in principle on the same level as the heroic epic, makes use of the technical options suggested precisely by the low tradition. Lucas in his commentary to the *Poetics* (Lucas 1968: 74-75) says that this description is so at odds with Aristotle's presuppositions that it must attest to its historical authenticity. Had the facts not been historically true, Aristotle would have had no reason to present a thesis so incompatible with the rest of his theory. The question which troubles me, however, is not the historical authenticity of Aristotle's thesis but the depth of its integration into his theory. A deeper understanding of the thesis may show that it does blend with Aristotle's theory.

He distinguishes, albeit not explicitly, two kinds of question referring to historical changes: there is the mechanical issue—how did this change actually take place? What options did it use and whence did they derive? and there is the functional issue—what does this change mean? What was

its purpose? And after taking place, what meaning has it become? In Aristotelian terms, the first group of questions concerns the Matter of change and its efficient cause, the second concerns the elements of Form and the effective cause.

The formal and teleological aspect of all changes discussed concern the tendency to attain an optimal actualization of the idea of *mimêsis*, hence a higher level of mimetic effect. But the process which actually led to these changes, as well as the materials and data used in its course, do not necessarily concern *mimêsis*. So in our case, the same verbal behavior used in a certain context for mockery may serve in a different context as a realistic representation of a serious conversation; and the language which was regarded as dramatic in the epic context may be regarded as tedious in a truly dramatic context, and another diction may be chosen. These changes make use of several textual qualities, some of which have been used in the past for other ends, but in the present context they are all chosen to raise poetry to a more convincing level of depicting reality.

Moreover, changes may occur not for a certain end but without any motive whatsoever. But having occurred, they may be revealed as more fitting than others for that certain end. For instance, choral songs of the post-epic era and satiric and phallic dances habitual in various places developed in different forms, and did so for ends mostly unspecified by Aristotle; but at a certain stage they became an option for poets, and offered them new and more efficient ways to compose artistic imitations. So tragedy, having undergone various changes, was revealed as a more accomplished development of the mimetic idea than that attained by the epic. This does not mean that it developed directly from the epic; on the contrary, it was a combination of materials from various sources, which at a certain point became structured into a pattern that fostered actualization of the dramatic potential embedded in epic far better than epic poetry itself.

This is the case described by Aristotle when he presented his general model for the development of poetry:

It certainly began in improvisation [---]. And their advance after that was little by little, through their improving on whatever they had before them at each stage. It was in fact after a long series of changes that the movement of tragedy stopped on its attaining to its natural form. (*Poetics* 4, 1449a10-15)

Improvisation is not only the act of individual poets. Each historical change which is not aimed at poetry's central end is a kind of "improvisation". Only in retrospect is it discovered that these changes



contribute to that end, therefore they are preserved and keep on developing.

The discussion of the history of tragedy thus presents its actual coming into being; the discussion of the history of *mimêsis*, which refers to the relation of the three eras of poetry, describes a model neither causal nor linear but designed by the logical analysis of the concept of imitation. Having discussed the history of the tragic genre, Aristotle takes leave of the historical viewpoint; the later discussion of tragedy is ahistoric: the moment tragedy has reached its full ripeness Aristotle regards all tragedies as coexistent.

But this coexistence is not absolute. True, Aristotle does not present a model of the intra-generic changes tragedy has undergone, nor do his very basic assumptions allow him to attach a historical dimension to a fixed and constant species. However, Aristotle does not ignore the changes which occurred in the patterns of tragedy composition. Our last issue therefore will be his various comments on these changes.

### 3.6 Intra-Genre Stylistic Changes: Signs of Growth and Signs of Old Age

Aristotle does not explicitly ask at which point is it possible to speak of tragedy as a ripe genre. However, the question does arise when his comments on inner changes in the genre of tragedy are examined. Some of these changes are in fact a continuation or development of the changes which led from the archaic forms to tragedy.

First and foremost this concerns the status of plot: a survey of the history of tragedy makes it clear that the passage from "short stories" to stories with "magnitude" was one of the axes of the genre's growth. Some comments on intra-generic relations among the tragedies refer to it. According to one comment, already discussed above (chapter 5: 1.2), the early poets, like the beginners among contemporary ones, mastered character and diction better than plot:

A further proof is the fact that beginners succeed earlier with the diction and characters than with the construction of a story: and the same may be said of nearly all the early dramatists. (*Poetics* 6, 1450a35)

This comment does not specify who these early dramatists were, but from the various examples mentioned in the *Poetics*, it seems that Aeschylus was not deemed a very central poet. Most references are to Sophocles, Euripides and later poets. For Aristotle the borderline between Aeschylus

and his contemporaries and the later poets is determined through the status of plot.

Another comment, also mentioned before, places the text/performance relationship on a diachronic line. This is the statement in the *Rhetoric* that in the past, poets performed their texts themselves:

Indeed, it was long before it [the art of delivery] found a way into the arts of tragic dramas and epic recitation: at first poets acted their tragedies themselves. (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b23)

This comment is important mainly because it imparts a historical dimension to Aristotle's attitude to performance. When we discussed above (chapter 2: 2.5) Aristotle's ambivalence on performance we found a kind of inner contradiction. In certain respects Aristotle identifies the work with its production, since the dramatic mode, the theatrical production, is one of the "parts" of tragedy. But at the same time he states that the production is a different issue, and not a part of the poet's art. The historical dimension can in a way settle this contradiction: the tension between text and performance reflects a certain stage in the development of tragedy and poetry in general. The direction is toward a separation, so that poetry becomes autonomic and independent of performance.

A third comment with historical overtones concerns the relation of poetry and rhetoric. Speaking about thought (*dianoia*) Aristotle says that it is an issue of the art of oration:

This is what, in the speeches in tragedy, falls under the arts of politics and rhetoric; for the older poets make their personages discourse like statesmen [*politikôs*], and the moderns like orators [*rhêtorikôs*]. (*Poetics* 6, 1450b6)

Aristotle presents two disciplines which lead to an understanding of the "oratory" part of tragedy: politics and rhetoric. How do they actually combine? For Aristotle they represent two stages on a historical line: the early poets depicted their characters as citizens of a state, for which the political way of speaking and consideration was the fittest; the later poets depicted their characters as professional orators, and their way of speaking was guided by the need to demonstrate their rhetorical skills and their capacity to persuade and arouse emotions, rather than by their arguments themselves and public goals.

Here Aristotle refers to the cultural change which occurred in the Greek world with the growth of sophism and rhetoric. He points at a link between that change and a parallel change in the history of tragedy, concerning the relation between character and discourse. He does not show explicitly where the distinction between "early poets" and "moderns"

lies; however, in the tragic corpus we know this change is perfectly recognizable in the passage from Aeschylus to Sophocles and Euripides.

Sophocles is without doubt very rhetorical, but his characters' rhetoric is definitely subject to the major problem they cope with, which is rooted in the very tragic plot. The conflict between Antigone and Creon, for instance, is clearly political, and it is excellently rhetorically expressed, but the rhetoric is entirely in service of these characters' ethical political stands. In Euripides, on the other hand, rhetoric becomes autonomous in a way. It does not exclusively serve to make manifest the characters' ethos. Sometimes it suspends the plot's progress to allow the character to argue an issue which does not further the events. These may be speeches on abstract subjects,<sup>125</sup> and even complete situations which include a quasi-juridical argumentation, but actually do not advance the plot. Such is the well-known argument between Hekabe and Helen in *The Trojan Women*, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter (section 3.3).

Aristotle's comment evinces some reservation. Depicting characters as orators implies in most cases a flaw in the structure of plot or probability, and in highlighting unnecessary subjects. In section 3.3 above we discussed the remark about the episodic structure, which is preferred by good poets because of the actors' pressure, and we said that this pressure is mostly due to the actors' need to perform impressively rhetorical sections.

In connecting this phenomenon with a specific historical period (it is ascribed to the moderns: *hoi nun*), Aristotle probably hints that poetry has undergone a certain deterioration. A similar tone can be heard also in the above—quoted statement from the *Rhetoric*, where he refers to the high status of the actors at the poets' expense "owing to the defects of our political institutions" (ibid. II, 1, 1403b34). Aristotle does not devote a special discussion to this deterioration, but it can clearly challenge his developmental conception since he regards the growth of the genres as a process of actualization of an idea, so that every stage must be an improvement on the preceding.

Still, what we have seen so far is that the development of a genre has an end: there is a stage at which the idea has become fully actualized, and like the tree that has attained maturity, "the movement of tragedy stopped on its attaining to its natural form" (*Poetics*, 4, 1449a14). True, this is not presented as unequivocal, and it can be formulated as a question too: "whether tragedy is now all that it needs to be in its formative elements" (ibid. 1449a7). But after all, the Aristotelian theory has no capacity to burst beyond that "final" point, that is, to present new options other than those already presented.

In respect of the Aristotelian assumptions, there is no possible continuation to the development of tragedy or of genres in general. In light of the biological-ontogenetic model Aristotle uses, there is only one conceivable continuation: when tragedy has attained the peak of its ripeness, signs of old age can be discovered. So tragedy can return to its early states: just as the early poets mastered character and diction better than plot, so the "moderns" sometimes prefer to master rhetoric than plot.

These comments, as stated above, are no more than hints: the question of what happens to a poetic genre after it has reached its peak is far from systematically answered in Aristotelian thought.



## EPILOGUE

### TOWARD A THEORY OF *MIMÊSIS*

We have completed herewith a reading process in which we tried to present Aristotle's thinking through the concept of **text**. This viewpoint changed in a way the common hierarchy of Aristotelian concepts: concepts like tragedy, catharsis, mimesis have indeed been mentioned several times in the course of our discussion, but in the end they were situated in the background; on the other hand concepts and issues like author, audience, literary history, communicational situation, semantic structure, which in regular discussions of Aristotle, at least of the *Poetics*, are situated in the background, have been moved in the present discussion to the forefront. We thereby attempted to reconstruct a hypothetic Aristotelian text theory.

The focus on text theory pushed to the background one more concept, which may sometimes seem indispensable: that of *poetry*. Indeed, a great deal of the discussion was about poetic texts, but the concept of text in itself is far broader than that of poetry, and poetic texts are only one of its manifestations. So even when poetic texts were discussed, they were treated mainly as texts in general.

A discussion of this kind would not have been possible without the matching of the *Poetics* with the *Rhetoric*. Among Aristotelian writings the *Rhetoric* is the most clearly devoted to verbal texts as such; or at least, the concept of text implied in the *Rhetoric* is not a specifically poetic one.

Now, having completed our course concerning text theory in general, this is the proper time to ask about the uniqueness of the poetic text: what is poetic in poetry, and what distinguishes it from other kinds of verbal texts—rhetoric, historic, philosophical and the like? This question places at the center a concept that we mentioned time and again in our discussion but could not tarry on it: *mimêsis*. For Aristotle this is the *differentia specifica* distinguishing poetic texts from other textual kinds.

But the choice of text theory as a starting point also reflects on the discussion of *mimêsis*, and determines in many respects what is to be situated at its center and what at the margins. To clarify this, a certain duality within the concept of *mimêsis* should be pointed out.

The Greek word *mimêsis* is a derivative of *mimos*, which means a kind of actor, a clown or an "imitator", and also a show based on that kind of

acting. In late uses it denotes also the text for such shows, the *mimos* as poetic genre, but in its earlier uses it denoted only the performing acts of such shows: corporeal or vocal gesticulation, dressing up, masks. The various words derived from that root broadened its meaning and also modified it. For instance, the pejorative connotation of the original term, which refers to vulgar clownery, is entirely absent from the later derivatives. The verb *mimeisthai* is used for ritual shows, such as that of the Apollonian priestesses described in the *Hymn to Apollo* (156-164).<sup>126</sup> But along with this realm of meanings, the word *mimêsis* has also been used for objects created as visually similar to things in the world like paintings or sculptures, as in Herodotus (II 78, 86, 132, 169; III 37).<sup>127</sup>

The essential difference between the two uses is that in the first there is no medium: imitation is done through the imitator's body and his very being. In the second use the imitation is incorporated into a certain material body—stone, clay, canvas, colors, and it is thus an object separate from the imitator.

This difference is not crucial in the old uses of the term—they do not seem contradictory and exist side by side as complementary applications of the term *mimêsis*. Even the fact that the first use is based on the original etymology of the word, while the second is in a certain way metaphoric, does not seem to matter. However, this difference becomes crucial when the concept is dealt with by the philosophers and the meanings begin to exclude each other.

Plato sticks exclusively to the first use of the term. For him there is no concept of medium; imitation is an action performed by the imitator himself. Plato is clearly thinking of the gesticulation. Of course there are also paintings and sculptures, and Plato sometimes mentions them as examples of *mimêsis*, but he regards them as kinds of mirror reflections and shadows. These are only effects of the original object's existence—projections, not real entities. As they are not bodies in themselves, they are more similar to gesticulations; they do not lead to a concept of medium, an object incorporating the imitation as a separate entity. In Aristotle, on the other hand, there is a dramatic turn to the second meaning: that of imitation as incorporated in a medium.

No wonder that when Plato speaks of the various aspects of poetry, he mentions only the **object** and the **manner**:

So this concludes the topic of tales. That of diction, I take it, is to be considered next. So we shall have completely examined both the **matter** [*ha te lektoon* = what is to be spoken of] and the **manner** of speech [*hōs lektoon* = how to speak]. (*Republic* III, 392c).

For Aristotle, on the other hand, imitation has three aspects:

Epic poetry and tragedy, as well as comedy [---] are all, viewed as a whole, modes of imitation. But they differ from one another in three ways, either in their **means** [*en heterois*], or in their **objects** [*hetera*], or in the **manner** [*heterôs*] of their imitation. (*Poetics* 1, 1447a14-17)

The first aspect mentioned by Aristotle is the **medium**, the various materials through which the act of imitation is realized (colors, forms, voice, language). The concept of imitation in Aristotle is dominated by the aspect of medium, and the concept of medium in turn is broadened to the realms of theatrical and musical imitation, which in earlier conceptions were conceived mainly as gesticulation. The introduction of the medium to the philosophical explication of poetic creation is a direct outcome of thinking about poetry in terms of writing, as has been shown in detail.

Also the ethical and aesthetic differences implied in this turn were mentioned in the above discussion: when imitation is mainly gesticulation, it is judged as a kind of behavior, and the standard for judging behaviors is of course the ethical one; when imitation is incorporated in a real object it is judged as a product, and the standard for that judgment is the efficiency of attaining the goal for which the object has been produced. In the case of poetry it is an aesthetic standard.

The object produced by language is a **text**, so Aristotle's theory of *mimêsis* cannot be understood without a concept of text, and the Aristotelian text theory presented in this study, is in fact also a theory of the mimetic medium. In order to examine the concept of *mimêsis*, the deep significance of the concept of text and the way it shapes that of imitation should be taken into account. This is the starting point for a new study which should, it is to be hoped, follow the present one.





## NOTES

1. See *Institutio Oratoria* 9.4.13, 17. About Quintilian as the first to use the term *textus* as a noun, see Scheid 1996, pp.152-3.
2. See Scheid 1996, p. 154.
3. The same can be said about *rhapsôdia*: "like the **Centaur** (a rhapsody in a medley of all meters) of Chaeremon" (*kathaper Kharemôn epoiese Kentauron meiktên rhapsôdian ex hapantôn tôn metrôn*, *Poetics* 1, 1447b21).
4. For an analysis of the concept of *mimêma* see Sifakis, 1986 p. 217. Sifakis understands this concept as parallel to the "sign" in modern semantics. He claims that like the sign, this concept also is a compound of two aspects: *mimoumenos*, which is the parallel of *signifiant* (signifier) and *memimêmenon*, which is the parallel of *signifié* (signified) and is also the "referent".
5. References from the *Rhetoric* to the *Poetics* appear, among others, in three places in part III chapter 2 (1404b2,5,7) and in chapter 18 (1419b7); a reference from the *Poetics* to the *Rhetoric* can be found in chapter 19 (1456a36).
6. See Lucas 1968, p. 53.
7. Agathon is quoted in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* II, 19, 1392b9-10: "To some things we by art must needs attain, / Others by destiny or luck we gain". Moschion says: "But when at last Time, who brings all to birth, / Transformed the manner of our mortal life, / Whether through the contrivance of Prometheus, / Or through Necessity, or whether long / Practice had learned from Nature's own instruction" (quoted in Thomson 1946, p. 317).
8. Only at the ending of Plato's *Symposium* is there a short note which speaks of poetry as "art": "that the tragic poet [*ton tekhnêi tragôidopoion*, = 'the true artist in tragedy'] might be a comedian as well" (ibid. 223d). But according to the context it is doubtful that Socrates really believes that such poets exist. The words are addressed to Aristophanes and Agathon, and they imply, quite indelicately, that the addressees themselves are not deemed knowledgeable poets. See on this also chapter 5: 1.3 below.
9. This issue is dealt with in Zoran 1998, section 1.
10. About natural talent vs. madness see chapter 5: 1.2, 1.3 below.
11. On the status of the *Poetics* in the framework of the triple division of *theôria*, *praxis* and *poiêsis* see also Olson 1965, p. 178.
12. The *Poetics* creates a concept of a world which is *mimêsis*, and thus not subject to rules of truth and falsehood, but only to rules of probability, and also not to values usually applied to reality, such as pleasing or unpleasing.
13. The earliest documentation of the word *poiêtês* as poet is found in Herodotus II 53; the word *aoidos* is the common term in Homeric epic. See on this also Murrey 1996, p. 8.

14. The lower grades of knowledge could of course have been added to the table, but they are not relevant for the present context, which focuses on human thinking and grades of professional expertise.

15. See on this Halliwell 1990; Irwin 1996.

16. However, the list of Aristotle's writings presented in Diogenes Laertius V 22-27 (Hicks 1925 vol. I, pp. 464-475) includes some titles which could represent books on the missing subjects. A general "aesthetic" theory which does not concern a specific art might be represented by the title *On the Beautiful* (*Peri kalou*), but this title does not necessarily refer to *poiêsis* or to art at all; discussions on a non-verbal art other than poetry might be represented by a title mentioned twice, *On Music* (*Peri mousikês*). Arts of several kinds, not necessarily verbal or "aesthetic", might have been discussed in two collections of handbooks, *Tekhnôn sunagôgê* and *Allês tekhnôn sunagôgês*, and in a general book titled *Tekhnê*. But we do not know much about the authenticity of this list, and the fact that the surviving texts are about three arts of verbal behavior is still significant.

17. Also in the Aristotelian corpus there is a composition named *Oikonomika*, but its attribution to Aristotle is doubtful.

18. Two different attempts have been made to present the relation of the *Poetics* to the *Rhetorics*, and to locate them in relation to one another and to the rest of human activity. McKeon (1965) does it through a view from above based mainly on the four Aristotelian causes; Ricoeur (1996) does it through a view from below, that is, an analysis of the concept of metaphor in both disciplines, its combining with the concept of *lexis* peculiar to each of them, and its connection to the ends and modes of operation of the disciplines.

19. This is by no means simple, since the definition of rhetoric in the first chapter of book I does not refer to *lexis*. This "logical" conception is strictly kept through the two first books. In book III the discussion of *lexis* is introduced, so it needs a new introduction. See also below.

20. Not in every context is the distinction of *logos* and *lexis* very sharp, and not always is it important, since rhetoric and poetics are disciplines which essentially deal with *logos* and *lexis* alike, and this differentiates both of them from the *Organon*, which deals with *logos* only.

21. Andrew Ford's important study *The Origins of Criticism* (Ford 2002), which discusses Aristotle from various aspects, deals among other things with the transition of poetry from the oral to the written medium. In earlier scholarship too there were some hints of understanding Aristotle in that light. In note 25 below I shall present and shortly discuss some of these studies.

22. In his later book (Havelock 1986) Havelock presents his theory systematically, and in a way that disconnects it from the interpretation of Plato and presents it in a broader historical cultural context. He also explains the relation of his own conception to others, noting that in the year his first study appeared (1963) four other important studies on this same subject were published (by Claude Levi-Strauss and Marshal MacLuhén, among others). That year could thus be regarded as a "watershed" in the development of the question (ibid. 25). For responses to Havelock's theory see the collection of articles edited by Kevin Robb (Robb 1983)

which is devoted to the relation of ancient philosophy to language, especially the articles of Kirk, Adkins, Willard and Margolis.

23. This double situation is intimated in Havelock's later book: "Socrates himself played a paradoxical role, an oralist adhering to the habit of his youth, yet using oralism in a brand new manner, no more as an exercise in poetic memorization, but as a prosaic instrument for breaking the spell of the poetic tradition" (Havelock 1986, p. 5). This situation can perhaps be compared to that of Xenophanes from Colophon, a hundred years earlier, who also, from the starting point of Greek poetic tradition, strongly criticized this very tradition, in a way quite similar to that of Socrates (see Kirk & Raven 1983, pp. 168-9).

24. This duality in Plato's position on writing is referred to also in Svenbro's stimulating analysis of the *Phaedrus* (Svenbro 1993, ch. 10). But his explanation is quite different. In his view Plato does not believe that writing is always bad, but only in cases where the writer is not there to speak for his written text and explain it if needed. (This means, incidentally, that Plato regarded writing as an auxiliary for oral discourse, not as a medium in itself.) Plato was himself a prolific writer because his writing was intended for the Academy, the school he founded, which created for his texts the milieu in which they could get the "aid" they needed, and become subjects for living discussions. Socrates, on the other hand, had no school of that kind, and therefore did not write and his opinion on writing sounded much less favorable (ibid. 214-216).

25. Aristotle's position as a turning point in this respect is not new in itself. Knox comments: "It is in this work [i.e. *Rhetoric*] that for the first time we are presented with critical remarks which refer specifically to the text visualized as a written page rather than conceived of as something heard" (Knox 1985, p. 13-14). Thomas refers to Knox's comment when she says: "It is in Aristotle first that one finds extensive discussion of literary and philosophical works in terms of the written text" (Thomas 1992, p. 92). Both scholars leave their statements about Aristotle as a remark aimed to point to a turning point in the history of Greek literacy, so they do not get beyond stating that Aristotle was the owner of one of the first book collections in history, hence was also one of the first readers (Turner 1968, p. 106). Ford (2002) deals more systematically with the transition from oral to literate concepts (the transition from the poet as "singer", *oidos*, to "maker", *poiētēs*, and the connection between "making" and writing), but for him the turning point is much earlier than Aristotle, and Aristotle is presented rather as the final point. Ford follows mainly the development of the concept of *kritēs*, the "literary critic"; I wish to follow the development of the philosophical text-theory, and in that respect Aristotle is a turning point. Anyway, neither the ideas of Knox and Thomas nor Ford's historical analysis led to a systematic new reading of Aristotle.

26. To reconstruct the original orality of the Homeric poet, a deliberate scholarly effort was needed; this was made only at the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Lord 1968.

27. At this point, and as a basis for the continuation of the discussion, note that the concepts concerning the relation between orality and literacy on which we rely are somewhat questionable according to recent research (see Algazi 1998, ch. II). A clear-cut distinction between oral and written is problematic. Moreover, some of

the assumptions about the fastness of the written text and about several qualities of the oral tradition are incompatible with many facts and need revision. The main argument is that this very distinction is based on the self-image of medieval scholars, who distinguished "literate" from "illiterate", and became, without sufficient justification, a universal method, which is applicable to several cultures and societies. The very distinction between oral and written is a cultural phenomenon, which changes through history, and itself merits examination. (This theory was presented with slightly different emphases in a lecture by Prof. Gadi Algazi of Tel Aviv University at the University of Haifa on January 15, 1996. I wish to thank him for his comments and for letting me read his unpublished article on the subject). Thomas too has a rich discussion about the history of the research on orality-literacy, its various trends and the problems it raises (Thomas 1992, p. 15-28). In our discussion we shall indeed make use of general concepts of orality and literacy, but unlike the studies mentioned above, which do it to portray cultures or societies, we shall do it to point at the implicit assumptions of two philosophers—Plato and Aristotle. Thus our aim is to characterize conscience and self-image, not to depict an "objective" historical and sociological reality.

28. See also Ford's discussion on "making" and "writing": Ford 2002, pp. 152-157.

29. The translation is by Richmond Latimore (Latimore 1965).

30. Interestingly, the only place where Plato does speak about completeness as demanded from the text is in a discussion of rhetoric: "At any rate, you will allow that every discourse ought to be a living creature, having its own body and head and feet; there ought to be a middle, beginning and end, which are in a manner agreeable to one another and to the whole" (*Phaedrus* 264). The use of the organic metaphor precisely at this point is understandable from the context, since the dialogue here deals with a speech by Lysias which is a written one. In spite of the declared criticism of writing, something of the assumptions of writing probably influenced Plato. At any rate, the theory of rhetoric Plato develops in the last part of the *Phaedrus* looks like a program for Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. No wonder then that he uses a metaphor that suits Aristotle perhaps more than it suits himself.

31. The first usage of the verb *mimēsthai* known to us is in the *Hymn to Apollo*, where the meaning seems to be that of acting: "They know how to mimic the speech / And babble that all humans utter / Each man would say he himself / Was making the sound, their beautiful singing matches so", 160-162 (Crudden 2001, p. 28). When Aristotle summarizes the conventional uses of the term *mimēsis* he too includes "most flute-playing and lyre playing [*tēs aulētikēs hē pleistē kai kitharistikēs*]", *Poetics* 1, 1447a15). This is usually understood as indicating that the representational aspect of *mimēsis* is not clearly differentiated from the expressive (as Halliwell puts it: "representational-cum-expressive", 2002, pp. 240-241). However, it may also indicate that instrumental music was viewed in antiquity as imitation of the human voice.

32. This of course is not a universal law: in the *Protagoras* (338e-347b) a poem by Simonides is lengthily analyzed without the use of any written text. But this could not have been done without ascertaining first that the two interlocutors knew the poem by heart (ibid. 339b), which means that the method was possible only for a restricted number of texts. If the text was new or unknown to one of the

interlocutors, it had to be recited, which was of course possible, but not very efficient. It would be like responding to very long speeches, and Socrates' ironic remark on this should be taken seriously: "I'm a forgetful sort of man, Protagoras, and if someone speaks at length, I lose the thread of the argument. If I were a little deaf, you would recognize the necessity of raising your voice if you wanted to talk to me; so now, since you find me forgetful, cut down your answers and make them shorter if I am to follow you" (ibid. 334 c-d).

33. Here of course one should bear in mind the modern reservations against the oversimplified model of the oral activity: the oral poet sometimes exactly repeats a former version; he knows certain passages by heart, and sometimes he prepares his performance by a mental process or by real rehearsing (see Thomas 1992, pp. 36-40). Nevertheless, if there are no drafts and written texts, these processes by nature are much more abstract and difficult for a mental follow-up.

34. The quotations from the *Frogs* are translated by R.H. Webb (Hadas 1962, pp 367-415).

35. For a discussion of Aristophanes' *Frogs* regarding the orality-literacy opposition, see Havelock 1982, pp. 292-268.

36. In other sections of the same part of the *Problems* Aristotle speaks about hearing of literature and listening to it: "Why do we feel more pleasure in listening to narratives in which the attention is concentrated to a single point, than in hearing those which are concerned with many subjects?" (ibid. 9, 917b8-10). "Why do we like to hear of events which are neither very old nor quite new?" (ibid. 10, 917b14-15). Here Aristotle is not far from the way he speaks in the *Poetics*, where he in fact speaks of hearing as opposed to seeing a performance, but not to reading it. This issue is discussed in the next section. For more information about the authenticity of the *Problems* see Hett 1937, vol. 1 p. vii. For a comprehensive discussion about reading in antiquity see Svenbro 1993; Thomas 1989, 1992.

37. Indeed, Plato did not disregard the individual response, and he discusses it in the *Republic* X, (606-606d). However he conceives the individual only through his function within the state, so that after all he is a part of a collective. Therefore the appeal of poetry to the individuality of the citizen and to his specific needs is conceived as undermining the order of the state. The only aspect of the individuality to which poetry is allowed to appeal is the citizen's civil and obedient potential. For that purpose, however, there is no need to isolate the individual from the public, and it is even better to meet him within the community. Plato says nothing in this context about reading or hearing, but it is quite clear that the poet who will be allowed to act within the ideal state must be one addressing the collective, not the individual.

38. On Aristotle's view of stage production see also Halliwell 1986, pp. 337-343. Halliwell too hints at a certain connection between Aristotle's ambivalence to stage productions and the fact that in his time more written texts were available (ibid. 343).

39. The verb *hupokrinô* means to answer. The term *hupokritês* was given to the actor, when he was added to the chorus as a "soloist" who was supposed to answer the chorus' questions. The term was retained when there were more actors, and they had more functions than just answering.

40. In his commentary to the *De Interpretatione* Ackrill refers to the ambiguity of the quoted section, as well as to the relation between writing and sound, and he asks: "Are written marks symbols of spoken sounds in the same sense in which these are symbols of thought? Is it necessary—or only natural—to regard speech as primary and writing as secondary?" (Ackrill 1963, p. 113)

41. It is interesting to compare the conception of **voice** as starting point to that of **time** and that of **language**. The concept of time as starting point was suggested in Lessing's *Laocoon* of 1766, when he distinguished arts of time from arts of space (Lessing 1957). This conception is considerably broader than that of voice, but for Aristotle's needs it is not concrete enough. Aristotle tries to describe poetry from the point of view of its material cause (the medium), and after all, in his view time is not material, it is rather a category of form. In just the same way Aristotle does not speak about space, but about forms and colors. On the other hand Aristotle does not reduce voice to the linguistic aspect alone, and does not introduce poetry as "art of language". In the following discussion we shall see why.

42. It is interesting to refer here to the theory of Scheid and Svenbro (1996) on the history of the images of textiles in antiquity. They describe an archaic phase in Greek thought in which the written letter was conceived as warp, voice as woof, and the text as a whole as a fabric made of these two components. With the deepening of the conception of writing and reading the very letters began to be conceived as containing the voice, so the act of reading was understood as the liberation of that hidden voice. They quote a Hellenistic epigram about a cicada caught in a spider's web; the speaker lets it free and blesses it as daughter of the Muse. According to the authors this is an allegory of the conception of voice (the Music element) as something captured in the web of letters, and the reading process as an act of liberation (ibid., pp. 128-129). This is no doubt the situation expressed by Aristotle himself in this passage, although he does it in his own way, and probably would not have used that allegory.

43. The original term, *skiagraphia*, literally means "shadow sketch", namely any rough sketch "intended to produce the effect of the finished work at a distance before a large number of spectators" (Freese 1982, p. 422, note a). It can be used for scene-painting also, although the common term for it is *skenographia*.

44. "We maintain, therefore, that the first essential [---] is the plot [*muthos*] and that the characters [*êthos*] come second—compare the parallel in painting, where the most beautiful colours laid on without order will not give one the same pleasure as a simple black-and-white sketch of a portrait" (*Poetics* 6, 1450a37-b2).

45. The problem of the authenticity of the speeches cited in Thucydides still exists, but here the question is about their generic qualities, and in that respect the *Epitaph* may serve as a perfect example regardless of the problem of authenticity. Moreover, precisely in the context of that speech Thucydides makes a comment from which one can learn something about the size of the audience: "When the proper time arrived, he advanced from the sepulcher to an elevated platform in order to be heard by as many of the crowd as possible, and spoke as follows" (Thucydides II, 34).

46. In principle the term *lexis* is used in both texts (see *Poetics* 20, 1456b19; 22, 1458a19), however, in *Poetics* 1, 1447a22, when Aristotle introduces the poetic

medium, he uses the term *logos* [*en rhuthmô kai logô kai harmonia*]. He does so probably to begin with the most general concept.

47. In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle sometimes uses the term *logos* in the sense of narrative. In part II chapter 22 he uses it for Aesop's fables.

48. "But they differ from one another in three ways, either in their means, or in their objects, or in the manner of their imitations" [*diapherousi de allêlôn trisin, ê gar tô en heterois mimeisthai ê tô hetera ê tô heterôs kai mê ton auton tropon*] (*Poetics* 1, 1447a16-18).

49. "We have already decided that Aristotle is wrong and now we must face the consequences of disagreeing with him. 'All human happiness and misery', says Aristotle, 'takes the form of action'. We know better. We believe that happiness and misery exist in the secret life, which each of us leads privately and to which (in his characters) the novelist has access. And by the secret life we mean the life for which there is no external evidence" (Forster 1974, p. 91).

50. On the inner world and its place in Greek culture see Snell 1960 and Gill 1996. Snell views the conception of man in Greek culture as a "draft" of Western psychology. Gill tries to suggest a more complex view: see especially his reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*, *ibid.* pp. 99-108.

51. I discuss this issue in Zoran 1992 and 2009, chapter 12.

52. The metaphor of "body" for character and thought may sound oxymoronic to the modern ear since we regard character and soul as mental elements. However, this is the natural conclusion of Aristotle's choice of the metaphor "soul" to represent the structure of actions. This should be understood in light of the difference between his concept of soul and the modern one, as well as in light of his conception of textual hierarchy.

53. On the relation of juridical to fictional speeches in tragedy see Zoran 2002.

54. This is true to such an extent that book III was suspected as being a late addition not authored by Aristotle. Nowadays this book is deemed genuinely Aristotelian, but this does not change the structural problem raised by that book. (See Freese 1982, p. xxxi.)

55. I have discussed Aristotle's view of music in Zoran 2009, pp. 348-416.

56. The issue of performance is also discussed above in chapter 2: 2.5, but that discussion conceived performance only as one of the indicators of Aristotle's attitude to the written text. In the present discussion, however, my intention is to examine performance from the aspect of textual stratification. Only few have dealt with the problem of performance, so Halliwell (1986, pp. 337-343) should be mentioned again, although his discussion is less focused on the stratified structure.

57. The best known use of that way of convincing is found in Antony's speech at Julius Caesar's funeral. Anthony exposes Caesar's ripped toga to incite the Roman mob against Brutus and Cassius. "Now, it so happened that Antony was due to deliver the customary eulogy in the forum when Caesar's body was brought out for burial. When he saw that the assembled people were extraordinarily moved and beguiled by his words, he tempered his praise with expressions of sorrow and indignation at what happened, and at the end of his speech he brandished the dead man's bloodstained, sword-slashed clothes, and called the perpetrators of the deed accused murderers. In this way he whipped the crowd up into such a frenzy of



anger that they piled up the benches and tables, cremated Caesar's body there in the forum, and then snatched brands from the pyre and ran to attack the houses of his assassins" (Plutarch, *Antony* 14). Note especially the connection Plutarch sees between arousing pity and fear and exposing the damaged toga, which looks like an exact illustration of what Aristotle's says in the *Rhetoric*. Shakespeare's masterful rendering of that scene ascribes a series of further rhetorical devices to Anthony, but the climax, as in Plutarch, is the display of the toga.

58. In the continuation to this, Aristotle tells the well-known anecdote about Amasis, king of Egypt, who did not cry when he saw his son being executed, but burst into tears when he saw a friend becoming a beggar. He explained it saying that only his friend's fate was "equal to his tears". See also Herodotus III, 14.

59. Complex—*peplagmenê*; of suffering—*pathetikê*; of character—*êthikê*. There is a problem in the manuscript precisely with the tragedy we called "of spectacle", and the original word cannot be reconstructed for certain. Some commentators suggest reading it as an "episodic" or "simple" tragedy (Else 1963, p. 527). The suggestion to read it as *opseôs*, "a spectacular tragedy", "a tragedy of stage production", is supported by Lucas (1968, pp. 187-188). The former reading makes the passage problematic and incompatible with what Aristotle has said elsewhere. His use of the term "simple tragedy" (*Poetics* 11) is that of a super-category including all tragedies which are not "complex", that is, also those of sufferance and character. An "episodic" tragedy, on the other hand, is not a kind in itself but a deviation from the rules, as implied in *Poetics* 9, 1451b34-1452a1. However, Aristotle's examples for the fourth kind bring to mind the visual aspect, on which see below.

60. On the connection between emotions and rational conscience see Fortenbaugh 1975, pp. 9-12.

61. I discuss this issue at greater length (and in a different context) in Zoran 2009, pp. 468-75.

62. As Lucas remarks (1967, pp. 135-136), doubting the authenticity of that chapter is typical of 19<sup>th</sup>-century philology. Nowadays the most important scholar supporting that understanding is Else (1963, pp. 360-363), but it is not generally accepted. See Lucas, *ibid*.

63. On the relation of parable to metaphor see also Ricoeur 1996, p.337.

64. To complete the picture, note also the metaphorical uses of the term "episode" in extra-poetic matters. Aristotle uses it twice in the *Metaphysics*: in book 12 chapter 10 (1075b37-1076a2) he criticizes the philosophers who ascribe a different primal principle to each object, and he claims that they "make the substance of the universe a series of episodes". In book 14 chapter 3 (1090b19-20) he writes: "But the phenomena show that nature is not a series of episodes like a bad tragedy." (For more on this see Belfiore 1992, p. 122.) One can learn from this that for Aristotle the natural and simple use of the term seems to be that applied in the *Poetics* 9, where he discusses the "episodic" plot. This, of course, does not reduce the status of the other meanings. On the term "episode" from a terminological aspect see also Könken 1990.

65. In the original the term "choice" is even more elaborately explained: "...*proairesin hopoia tis proairitai ê pheugei*" = "choice—what one chooses or

avoids". And the expression "purely indifferent" is originally "*en hois ouk esti dêlon ê en hois mêd' holôs estin ho ti proaireitai e feugei ho legôn*" = "where it is not clear what the speaker chooses or avoids or where he does not choose at all".

66. "There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, excellence and good will. False statements and bad advice are due to one or more of the following three causes. Men either form a false opinion through want of good sense; or they form a true opinion, but because of their moral badness do not say what they really think; or, finally, they are both sensible and upright, but not well disposed to their hearers, and may fail in consequence to recommend what they know to be the best course. These are the only possible cases. It follows that anyone who is thought to have all these good qualities will inspire trust in his audience" (*Rhetoric* II, 1, 1378a7-15).

67. Jakobson 1960, pp. 138-166.

68. On the absence of lyrical poetry in the *Poetics* see especially Halliwell 1986, pp. 238-252; Finkelberg 1998, pp. 10-11, 196-197; Simpson 1988, pp. 276-284. See also Fishelov 1992, Glucker 1992, Finkelberg 2002.

69. For that matter, the conception of Lee Too should be mentioned (Too 1998, pp. 82-114). Too presents a systematic model of the *Poetics*, which is based on the distinction between various kinds of audience, especially those of tragedy and comedy. Too notes also the important role of the *Politics* and the *Rhetoric* in understanding these distinctions, and on this point, of course, he cannot be disputed. However, in a certain sense he seems to fuse these books instead of examining their mutual relationship: he does not really answer the question why the *Poetics* cannot be understood in itself—moreover, why it cannot be understood through its opposition to the *Rhetoric* and the *Politics*. It seems to me that even his analysis, which is brilliant in itself, implies that the *Poetics* is based on different assumptions, so it needs to be supported by the other books.

70. See also Halliwell (1986, p. 169): "The *Poetics* therefore rests on interlocked and mutually reinforcing views about poetic composition and the emotional psychology of the audience of poetry, and such a position must be carefully distinguished from truly rhetorical *poetics*, in which the audience is a major and *independently* determinant factor". On the face of it this may seem the opposite of what has been stated above, but actually it fully complies with it: in the *Poetics* the specific assumptions about the audience are an inseparable component of the structure; in the *Rhetoric* they are free and independent of the definition of the structure, since the specific assumptions about the audience are derived from the situation in which the speech is given and its specific subject.

71. So in the common Greek saying "My disaster (*pathêma*) was my lesson (*mathêma*)".

72. Solon, "Daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus", 51-52. Campbell 1967, pp. 29-32

73. For a detailed introduction to the history of the word *poiêtês* see Ford 2002, pp. 131-157.

74. On the history of poetic contests see Ford 2002, pp. 272-296.

75. On the place of the *Poetics* as related to traditional concepts of poetry see Finkelberg 1998, pp. 26-33.

76. Ford (2002, pp. 286-293) reads the *Poetics* as addressed to the reader and intended to develop his critical skills, rather than as a handbook for poets. He bases his view among other things on the equality between the two types of poet. However, Aristotle's standards for appreciating poetry refer mainly to the craftsmanship of composition; standards for appreciating an ecstatic poet may be those of authenticity, expression and the like, and needless to say Aristotle has no such standards. So whether the *Poetics* is addressed to the reader or to the poet, its dominant image of the poet is still that of the craftsman.

77. In parallel he speaks also of the existence of plot as the climax of the development of poetry in general, and he compares poets in their beginning stages to archaic poets, that is, he identifies in a way "ontogenetic" with "phylogenetic" development. This matter is discussed in detail in chapter 7 below.

78. On this passage see also chapter 1: 2, note 8 above.

79. Socrates is not subject to these restrictions and believes that one and the same person must be an expert in tragedy and comedy alike. Here he may perhaps be representing Plato himself as the author of the *Symposium*, a dialogue which indeed combines the elevation of tragedy with the earthy juiciness of comedy.

80. According to their definitions in the *Rhetoric* (II, 5, 1382a32; II, 8, 1385b2) both pity and fear are oriented to the future; future events usually resemble past events (*Rhetoric* II, 20, 1394a6), hence past events (historical stories) would be more effective in arousing pity and fear.

81. This connection is harder to explain in a few words; however, it has to do with the effects of metaphor especially (*Rhetoric* III, 2; 22; *Poetics* 21) and those of fables, which are regarded as invented examples (*Rhetoric* II, 20).

82. This use of imagination will be discussed in detail in section 2.4 below. For more on imagination in the *Poetics* see also Zoran 1998.

83. The later metamorphoses of the concept lose their spatial concreteness and preserve only the remnants of spatial connotation. So Ernest Robert Curtius' use of the term in his theory of style is indeed inferred from the rhetorical concept, but the thematic repertoire he refers to exists not in the writer's mind but in cultural history, and the aim of the concept is not creative but exegetic. The concept refers to a motif or pattern of motifs transmitted and preserved in tradition, so it is after all quite remote from the Aristotelian origin (see Curtius 1953, pp. 79-105). Also, from the viewpoint of everyday verbal use the English "topic" is a late descendant of the Greek *topos*, but no longer has anything to do with place. Likewise the term "commonplace", which is a literal translation of *koinos topos* or the Latin *locus communis*, lacks any spatial connotations. For more on the metamorphoses of *topos* see Baeumer 1973.

84. Cicero, *Orator* II, 358 "But these concrete forms, just like everything that falls under the faculty of sight, must be located somewhere; for a concrete object without locality is inconceivable. Consequently [---] the localities we use must be numerous, clearly visible, and at moderate intervals, while our images should be lively, sharp, and conspicuous, with the potential to present themselves quickly and to strike the mind" (May 2001, p. 220).

85. The topic discussed is mentioned in *Rhetoric* II, 23, 1400a29. The example Aristotle presents is that of Laodamas, who is accused for exploiting the regime of

the thirty tyrants to erase his name from the list of the enemies of democracy. His argument is: what motive could I have to pretend being a democrat in an era of tyranny?

**86.** For a detailed analysis of the concept of "invention" (Gr. *heurêma*, Lat. *inventio*) in ancient rhetoric and its connection with the theory of topics, see Heath, 1997.

**87.** On the way Aristotle describes the scene of recognition from *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the way it is combined in the plot see also Belfiore 1992, pp. 123-127.

**88.** Elsewhere in the same chapter Aristotle mentions again that same recognition, this time from another aspect. "Next after these are discoveries [recognitions] made directly by the poet; which are inartistic for that very reason; e.g. Orestes' discovery of himself in *Iphigenia*: whereas his sister reveals who she is by the letter, Orestes is made to say himself what the poet rather than the story demands" (*Poetics* 17, 1454b30-34). This is a little strange, since Aristotle is not accurate in relating the plot: Orestes does not cause his own recognition; on the contrary, he tries to conceal his real identity. But Aristotle's reading is still basically right: he says that there is something arbitrary in the way Orestes acts, yet his action is not one of initiating his recognition but the reverse, one of concealing his identity. Orestes motivates it with a very artificial argument: "So you will sacrifice only my body, not my name [---] I shall die without name and so I won't be mocked at" (*Iphigenia in Tauris* 502-504). This is not a very convincing motivation, but the poet needs it for his play. Had Orestes immediately introduced himself, the scene of recognition would have been fast and short, without the letter and the long dialogue around it. To make possible the dramatic scene of recognition and give it a certain volume, Euripides needs to suspend revelation of Orestes' identity. But this suspension is motivated in a way which may seem arbitrary and lacking probability.

**89.** Had such an action determined the overall structure of the plot, Aristotle would have probably said that the characterization was inconsistent. In such a case the character behaves according to two contradictory ethical principles without any change in the external circumstances. Aristotle rejects this kind of characterization when discussing the *êthos*, *Poetics* 15, 1454a26-34.

**90.** Sternberg's article is in Hebrew; the English summary (ibid. i) is not very detailed on this point but the distinction between structural and thematic approach to plot is quite clear: "the structural approach in its extreme form (Aristotle's *Poetics*) as against a correspondingly extreme thematic approach (the *De Casibus* tradition, as represented by Chaucer); the descriptive (non normative) nature of this division, due to the Law of Compensation operating in literature, and the location of other theories upon the structure-thematics continuum". In a later article Sternberg returns to this issue in a short remark, and the *structure-thematics* opposition is easily recognizable behind the distinction between "suspense" and "sheer horrified surprise": "A tragedy without a tragic act, and with a happy end, and ranked highest? In my terms, the Aristotelian calculus will perhaps grow intelligible: better suspense (about an impending crime within the family) that resolves itself at the last moment into a welcome surprise (due to opportune recognition between the parties) than sheer horrified surprise (upon the disclosure

of the unspeakable crime, committed in ignorance at the time)". (Sternberg 2003, p. 626).

91. These considerations are analyzed in more detail in Zoran 2009, chapter 12.

92. On this matter see my discussion in Zoran 1998.

93. See chapter 2: 2.5 and chapter 3: 1.3 above.

94. According to Aristotle, the most common way to analyze the audience's attitude is by differentiating various kinds of pleasure or response (among others see Halliwell 1986, pp. 63ff.; Rorty 1992; Too 1998, pp. 82-114). Despite the important contribution of these studies, they seem to be impelled by the wish to attain a special definition of tragic pleasure as distinct from other kinds of pleasure. It seems to me that dividing the response to **levels** instead of **kinds** can contribute more to the understanding of artistic pleasure, and among other things to its classification into various kinds as well.

95. In Bywater's translation (Barnes 1984): "gathering the meaning of things".

96. An interesting discussion of Aristotle's theory about the relationship between learning and artistic pleasure is that of Sifakis (1986). He extensively discusses the meaning of the verb *sullogizesthai* which Aristotle uses (p. 215), and he also attempts a model of his own for the inference used by the observer of the art work. The difference between his conception and that presented here is that he seems to be unsatisfied with the process of learning in itself, and tries also to determine a specific content learned from the work of art. Therefore he interprets chapter 4 of the *Poetics* in the spirit of chapter 9, which discusses explicitly the connection between poetry and philosophical principles. But according to my understanding, in chapter 4 Aristotle discusses learning and artistic pleasure in their simplest and most general forms, hence also the most trivial. He speaks there about the relationship between imitation and our earliest acts of learning (e.g., to talk). He says that pleasure from imitation is common to all people, not necessarily those philosophically educated. Only after presenting the basic layer of pleasure from imitation as such does he analyze the special pleasure of tragedy or poetry in general (about which he speaks in *Poetics* 9). Therefore I believe that in chapter 4 he speaks of the process of learning attained by matching the imitation with the imitated, and not of learning specific contents, which may be followed by the understanding of general rules.

97. There are even more complex kinds of pleasure: for instance, Aristotle describes the pleasure from metaphors as the pleasure from solving riddles (*Rhetoric* III, 11, 1412a6). Here too one is required to identify the similarity between two objects, and for that a certain philosophical knowledge is needed because similarity between objects is based on the concept of a common genus, not only on sensual appearance. In any case, all the kinds of pleasure described by Aristotle concern the process of the reader's deciphering the text.

98. In Greek: *hōs de haplōs diorisantes eipein* = "to say [it while] simply defining". "Simply", *haplōs*, can also mean "absolutely".

99. This double structure is clearly manifested in the brief outline of events sketched by Aristotle for the *Odyssey*: "and the end is his salvation and their death" (*Poetics* 17, 1455b23).

**100.** The above discussion is based on a specific understanding of the "double plot". Craik (1970) suggests an entirely different understanding, namely it refers to a "diptych" plot (with two consecutive stories), like Sophocles' *Ajax* or *The Trachinians*. Despite the interest of this understanding in itself, it does not comply with Aristotle's examples from the *Odyssey* and *Electra*.

**101.** On the connection between *philanthrôpia* and the Maenandric comedy see Lamberton 1983.

**102.** In *Poetics* 18 Aristotle uses the term *philanthrôpon* as parallel to tragic, saying that a simple action with reversals is "*tragikon gar touto kai philanthrôpon*" (*Poetics* 18, 1456a20).

**103.** For a further discussion of *philanthrôpia* see Lucas 1968, pp. 142, Moles 1984, in addition to Carey 1988 and Lamberton 1983, mentioned above.

**104.** See also: "[T]he third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated" (ibid., p. 3).

**105.** The source of this distinction is De Saussure's linguistic theory of 1916. See De Saussure 1983, Introduction chapter IV (pp. 18-20). See also above, interim discussion (following chapter 2).

**106.** It is easy to show that these concepts too derive from variations in structuralist thinking, and are rooted in De Saussure (1983, pp. 89-94). These distinctions, as we shall see later, are valid and applicable to Aristotelian thought, although as with the concept of "langue", the specific content they acquire in Aristotelian thought is different and unique.

**107.** On the archaic conception of the generic organization see Rotstein 2002.

**108.** He even refers to the etymology of "drama", saying that it points at the Doric origin of theater, since the verb *draô*, to act, is used mainly among the Dorians, while in Attic the common verb is *prattô*, from which "praxis" is derived.

**109.** "His work being for public performance [literally: *agônismata* = competitions], a good poet often stretches out the plot beyond its capabilities, and is thus obliged to twist the sequence of incident" (*Poetics* 9, 1451b39); "just as in drama the actors now count for more than the poets, so it is in the contests of public life, owing to the defects of our political institutions" (*Rhetoric* III, 1, 1403b33-35).

**110.** Too (1998, pp. 82-114) presents a systematic interpretation of the *Poetics* based, in fact, on the distinction between high and low alone.

**111.** On this see Kirk (with Raven), 1983: pp. 140-2, 302-305.

**112.** On Aristotle and evolutionary theories see also Watson 2012, pp. 28-29.

**113.** Cyclical historical conceptions can also be imagined, like those of Herodotus or Plato. But these are more mythic in character than Aristotle's rational biological conception. Yet as regards cyclicity, these conceptions have the same problem as that which we pointed out above, namely reducing a historical process to a cyclical structure of ontogenesis. This problem is more clearly recognizable in Aristotle only because of his biological terminology: it can be found elsewhere too.

**114.** The confusion between the history of the individual and of the class is far from resolved even after Darwin. Fishelov (1993) broadly discusses the biological analogies in the theory of genres, and points at a very similar problem in two prominent post-Darwinian theories from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which confuse the concept of evolution with that of life cycle (ibid., pp. 22-24). This confusion is discussed also in Fishelov 2002. A special discussion of Aristotle's theory of genres is to be found in Fishelov 1992.

**115.** On the historical growth of the art see also Halliwell (1986, pp. 48-49). Halliwell understands Aristotle's conception of the art of production as a kind of "imitation" of the activity of nature, which repeats in its own way the teleological pattern of nature, and which is in many senses also "natural" in itself. This view does not simplify the transition from natural entities to artificial products.

**116.** The problems arising here all derive from the teleological structure of Aristotle's thought. On the place of teleology in the conception of substance and coming into being see Witt, 1998 and Landau 1972, chapters 10, 11, 12.

**117.** On the place of lyric poetry in the *Poetics* see also chapter 4: 1 and note 68.

**118.** On this see Zoran 1998.

**119.** True, the reason for this equality is Plato's wish to prove that the imitator is inferior to both of them equally.

**120.** It may be interesting to compare this conception with that of Northrop Frye (1957, pp. 333-335). Frye bases his notion on the Aristotelian distinction between noble and ignoble, and orders it as a sequence of five stages according to a certain principle down all the historical eras (myth, romance, tragedy, comedy, irony). He thus makes Aristotle's synchronic distinction diachronic.

**121.** This may also be a possible answer to the question whither has lyrical poetry disappeared from the Aristotelian model. For Aristotle it may be a marginal existence of something that was in the past poetry per se. In other words, it may be regarded as an epigonic continuation of the hymns and invectives of past times.

**122.** See Jakobson and Bogatirev, 1966 [1929].

**123.** See Golden and Hardison 1968, p. 100.

**124.** The relation of tragedy to the Homeric epic was a common belief in antiquity. When Plato says that it is generally agreed that "nothing ever is, but all things are becoming" he includes the poets in this consensus: "and among poets the greatest masters in both kinds, Epicharmus in comedy, Homer in tragedy. When Homer speaks of 'Oceans, source of the gods, and mother of Thetys' he means that all things are the offspring of a flowing stream of change" (*Theaetetus* 152e). Homer is cited here as a tragic poet.

**125.** Aristotle says that there are speeches in which characters say things unfitting for them from the viewpoint of gender, for example, Melanippe's speech (*Poetics* 15, 1454a31) from a lost tragedy by Euripides. This may be clearer if we consider abstract philosophical speeches in extant tragedies, such as Medea's speech about the difficulty of being a woman (*Medea* 214-266), or Phaedra's speech, which raises the question why people act contrary to their conscience (*Hippolytus* 373-430). In these cases rhetoric dislodges the conventions of gender.

**126.** See also chapter 2: 2.2, note 31 above

**127.** This discussion is based on Keul's illuminating analysis of the history of the term and its pre-Platonic uses (1978, pp. 9-28).





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