Poetics

ARISTOTLE

384–322 BC

Poetics

Περὶ ποιητικῆς

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited



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Poetics · Aristotle (384–322 BC)

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CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Poetics 1

Poetry as imitation 1
The objects of imitation 2
The manner of imitation 3
The origins of poetry 4
Comedy and epic 6
The definition of tragedy 6
Wholeness and magnitude 9
Unity of plot 10
Poetry and history 11
Simple and complex plots 12
Reversal, recognition and suffering 13
The sections of a tragedy 14
The best tragic plot 14
Pity and fear from the plot 16
Character 17
Kinds of recognition 19
Composing a plot 20
Complication and resolution 21
Thought and diction 23
The parts of language 24
Kinds of words and metaphor 25
The excellence of diction 27
Unity in epic 29
Epic compared with tragedy 30
Problems and solutions 32
Is epic or tragedy better? 35

INTRODUCTION

The *Poetics* is the first work of literary theory in the Western tradition, and still the most influential. Written around 335 BC, it asks what poetry is, how its kinds differ, and what makes a tragedy work.

Aristotle's answers became the vocabulary of criticism: art as *mimesis*, imitation; plot as the soul of tragedy, with a beginning, middle and end; reversal and recognition; the tragic error, *hamartia*; and the famous, much-disputed *catharsis* of pity and fear.

What survives looks like lecture notes, compressed and in places damaged; a second book, on comedy, is lost. Where the Greek is uncertain, the translation says so.

Poetics

Aristotle analyzes poetry as imitation, and tragedy above all.

POETRY AS IMITATION

Aristotle sets out his subject and sorts the arts of poetry by the means they use to imitate.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
1447a	περὶ ποιητικῆς αὐτῆς τε καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν αὐτῆς, ἥν τινα δύναμιν ἕκαστον ἔχει, καὶ πῶς δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοὺς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἕξειν ἡ ποίησις, ἔτι δὲ ἐκ πόσων καὶ ποίων ἐστὶ μορίων, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστι μεθόδου, λέγωμεν ἀρξάμενοι κατὰ φύσιν πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων. ἐποποιία δὴ καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας ποίησις ἔτι δὲ κωμῳδία καὶ ἡ διθυραμβοποιητικὴ καὶ τῆς αὐλητικῆς ἡ πλείστη καὶ κιθαριστικῆς πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσιν οὖσαι μιμήσεις τὸ σύνολον· διαφέρουσι δὲ ἀλλήλων τρισίν, ἢ γὰρ τῷ ἐν ἑτέροις μιμεῖσθαι ἢ τῷ ἕτερα ἢ τῷ ἑτέρως καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον.	Let us discuss the art of poetry itself and its kinds, the particular capacity each of them has, how plots must be structured if the poetry is to turn out well, and further how many parts it consists of and of what sort, and likewise whatever else belongs to the same inquiry. Let us begin, as is natural, with first things first. Epic, then, and the composition of tragedy, as well as comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and most music for the pipe and the lyre, all happen to be, taken as a whole, imitations. But they differ from one another in three ways: they imitate either in different media, or different objects, or differently, that is, not in the same manner.[1]
	ὥσπερ γὰρ καὶ χρώμασι καὶ σχήμασι πολλὰ μιμοῦνταί τινες ἀπεικάζοντες (οἱ μὲν διὰ τέχνης οἱ δὲ διὰ συνηθείας), ἕτεροι δὲ διὰ τῆς φωνῆς, οὕτω κἀν ταῖς εἰρημέναις τέχναις ἅπασαι μὲν ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ, τούτοις δ' ἢ χωρὶς ἢ μεμιγμένοις· οἷον ἁρμονίᾳ μὲν καὶ ῥυθμῷ χρώμεναι μόνον ἥ τε αὐλητικὴ καὶ ἡ κιθαριστικὴ κἂν εἴ τινες ἕτεραι τυγχάνωσιν οὖσαι τοιαῦται τὴν δύναμιν, οἷον ἡ τῶν συρίγγων, αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ ῥυθμῷ [μιμοῦνται] χωρὶς ἁρμονίας ἡ τῶν ὀρχηστῶν (καὶ γὰρ οὗτοι διὰ τῶν σχηματιζομένων ῥυθμῶν μιμοῦνται καὶ ἤθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις)· ἡ δὲ [ἐποποιία] μόνον τοῖς λόγοις ψιλοῖς ⟨καὶ⟩ ἡ τοῖς μέτροις καὶ τούτοις 1447b εἴτε μιγνῦσα μετ' ἀλλήλων εἴθ' ἑνί τινι γένει χρωμένη τῶν μέτρων ἀνώνυμοι τυγχάνουσι μέχρι τοῦ νῦν· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν ἔχοιμεν ὀνομάσαι κοινὸν τοὺς Σώφρονος καὶ Ξενάρχου μίμους καὶ τοὺς Σωκρατικοὺς λόγους οὐδὲ εἴ τις διὰ τριμέτρων ἢ ἐλεγείων ἢ τῶν ἄλλων τινῶν τῶν τοιούτων ποιοῖτο τὴν μίμησιν.	For just as some people imitate many things by making likenesses of them with colors and shapes (some through craft, others through habit), and others do so with the voice, so too with the arts just mentioned: all of them produce their imitation in rhythm, language and melody, using these either separately or in combination. Music for the pipe and the lyre, for example, uses melody and rhythm alone, as would any other arts that happen to have a similar capacity, such as music for the panpipes. The art of dancers uses rhythm by itself, without melody (for dancers too imitate character, feelings and actions through rhythms given shape in movement). The art that uses bare language alone, and the one that uses meters, whether 1447b mixing them with one another or employing a single kind of meter, happen to have gone without a name to this day. For we would have no common name to give to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and to Socratic dialogues, nor to an imitation someone might produce in iambic trimeters or elegiacs or other such meters.[2]

1 "Imitation" translates *mimēsis,* Aristotle's central term, which can also be rendered "representation."

	GREEK	ENGLISH
1447b	πλὴν οἱ ἄνθρωποί γε συνάπτοντες τῷ μέτρῳ τὸ ποιεῖν ἐλεγειοποιοὺς τοὺς δὲ ἐποποιοὺς ὀνομάζουσιν, οὐχ ὡς κατὰ τὴν μίμησιν ποιητὰς ἀλλὰ κοινῇ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον προσαγορεύοντες· καὶ γὰρ ἂν ἰατρικὸν ἢ φυσικόν τι διὰ τῶν μέτρων ἐκφέρωσιν, οὕτω καλεῖν εἰώθασιν· οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὁμήρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον, διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιολόγον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητήν· ὁμοίως δὲ κἂν εἴ τις ἅπαντα τὰ μέτρα μιγνύων ποιοῖτο τὴν μίμησιν καθάπερ Χαιρήμων ἐποίησε Κένταυρον μικτὴν ῥαψῳδίαν ἐξ ἁπάντων τῶν μέτρων, καὶ ποιητὴν προσαγορευτέον. περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων διωρίσθω τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον.	People do, of course, attach "poet" to the meter, calling some "elegiac poets" and others "epic poets," and so they name them poets not for their imitation but indiscriminately, by the meter. Indeed, if someone sets out something on medicine or natural science in verse, they customarily call him that. Yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common except the meter, so it is right to call the one a poet and the other a natural scientist rather than a poet. Similarly, even if someone were to produce his imitation by mixing all the meters, as Chaeremon composed his *Centaur*, a mixed rhapsody in all the meters, he too must be called a poet. On these matters, then, let our distinctions be drawn in this way.[3]
	εἰσὶ δέ τινες αἳ πᾶσι χρῶνται τοῖς εἰρημένοις, λέγω δὲ οἷον ῥυθμῷ καὶ μέλει καὶ μέτρῳ, ὥσπερ ἥ τε τῶν διθυραμβικῶν ποίησις καὶ ἡ τῶν νόμων καὶ ἥ τε τραγῳδία καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία· διαφέρουσι δὲ ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἅμα πᾶσιν αἱ δὲ κατὰ μέρος. ταύτας μὲν οὖν λέγω τὰς διαφορὰς τῶν τεχνῶν ἐν οἷς ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν.	There are also some arts that use all the media mentioned, I mean rhythm, song and meter: for instance, the composition of dithyrambs and of nomes, and tragedy and comedy. They differ in that the first two use them all together, the last two in different parts. These, then, are what I call the differences among the arts in the media in which they produce their imitation.[4]

THE OBJECTS OF IMITATION

Poets imitate people better than us, worse, or like us; tragedy and comedy differ in this way.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
1448a	ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τούτους ἢ σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους εἶναι (τὰ γὰρ ἤθη σχεδὸν ἀεὶ τούτοις ἀκολουθεῖ μόνοις, κακίᾳ γὰρ καὶ ἀρετῇ τὰ ἤθη διαφέρουσι πάντες), ἤτοι βελτίονας ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἢ χείρονας ἢ καὶ τοιούτους, ὥσπερ οἱ γραφεῖς· Πολύγνωτος μὲν γὰρ κρείττους, Παύσων δὲ χείρους, Διονύσιος δὲ ὁμοίους εἴκαζεν. δῆλον δὲ ὅτι καὶ τῶν λεχθεισῶν ἑκάστη μιμήσεων ἔξει ταύτας τὰς διαφορὰς καὶ ἔσται ἑτέρα τῷ ἕτερα μιμεῖσθαι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον.	Since those who imitate imitate people in action, and these must be either admirable or inferior (for character nearly always follows these alone, since it is by vice and excellence that everyone differs in character), they imitate people either better than we are, or worse, or like us, just as painters do: Polygnotus depicted people as better, Pauson as worse, Dionysius as like us. It is clear that each of the imitations mentioned will also have these differences, and will be distinct by imitating distinct objects in this way.[5]
	καὶ γὰρ ἐν ὀρχήσει καὶ αὐλήσει καὶ κιθαρίσει ἔστι γενέσθαι ταύτας τὰς ἀνομοιότητας, καὶ [τὸ] περὶ τοὺς λόγους δὲ καὶ τὴν ψιλομετρίαν, οἷον Ὅμηρος μὲν βελτίους, Κλεοφῶν δὲ ὁμοίους, Ἡγήμων δὲ ὁ Θάσιος ⟨ὁ⟩ τὰς παρῳδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος καὶ Νικοχάρης ὁ τὴν	For these dissimilarities can arise in dancing, pipe-playing and lyre-playing, and also in prose and in verse without music. Homer, for example, depicts people as better, Cleophon as like us, and Hegemon of Thasos, the first to compose parodies,

2 Sophron of Syracuse (fifth century BC) wrote prose mimes, short dramatic sketches of everyday life; Xenarchus was his son.
3 Empedocles (fifth century BC), a philosopher from Acragas in Sicily, set out his theory of nature in epic hexameters.
4 The dithyramb was a choral song in honor of Dionysus; the nome, a solo song, usually in honor of Apollo.
5 Polygnotus of Thasos was a celebrated painter of the mid-fifth century BC; little is known of Pauson and Dionysius.

GREEK

Δειλιάδα χείρους· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τοὺς διθυράμβους καὶ περὶ τοὺς νόμους, ὥσπερ † γᾶς † Κύκλωπας Τιμόθεος καὶ Φιλόξενος μιμήσαιτο ἄν τις. ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ διαφορᾷ καὶ ἡ τραγῳδία πρὸς τὴν κωμῳδίαν διέστηκεν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ χείρους ἡ δὲ βελτίους μιμεῖσθαι βούλεται τῶν νῦν.

ENGLISH

and Nicochares, author of the *Deiliad*, as worse. The same holds for dithyrambs and nomes: one might imitate as Timotheus and Philoxenus did their Cyclopes. And this very difference also sets tragedy apart from comedy: comedy aims to imitate people worse than those of today, tragedy people better.[6]

THE MANNER OF IMITATION

Poets imitate by narrating or by presenting people in action, and Dorians claim to have invented drama.

GREEK

ἔτι δὲ τούτων τρίτη διαφορὰ τὸ ὡς ἕκαστα τούτων μιμήσαιτο ἄν τις. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμεῖσθαι ἔστιν ὁτὲ μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἢ ἕτερόν τι γιγνόμενον ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ ἢ ὡς τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντας ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας † τοὺς μιμουμένους †. ἐν τρισὶ δὴ ταύταις διαφοραῖς ἡ μίμησίς ἐστιν, ὡς εἴπομεν κατ' ἀρχάς, ἐν οἷς τε ⟨καὶ ἃ⟩ καὶ ὥς. ὥστε τῇ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἂν εἴη μιμητὴς Ὁμήρῳ Σοφοκλῆς, μιμοῦνται γὰρ ἄμφω σπουδαίους, τῇ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἄμφω. ὅθεν καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαί τινες αὐτά φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρῶντας.

διὸ καὶ ἀντιποιοῦνται τῆς τε τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς κωμῳδίας οἱ Δωριεῖς (τῆς μὲν γὰρ κωμῳδίας οἱ Μεγαρεῖς οἵ τε ἐνταῦθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης καὶ οἱ ἐκ Σικελίας, ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἦν Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ ποιητὴς πολλῷ πρότερος ὢν Χιωνίδου καὶ Μάγνητος· καὶ τῆς τραγῳδίας ἔνιοι τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ) ποιούμενοι τὰ ὀνόματα σημεῖον· αὐτοὶ μὲν γὰρ κώμας τὰς περιοικίδας καλεῖν φασιν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ δήμους, ὡς κωμῳδοὺς οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ κωμάζειν λεχθέντας ἀλλὰ τῇ κατὰ κώμας πλάνῃ ἀτιμαζομένους ἐκ τοῦ ἄστεως· [1448b] καὶ τὸ ποιεῖν αὐτοὶ μὲν δρᾶν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ πράττειν προσαγορεύειν. περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν διαφορῶν καὶ πόσαι καὶ τίνες τῆς μιμήσεως εἰρήσθω ταῦτα.

ENGLISH

There is also a third difference among these: the manner in which one might imitate each of these objects. For it is possible to imitate the same objects in the same media sometimes by narrating—either becoming someone else, as Homer does, or remaining oneself without change—or with all the imitators acting and doing things. Imitation, then, involves these three differences, as we said at the start: the media, the objects and the manner. So in one respect Sophocles would be the same kind of imitator as Homer, since both imitate admirable people, and in another the same as Aristophanes, since both imitate people acting and doing. That, some say, is why these works are called "dramas": because they imitate people doing (*drōntes*).

This is also why the Dorians lay claim to both tragedy and comedy—comedy by the Megarians, both those here, on the grounds that it arose in the time of their democracy, and those in Sicily, since the poet Epicharmus came from there, much earlier than Chionides and Magnes; and tragedy by some of those in the Peloponnese. They cite the words as evidence. They say that they call their outlying villages *kōmai*, whereas Athenians call them *dēmoi*, on the view that comic performers (*kōmōidoi*) got their name not from reveling (*kōmazein*) but from wandering from village to village when they were scorned in the city; [1448b] and that for "doing" they themselves say *dran*, whereas Athenians say *prattein*. So much, then, for the differences of imitation: how many there are and what they are.[7]

6 Timotheus and Philoxenus, dithyrambic poets of around 400 BC, each composed a *Cyclops*; a word just before their names is corrupt in the Greek.

7 Megara, a Dorian city bordering Attica, founded Megara Hyblaea in Sicily; Epicharmus, an early comic poet, worked in Sicily around 500 BC.

THE ORIGINS OF POETRY

Poetry grows from the natural human delight in imitation, then splits into serious and comic kinds.

GREEK	ENGLISH
1448b ἐοίκασι δὲ γεννῆσαι μὲν ὅλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτίαι δύο τινὲς καὶ αὗται φυσικαί. τό τε γὰρ μιμεῖσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παίδων ἐστὶ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας. σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων· ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὁρῶμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφὰς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αἴτιον δὲ καὶ τούτου, ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἥδιστον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ.	Two causes, it seems, gave rise to the art of poetry as a whole, and both are natural. Imitating is innate in human beings from childhood—they differ from the other animals in this, that they are the most imitative and do their first learning through imitation—and so is everyone's delight in imitations. Evidence of this is what happens in practice: things we find painful to see in themselves we enjoy contemplating in the most precisely rendered images, such as the forms of the lowliest animals and of corpses. The reason for this, too, is that learning is most pleasant not only to philosophers but to everyone else likewise, though their share in it is brief.
διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὁρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος· ἐπεὶ ἐὰν μὴ τύχῃ προεωρακώς, οὐχ ᾗ μίμημα ποιήσει τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν ἢ τὴν χροιὰν ἢ διὰ τοιαύτην τινὰ ἄλλην αἰτίαν. κατὰ φύσιν δὲ ὄντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μιμεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ἁρμονίας καὶ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ (τὰ γὰρ μέτρα ὅτι μόρια τῶν ῥυθμῶν ἐστι φανερὸν) ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἱ πεφυκότες πρὸς αὐτὰ μάλιστα κατὰ μικρὸν προάγοντες ἐγέννησαν τὴν ποίησιν ἐκ τῶν αὐτοσχεδιασμάτων. διεσπάσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἤθη ἡ ποίησις· οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων, πρῶτον ψόγους ποιοῦντες, ὥσπερ ἕτεροι ὕμνους καὶ ἐγκώμια.	That is why people enjoy seeing images: as they contemplate them, they find themselves learning and working out what each thing is, for example that this is that person. For if one happens not to have seen the thing before, the image will give pleasure not as an imitation but through its workmanship, its color or some other such cause. Since imitation is natural to us, as are melody and rhythm (it is obvious that meters are sections of rhythms), those who from the beginning were most naturally gifted for these advanced little by little and gave birth to poetry out of their improvisations. Poetry then split according to the poets' own characters: the more dignified imitated fine actions and the actions of such people, the more ordinary those of inferior people, at first composing invectives, just as the others composed hymns and encomia.
τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ὁμήρου οὐδενὸς ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκὸς δὲ εἶναι πολλούς, ἀπὸ δὲ Ὁμήρου ἀρξαμένοις ἔστιν, οἷον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἁρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον—διὸ καὶ ἰαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἰάμβιζον ἀλλήλους. καὶ ἐγένοντο τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ μὲν ἡρωικῶν οἱ δὲ ἰάμβων ποιηταί. ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητὴς Ὅμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εὖ ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν), οὕτως καὶ τὸ τῆς κωμῳδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας· ὁ γὰρ Μαργίτης ἀνάλογον ἔχει, ὥσπερ Ἰλιὰς [1449a] καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγῳδίας, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος πρὸς τὰς κωμῳδίας.	Now we can name no such poem by anyone before Homer, though there were probably many; but starting from Homer we can, for example his *Margites* and the like. In these the iambic meter also came in, as was fitting—which is why it is now called "iambic": because it was in this meter that people lampooned (*iambizein*) one another. And of the ancient poets some became poets of heroic verse, others of iambics. Just as Homer was the supreme poet of serious subjects (he alone composed not only well but also dramatic imitations), so too he was the first to sketch the form of comedy, dramatizing not invective but the laughable.

GREEK	ENGLISH
	For the *Margites* stands in the same relation to comedies as the *Iliad* [1449a] and the *Odyssey* do to tragedies.[8]
1449a παραφανείσης δὲ τῆς τραγῳδίας καὶ κωμῳδίας οἱ ἐφ' ἑκατέραν τὴν ποίησιν ὁρμῶντες κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν οἱ μὲν ἀντὶ τῶν ἰάμβων κωμῳδοποιοὶ ἐγένοντο, οἱ δὲ ἀντὶ τῶν ἐπῶν τραγῳδοδιδάσκαλοι, διὰ τὸ μείζω καὶ ἐντιμότερα τὰ σχήματα εἶναι ταῦτα ἐκείνων. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐπισκοπεῖν εἰ ἄρα ἔχει ἤδη ἡ τραγῳδία τοῖς εἴδεσιν ἱκανῶς ἢ οὔ, αὐτό τε καθ' αὑτὸ κρῖναι καὶ πρὸς τὰ θέατρα, ἄλλος λόγος. γενομένη δ' οὖν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτοσχεδιαστικῆς — καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία, καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον, ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν τὰ φαλλικὰ ἃ ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν πόλεων διαμένει νομιζόμενα — κατὰ μικρὸν ηὐξήθη προαγόντων ὅσον ἐγίγνετο φανερὸν αὐτῆς· καὶ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς μεταβαλοῦσα ἡ τραγῳδία ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ ἔσχε τὴν αὑτῆς φύσιν.	When tragedy and comedy had appeared, those drawn to either kind of poetry by their own nature became, in the one case, writers of comedy instead of iambics, in the other, producers of tragedy instead of epic, because these forms were greater and more esteemed than those. Whether tragedy is by now sufficiently developed in its forms or not, judged both in itself and in relation to audiences, is another question. At any rate, it arose from an improvised beginning—both tragedy and comedy did, tragedy from those who led off the dithyramb, comedy from those who led the phallic songs that remain customary in many cities even now—and grew little by little as people developed whatever of it became apparent. After undergoing many changes, tragedy stopped changing once it had attained its own nature.[9]
καὶ τό τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε καὶ τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἠλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν· τρεῖς δὲ καὶ σκηνογραφίαν Σοφοκλῆς. ἔτι δὲ τὸ μέγεθος· ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὀψὲ ἀπεσεμνύνθη, τό τε μέτρον ἐκ τετραμέτρου ἰαμβεῖον ἐγένετο. τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τετραμέτρῳ ἐχρῶντο διὰ τὸ σατυρικὴν καὶ ὀρχηστικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν ποίησιν, λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὗρε· μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἰαμβεῖόν ἐστιν· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, πλεῖστα γὰρ ἰαμβεῖα λέγομεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἑξάμετρα δὲ ὀλιγάκις καὶ ἐκβαίνοντες τῆς λεκτικῆς ἁρμονίας. ἔτι δὲ ἐπεισοδίων πλήθη.	Aeschylus was the first to raise the number of actors from one to two; he reduced the chorus's part and gave speech the leading role. Sophocles introduced three actors and scene-painting. Then there was magnitude: from slight plots and laughable diction, because it developed out of the satyric, tragedy only late acquired dignity, and its meter changed from tetrameter to iambic. At first they used the tetrameter because the poetry was satyric and more suited to dancing; but once speech came in, nature itself found the appropriate meter, for the iambic is the most speakable of meters. Evidence of this: in conversation with one another we speak iambics very often, but hexameters rarely, and only when departing from the cadence of speech. Then there was the number of episodes.[10]
καὶ τὰ ἄλλ' ὡς ἔκαστα κοσμηθῆναι λέγεται ἔστω ἡμῖν εἰρημένα· πολὺ γὰρ ἂν ἴσως ἔργον εἴη διεξιέναι καθ' ἕκαστον.	As for the other embellishments, and how each is said to have been added, let us take them as stated; for it would probably be a large task to go through them one by one.

8 The *Margites*, a comic poem about a fool, was ascribed to Homer in antiquity; only fragments survive.
9 Phallic songs were sung in processions for Dionysus in which a large model phallus was carried.
10 "Satyric" refers to satyr plays, boisterous dramas with a chorus of satyrs, the half-animal followers of Dionysus.

COMEDY AND EPIC

Comedy imitates the laughable; epic shares tragedy's seriousness but differs in meter, narration and length.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία ἐστὶν ὥσπερ εἴπομεν μίμησις φαυλοτέρων μέν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστι τὸ γελοῖον μόριον. τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἁμάρτημά τι καὶ αἶσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθὺς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὀδύνης. αἱ μὲν οὖν τῆς τραγῳδίας μεταβάσεις καὶ δι' ὧν ἐγένοντο οὐ λελήθασιν, ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία διὰ τὸ μὴ 1449b σπουδάζεσθαι ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλαθεν· καὶ γὰρ χορὸν κωμῳδῶν ὀψέ ποτε ὁ ἄρχων ἔδωκεν, ἀλλ' ἐθελονταὶ ἦσαν. ἤδη δὲ σχήματά τινα αὐτῆς ἐχούσης οἱ λεγόμενοι αὐτῆς ποιηταὶ μνημονεύονται. τίς δὲ πρόσωπα ἀπέδωκεν ἢ προλόγους ἢ πλήθη ὑποκριτῶν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἠγνόηται.	Comedy is, as we said, an imitation of people who are worse—not, however, with respect to every kind of vice; rather, the laughable is one part of the ugly. For the laughable is a kind of mistake and ugliness that causes no pain and no destruction; the comic mask is an obvious example, something ugly and distorted without pain. Now the stages through which tragedy passed, and those responsible for them, are well known; but comedy, because it was not 1449b taken seriously at first, went unnoticed. It was only late that the archon granted a chorus of comic performers; before that they were volunteers. Its so-called poets are remembered only from when it already had certain forms. Who introduced masks, or prologues, or the number of actors, and all such things, is unknown.[11]
1449b	τὸ δὲ μύθους ποιεῖν [Ἐπίχαρμος καὶ Φόρμις] τὸ μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ Σικελίας ἦλθε, τῶν δὲ Ἀθήνησιν Κράτης πρῶτος ἦρξεν ἀφέμενος τῆς ἰαμβικῆς ἰδέας καθόλου ποιεῖν λόγους καὶ μύθους. ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐποποιία τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ μέχρι μὲν τοῦ μετὰ μέτρου λόγῳ μίμησις εἶναι σπουδαίων ἠκολούθησεν· τῷ δὲ τὸ μέτρον ἁπλοῦν ἔχειν καὶ ἀπαγγελίαν εἶναι, ταύτῃ διαφέρουσιν· ἔτι δὲ τῷ μήκει· ἡ μὲν ὅτι μάλιστα πειρᾶται ὑπὸ μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου εἶναι ἢ μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττειν, ἡ δὲ ἐποποιία ἀόριστος τῷ χρόνῳ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρει, καίτοι τὸ πρῶτον ὁμοίως ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις τοῦτο ἐποίουν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσιν.	Composing plots (Epicharmus and Phormis) originally came from Sicily; among the Athenians, Crates was the first to abandon the iambic form and compose stories and plots of general scope. Epic kept pace with tragedy to the extent of being an imitation of admirable people in verse; but they differ in that epic has a single meter and is narration. They differ also in length: tragedy tries as far as possible to keep within a single revolution of the sun, or to exceed it only a little, whereas epic is unlimited in time, and differs in this respect—although at first poets did the same in tragedies as in epics.[12]
	μέρη δ' ἐστὶ τὰ μὲν ταὐτά, τὰ δὲ ἴδια τῆς τραγῳδίας· διόπερ ὅστις περὶ τραγῳδίας οἶδε σπουδαίας καὶ φαύλης, οἶδε καὶ περὶ ἐπῶν· ἃ μὲν γὰρ ἐποποιία ἔχει, ὑπάρχει τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ, ἃ δὲ αὐτῇ, οὐ πάντα ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ.	As for parts, some are the same, others peculiar to tragedy. That is why anyone who knows about good and bad tragedy also knows about epic: what epic has, tragedy has too, but not everything tragedy has is found in epic.

THE DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

Tragedy is defined, and its six parts are named, with plot the most important.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς ἐν ἑξαμέτροις μιμητικῆς καὶ περὶ κωμῳδίας ὕστερον ἐροῦμεν· περὶ δὲ τραγῳδίας λέγωμεν	We shall speak later about imitation in hexameters and about comedy. Let us now discuss tragedy,

11 The archon, a leading Athenian magistrate, assigned choruses, with wealthy sponsors to fund them, for the dramatic festivals.
12 Crates was an Athenian comic poet of the mid-fifth century BC.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἀναλαβόντες αὐτῆς ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων τὸν γινόμενον ὅρον τῆς οὐσίας. ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. λέγω δὲ ἡδυσμένον μὲν λόγον τὸν ἔχοντα ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἁρμονίαν [καὶ μέλος], τὸ δὲ χωρὶς τοῖς εἴδεσι τὸ διὰ μέτρων ἔνια μόνον περαίνεσθαι καὶ πάλιν ἕτερα διὰ μέλους. ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττοντες ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τι μόριον τραγῳδίας ὁ τῆς ὄψεως κόσμος· εἶτα μελοποιία καὶ λέξις, ἐν τούτοις γὰρ ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν.	picking up the definition of its essence that emerges from what has been said. Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious and complete and has magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its kinds used separately in the different parts; performed by people acting, not through narration; accomplishing through pity and fear the catharsis of such emotions. By "language made pleasurable" I mean language that has rhythm and melody and song; by "its kinds separately" I mean that some parts are accomplished through verse alone, and others in turn through song. Since it is people acting who produce the imitation, the first part of tragedy must necessarily be the ordering of the spectacle; then song and diction, for these are the media in which they produce the imitation.[13]
	λέγω δὲ λέξιν μὲν αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν μέτρων σύνθεσιν, μελοποιίαν δὲ ὃ τὴν δύναμιν φανερὰν ἔχει πᾶσαν. ἐπεὶ δὲ πράξεώς ἐστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πραττόντων, οὓς ἀνάγκη ποιούς τινας εἶναι κατά τε τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν (διὰ γὰρ τούτων καὶ τὰς 1450a πράξεις εἶναί φαμεν ποιάς τινας, [πέφυκεν αἴτια δύο τῶν πράξεων εἶναι, διάνοια καὶ ἦθος] καὶ κατὰ ταύτας καὶ τυγχάνουσι καὶ ἀποτυγχάνουσι πάντες), ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις, λέγω γὰρ μῦθον τοῦτον τὴν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων, τὰ δὲ ἤθη, καθ' ὃ ποιούς τινας εἶναί φαμεν τοὺς πράττοντας, διάνοιαν δέ, ἐν ὅσοις λέγοντες ἀποδεικνύασίν τι ἢ καὶ ἀποφαίνονται γνώμην— ἀνάγκη οὖν πάσης τῆς τραγῳδίας μέρη εἶναι ἕξ, καθ' ὃ ποιά τις ἐστὶν ἡ τραγῳδία· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ μῦθος καὶ ἤθη καὶ λέξις καὶ διάνοια καὶ ὄψις καὶ μελοποιία.	By diction I mean the actual composition of the verses; by song, that whose force is entirely obvious. Since tragedy is an imitation of an action, and the action is performed by certain agents, who must be of a certain kind in character and thought (for it is through these that we say actions 1450a too are of a certain kind—thought and character are by nature the two causes of actions—and it is by these that everyone succeeds or fails), the plot is the imitation of the action—by plot I mean here the arrangement of the incidents—while character is that in virtue of which we say the agents are of a certain kind, and thought is present wherever in speaking they demonstrate something or declare an opinion. Necessarily, then, every tragedy has six parts, which determine what kind of tragedy it is: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song.
1450a	οἷς μὲν γὰρ μιμοῦνται, δύο μέρη ἐστίν, ὡς δὲ μιμοῦνται, ἕν, ἃ δὲ μιμοῦνται, τρία, καὶ παρὰ ταῦτα οὐδέν. τούτοις μὲν οὖν † οὐκ ὀλίγοι αὐτῶν † ὡς εἰπεῖν κέχρηνται τοῖς εἴδεσιν· καὶ γὰρ † ὄψις ἔχει πᾶν † καὶ ἦθος καὶ μῦθον καὶ λέξιν καὶ μέλος καὶ διάνοιαν ὡσαύτως. μέγιστον δὲ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις.	Two of these parts are the media in which they imitate, one the manner, and three the objects; and there is nothing beyond these. Not a few poets, so to speak, have made use of these forms; for every play has spectacle, character, plot, diction, song and thought alike. But the most important of them is the structure of the incidents.[14]
	ἡ γὰρ τραγῳδία μίμησίς ἐστιν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ πράξεων καὶ βίου [καὶ εὐδαιμονία καὶ κακοδαιμονία ἐν πράξει ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ τέλος πρᾶξίς τις ἐστίν, οὐ ποιότης·	For tragedy is an imitation not of human beings but of actions and of life. Happiness and unhappiness lie in action, and the end is a kind of action,

13 "Catharsis" (Greek *katharsis*) can mean "purgation" or "purification" of pity and fear; what Aristotle means by it here is much disputed.

14 The Greek of this sentence is corrupt in two places; "not a few poets" and "every play" are editors' likely sense.

GREEK

εἰσὶν δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὰ ἤθη ποιοί τινες, κατὰ δὲ τὰς πράξεις εὐδαίμονες ἢ τοὐναντίον]· οὔκουν ὅπως τὰ ἤθη μιμήσωνται πράττουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἤθη συμπεριλαμβάνουσιν διὰ τὰς πράξεις· ὥστε τὰ πράγματα καὶ ὁ μῦθος τέλος τῆς τραγῳδίας, τὸ δὲ τέλος μέγιστον ἁπάντων. ἔτι ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγῳδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἠθῶν γένοιτ' ἄν· αἱ γὰρ τῶν νέων τῶν πλείστων ἀήθεις τραγῳδίαι εἰσίν, καὶ ὅλως ποιηταὶ πολλοὶ τοιοῦτοι, οἷον καὶ τῶν γραφέων Ζεῦξις πρὸς Πολύγνωτον πέπονθεν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πολύγνωτος ἀγαθὸς ἠθογράφος, ἡ δὲ Ζεύξιδος γραφὴ οὐδὲν ἔχει ἦθος.

ἔτι ἐάν τις ἐφεξῆς θῇ ῥήσεις ἠθικὰς καὶ λέξει καὶ διανοίᾳ εὖ πεποιημένας, οὐ ποιήσει ὃ ἦν τῆς τραγῳδίας ἔργον, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἡ καταδεεστέροις τούτοις κεχρημένη τραγῳδία, ἔχουσα δὲ μῦθον καὶ σύστασιν πραγμάτων. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις τὰ μέγιστα οἷς ψυχαγωγεῖ ἡ τραγῳδία τοῦ μύθου μέρη ἐστίν, αἵ τε περιπέτειαι καὶ ἀναγνωρίσεις. ἔτι σημεῖον ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἐγχειροῦντες ποιεῖν πρότερον δύνανται τῇ λέξει καὶ τοῖς ἤθεσιν ἀκριβοῦν ἢ τὰ πράγματα συνίστασθαι, οἷον καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι ποιηταὶ σχεδὸν ἅπαντες. ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἤθη (παραπλήσιον γάρ ἐστιν καὶ [1450b] ἐπὶ τῆς γραφικῆς· εἰ γάρ τις ἐναλείψειε τοῖς καλλίστοις φαρμάκοις χύδην, οὐκ ἂν ὁμοίως εὐφράνειεν καὶ λευκογραφήσας εἰκόνα)· ἔστιν τε μίμησις πράξεως καὶ διὰ ταύτην μάλιστα τῶν πραττόντων.

[1450b] τρίτον δὲ ἡ διάνοια· τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν τὸ λέγειν δύνασθαι τὰ ἐνόντα καὶ τὰ ἁρμόττοντα, ὅπερ ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων τῆς πολιτικῆς καὶ ῥητορικῆς ἔργον ἐστίν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαῖοι πολιτικῶς ἐποίουν λέγοντας, οἱ δὲ νῦν ῥητορικῶς. ἔστιν δὲ ἦθος μὲν τὸ τοιοῦτον ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν, ὁποία τις [ἐν οἷς οὐκ ἔστι δῆλον ἢ προαιρεῖται ἢ φεύγει] διόπερ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἦθος τῶν λόγων ἐν οἷς μηδ' ὅλως ἔστιν ὅ τι προαιρεῖται ἢ φεύγει ὁ λέγων— διάνοια δὲ ἐν οἷς ἀποδεικνύουσί τι ὡς ἔστιν ἢ ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ καθόλου τι ἀποφαίνονται. τέταρτον δὲ † τῶν μὲν λόγων † ἡ λέξις· λέγω δέ, ὥσπερ πρότερον εἴρηται, λέξιν εἶναι τὴν διὰ τῆς ὀνομασίας ἑρμηνείαν, ὃ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμμέτρων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων ἔχει τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν.

ENGLISH

not a quality; people are of a certain kind according to their characters, but happy or the opposite according to their actions. So the agents do not act in order to imitate character; rather, they take on character for the sake of the actions. Thus the incidents and the plot are the end of tragedy, and the end is the most important thing of all. Further, without action there could not be a tragedy, but without character there could. The tragedies of most recent poets lack character, and in general many poets are like that—as among painters Zeuxis is in comparison with Polygnotus: Polygnotus is a good painter of character, whereas Zeuxis's painting has no character at all.[15]

Again, if someone strings together speeches full of character and well made in diction and thought, he will not achieve what we said was the function of tragedy; a tragedy that uses these less adequately but has a plot and a structure of incidents will do so much better. Besides, the most important means by which tragedy sways the soul are parts of the plot: reversals and recognitions. A further sign: those who try their hand at composing can get diction and character exactly right before they can structure the incidents, as was true of nearly all the early poets. The plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of tragedy; character comes second. (It is much the same [1450b] in painting: if someone smeared on the finest pigments at random, he would not give as much delight as by drawing an image in outline.) Tragedy is an imitation of action, and chiefly for the sake of the action an imitation of the agents.

Third is thought: this is the ability to say what is pertinent and fitting, which in speeches is the task of politics and rhetoric; for the older poets made their characters speak like statesmen, present-day poets make them speak like rhetoricians. Character is what reveals decision, of what sort it is; hence speeches in which there is nothing at all that the speaker chooses or avoids have no character. Thought is found where people demonstrate that something is or is not, or make some general declaration. Fourth among the verbal parts is diction. I mean, as was said before, that diction is expression through words, which has the same force in verse and in prose.[16]

15 Zeuxis of Heraclea was a famous painter of the late fifth century BC.

GREEK	ENGLISH
τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἡ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων, ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μέν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς· ἡ γὰρ τῆς τραγῳδίας δύναμις καὶ ἄνευ ἀγῶνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἔστιν, ἔτι δὲ κυριωτέρα περὶ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν τῶν ὄψεων ἡ τοῦ σκευοποιοῦ τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἐστιν.	Of the remaining parts, song is the most important of the sweetenings. Spectacle does sway the soul, but it is the least a matter of art and the least proper to poetry; for the power of tragedy exists even without a performance and actors, and besides, for producing spectacle the art of the costume-maker is more decisive than that of the poets.

WHOLENESS AND MAGNITUDE

A plot must be a whole, with beginning, middle and end, and a length that can be grasped.

GREEK	ENGLISH
διωρισμένων δὲ τούτων, λέγωμεν μετὰ ταῦτα ποίαν τινὰ δεῖ τὴν σύστασιν εἶναι τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐπειδὴ τοῦτο καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μέγιστον τῆς τραγῳδίας ἐστίν. κεῖται δὴ ἡμῖν τὴν τραγῳδίαν τελείας καὶ ὅλης πράξεως εἶναι μίμησιν ἐχούσης τι μέγεθος· ἔστιν γὰρ ὅλον καὶ μηδὲν ἔχον μέγεθος. ὅλον δέ ἐστιν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν. ἀρχὴ δέ ἐστιν ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μὴ ἐξ ἀνάγκης μετ' ἄλλο ἐστίν, μετ' ἐκεῖνο δ' ἕτερον πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ γίνεσθαι· τελευτὴ δὲ τοὐναντίον ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μετ' ἄλλο πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἄλλο οὐδέν· μέσον δὲ ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ μετ' ἄλλο καὶ μετ' ἐκεῖνο ἕτερον.	With these distinctions made, let us next say what the structure of the incidents should be like, since this is both the first and the most important thing in tragedy. We have laid down that tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete and whole and has some magnitude—for a thing can be whole and have no magnitude. A whole is what has a beginning, a middle and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself necessarily follow anything else, but after which something else naturally is or comes to be. An end, conversely, is that which itself naturally follows something else, either necessarily or for the most part, but has nothing else after it. A middle is that which both follows something else and has something else after it.
δεῖ ἄρα τοὺς συνεστῶτας εὖ μύθους μήθ' ὁπόθεν ἔτυχεν ἄρχεσθαι μήθ' ὅπου ἔτυχε τελευτᾶν, ἀλλὰ κεχρῆσθαι ταῖς εἰρημέναις ἰδέαις. ἔτι δ' ἐπεὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ζῷον καὶ ἅπαν πρᾶγμα ὃ συνέστηκεν ἐκ τινῶν οὐ μόνον ταῦτα τεταγμένα δεῖ ἔχειν ἀλλὰ καὶ μέγεθος ὑπάρχειν μὴ τὸ τυχόν· τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐν μεγέθει καὶ τάξει ἐστίν, διὸ οὔτε πάμμικρον ἄν τι γένοιτο καλὸν ζῷον (συγχεῖται γὰρ ἡ θεωρία ἐγγὺς τοῦ ἀναισθήτου χρόνου γινομένη) οὔτε παμμέγεθες (οὐ γὰρ [1451a] ἅμα ἡ θεωρία γίνεται ἀλλ' οἴχεται τοῖς θεωροῦσι τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῆς θεωρίας) οἷον εἰ μυρίων σταδίων εἴη ζῷον· ὥστε δεῖ καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ζώων ἔχειν μὲν μέγεθος, τοῦτο δὲ εὐσύνοπτον εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μύθων ἔχειν μὲν μῆκος, τοῦτο δὲ εὐμνημόνευτον εἶναι.	Well-structured plots, then, must neither begin nor end at some random point, but must follow the patterns just described. Further, a beautiful thing, whether an animal or anything else composed of parts, must not only have these parts in order but also have a magnitude that is not arbitrary; for beauty lies in magnitude and order. So neither could a very tiny animal be beautiful (our view of it is blurred, taking place in an almost imperceptible time), nor a vast one (our view [1451a] does not take it in all at once, and its unity and wholeness escape the viewers), as if there were an animal ten thousand stades long. So just as bodies and animals must have magnitude, but one that can easily be taken in at a glance, so plots must have length, but one that can easily be held in memory.[17]
[1451a] τοῦ δὲ μήκους ὅρος ⟨ὁ⟩ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἐστίν· εἰ γὰρ ἔδει ἑκατὸν	The limit of length set by the competitions and by what an audience can perceive is not a matter for

GREEK	ENGLISH
τραγῳδίας ἀγωνίζεσθαι, πρὸς κλεψύδρας ἂν ἠγωνίζοντο, † ὥσπερ ποτὲ καὶ ἄλλοτέ φασιν †. ὁ δὲ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν τοῦ πράγματος ὅρος, ἀεὶ μὲν ὁ μείζων μέχρι τοῦ σύνδηλος εἶναι καλλίων ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος· ὡς δὲ ἁπλῶς διορίσαντας εἰπεῖν, ἐν ὅσῳ μεγέθει κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἐφεξῆς γιγνομένων συμβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας ἢ ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταβάλλειν, ἱκανὸς ὅρος ἐστὶν τοῦ μεγέθους.	the art. For if a hundred tragedies had to compete, they would be performed against water clocks, as they say happened at one time or another. But as for the limit set by the very nature of the thing, the longer the plot, provided it remains clear as a whole, the finer it is in magnitude. To define it simply: a sufficient limit of magnitude is whatever length allows a change from misfortune to good fortune, or from good fortune to misfortune, to come about through a sequence of events that follow one another in accordance with probability or necessity.[18]

UNITY OF PLOT

A plot is unified by a single action, not by a single hero, as Homer understood.

GREEK	ENGLISH
μῦθος δ' ἐστὶν εἷς οὐχ ὥσπερ τινὲς οἴονται ἐὰν περὶ ἕνα ᾖ· πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἄπειρα τῷ ἑνὶ συμβαίνει, ἐξ ὧν ἐνίων οὐδέν ἐστιν ἕν· οὕτως δὲ καὶ πράξεις ἑνὸς πολλαί εἰσιν, ἐξ ὧν μία οὐδεμία γίνεται πρᾶξις. διὸ πάντες ἐοίκασιν ἁμαρτάνειν ὅσοι τῶν ποιητῶν Ἡρακληίδα Θησηίδα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιήματα πεποιήκασιν· οἴονται γάρ, ἐπεὶ εἷς ἦν ὁ Ἡρακλῆς, ἕνα καὶ τὸν μῦθον εἶναι προσήκειν.	A plot is not unified, as some think, merely because it is about one person. For many, indeed countless, things happen to one person, and some of them make up no unity; likewise one person performs many actions from which no single action results. That is why all the poets who have composed a *Heracleid*, a *Theseid* and poems of that sort seem to have gone wrong: they think that because Heracles was one person, the plot too should be one.
ὁ δ' Ὅμηρος ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα διαφέρει καὶ τοῦτ' ἔοικεν καλῶς ἰδεῖν, ἤτοι διὰ τέχνην ἢ διὰ φύσιν· Ὀδύσσειαν γὰρ ποιῶν οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἅπαντα ὅσα αὐτῷ συνέβη, οἷον πληγῆναι μὲν ἐν τῷ Παρνασσῷ, μανῆναι δὲ προσποιήσασθαι ἐν τῷ ἀγερμῷ, ὧν οὐδὲν θατέρου γενομένου ἀναγκαῖον ἦν ἢ εἰκὸς θάτερον γενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν οἵαν λέγομεν τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν συνέστησεν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἰλιάδα. χρὴ οὖν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις μιμητικαῖς ἡ μία μίμησις ἑνός ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μίμησίς ἐστι, μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης ὅλης, καὶ τὰ μέρη συνεστάναι τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτως ὥστε μετατιθεμένου τινὸς μέρους ἢ ἀφαιρουμένου διαφέρεσθαι καὶ κινεῖσθαι τὸ ὅλον· ὃ γὰρ προσὸν ἢ μὴ προσὸν μηδὲν ποιεῖ ἐπίδηλον, οὐδὲν μόριον τοῦ ὅλου ἐστίν.	Homer, just as he excels in other respects, seems to have seen this clearly too, whether by art or by nature. In composing the *Odyssey* he did not include everything that happened to Odysseus—for instance his being wounded on Parnassus or his feigning madness at the mustering, events of which neither made the other necessary or probable. Instead he structured the *Odyssey* around a single action of the kind we mean, and the *Iliad* likewise. So just as in the other imitative arts a single imitation is of a single thing, the plot too, since it is an imitation of an action, must be of one action, and that a whole one; and its parts, the incidents, must be so structured that if any part is moved or removed the whole is disjointed and disturbed. For that which makes no noticeable difference whether it is present or not is no part of the whole.[19]

17 A stade was about 600 feet, so ten thousand stades is over a thousand miles.
16 The words "among the verbal parts" render a corrupt phrase in the Greek.
18 Water clocks were used to time speeches in the Athenian law courts; the words "as they say happened at one time or another" render a corrupt clause.

POETRY AND HISTORY

The poet tells what would probably happen, so poetry is more philosophical than history.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	φανερὸν δὲ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων καὶ ὅτι οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον. ὁ γὰρ	It is also clear from what has been said that the poet's task is to say not what has happened but what sort of thing would happen, that is, what is possible in accordance with probability or necessity. For the
1451b	ἱστορικὸς καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς οὐ τῷ ἢ ἔμμετρα λέγειν ἢ ἄμετρα διαφέρουσιν (εἴη γὰρ ἂν τὰ Ἡροδότου εἰς μέτρα τεθῆναι καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον ἂν εἴη ἱστορία τις μετὰ μέτρου ἢ ἄνευ μέτρων)· ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῷ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο. διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἡ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει.	1451b historian and the poet do not differ by speaking in verse or in prose (Herodotus's work could be put into verse and would be no less a history with meter than without it); they differ in this: the one says what has happened, the other what sort of thing would happen. That is why poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history: poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars.
1451b	ἔστιν δὲ καθόλου μέν, τῷ ποίῳ τὰ ποῖα ἄττα συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὗ στοχάζεται ἡ ποίησις ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθεμένη· τὸ δὲ καθ' ἕκαστον, τί Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔπραξεν ἢ τί ἔπαθεν. ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς κωμῳδίας ἤδη τοῦτο δῆλον γέγονεν· συστήσαντες γὰρ τὸν μῦθον διὰ τῶν εἰκότων οὕτω τὰ τυχόντα ὀνόματα ὑποτιθέασιν, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ οἱ ἰαμβοποιοὶ περὶ τὸν καθ' ἕκαστον ποιοῦσιν. ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς τραγῳδίας τῶν γενομένων ὀνομάτων ἀντέχονται. αἴτιον δ' ὅτι πιθανόν ἐστι τὸ δυνατόν· τὰ μὲν οὖν μὴ γενόμενα οὔπω πιστεύομεν εἶναι δυνατά, τὰ δὲ γενόμενα φανερὸν ὅτι δυνατά· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγένετο, εἰ ἦν ἀδύνατα.	A universal is what sort of things a certain sort of person will say or do in accordance with probability or necessity; this is what poetry aims at, even though it attaches names. A particular is what Alcibiades did or what happened to him. In comedy this has already become clear: the poets structure the plot through probable events and only then supply whatever names occur to them, rather than writing about particular individuals as the iambic poets do. In tragedy, though, they cling to the names of people who actually existed. The reason is that what is possible is persuasive: what has not happened we do not yet believe to be possible, whereas what has happened is obviously possible, since it would not have happened if it were impossible.[20]
	οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις ἐν ἐνίαις μὲν ἓν ἢ δύο τῶν γνωρίμων ἐστὶν ὀνομάτων, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πεποιημένα, ἐν ἐνίαις δὲ οὐθέν, οἷον ἐν τῷ Ἀγάθωνος Ἀνθεῖ· ὁμοίως γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ τά τε πράγματα καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα πεποίηται, καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον εὐφραίνει. ὥστ' οὐ πάντως εἶναι ζητητέον τῶν παραδεδομένων μύθων, περὶ οὓς αἱ τραγῳδίαι εἰσίν, ἀντέχεσθαι. καὶ γὰρ γελοῖον τοῦτο ζητεῖν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ γνώριμα ὀλίγοις γνώριμά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὅμως εὐφραίνει πάντας. δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν μᾶλλον τῶν μύθων εἶναι δεῖ ποιητὴν ἢ τῶν μέτρων, ὅσῳ ποιητὴς κατὰ τὴν μίμησίν ἐστιν, μιμεῖται δὲ τὰς πράξεις.	Even so, in some tragedies only one or two of the names are familiar and the rest are invented, and in some none are, as in Agathon's *Antheus*: in it both incidents and names are invented alike, and it gives no less delight. So one should not seek at all costs to cling to the traditional plots on which tragedies are based. Indeed, it would be absurd to seek this, since even the familiar plots are familiar to few, yet they delight everyone. It is clear from this, then, that the poet must be a maker of plots rather than of verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by

19 Odysseus was wounded by a boar on Mount Parnassus as a youth, and feigned madness to avoid joining the expedition against Troy.

20 Alcibiades (c. 450–404 BC) was a flamboyant Athenian general and politician.

GREEK	ENGLISH
	virtue of imitation, and what he imitates are actions.[21]
κἂν ἄρα συμβῇ γενόμενα ποιεῖν, οὐθὲν ἧττον ποιητής ἐστι· τῶν γὰρ γενομένων ἔνια οὐδὲν κωλύει τοιαῦτα εἶναι οἷα ἂν εἰκὸς γενέσθαι [καὶ δυνατὰ γενέσθαι], καθ' ὃ ἐκεῖνος αὐτῶν ποιητής ἐστιν.	And even if he happens to compose about things that actually happened, he is no less a poet; for nothing prevents some actual events from being the sort of things that would probably happen, and could happen, and it is in that respect that he is their poet.
τῶν δὲ ἁπλῶν μύθων καὶ πράξεων αἱ ἐπεισοδιώδεις εἰσὶν χείρισται· λέγω δ' ἐπεισοδιώδη μῦθον ἐν ᾧ τὰ ἐπεισόδια μετ' ἄλληλα οὔτ' εἰκὸς οὔτ' ἀνάγκη εἶναι. τοιαῦται δὲ ποιοῦνται ὑπὸ μὲν τῶν φαύλων ποιητῶν δι' αὐτούς, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν διὰ τοὺς ὑποκριτάς· ἀγωνίσματα γὰρ ποιοῦντες καὶ παρὰ τὴν δύναμιν παρατείνοντες τὸν μῦθον 1452a πολλάκις διαστρέφειν ἀναγκάζονται τὸ ἐφεξῆς.	Of simple plots and actions, the episodic are the worst. By an episodic plot I mean one in which the episodes follow one another without probability or necessity. Such plots are composed by poor poets because of their own shortcomings, and by good ones because of the actors: writing showpieces for the competition and stretching the plot beyond its capacity, 1452a they are often forced to distort the sequence.
1452a ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐ μόνον τελείας ἐστὶ πράξεως ἡ μίμησις ἀλλὰ καὶ φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν, ταῦτα δὲ γίνεται καὶ μάλιστα [καὶ μᾶλλον] ὅταν γένηται παρὰ τὴν δόξαν δι' ἄλληλα· τὸ γὰρ θαυμαστὸν οὕτως ἕξει μᾶλλον ἢ εἰ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου καὶ τῆς τύχης, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τύχης ταῦτα θαυμασιώτατα δοκεῖ ὅσα ὥσπερ ἐπίτηδες φαίνεται γεγονέναι, οἷον ὡς ὁ ἀνδριὰς ὁ τοῦ Μίτυος ἐν Ἄργει ἀπέκτεινεν τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου τῷ Μίτυι, θεωροῦντι ἐμπεσών· ἔοικε γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐκ εἰκῇ γίνεσθαι· ὥστε ἀνάγκη τοὺς τοιούτους εἶναι καλλίους μύθους.	The imitation is not only of a complete action but also of things that are fearful and pitiable, and these arise most of all when events happen contrary to expectation yet because of one another. They will be more astonishing this way than if they came about by themselves or by chance, since even among chance events the most astonishing seem to be those that appear to have happened as if on purpose—as when the statue of Mitys at Argos killed the man responsible for Mitys's death by falling on him while he was looking at it; for such things seem not to happen at random. So plots of this kind are necessarily finer.

SIMPLE AND COMPLEX PLOTS

Complex plots change fortune through reversal or recognition arising from what went before.

GREEK	ENGLISH
εἰσὶ δὲ τῶν μύθων οἱ μὲν ἁπλοῖ οἱ δὲ πεπλεγμένοι· καὶ γὰρ αἱ πράξεις ὧν μιμήσεις οἱ μῦθοί εἰσιν ὑπάρχουσιν εὐθὺς οὖσαι τοιαῦται. λέγω δὲ ἁπλῆν μὲν πρᾶξιν ἧς γινομένης ὥσπερ ὥρισται συνεχοῦς καὶ μιᾶς ἄνευ περιπετείας ἢ ἀναγνωρισμοῦ ἡ μετάβασις γίνεται, πεπλεγμένην δὲ ἐξ ἧς μετὰ ἀναγνωρισμοῦ ἢ περιπετείας ἢ ἀμφοῖν ἡ μετάβασίς ἐστιν. ταῦτα δὲ δεῖ γίνεσθαι ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ μύθου, ὥστε ἐκ τῶν προγεγενημένων συμβαίνειν ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς γίγνεσθαι ταῦτα· διαφέρει γὰρ πολὺ τὸ γίγνεσθαι τάδε διὰ τάδε ἢ μετὰ τάδε.	Some plots are simple, others complex; for the actions of which plots are imitations are themselves, from the outset, of these kinds. I call an action simple when, being continuous and unified in the way defined, its change of fortune comes about without reversal or recognition; complex, when the change involves recognition or reversal or both. These must arise from the structure of the plot itself, so that they result from what has gone before, happening either necessarily or probably. For it makes a great difference whether things

21 Agathon was an Athenian tragic poet of the late fifth century BC, host of the party in Plato's *Symposium*.

GREEK	ENGLISH
	happen because of what preceded or merely after it.

REVERSAL, RECOGNITION AND SUFFERING

Aristotle defines reversal, recognition and suffering, the three parts of the plot.

GREEK	ENGLISH
ἔστι δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν πραττομένων μεταβολὴ καθάπερ εἴρηται, καὶ τοῦτο δὲ ὥσπερ λέγομεν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ ἀναγκαῖον, οἷον ἐν τῷ΄ Οἰδιποδι ἐλθὼν ὡς εὐφρανῶν τὸν Οἰδίπουν καὶ ἀπαλλάξων τοῦ πρὸς τὴν μητέρα φόβου, δηλώσας ὃς ἦν, τοὐναντίον ἐποίησεν· καὶ ἐν τῷ Λυγκεῖ ὁ μὲν ἀγόμενος ὡς ἀποθανούμενος, ὁ δὲ Δαναὸς ἀκολουθῶν ὡς ἀποκτενῶν, τὸν μὲν συνέβη ἐκ τῶν πεπραγμένων ἀποθανεῖν, τὸν δὲ σωθῆναι. ἀναγνώρισις δέ, ὥσπερ καὶ τοὔνομα σημαίνει, ἐξ ἀγνοίας εἰς γνῶσιν μεταβολή, ἢ εἰς φιλίαν ἢ εἰς ἔχθραν, τῶν πρὸς εὐτυχίαν ἢ δυστυχίαν ὡρισμένων· καλλίστη δὲ ἀναγνώρισις, ὅταν ἅμα περιπετείᾳ γένηται, οἷον ἔχει ἡ ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι.	Reversal is a change of what is being done to its opposite, as has been said, and this too, as we are saying, in accordance with probability or necessity. For example, in the *Oedipus* the man who comes to cheer Oedipus and free him from his fear about his mother does the opposite by revealing who he was; and in the *Lynceus* one man is being led off to be put to death, with Danaus following to kill him, but as a result of what has happened it is Danaus who is killed and the other who is saved. Recognition, as the name itself indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, leading to friendship or to enmity, among those marked out for good fortune or misfortune. The finest recognition is one that occurs together with a reversal, like the one in the *Oedipus*.[22]
εἰσὶν μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλαι ἀναγνωρίσεις· καὶ γὰρ πρὸς ἄψυχα καὶ τὰ τυχόντα † ἐστὶν ὥσπερ εἴρηται συμβαίνει † καὶ εἰ πέπραγέ τις ἢ μὴ πέπραγεν ἔστιν ἀναγνωρίσαι. ἀλλ' ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μύθου καὶ ἡ μάλιστα τῆς πράξεως ἡ εἰρημένη ἐστίν· ἡ γὰρ τοιαύτη ἀναγνώρισις καὶ περιπέτεια ἢ ἔλεον ἕξει [1452b] ἢ φόβον (οἵων πράξεων ἡ τραγῳδία μίμησις ὑπόκειται), ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὸ ἀτυχεῖν καὶ τὸ εὐτυχεῖν ἐπὶ τῶν τοιούτων συμβήσεται. ἐπεὶ δὴ ἡ ἀναγνώρισις τινῶν ἐστιν ἀναγνώρισις, αἱ μέν εἰσι θατέρου πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον μόνον, ὅταν ᾖ δῆλος ἄτερος τίς ἐστιν, ὁτὲ δὲ ἀμφοτέρους δεῖ ἀναγνωρίσαι, οἷον ἡ μὲν Ἰφιγένεια τῷ Ὀρέστῃ ἀνεγνωρίσθη ἐκ τῆς πέμψεως τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ἐκείνου δὲ πρὸς τὴν Ἰφιγένειαν ἄλλης ἔδει ἀναγνωρίσεως.	There are, of course, other kinds of recognition too: it can happen, as has been said, with regard to inanimate and random objects, and one can recognize whether someone has or has not done something. But the kind most integral to the plot and to the action is the one described. For such a recognition combined with a reversal will involve either pity [1452b] or fear (and it is actions of this kind that tragedy is taken to imitate), since misfortune and good fortune too will turn on such events. Since recognition is recognition of persons, some recognitions are of one person by the other only, when it is already clear who the other is; but sometimes both must recognize each other. For example, Iphigenia was recognized by Orestes through the sending of the letter, but another recognition was needed for him to be recognized by Iphigenia.[23]
[1452b] δύο μὲν οὖν τοῦ μύθου μέρη ταῦτ' ἐστί, περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις· τρίτον δὲ πάθος. τούτων δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν καὶ ἀναγνώρισις εἴρηται, πάθος δέ ἐστι πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά, οἷον οἵ τε ἐν τῷ φανερῷ θάνατοι καὶ αἱ περιωδυνίαι καὶ τρώσεις καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα.	These, then, are two parts of the plot, reversal and recognition; a third is suffering. Of these, reversal and recognition have been discussed. Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as deaths in full view, agonies, woundings and the like.

22 The *Oedipus* is Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; the *Lynceus*, by the fourth-century BC tragedian Theodectes, is lost.
23 The example is from Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, where Orestes and his sister meet without knowing each other.

THE SECTIONS OF A TRAGEDY

Tragedy is divided into prologue, episodes, exodos and choral songs.

GREEK	ENGLISH
μέρη δὲ τραγῳδίας οἷς μὲν ὡς εἴδεσι δεῖ χρῆσθαι πρότερον εἴπομεν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ποσὸν καὶ εἰς ἃ διαιρεῖται κεχωρισμένα τάδε ἐστίν, πρόλογος ἐπεισόδιον ἔξοδος χορικόν, καὶ τούτου τὸ μὲν πάροδος τὸ δὲ στάσιμον, κοινὰ μὲν ἁπάντων ταῦτα, ἴδια δὲ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ κομμοί. ἔστιν δὲ πρόλογος μὲν μέρος ὅλον τραγῳδίας τὸ πρὸ χοροῦ παρόδου, ἐπεισόδιον δὲ μέρος ὅλον τραγῳδίας τὸ μεταξὺ ὅλων χορικῶν μελῶν, ἔξοδος δὲ μέρος ὅλον τραγῳδίας μεθ' ὃ οὐκ ἔστι χοροῦ μέλος· χορικοῦ δὲ πάροδος μὲν ἡ πρώτη λέξις ὅλη χοροῦ, στάσιμον δὲ μέλος χοροῦ τὸ ἄνευ ἀναπαίστου καὶ τροχαίου, κομμὸς δὲ θρῆνος κοινὸς χοροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς.	The parts of tragedy that should be used as its constituent forms we have stated earlier. Its parts in terms of quantity, the separate sections into which it is divided, are these: prologue, episode, exodos and choral part, and of the choral part, the parodos and the stasimon. These are common to all tragedies; peculiar to some are songs from the stage and kommoi. The prologue is the whole part of a tragedy before the entrance of the chorus; an episode is the whole part of a tragedy between complete choral songs; the exodos is the whole part of a tragedy after which there is no choral song. Of the choral part, the parodos is the first complete utterance of the chorus; a stasimon is a choral song without anapaests and trochees; a kommos is a lament shared by the chorus and the actors on stage.[24]
μέρη δὲ τραγῳδίας οἷς μὲν ⟨ὡς εἴδεσι⟩ δεῖ χρῆσθαι πρότερον εἴπαμεν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ποσὸν καὶ εἰς ἃ διαιρεῖται κεχωρισμένα ταῦτ' ἐστίν.	The parts of tragedy that should be used as its constituent forms we stated earlier; its parts in terms of quantity, the separate sections into which it is divided, are the ones just listed.[25]

THE BEST TRAGIC PLOT

The finest tragedy shows a person, neither very good nor wicked, falling into misfortune through error.

GREEK	ENGLISH
ὧν δὲ δεῖ στοχάζεσθαι καὶ ἃ δεῖ εὐλαβεῖσθαι συνιστάντας τοὺς μύθους καὶ πόθεν ἔσται τὸ τῆς τραγῳδίας ἔργον, ἐφεξῆς ἂν εἴη λεκτέον τοῖς νῦν εἰρημένοις. ἐπειδὴ οὖν δεῖ τὴν σύνθεσιν εἶναι τῆς καλλίστης τραγῳδίας μὴ ἁπλῆν ἀλλὰ πεπλεγμένην καὶ ταύτην φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν εἶναι μιμητικήν (τοῦτο γὰρ ἴδιον τῆς τοιαύτης μιμήσεώς ἐστιν), πρῶτον μὲν δῆλον ὅτι οὔτε τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς ἄνδρας δεῖ μεταβάλλοντας φαίνεσθαι ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν, οὐ γὰρ φοβερὸν οὐδὲ ἐλεεινὸν τοῦτο ἀλλὰ μιαρόν ἐστιν· οὔτε τοὺς μοχθηροὺς ἐξ ἀτυχίας εἰς εὐτυχίαν, ἀτραγῳδότατον γὰρ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ πάντων, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔχει ὧν δεῖ, οὔτε γὰρ φιλάνθρωπον [1453a] οὔτε ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε φοβερόν ἐστιν· οὐδ' αὖ τὸν σφόδρα πονηρὸν ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταπίπτειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ φιλάνθρωπον ἔχοι ἂν ἡ τοιαύτη σύστασις ἀλλ' οὔτε ἔλεον οὔτε φόβον, ὁ μὲν	What one should aim at and what one should avoid in structuring plots, and how tragedy will achieve its function, would be the next thing to discuss after what has just been said. Since the structure of the finest tragedy should be not simple but complex, and it should imitate fearful and pitiable events (this being the distinctive feature of this kind of imitation), it is clear, first, that decent men should not be shown passing from good fortune to misfortune, for that is neither fearful nor pitiable but repugnant; nor wicked people passing from misfortune to good fortune, for that is the most untragic of all: it has none of the required qualities, being neither appealing to human sympathy [1453a] nor pitiable nor fearful; nor

24 *Parodos* means the chorus's entrance, *exodos* the exit, and *stasimon* a song sung in place; *kommos* literally means a beating of the breast in mourning.

25 This sentence repeats the chapter's opening almost word for word, as a closing summary; the repetition is in the Greek.

GREEK	ENGLISH
γὰρ περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιόν ἐστιν δυστυχοῦντα, ὁ δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον, ἔλεος μὲν περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιον, φόβος δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον, ὥστε οὔτε ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε φοβερὸν ἔσται τὸ συμβαῖνον.	again a thoroughly vicious man falling from good fortune into misfortune. Such a structure might appeal to human sympathy, but it would arouse neither pity nor fear. For pity concerns one who suffers undeservedly, fear one who is like us—pity for the undeserving, fear for someone like us—so that the outcome will be neither pitiable nor fearful.
1453a ὁ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἷον Οἰδίπους καὶ Θυέστης καὶ οἱ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων γενῶν ἐπιφανεῖς ἄνδρες. ἀνάγκη ἄρα τὸν καλῶς ἔχοντα μῦθον ἁπλοῦν εἶναι μᾶλλον ἢ διπλοῦν, ὥσπερ τινές φασι, καὶ μεταβάλλειν οὐκ εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας ἀλλὰ τοὐναντίον ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μὴ διὰ μοχθηρίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν μεγάλην ἢ οἵου εἴρηται ἢ βελτίονος μᾶλλον ἢ χείρονος.	What remains is the person in between. This is someone who neither is outstanding in excellence and justice nor falls into misfortune through vice and wickedness, but through some error; one of those who enjoy great renown and good fortune, such as Oedipus, Thyestes and distinguished men from such families. The well-made plot, then, must be single rather than double, as some claim, and must change not from misfortune to good fortune but the opposite, from good fortune to misfortune, not through wickedness but through a great error, on the part of someone either as described or better rather than worse.[26]
σημεῖον δὲ καὶ τὸ γιγνόμενον· πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ οἱ ποιηταὶ τοὺς τυχόντας μύθους ἀπηρίθμουν, νῦν δὲ περὶ ὀλίγας οἰκίας αἱ κάλλισται τραγῳδίαι συντίθενται, οἷον περὶ Ἀλκμέωνα καὶ Οἰδίπουν καὶ Ὀρέστην καὶ Μελέαγρον καὶ Θυέστην καὶ Τήλεφον καὶ ὅσοις ἄλλοις συμβέβηκεν ἢ παθεῖν δεινὰ ἢ ποιῆσαι. ἡ μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὴν τέχνην καλλίστη τραγῳδία ἐκ ταύτης τῆς συστάσεώς ἐστι. διὸ καὶ οἱ Εὐριπίδῃ ἐγκαλοῦντες τὸ αὐτὸ ἁμαρτάνουσιν ὅτι τοῦτο δρᾷ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις καὶ αἱ πολλαὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς δυστυχίαν τελευτῶσιν. τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ὥσπερ εἴρηται ὀρθόν· σημεῖον δὲ μέγιστον· ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν σκηνῶν καὶ τῶν ἀγώνων τραγικώταται αἱ τοιαῦται φαίνονται, ἂν κατορθωθῶσιν, καὶ ὁ Εὐριπίδης, εἰ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μὴ εὖ οἰκονομεῖ, ἀλλὰ τραγικώτατός γε τῶν ποιητῶν φαίνεται.	What actually happens is evidence of this. At first poets ran through any plots that came to hand, but now the finest tragedies are composed about a few houses, for example about Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and any others who happened to suffer or do terrible things. The finest tragedy by the standards of the art, then, comes from this structure. That is why those who criticize Euripides make the same mistake, faulting him for doing this in his tragedies, many of which end in misfortune. This, as has been said, is correct. The greatest evidence is that on the stage and in the competitions such plays appear the most tragic, if they are successfully done; and Euripides, even if he does not manage other things well, at least appears the most tragic of the poets.
δευτέρα δ' ἡ πρώτη λεγομένη ὑπὸ τινῶν ἐστιν σύστασις, ἡ διπλῆν τε τὴν σύστασιν ἔχουσα καθάπερ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια καὶ τελευτῶσα ἐξ ἐναντίας τοῖς βελτίοσι καὶ χείροσιν. δοκεῖ δὲ εἶναι πρώτη διὰ τὴν τῶν θεάτρων ἀσθένειαν· ἀκολουθοῦσι γὰρ οἱ ποιηταὶ κατ' εὐχὴν ποιοῦντες τοῖς θεαταῖς. ἔστιν δὲ οὐχ αὕτη ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας ἡδονὴ ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τῆς κωμῳδίας οἰκεία· ἐκεῖ γὰρ οἳ ἂν ἔχθιστοι ὦσιν ἐν τῷ μύθῳ, οἷον Ὀρέστης καὶ Αἴγισθος, φίλοι γενόμενοι ἐπὶ τελευτῆς ἐξέρχονται, καὶ ἀποθνήσκει οὐδεὶς ὑπ' οὐδενός.	Second is the structure that some call first: the one that has a double structure, like the *Odyssey*, and ends in opposite ways for the better and the worse characters. It seems to be first because of the weakness of audiences; for the poets follow the spectators, composing to suit their wishes. But this is not the pleasure that comes from tragedy; it is more proper to comedy. There, those who are the bitterest enemies in the plot, such as Orestes

26 "Error" translates *hamartia*, often rendered "tragic flaw," though Aristotle means a mistake or error.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		and Aegisthus, go off at the end as friends, and no one is killed by anyone.

PITY AND FEAR FROM THE PLOT

Pity and fear should come from the plot, especially from deeds between close relatives.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
1453b	ἔστιν μὲν οὖν τὸ φοβερὸν καὶ ἐλεεινὸν ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως γίγνεσθαι, ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅπερ ἐστὶ πρότερον καὶ ποιητοῦ ἀμείνονος. δεῖ γὰρ καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ ὁρᾶν οὕτω συνεστάναι τὸν μῦθον ὥστε τὸν ἀκούοντα τὰ πράγματα γινόμενα καὶ φρίττειν καὶ ἐλεεῖν ἐκ τῶν συμβαινόντων· ἅπερ ἂν πάθοι τις ἀκούων τὸν τοῦ Οἰδίπου μῦθον. τὸ δὲ διὰ τῆς ὄψεως τοῦτο παρασκευάζειν ἀτεχνότερον καὶ χορηγίας δεόμενόν ἐστιν. οἱ δὲ μὴ τὸ φοβερὸν διὰ τῆς ὄψεως ἀλλὰ τὸ τερατῶδες μόνον παρασκευάζοντες οὐδὲν τραγῳδίᾳ κοινωνοῦσιν· οὐ γὰρ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως δεῖ ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν τὸν ποιητήν, φανερὸν ὡς τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐμποιητέον.	Now, the fearful and pitiable can arise from the spectacle, but they can also arise from the structure of the incidents itself, which is preferable and the mark of a better poet. For the plot should be so structured that, even without seeing it, anyone who hears the incidents unfold shudders and feels pity at what happens—which is what one would experience on hearing the plot of the *Oedipus*. To produce this effect through spectacle is less a matter of art and requires funding for the production. Those who use spectacle to produce not the fearful but only the monstrous have nothing in common with tragedy; for one should not seek every pleasure from tragedy, but the one proper to it. And since the poet should produce the pleasure that comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is clear that this must be built into the incidents.[27]
	ποῖα οὖν δεινὰ ἢ ποῖα οἰκτρὰ φαίνεται τῶν συμπιπτόντων, λάβωμεν. ἀνάγκη δὴ ἢ φίλων εἶναι πρὸς ἀλλήλους τὰς τοιαύτας πράξεις ἢ ἐχθρῶν ἢ μηδετέρων. ἂν μὲν οὖν ἐχθρὸς ἐχθρόν, οὐδὲν ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε ποιῶν οὔτε μέλλων, πλὴν κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ πάθος· οὐδ' ἂν μηδετέρως ἔχοντες· ὅταν δ' ἐν ταῖς φιλίαις ἐγγένηται τὰ πάθη, οἷον ἢ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφὸν ἢ υἱὸς πατέρα ἢ μήτηρ υἱὸν ἢ υἱὸς μητέρα ἀποκτείνῃ ἢ μέλλῃ ἤ τι ἄλλο τοιοῦτον δρᾷ, ταῦτα ζητητέον. τοὺς μὲν οὖν παρειλημμένους μύθους λύειν οὐκ ἔστιν, λέγω δὲ οἷον τὴν Κλυταιμήστραν ἀποθανοῦσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀρέστου καὶ τὴν Ἐριφύλην ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀλκμέωνος, αὐτὸν δὲ εὑρίσκειν δεῖ καὶ τοῖς παραδεδομένοις χρῆσθαι καλῶς. τὸ δὲ καλῶς τί λέγομεν, εἴπωμεν σαφέστερον.	Let us consider, then, which sorts of events strike us as terrible or pitiable. Such actions must be between people who are close to one another, or enemies, or neither. If an enemy acts against an enemy, there is nothing pitiable either in his doing it or in his being about to, except for the suffering itself; nor if they are neither. But when sufferings occur within close relationships—when brother kills or is about to kill brother, or son father, or mother son, or son mother, or does something else of the kind—these are what one should look for. One cannot break up the traditional plots—I mean, for example, Clytemnestra being killed by Orestes, and Eriphyle by Alcmaeon—but the poet must discover for himself how to use the inherited material well. Let us say more clearly what we mean by "well."[28]
	ἔστι μὲν γὰρ οὕτω γίνεσθαι τὴν πρᾶξιν, ὥσπερ οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐποίουν εἰδότας καὶ γιγνώσκοντας, καθάπερ καὶ Εὐριπίδης ἐποίησεν ἀποκτείνουσαν τοὺς παῖδας τὴν Μήδειαν· ἔστιν δὲ πρᾶξαι μέν, ἀγνοοῦντας δὲ πρᾶξαι τὸ δεινόν, εἶθ' ὕστερον ἀναγνωρίσαι τὴν φιλίαν, ὥσπερ ὁ	The action can take place as the older poets made it, with the characters knowing and aware, as Euripides too made Medea kill her children. Or they can do the terrible deed, but in ignorance, and only later recognize the relationship, like

27 At Athens a wealthy citizen, the *chorēgos,* paid for a play's chorus and production as a public service.
28 Eriphyle, bribed with a necklace, sent her husband Amphiaraus to his death at Thebes; their son Alcmaeon killed her in revenge.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	Σοφοκλέους Οἰδίπους· τοῦτο μὲν οὖν ἔξω τοῦ δράματος, ἐν δ' αὐτῇ τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ οἷον ὁ Ἀλκμέων ὁ Ἀστυδάμαντος ἢ ὁ Τηλέγονος ὁ ἐν τῷ τραυματίᾳ Ὀδυσσεῖ. ἔτι δὲ τρίτον παρὰ ταῦτα τὸ μέλλοντα ποιεῖν τι τῶν ἀνηκέστων δι' ἄγνοιαν ἀναγνωρίσαι πρὶν ποιῆσαι. καὶ παρὰ ταῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλως. ἢ γὰρ πρᾶξαι ἀνάγκη ἢ μὴ καὶ εἰδότας ἢ μὴ εἰδότας. τούτων δὲ τὸ μὲν γινώσκοντα μελλῆσαι καὶ μὴ πρᾶξαι χείριστον· τό τε γὰρ μιαρὸν ἔχει, καὶ οὐ τραγικόν· ἀπαθὲς γάρ.	Sophocles' Oedipus. There, it is true, the deed lies outside the drama, but it can also be within the tragedy itself, as with Astydamas's Alcmaeon, or Telegonus in the *Wounded Odysseus*. A third possibility besides these is for someone who is about to do something irreparable through ignorance to recognize the truth before doing it. There is no other way besides these; for one must either act or not, and either knowingly or unknowingly. Of these, to be about to act knowingly and then not do it is the worst: it is repugnant and not tragic, since there is no suffering.[29]
	διόπερ οὐδεὶς [1454a] ποιεῖ ὁμοίως, εἰ μὴ ὀλιγάκις, οἷον ἐν Ἀντιγόνῃ τὸν Κρέοντα ὁ Αἵμων. τὸ δὲ πρᾶξαι δεύτερον. βέλτιον δὲ τὸ ἀγνοοῦντα μὲν πρᾶξαι, πράξαντα δὲ ἀναγνωρίσαι· τό τε γὰρ μιαρὸν οὐ πρόσεστιν καὶ ἡ ἀναγνώρισις ἐκπληκτικόν. κράτιστον δὲ τὸ τελευταῖον, λέγω δὲ οἷον ἐν τῷ Κρεσφόντῃ ἡ Μερόπη μέλλει τὸν υἱὸν ἀποκτείνειν, ἀποκτείνει δὲ οὔ, ἀλλ' ἀνεγνώρισε, καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἡ ἀδελφὴ τὸν ἀδελφόν, καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἕλλῃ ὁ υἱὸς τὴν μητέρα ἐκδιδόναι μέλλων ἀνεγνώρισεν. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο, ὅπερ πάλαι εἴρηται, οὐ περὶ πολλὰ γένη αἱ τραγῳδίαι εἰσίν. ζητοῦντες γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ τέχνης ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τύχης εὗρον τὸ τοιοῦτον παρασκευάζειν ἐν τοῖς μύθοις· ἀναγκάζονται οὖν ἐπὶ ταύτας τὰς οἰκίας ἀπαντᾶν ὅσαις τὰ τοιαῦτα συμβέβηκε πάθη.	That is why no one [1454a] composes this way, except rarely, as with Haemon and Creon in the *Antigone*. Acting is second. It is better to act in ignorance and to recognize after acting; for there is nothing repugnant in it, and the recognition is astonishing. Best is the last: I mean, for example, that in the *Cresphontes* Merope is about to kill her son, but does not, and recognizes him instead; and in the *Iphigenia* the sister recognizes the brother; and in the *Helle* the son recognizes his mother when about to hand her over. This is why, as was said long ago, tragedies are about only a few families. For in their search it was not by art but by chance that poets discovered how to produce this sort of thing in their plots; so they are compelled to turn to those houses in which such sufferings have occurred.[30]
1454a	περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσεως καὶ ποίους τινὰς εἶναι δεῖ τοὺς μύθους εἴρηται ἱκανῶς.	Concerning the structure of the incidents, then, and what sort the plots should be, enough has been said.

CHARACTER

Characters should be good, appropriate, lifelike and consistent, and resolutions should arise from the plot.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	περὶ δὲ τὰ ἤθη τέτταρά ἐστιν ὧν δεῖ στοχάζεσθαι, ἓν μὲν καὶ πρῶτον, ὅπως χρηστὰ ᾖ. ἔξει δὲ ἦθος μὲν ἐὰν ὥσπερ ἐλέχθη ποιῇ φανερὸν ὁ λόγος ἢ ἡ πρᾶξις προαίρεσίν τινα ⟨ἥ τις ἂν⟩ ᾖ, χρηστὸν δὲ ἐὰν χρηστήν. ἔστιν δὲ ἐν ἑκάστῳ γένει· καὶ γὰρ γυνή ἐστιν χρηστὴ καὶ δοῦλος, καίτοι γε ἴσως τούτων τὸ μὲν χεῖρον, τὸ δὲ ὅλως φαῦλόν ἐστιν. δεύτερον δὲ τὸ ἁρμόττοντα· ἔστιν γὰρ ἀνδρείαν μὲν τὸ ἦθος, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἁρμόττον γυναικὶ οὕτως ἀνδρείαν ἢ δεινὴν εἶναι. τρίτον δὲ τὸ ὅμοιον. τοῦτο γὰρ ἕτερον τοῦ	With regard to character there are four things to aim at. The first and foremost is that the characters be good. There will be character if, as was said, the speech or the action makes evident some decision, whatever it may be; and good character if the decision is good. Goodness is possible in every class of person: a woman can be good, and so can a slave, though perhaps of these the first is inferior and the second wholly base. Second is

29 Telegonus, son of Odysseus and Circe, unknowingly killed his father; Astydamas was a fourth-century BC tragedian.
30 In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Haemon draws his sword on his father Creon but misses him.

GREEK

χρηστὸν τὸ ἦθος καὶ ἁρμόττον ποιῆσαι ὡς προείρηται. τέταρτον δὲ τὸ ὁμαλόν. κἂν γὰρ ἀνώμαλός τις ᾖ ὁ τὴν μίμησιν παρέχων καὶ τοιοῦτον ἦθος ὑποτεθῇ, ὅμως ὁμαλῶς ἀνώμαλον δεῖ εἶναι.

ἔστιν δὲ παράδειγμα πονηρίας μὲν ἤθους μὴ ἀναγκαίας οἷον ὁ Μενέλαος ὁ ἐν τῷ Ὀρέστῃ, τοῦ δὲ ἁρπεποῦς καὶ μὴ ἁρμόττοντος ὅ τε θρῆνος Ὀδυσσέως ἐν τῇ Σκύλλῃ καὶ ἡ τῆς Μελανίππης ῥῆσις, τοῦ δὲ ἀνωμάλου ἡ ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἰφιγένεια· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ ἱκετεύουσα τῇ ὑστέρᾳ. χρὴ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσιν ὁμοίως ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσει ἀεὶ ζητεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκός, ὥστε τὸν τοιοῦτον τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγειν ἢ πράττειν ἢ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκὸς καὶ τοῦτο μετὰ τοῦτο γίνεσθαι ἢ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκός. φανερὸν οὖν ὅτι καὶ τὰς λύσεις τῶν μύθων ἐξ αὐτοῦ δεῖ τοῦ 1454b μύθου συμβαίνειν, καὶ μὴ ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ Μηδείᾳ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι τὰ περὶ τὸν ἀπόπλουν.

1454b ἀλλὰ μηχανῇ χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ δράματος, ἢ ὅσα πρὸ τοῦ γέγονεν ἃ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἄνθρωπον εἰδέναι, ἢ ὅσα ὕστερον, ἃ δεῖται προαγορεύσεως καὶ ἀγγελίας· ἅπαντα γὰρ ἀποδίδομεν τοῖς θεοῖς ὁρᾶν. ἄλογον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τῆς τραγῳδίας, οἷον τὸ ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι τῷ Σοφοκλέους. ἐπεὶ δὲ μίμησίς ἐστιν ἡ τραγῳδία βελτιόνων ἢ ἡμεῖς, δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς εἰκονογράφους· καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι ἀποδιδόντες τὴν ἰδίαν μορφὴν ὁμοίους ποιοῦντες καλλίους γράφουσιν· οὕτω καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν μιμούμενον καὶ ὀργίλους καὶ ῥᾳθύμους καὶ τἆλλα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔχοντας ἐπὶ τῶν ἠθῶν τοιούτους ὄντας ἐπιεικεῖς ποιεῖν † παράδειγμα σκληρότητος οἷον τὸν Ἀχιλλέα ἀγαθὸν καὶ Ὅμηρος †.

ταῦτα δὴ διατηρεῖν, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις τὰ παρὰ τὰς ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀκολουθούσας αἰσθήσεις τῇ ποιητικῇ· καὶ γὰρ κατ' αὐτὰς ἔστιν ἁμαρτάνειν πολλάκις· εἴρηται δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς ἐκδεδομένοις λόγοις ἱκανῶς.

ENGLISH

that the characters be appropriate: a character can be courageous, but it is not appropriate for a woman to be courageous or formidable in this way. Third is that they be lifelike, for this is different from making the character good and appropriate in the sense described. Fourth is that they be consistent: even if the person being imitated is inconsistent and that is the character assumed, he should still be consistently inconsistent.

An example of unnecessary baseness of character is Menelaus in the *Orestes*; of the unseemly and inappropriate, Odysseus's lament in the *Scylla* and Melanippe's speech; of the inconsistent, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, for Iphigenia as a suppliant is nothing like her later self. In character, just as in the structure of the incidents, one should always seek either the necessary or the probable, so that it is either necessary or probable for a person of this kind to say or do things of this kind, and necessary or probable for this to happen after that. It is clear, then, that the resolutions of plots too should arise from the 1454b plot itself, and not from the machine, as in the *Medea* and in the business of the departure in the *Iliad*.[31]

The machine should be used for matters outside the drama: either things that happened before, which a human being cannot know, or things that happen later, which require foretelling and announcement; for we grant to the gods the power to see all things. There should be nothing irrational in the incidents, or if there is, it should be outside the tragedy, like the one in Sophocles' *Oedipus*. Since tragedy is an imitation of people better than we are, poets should imitate good portrait-painters. They too, while rendering a person's particular form and making a likeness, paint people as finer than they are. So too the poet, when imitating people who are irascible or easygoing or have other such traits of character, should make them decent while being such, as Homer made Achilles good, an example of harshness.[32]

These things, then, must be carefully observed, and besides them the matters bearing on the perceptions that necessarily accompany the art of poetry; for here too one can often go wrong. But

31 The machine was a stage crane that could bring gods on high into view; Medea escapes in a chariot sent by the Sun, and in *Iliad* 2 Athena stops the Greeks from sailing home.
32 The Greek of the final clause, about Achilles, is corrupt.

GREEK

ENGLISH

enough has been said about them in my published works.

KINDS OF RECOGNITION

Recognitions by signs, contrivance, memory and reasoning are ranked; the best arises from the incidents.

GREEK

ENGLISH

ἀναγνώρισις δὲ τί μέν ἐστιν, εἴρηται πρότερον· εἴδη δὲ ἀναγνωρίσεως, πρώτη μὲν ἡ ἀτεχνοτάτη καὶ ᾗ πλείστῃ χρῶνται δι' ἀπορίαν, ἡ διὰ τῶν σημείων. τούτων δὲ τὰ μὲν σύμφυτα, οἷον "λόγχην ἣν φοροῦσι Γηγενεῖς" ἢ ἀστέρας οἵους ἐν τῷ Θυέστῃ Καρκίνος, τὰ δὲ ἐπίκτητα, καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν ἐν τῷ σώματι, οἷον οὐλαί, τὰ δὲ ἐκτός, οἷον τὰ περιδέραια καὶ οἷον ἐν τῇ Τυροῖ διὰ τῆς σκάφης. ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τούτοις χρῆσθαι ἢ βέλτιον ἢ χεῖρον, οἷον Ὀδυσσεὺς διὰ τῆς οὐλῆς ἄλλως ἀνεγνωρίσθη ὑπὸ τῆς τροφοῦ καὶ ἄλλως ὑπὸ τῶν συβοτῶν· εἰσὶ γὰρ αἱ μὲν πίστεως ἕνεκα ἀτεχνότεραι, καὶ αἱ τοιαῦται πᾶσαι, αἱ δὲ ἐκ περιπετείας, ὥσπερ ἡ ἐν τοῖς Νίπτροις, βελτίους. δεύτεραι δὲ αἱ πεποιημέναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, διὸ ἄτεχνοι.

What recognition is was stated earlier. As for the kinds of recognition, the first is the least artistic and the one most used for lack of resources: recognition through signs. Of these, some are congenital, such as "the spear the Earth-born bear" or stars like those Carcinus uses in his *Thyestes*; others are acquired, and of these some are on the body, such as scars, others external, such as necklaces, or the little boat in the *Tyro*. These too can be used better or worse: Odysseus, for instance, was recognized through his scar in one way by his nurse and in another by the swineherds. Recognitions made for the sake of proof, and all such, are less artistic; those that arise from a reversal, like the one in the Bathing Scene, are better. Second are those contrived by the poet, and therefore inartistic.[33]

οἷον Ὀρέστης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης· ἐκείνη μὲν γὰρ διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ἐκεῖνος δὲ αὐτὸς λέγει ἃ βούλεται ὁ ποιητὴς ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ μῦθος· διὸ ἐγγύς τι τῆς εἰρημένης ἁμαρτίας ἐστίν, ἐξῆν γὰρ ἂν ἔνια καὶ ἐνεγκεῖν. καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Τηρεῖ ἡ τῆς κερκίδος φωνή. ἡ τρίτη διὰ μνήμης, τῷ αἰσθέσθαι [1455a] τι ἰδόντα, ὥσπερ ἡ ἐν Κυπρίοις τοῖς Δικαιογένους, ἰδὼν γὰρ τὴν γραφὴν ἔκλαυσεν, καὶ ἡ ἐν Ἀλκίνου ἀπολόγῳ, ἀκούων γὰρ τοῦ κιθαριστοῦ καὶ μνησθεὶς ἐδάκρυσεν, ὅθεν ἀνεγνωρίσθησαν. τετάρτη δὲ ἡ ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ, οἷον ἐν Χοηφόροις, ὅτι ὅμοιός τις ἐλήλυθεν, ὅμοιος δὲ οὐθεὶς ἀλλ' ἢ Ὀρέστης, οὗτος ἄρα ἐλήλυθεν.

For example, Orestes in the *Iphigenia* makes himself known as Orestes. She is recognized through the letter, but he says what the poet wants, not what the plot requires. So this comes close to the fault mentioned above: he might just as well have brought some tokens with him. Another example is the "voice of the shuttle" in Sophocles' *Tereus*. The third kind comes through memory, when seeing something makes a person [1455a] aware of something. So in the *Cyprians* of Dicaeogenes, he sees the painting and weeps; and in the story told to Alcinous, he hears the lyre-player, is reminded, and sheds tears; and from this they were recognized. The fourth is recognition by reasoning, as in the *Libation Bearers*: someone like me has come; no one is like me except Orestes; so Orestes has come.[34]

1455a καὶ ἡ Πολυίδου τοῦ σοφιστοῦ περὶ τῆς Ἰφιγενείας· εἰκὸς γὰρ ἔφη τὸν Ὀρέστην συλλογίσασθαι ὅτι ἥ τ' ἀδελφὴ ἐτύθη καὶ αὐτῷ συμβαίνει θύεσθαι. καὶ ἐν τῷ Θεοδέκτου Τυδεῖ, ὅτι ἐλθὼν ὡς εὑρήσων τὸν υἱὸν αὐτὸς ἀπόλλυται. καὶ ἡ ἐν τοῖς Φινείδαις· ἰδοῦσαι γὰρ τὸν τόπον συνελογίσαντο τὴν εἱμαρμένην ὅτι ἐν τούτῳ εἵμαρτο

There is also the one in Polyidus the sophist's version of *Iphigenia*: it was natural, he said, for Orestes to reason that his sister had been sacrificed and that now he too was to be sacrificed. And in Theodectes' *Tydeus*: that he came expecting to find his son and is himself being put to death. And the

33 The Bathing Scene is *Odyssey* 19, where the old nurse recognizes Odysseus by his scar while washing his feet.
34 In Sophocles' lost *Tereus*, Philomela, whose tongue had been cut out, revealed her story by weaving it into a cloth.

GREEK

ἀποθανεῖν αὐταῖς, καὶ γὰρ ἐξετέθησαν ἐνταῦθα. ἔστιν δέ τις καὶ συνθετὴ ἐκ παραλογισμοῦ τοῦ θεάτρου, οἷον ἐν τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ τῷ ψευδαγγέλῳ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ τόξον ἐντείνειν, ἄλλον δὲ μηδένα, πεποιημένον ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ καὶ ὑπόθεσις, καὶ εἴ γε τὸ τόξον ἔφη γνώσεσθαι ὃ οὐχ ἑωράκει· τὸ δὲ ὡς δι' ἐκείνου ἀναγνωριοῦντος διὰ τούτου ποιῆσαι παραλογισμός.

πασῶν δὲ βελτίστη ἀναγνώρισις ἡ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων, τῆς ἐκπλήξεως γιγνομένης δι' εἰκότων, οἷον ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Οἰδίποδι καὶ τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ· εἰκὸς γὰρ βούλεσθαι ἐπιθεῖναι γράμματα. αἱ γὰρ τοιαῦται μόναι ἄνευ τῶν πεποιημένων σημείων καὶ περιδεραίων. δεύτεραι δὲ αἱ ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ.

ENGLISH

one in the *Daughters of Phineus*: when they saw the place, they reasoned out their fate—that they were fated to die there, since that was where they had been exposed as infants. There is also a composite kind, which comes from a false inference on the part of the audience, as in *Odysseus the False Messenger*. That he alone, and no one else, can string the bow is the poet's invention and a premise, as is his saying that he would recognize the bow he had never seen; but to make the recognition come about through this, as though he would be recognized through that, is a false inference.

Best of all is the recognition that arises from the incidents themselves, where the astonishment comes about through probable events, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus* and in the *Iphigenia*: it is probable that she would want to send a letter. Only recognitions of this kind do without contrived tokens and necklaces. Second best are those that come from reasoning.

COMPOSING A PLOT

The poet should visualize the action, sketch the plot in outline, and then add episodes.

GREEK

δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους συνιστάναι καὶ τῇ λέξει συναπεργάζεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέμενον· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἐναργέστατα [ὁ] ὁρῶν ὥσπερ παρ' αὐτοῖς γιγνόμενος τοῖς πραττομένοις εὑρίσκοι τὸ πρέπον καὶ ἥκιστα ἂν λανθάνοι [τὸ] τὰ ὑπεναντία. σημεῖον δὲ τούτου ὃ ἐπετιμᾶτο Καρκίνῳ. ὁ γὰρ Ἀμφιάραος ἐξ ἱεροῦ ἀνῄει, ὃ μὴ ὁρῶντα [τὸν θεατὴν] ἐλάνθανεν, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς σκηνῆς ἐξέπεσεν δυσχερανάντων τοῦτο τῶν θεατῶν. ὅσα δὲ δυνατὸν καὶ τοῖς σχήμασιν συναπεργαζόμενον· πιθανώτατοι γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως οἱ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσίν εἰσιν, καὶ χειμαίνει ὁ χειμαζόμενος καὶ χαλεπαίνει ὁ ὀργιζόμενος ἀληθινώτατα. διὸ εὐφυοῦς ἡ ποιητικὴ ἐστιν ἢ μανικοῦ· τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὔπλαστοι οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοί εἰσιν. τούς τε λόγους καὶ τοὺς πεποιημένους δεῖ καὶ [1455b] αὐτὸν ποιοῦντα ἐκτίθεσθαι καθόλου, εἶθ' οὕτως ἐπεισοδιοῦν καὶ παρατείνειν.

ENGLISH

When constructing plots and working them out in diction, the poet should put things before his eyes as much as possible. Seeing them most vividly this way, as if he were present at the actions themselves, he will find what is fitting, and inconsistencies will be least likely to escape him. A sign of this is the fault found with Carcinus. His Amphiaraus was coming back up from the shrine; this went unnoticed by anyone who did not see it, but on stage the play failed, because the audience was annoyed by it. As far as possible, the poet should also work things out with gestures. Given the same natural gifts, those who are actually in the grip of emotions are the most convincing: the one who is in turmoil conveys turmoil, and the one who is angry conveys anger, most truly. That is why the art of poetry belongs to a naturally gifted person or to a mad one: the first are adaptable, the second are carried out of themselves. As for stories, whether already made up or invented by the poet [1455b] himself, he should first set them out in general terms, and only then add episodes and extend them.

1455b

GREEK

λέγω δὲ οὕτως ἂν θεωρεῖσθαι τὸ καθόλου, οἷον τῆς Ἰφιγενείας· τυθείσης τινὸς κόρης καὶ ἀφανισθείσης ἀδήλως τοῖς θύσασιν, ἱδρυνθείσης δὲ εἰς ἄλλην χώραν, ἐν ᾗ νόμος ἦν τοὺς ξένους θύειν τῇ θεῷ, ταύτην ἔσχε τὴν ἱερωσύνην· χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον τῷ ἀδελφῷ συνέβη ἐλθεῖν τῆς ἱερείας, τὸ δὲ ὅτι ἀνεῖλεν ὁ θεὸς [διά τινα αἰτίαν ἔξω τοῦ καθόλου] ἐλθεῖν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐφ' ὅ τι δὲ ἔξω τοῦ μύθου· ἐλθὼν δὲ καὶ ληφθεὶς θύεσθαι μέλλων ἀνεγνώρισεν, εἴθ' ὡς Εὐριπίδης εἴθ' ὡς Πολύιδος ἐποίησεν, κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς εἰπὼν ὅτι οὐκ ἄρα μόνον τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδει τυθῆναι, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἡ σωτηρία.

ENGLISH

By considering the general outline I mean something like this, taking the *Iphigenia* as an example. A girl was sacrificed and vanished without her sacrificers knowing how. She was settled in another country, where it was the custom to sacrifice strangers to the goddess, and she came to hold this priesthood. Some time later the priestess's brother happened to arrive. That the god ordered him, for some reason outside the general outline, to go there, and what he went for, lie outside the plot. He arrived, was seized, and when he was about to be sacrificed he made himself known—whether as Euripides made it happen or as Polyidus did, by saying, as was probable, that it was not only his sister, it seemed, who was fated to be sacrificed, but he himself too; and from this came his rescue.

GREEK

μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ ἤδη ὑποθέντα τὰ ὀνόματα ἐπεισοδιοῦν· ὅπως δὲ ἔσται οἰκεῖα τὰ ἐπεισόδια, οἷον ἐν τῷ Ὀρέστῃ ἡ μανία δι' ἣς ἐλήφθη καὶ ἡ σωτηρία διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως. ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς δράμασιν τὰ ἐπεισόδια σύντομα, ἡ δ' [ἐποποιία] τούτοις μηκύνεται. τῆς γὰρ Ὀδυσσείας οὐ μακρὸς ὁ λόγος ἐστίν· ἀποδημοῦντός τινος ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ παραφυλαττομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος καὶ μόνου ὄντος, ἔτι δὲ τῶν οἴκοι οὕτως ἐχόντων ὥστε τὰ χρήματα ὑπὸ μνηστήρων ἀναλίσκεσθαι καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀφικνεῖται χειμασθείς, καὶ ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς ἐπιθέμενος αὐτὸς μὲν ἐσώθη τοὺς δ' ἐχθροὺς διέφθειρε. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἴδιον τοῦτο, τὰ δ' ἄλλα ἐπεισόδια.

ENGLISH

After this, once the names have been assigned, the poet should work in the episodes, and see to it that the episodes belong to the story: for instance, in the case of Orestes, the madness through which he was captured, and his rescue by means of the purification. In plays, then, the episodes are short, while epic is lengthened by them. The story of the *Odyssey* is not long. A man is away from home for many years, watched closely by Poseidon, and alone. Meanwhile affairs at home are such that his property is being squandered by suitors and his son is the target of plots. He himself arrives home, storm-tossed, makes himself known to certain people, and attacks; he himself is saved, and he destroys his enemies. This is what is essential; the rest is episodes.[35]

COMPLICATION AND RESOLUTION

Every tragedy has a complication and resolution; the chorus should share in the action.

GREEK

ἔστι δὲ πάσης τραγῳδίας τὸ μὲν δέσις τὸ δὲ λύσις, τὰ μὲν ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔνια τῶν ἔσωθεν πολλάκις ἡ δέσις, τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἡ λύσις· λέγω δὲ δέσιν μὲν εἶναι τὴν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μέχρι τούτου τοῦ μέρους ὃ ἔσχατόν ἐστιν ἐξ οὗ μεταβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἢ εἰς ἀτυχίαν, λύσιν δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς μεταβάσεως μέχρι τέλους· ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ Λυγκεῖ τῷ Θεοδέκτου δέσις μὲν τά τε προπεπραγμένα καὶ ἡ τοῦ παιδίου λῆψις καὶ πάλιν ἡ αὐτῶν ⟨λύσις⟩ δ' ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰτιάσεως τοῦ θανάτου μέχρι τοῦ τέλους.

ENGLISH

Every tragedy has a complication and a resolution. The complication consists of events outside the play and often some of those within it; the rest is the resolution. By complication I mean everything from the beginning up to the last point before the change to good or bad fortune; by resolution, everything from the beginning of the change to the end. So in Theodectes' *Lynceus*, the complication is the events that happened beforehand, the

35 "Purification" here is *katharsis* in its ritual sense: in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, the escape is managed under the pretext of purifying the goddess's statue in the sea.

GREEK

ENGLISH

seizure of the child, and then in turn their own …; the resolution runs from the accusation of murder to the end.

τραγῳδίας δὲ εἴδη εἰσὶ τέσσαρα (τοσαῦτα γὰρ καὶ τὰ μέρη ἐλέχθη), ἡ μὲν πεπλεγμένη, ἧς τὸ ὅλον ἐστὶν περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις, ἡ δὲ παθητική, οἷον οἵ τε 1456a Αἴαντες καὶ οἱ Ἰξίονες, ἡ δὲ ἠθική, οἷον αἱ Φθιώτιδες καὶ ὁ Πηλεύς· τὸ δὲ τέταρτον † οης †, οἷον αἵ τε Φορκίδες καὶ ὁ Προμηθεὺς καὶ ὅσα ἐν ᾅδου. μάλιστα μὲν οὖν ἅπαντα δεῖ πειρᾶσθαι ἔχειν, εἰ δὲ μή, τὰ μέγιστα καὶ πλεῖστα, ἄλλως τε καὶ ὡς νῦν συκοφαντοῦσιν τοὺς ποιητάς· γεγονότων γὰρ καθ' ἕκαστον μέρος ἀγαθῶν ποιητῶν, ἑκάστου τοῦ ἰδίου ἀγαθοῦ ἀξιοῦσι τὸν ἕνα ὑπερβάλλειν. δίκαιον δὲ καὶ τραγῳδίαν ἄλλην καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν λέγειν οὐδενὶ ὡς τῷ μύθῳ· τοῦτο δέ, ὧν ἡ αὐτὴ πλοκὴ καὶ λύσις.

There are four kinds of tragedy (for that is also the number of parts that were mentioned): the complex, whose whole consists of reversal and recognition; the tragedy of suffering, such as the 1456a *Ajax* and *Ixion* plays; the tragedy of character, such as the *Women of Phthia* and the *Peleus*; and the fourth, …, such as the *Daughters of Phorcys*, the *Prometheus*, and plays set in Hades. Ideally, then, a poet should try to have all these elements, or failing that the most important and as many as possible, especially given the way people now carp at poets: since there have been good poets for each kind, they expect one poet to surpass each of them in his particular strength. It is right to call a tragedy different from another, or the same, on no basis so much as the plot—that is, when they have the same complication and resolution.[36]

1456a πολλοὶ δὲ πλέξαντες εὖ λύουσι κακῶς· δεῖ δὲ ἀμφότερα ἀρτικροτεῖσθαι. χρὴ δὲ ὅπερ εἴρηται πολλάκις μεμνῆσθαι καὶ μὴ ποιεῖν ἐποποιικὸν σύστημα τραγῳδίαν— ἐποποιικὸν δὲ λέγω τὸ πολύμυθον— οἷον εἴ τις τὸν τῆς Ἰλιάδος ὅλον ποιοῖ μῦθον. ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τὸ μῆκος λαμβάνει τὰ μέρη τὸ πρέπον μέγεθος, ἐν δὲ τοῖς δράμασι πολὺ παρὰ τὴν ὑπόληψιν ἀποβαίνει. σημεῖον δέ, ὅσοι πέρσιν Ἰλίου ὅλην ἐποίησαν καὶ μὴ κατὰ μέρος ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδης, ⟨ἢ⟩ Νιόβην καὶ μὴ ὥσπερ Αἰσχύλος, ἢ ἐκπίπτουσιν ἢ κακῶς ἀγωνίζονται, ἐπεὶ καὶ Ἀγάθων ἐξέπεσεν ἐν τούτῳ μόνῳ. ἐν δὲ ταῖς περιπετείαις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἁπλοῖς πράγμασι στοχάζονται ὧν βούλονται θαυμαστῶς· τραγικὸν γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ φιλάνθρωπον. ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο, ὅταν ὁ σοφὸς μὲν μετὰ πονηρίας ⟨δ'⟩ ἐξαπατηθῇ, ὥσπερ Σίσυφος, καὶ ὁ ἀνδρεῖος μὲν ἄδικος δὲ ἡττηθῇ.

Many poets handle the complication well and the resolution badly; but both must always be mastered. And one must remember what has often been said, and not make a tragedy out of an epic structure—by epic I mean one with many plots—as if someone were to make a tragedy of the whole plot of the *Iliad*. There, because of the length, the parts take on their appropriate magnitude, but in plays the result falls far short of expectations. A sign of this: those who have dramatized the whole sack of Troy, and not part by part as Euripides did, or the whole of Niobe's story, and not as Aeschylus did, either fail on stage or do badly in the competition; even Agathon failed in this one respect alone. In reversals and in simple actions, though, poets hit what they aim at with astonishing skill; for this is tragic and satisfies our human sympathy. This happens when a clever but wicked man is deceived, like Sisyphus, or a brave but unjust man is defeated.

ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο καὶ εἰκὸς ὥσπερ Ἀγάθων λέγει, εἰκὸς γὰρ γίνεσθαι πολλὰ καὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰκός. καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι μὴ ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδῃ ἀλλ' ὥσπερ Σοφοκλεῖ. τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς τὰ ᾀδόμενα οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τοῦ μύθου ἢ ἄλλης τραγῳδίας ἐστίν· διὸ ἐμβόλιμα ᾄδουσιν πρώτου ἄρξαντος Ἀγάθωνος τοῦ τοιούτου. καίτοι τί

This is also probable, as Agathon says: it is probable that many things happen even contrary to probability. The chorus, too, should be treated as one of the actors: it should be a part of the whole and share in the action, not as in Euripides but as in Sophocles. In the other poets the songs have no more to do with the plot than with any other

36 The name of the fourth kind is corrupt in the Greek; editors often restore "spectacle."

GREEK	ENGLISH
διαφέρει ἢ ἐμβόλιμα ᾄδειν ἢ εἰ ῥῆσιν ἐξ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλο ἁρμόττοι ἢ ἐπεισόδιον ὅλον;	tragedy; that is why they sing interludes, a practice Agathon started. Yet what difference is there between singing interludes and fitting a speech, or a whole episode, from one play into another?

THOUGHT AND DICTION

Thought is left to rhetoric; the study of delivery is set aside as not part of poetry.

GREEK	ENGLISH
περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἄλλων εἰδῶν εἴρηται, λοιπὸν δὲ περὶ λέξεως καὶ διανοίας εἰπεῖν. τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐν τοῖς περὶ ῥητορικῆς κείσθω· τοῦτο γὰρ ἴδιον μᾶλλον ἐκείνης τῆς μεθόδου. ἔστι δὲ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν ταῦτα, ὅσα ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου δεῖ παρασκευασθῆναι. μέρη δὲ τούτων τό τε ἀποδεικνύναι καὶ τὸ λύειν καὶ τὸ πάθη παρασκευάζειν (οἷον 1456b ἔλεον ἢ φόβον ἢ ὀργὴν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα) καὶ ἔτι μέγεθος καὶ μικρότητας. δῆλον δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ἰδεῶν δεῖ χρῆσθαι ὅταν ἢ ἐλεεινὰ ἢ δεινὰ ἢ μεγάλα ἢ εἰκότα δέῃ παρασκευάζειν· πλὴν τοσοῦτον διαφέρει, ὅτι τὰ μὲν δεῖ φαίνεσθαι ἄνευ διδασκαλίας, τὰ δὲ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ λέγοντος παρασκευάζεσθαι καὶ παρὰ τὸν λόγον γίγνεσθαι.	The other elements have now been discussed; it remains to speak of diction and thought. What concerns thought may be left to my works on rhetoric, since it belongs more properly to that inquiry. Under thought falls everything that has to be produced by speech. Its parts are proving, refuting, arousing emotions (such as 1456b pity, fear, anger, and the like), and also making things seem great or small. Clearly the incidents, too, must draw on the same kinds of means whenever they need to make things seem pitiable, terrible, important, or probable. The only difference is that the incidents must make their impression without explanation, whereas in speech it must be produced by the speaker and arise through the speech.
1456b τί γὰρ ἂν εἴη τοῦ λέγοντος ἔργον, εἰ φαίνοιτο ᾗ δέοι καὶ μὴ διὰ τὸν λόγον; τῶν δὲ περὶ τὴν λέξιν ἓν μέν ἐστιν εἶδος θεωρίας τὰ σχήματα τῆς λέξεως, ἅ ἐστιν εἰδέναι τῆς ὑποκριτικῆς καὶ τοῦ τὴν τοιαύτην ἔχοντος ἀρχιτεκτονικήν, οἷον τί ἐντολὴ καὶ τί εὐχὴ καὶ διήγησις καὶ ἀπειλὴ καὶ ἐρώτησις καὶ ἀπόκρισις καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο τοιοῦτον. παρὰ γὰρ τὴν τούτων γνῶσιν ἢ ἄγνοιαν οὐδὲν εἰς τὴν ποιητικὴν ἐπιτίμημα φέρεται ὅ τι καὶ ἄξιον σπουδῆς. τί γὰρ ἄν τις ὑπολάβοι ἡμαρτῆσθαι ἃ Πρωταγόρας ἐπιτιμᾷ, ὅτι εὔχεσθαι οἰόμενος ἐπιτάττει εἰπὼν μῆνιν ἄειδε θεά; τὸ γὰρ κελεῦσαι, φησίν, ποιεῖν τι ἢ μὴ ἐπίταξίς ἐστιν. διὸ παρείσθω ὡς ἄλλης καὶ οὐ τῆς ποιητικῆς ὂν θεώρημα.	For what would be the speaker's function if things appeared as they should without his speech? Of the matters concerning diction, one field of study is the modes of expression. Knowing these belongs to the art of delivery and to whoever has mastery of that art: for instance, what a command is, what a prayer is, a narration, a threat, a question, an answer, and anything else of this kind. Knowing or not knowing these things brings no criticism against the art of poetry that is worth taking seriously. For who would regard as a mistake what Protagoras criticizes—that the poet, thinking he is praying, gives a command when he says "Sing, goddess, of the wrath"? To tell someone to do something or not, he says, is a command. So let this be set aside as belonging to another study, not to poetry.[37]

37 Protagoras was a fifth-century BC sophist; "Sing, goddess, of the wrath" is the opening of the *Iliad*.

THE PARTS OF LANGUAGE

Aristotle lists the elements of speech, from letter and syllable to noun, verb and utterance.

GREEK

τῆς δὲ λέξεως ἁπάσης τάδ' ἐστὶ τὰ μέρη, στοιχεῖον συλλαβὴ σύνδεσμος ὄνομα ῥῆμα ἄρθρον πτῶσις λόγος. στοιχεῖον μὲν οὖν ἐστιν φωνὴ ἀδιαίρετος, οὐ πᾶσα δὲ ἀλλ' ἐξ ἧς πέφυκε συνθετὴ γίγνεσθαι φωνή· καὶ γὰρ τῶν θηρίων εἰσὶν ἀδιαίρετοι φωναί, ὧν οὐδεμίαν λέγω στοιχεῖον. ταύτης δὲ μέρη τό τε φωνῆεν καὶ τὸ ἡμίφωνον καὶ ἄφωνον. ἔστιν δὲ ταῦτα φωνῆεν μὲν ⟨τὸ⟩ ἄνευ προσβολῆς ἔχον φωνὴν ἀκουστήν, ἡμίφωνον δὲ τὸ μετὰ προσβολῆς ἔχον φωνὴν ἀκουστήν, οἷον τὸ Σ καὶ τὸ Ρ, ἄφωνον δὲ τὸ μετὰ προσβολῆς καθ' αὑτὸ μὲν οὐδεμίαν ἔχον φωνήν, μετὰ δὲ τῶν ἐχόντων τινὰ φωνὴν γινόμενον ἀκουστόν, οἷον τὸ Γ καὶ τὸ Δ.

ταῦτα δὲ διαφέρει σχήμασίν τε τοῦ στόματος καὶ τόποις καὶ δασύτητι καὶ ψιλότητι καὶ μήκει καὶ βραχύτητι ἔτι δὲ ὀξύτητι καὶ βαρύτητι καὶ τῷ μέσῳ· περὶ ὧν καθ' ἕκαστον ἐν τοῖς μετρικοῖς προσήκει θεωρεῖν. συλλαβὴ δέ ἐστιν φωνὴ ἄσημος συνθετὴ ἐξ ἀφώνου καὶ φωνὴν ἔχοντος· καὶ γὰρ τὸ ΓΡ ἄνευ τοῦ Α † συλλαβὴ καὶ † μετὰ τοῦ Α, οἷον τὸ ΓΡΑ. ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων θεωρῆσαι τὰς διαφορὰς τῆς μετρικῆς ἐστιν. σύνδεσμος δέ ἐστιν φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ οὔτε 1457a κωλύει οὔτε ποιεῖ φωνὴν μίαν σημαντικὴν ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν πεφυκυῖα συντίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου ἣν μὴ ἁρμόττει ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγου τιθέναι καθ' αὑτήν, οἷον μέν ἤτοι δέ.

1457a ἣ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ ἐκ πλειόνων μὲν φωνῶν μιᾶς σημαντικῶν δὲ ποιεῖν πέφυκεν μίαν σημαντικὴν φωνήν. ἄρθρον δ' ἐστὶ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ λόγου ἀρχὴν ἢ τέλος ἢ διορισμὸν δηλοῖ. οἷον τὸ ἀμφί καὶ τὸ περί καὶ τὰ ἄλλα. ἣ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ οὔτε κωλύει οὔτε ποιεῖ φωνὴν μίαν σημαντικὴν ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν πεφυκυῖα τίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου. ὄνομα δέ ἐστι φωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ ἄνευ χρόνου ἧς μέρος οὐδέν ἐστι καθ' αὑτὸ σημαντικόν· ἐν γὰρ τοῖς διπλοῖς οὐ χρώμεθα ὡς καὶ αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ σημαῖνον, οἷον ἐν τῷ Θεόδωρος τὸ δωρος οὐ σημαίνει.

ENGLISH

Diction as a whole has the following parts: letter, syllable, connective, noun, verb, article, inflection, utterance. A letter is an indivisible sound—not every such sound, but one from which a compound sound can naturally be formed. Animals too utter indivisible sounds, but I call none of these a letter. Its kinds are the vowel, the semivowel, and the mute. A vowel is a letter that has an audible sound without contact of tongue or lips; a semivowel has an audible sound with such contact, such as S and R; a mute, with such contact, has no sound by itself but becomes audible together with letters that have some sound, such as G and D.

These differ according to the shapes of the mouth and the places where they are made, in aspiration and its absence, in length and shortness, and also in high, low, and intermediate pitch. The detailed study of these belongs to works on meter. A syllable is a sound without meaning, composed of a mute and a letter that has sound: GR without A is a syllable, and so is GRA, with A. But the study of the differences among these too belongs to the science of meter. A connective is a sound without meaning which neither 1457a prevents nor produces a single meaningful sound out of several sounds, which can naturally be placed both at the ends and in the middle, but which it is not proper to put by itself at the beginning of an utterance: for instance, *men*, *ētoi*, *de*.

GREEK	ENGLISH
	Or: a sound without meaning which can naturally make one meaningful sound out of several sounds that each have meaning. An article is a sound without meaning which marks the beginning or end of an utterance, or a division within it: for instance, *amphi*, *peri*, and the others. Or: a sound without meaning which neither prevents nor produces a single meaningful sound out of several sounds, and which can naturally be placed both at the ends and in the middle. A noun is a compound sound with meaning, without time, no part of which has meaning by itself; for in double nouns we do not use a part as if it had meaning by itself—in *Theodōros*, for instance, *dōros* ("gift") has no meaning.[38]
ῥῆμα δὲ φωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ μετὰ χρόνου ἧς οὐδὲν μέρος σημαίνει καθ' αὑτό, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἢ λευκόν οὐ σημαίνει τὸ πότε, τὸ δὲ βαδίζει ἢ βεβάδικεν προσσημαίνει τὸ μὲν τὸν παρόντα χρόνον τὸ δὲ τὸν παρεληλυθότα. πτῶσις δ' ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἢ ῥήματος ἡ μὲν κατὰ τὸ τούτου ἢ τούτῳ σημαῖνον καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἑνὶ ἢ πολλοῖς, οἷον ἄνθρωποι ἢ ἄνθρωπος, ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὰ ὑποκριτικά, οἷον κατ' ἐρώτησιν ἐπίταξιν· τὸ γὰρ ἐβάδισεν; ἢ βάδιζε πτῶσις ῥήματος κατὰ ταῦτα τὰ εἴδη ἐστίν.	A verb is a compound sound with meaning, with time, no part of which has meaning by itself, just as with nouns. "Man" or "white" does not signify when, but "walks" or "has walked" signifies in addition the present time in the one case and the past in the other. Inflection belongs to a noun or verb: one kind signifies "of this" or "to this" and the like; another signifies one or many, such as "men" or "man"; another concerns modes of delivery, such as question or command—"Did he walk?" and "Walk!" are inflections of a verb according to these kinds.
λόγος δὲ φωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ ἧς ἔνια μέρη καθ' αὑτὰ σημαίνει τι (οὐ γὰρ ἅπας λόγος ἐκ ῥημάτων καὶ ὀνομάτων σύγκειται, οἷον ὁ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁρισμός, ἀλλ' ἐνδέχεται ἄνευ ῥημάτων εἶναι λόγον, μέρος μέντοι ἀεί τι σημαῖνον ἕξει) οἷον ἐν τῷ βαδίζει Κλέων ὁ Κλέων. εἷς δέ ἐστι λόγος διχῶς, ἢ γὰρ ὁ ἓν σημαίνων, ἢ ὁ ἐκ πλειόνων συνδέσμῳ, οἷον ἡ Ἰλιὰς μὲν συνδέσμῳ εἷς, ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῷ ἓν σημαίνειν.	An utterance is a compound sound with meaning, some parts of which have meaning by themselves. (Not every utterance is composed of verbs and nouns—the definition of man, for instance—but there can be an utterance without verbs; still, it will always have some part with meaning.) For example, "Cleon" in "Cleon walks." An utterance is one in two ways: either it signifies one thing, or it is made one out of several by a connective. So the *Iliad* is one by connection, the definition of man by signifying one thing.

KINDS OF WORDS AND METAPHOR

Nouns are classified, and metaphor is defined with its four types.

GREEK	ENGLISH
ὀνόματος δὲ εἴδη τὸ μὲν ἁπλοῦν, ἁπλοῦν δὲ λέγω ὃ μὴ ἐκ σημαινόντων σύγκειται, οἷον γῆ, τὸ δὲ διπλοῦν· τούτου δὲ τὸ μὲν ἐκ σημαίνοντος καὶ ἀσήμου, πλὴν οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι σημαίνοντος καὶ ἀσήμου, τὸ δὲ ἐκ σημαινόντων	Nouns are of two kinds. One is simple—by simple I mean not composed of meaningful parts, such as *gē* ("earth"). The other is double. Of double nouns, some are made of a meaningful and a meaningless

38 The text of the definitions of connective and article is badly preserved, which is why it repeats itself.

GREEK

σύγκειται. εἴη δ' ἂν καὶ τριπλοῦν καὶ τετραπλοῦν ὄνομα καὶ πολλαπλοῦν, οἷον τὰ πολλὰ τῶν Μασσαλιωτῶν, [1457b] Ἑρμοκαϊκόξανθος... ἅπαν δὲ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἢ κύριον ἢ γλῶττα ἢ μεταφορὰ ἢ κόσμος ἢ πεποιημένον ἢ ἐπεκτεταμένον ἢ ὑφῃρημένον ἢ ἐξηλλαγμένον. λέγω δὲ κύριον μὲν ᾧ χρῶνται ἕκαστοι, γλῶτταν δὲ ᾧ ἕτεροι· ὥστε φανερὸν ὅτι καὶ γλῶτταν καὶ κύριον εἶναι δυνατὸν τὸ αὐτό, μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς δέ· τὸ γὰρ σίγυνον Κυπρίοις μὲν κύριον, ἡμῖν δὲ γλῶττα.

ENGLISH

part (though not meaningful and meaningless within the noun), others of meaningful parts. There could also be triple, quadruple, and multiple nouns, like many of the Massaliots' words, [1457b] *Hermocaïcoxanthus*... Every noun is either a standard word, a foreign word, a metaphor, an ornament, a coined word, a lengthened word, a shortened word, or an altered word. By a standard word I mean one that a given people uses; by a foreign word, one that others use. So clearly the same word can be both foreign and standard, but not for the same people: *sigynon* ("spear") is standard for Cypriots but foreign for us.[39]

1457b μεταφορὰ δέ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἴδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἴδους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον. λέγω δὲ ἀπὸ γένους μὲν ἐπὶ εἶδος οἷον "νηῦς δέ μοι ἥδ' ἕστηκεν·" τὸ γὰρ ὁρμεῖν ἐστιν ἑστάναι τι. ἀπ' εἴδους δὲ ἐπὶ γένος "ἦ δὴ μυρί' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργεν·" τὸ γὰρ μυρίον πολύ ἐστιν, ᾧ νῦν ἀντὶ τοῦ πολλοῦ κέχρηται. ἀπ' εἴδους δὲ ἐπὶ εἶδος οἷον "χαλκῷ ἀπὸ ψυχὴν ἀρύσας" καὶ "τεμὼν ταναήκεϊ χαλκῷ·" ἐνταῦθα γὰρ τὸ μὲν ἀρύσαι ταμεῖν, τὸ δὲ ταμεῖν ἀρύσαι εἴρηκεν· ἄμφω γὰρ ἀφελεῖν τί ἐστιν.

Metaphor is the application to something of a word that belongs to something else, either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy. By "from genus to species" I mean, for instance, "Here stands my ship": lying at anchor is a kind of standing. From species to genus: "Truly ten thousand noble deeds has Odysseus done": ten thousand is a large number, and it is used here instead of "many." From species to species: for instance, "drawing off the life with bronze" and "cutting with the long-edged bronze": here he has said "draw off" for "cut" and "cut" for "draw off," since both are kinds of taking away.

τὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω, ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχῃ τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον· ἐρεῖ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ δευτέρου τὸ τέταρτον ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ τετάρτου τὸ δεύτερον. καὶ ἐνίοτε προστιθέασιν ἀνθ' οὗ λέγει πρὸς ὅ ἐστι. λέγω δὲ οἷον ὁμοίως ἔχει φιάλη πρὸς Διόνυσον καὶ ἀσπὶς πρὸς Ἄρη· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν φιάλην ἀσπίδα Διονύσου καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα φιάλην Ἄρεως. ἢ ὃ γῆρας πρὸς βίον, καὶ ἑσπέρα πρὸς ἡμέραν· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν ἑσπέραν γῆρας ἡμέρας ἢ ὥσπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἑσπέραν βίου ἢ δυσμὰς βίου.

By analogy I mean when the second term stands to the first as the fourth does to the third: the poet will then say the fourth instead of the second, or the second instead of the fourth. And sometimes poets add the term to which the replaced word is related. I mean, for instance: the cup stands to Dionysus as the shield does to Ares; so he will call the cup "the shield of Dionysus" and the shield "the cup of Ares." Or: old age stands to life as evening does to day; so he will call evening "the old age of day," or as Empedocles does, and old age "the evening of life" or "the sunset of life."

ἐνίοις δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ὄνομα κείμενον τῶν ἀνάλογον, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἧττον ὁμοίως λεχθήσεται· οἷον τὸ τὸν καρπὸν μὲν ἀφιέναι σπείρειν, τὸ δὲ τὴν φλόγα ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνώνυμον· ἀλλ' ὁμοίως ἔχει τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὸ σπείρειν πρὸς τὸν καρπόν, διὸ εἴρηται "σπείρων θεοκτίσταν φλόγα." ἔστι δὲ τῷ τρόπῳ τούτῳ τῆς μεταφορᾶς χρῆσθαι καὶ ἄλλως, προσαγορεύσαντα τὸ

Some of the terms in an analogy have no established name, but the metaphor can be expressed just the same. For instance, casting seed is called "sowing," but the sun's casting of its flame has no name. Yet this stands to the sun as sowing does to the seed; hence the phrase "sowing the god-created flame." This kind of metaphor can also be

39 The Massaliots were the people of Massalia (Marseille); the example strings together the names of three rivers, the Hermus, Caicus and Xanthus.

GREEK

ἀλλότριον ἀποφῆσαι τῶν οἰκείων τι, οἷον εἰ τὴν ἀσπίδα εἴποι φιάλην μὴ Ἄρεως ἀλλ' ἄοινον... πεποιημένον δ' ἐστὶν ὃ ὅλως μὴ καλούμενον ὑπὸ τινῶν αὐτὸς τίθεται ὁ ποιητής, δοκεῖ γὰρ ἔνια εἶναι τοιαῦτα, οἷον τὰ κέρατα ἔρνυγας καὶ τὸν ἱερέα ἀρητῆρα.

ἐπεκτεταμένον 1458a δέ ἐστιν ἢ ἀφῃρημένον, τὸ μὲν ἐὰν φωνήεντι μακροτέρῳ κεχρημένον ᾖ τοῦ οἰκείου ἢ συλλαβῇ ἐμβεβλημένῃ, τὸ δὲ ἂν ἀφῃρημένον τι ᾖ αὐτοῦ, ἐπεκτεταμένον μὲν οἷον τὸ πόλεως πόληος καὶ τὸ Πηλείδου Πηληιάδεω, ἀφῃρημένον δὲ οἷον τὸ κρῖ καὶ τὸ δῶ καὶ "μία γίνεται ἀμφοτέρων ὄψ." ἐξηλλαγμένον δ' ἐστὶν ὅταν τοῦ ὀνομαζομένου τὸ μὲν καταλείπῃ τὸ δὲ ποιῇ, οἷον τὸ "δεξιτερὸν κατὰ μαζόν" ἀντὶ τοῦ δεξιόν.

1458a αὐτῶν δὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων τὰ μὲν ἄρρενα τὰ δὲ θήλεα τὰ δὲ μεταξύ, ἄρρενα μὲν ὅσα τελευτᾷ εἰς τὸ Ν καὶ Ρ καὶ Σ καὶ ὅσα ἐκ τούτου σύγκειται (ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν δύο, Ψ καὶ Ξ), θήλεα δὲ ὅσα ἐκ τῶν φωνηέντων εἴς τε τὰ ἀεὶ μακρά, οἷον εἰς Η καὶ Ω, καὶ τῶν ἐπεκτεινομένων εἰς Α· ὥστε ἴσα συμβαίνει πλήθει εἰς ὅσα τὰ ἄρρενα καὶ τὰ θήλεα· τὸ γὰρ Ψ καὶ τὸ Ξ σύνθετά ἐστιν. εἰς δὲ ἄφωνον οὐδὲν ὄνομα τελευτᾷ, οὐδὲ εἰς φωνῆεν βραχύ. εἰς δὲ τὸ Ι τρία μόνον, μέλι κόμμι πέπερι. εἰς δὲ τὸ Υ πέντε. τὰ δὲ μεταξὺ εἰς ταῦτα καὶ Ν καὶ Σ.

ENGLISH

used in another way: after applying the borrowed term, one denies it one of its proper attributes—as if one were to call the shield not "the cup of Ares" but "the wineless cup"... A coined word is one not used by anyone at all but introduced by the poet himself; some words seem to be of this kind, such as *ernyges* ("sprouters") for horns and *arētēr* ("one who prays") for priest.[40]

A lengthened word 1458a or a shortened one is, in the first case, one that uses a longer vowel than its own or has a syllable inserted, and in the second, one from which something has been removed. Lengthened: *polēos* for *poleōs*, and *Pēlēïadeō* for *Pēleidou*. Shortened: *kri*, *dō*, and "*ops* comes to be one from both." An altered word is one in which part of the name is kept and part is made up, as in "on the *dexiteron* breast" instead of *dexion* ("right").[41]

Nouns themselves are masculine, feminine, or in between. Masculine are those ending in N, R and S, and in the letters compounded with S (there are two of these, Ps and X). Feminine are those ending in the vowels that are always long, such as Ē and Ō, and, among the vowels that can be lengthened, in A. So the number of endings for masculine and feminine turns out to be equal, since Ps and X are compounds. No noun ends in a mute, nor in a short vowel. Only three end in I: *meli* (honey), *kommi* (gum), and *peperi* (pepper). Five end in U. Those in between end in these, and in N and S.

THE EXCELLENCE OF DICTION

Good diction is clear but not commonplace, mixing standard words with metaphors and rarer words.

GREEK

λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφῆ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι. σαφεστάτη μὲν οὖν ἐστιν ἡ ἐκ τῶν κυρίων ὀνομάτων, ἀλλὰ ταπεινή· παράδειγμα δὲ ἡ Κλεοφῶντος ποίησις καὶ ἡ Σθενέλου. σεμνὴ δὲ καὶ ἐξαλλάττουσα τὸ ἰδιωτικὸν ἡ τοῖς ξενικοῖς κεχρημένη· ξενικὸν δὲ λέγω γλῶτταν καὶ μεταφορὰν καὶ ἐπέκτασιν καὶ πᾶν τὸ παρὰ τὸ κύριον. ἀλλ' ἄν τις ἅπαντα τοιαῦτα ποιήσῃ, ἢ αἴνιγμα ἔσται ἢ βαρβαρισμός· ἂν μὲν οὖν ἐκ μεταφορῶν, αἴνιγμα, ἐὰν δὲ ἐκ γλωττῶν, βαρβαρισμός. αἰνίγματός τε γὰρ ἰδέα αὕτη ἐστί, τὸ λέγοντα ὑπάρχοντα ἀδύνατα συνάψαι· κατὰ μὲν οὖν τὴν τῶν ⟨ἄλλων⟩ ὀνομάτων σύνθεσιν οὐχ οἷόν τε τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, κατὰ δὲ τὴν μεταφορῶν ἐνδέχεται, οἷον "ἄνδρ'

ENGLISH

The excellence of diction is to be clear and not commonplace. The clearest diction consists of standard words, but it is commonplace; the poetry of Cleophon and of Sthenelus is an example. Diction that uses unfamiliar words is dignified and gets away from the ordinary; by unfamiliar I mean foreign words, metaphor, lengthening, and everything that departs from standard usage. But if someone composes entirely in such words, the result will be either a riddle or gibberish: a riddle if it is made of metaphors, gibberish if made of for-

40 There is a gap in the text here: Aristotle's account of "ornament" has been lost.
41 *Kri* stands for *krithē* (barley), *dō* for *dōma* (house), *ops* for *opsis* (sight).

GREEK	ENGLISH
εἶδον πυρὶ χαλκὸν ἐπ' ἀνέρι κολλήσαντα," καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. τὰ δὲ ἐκ τῶν γλωττῶν βαρβαρισμός.	eign words. The essence of a riddle is to describe things that are actually the case by joining together impossibilities. This cannot be done by combining other words, but it can with metaphors—for instance, "I saw a man who with fire welded bronze onto a man," and the like. Composition made of foreign words is gibberish.[42]
δεῖ ἄρα κεκρᾶσθαί πως τούτοις· τὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ μὴ ἰδιωτικὸν ποιήσει μηδὲ ταπεινόν, οἷον ἡ γλῶττα καὶ ἡ μεταφορὰ καὶ ὁ κόσμος καὶ τἆλλα τὰ εἰρημένα εἴδη, τὸ δὲ κύριον τὴν σαφήνειαν. οὐκ ἐλάχιστον δὲ μέρος 1458b συμβάλλεται εἰς τὸ σαφὲς τῆς λέξεως καὶ μὴ ἰδιωτικὸν αἱ ἐπεκτάσεις καὶ ἀποκοπαὶ καὶ ἐξαλλαγαὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων· διὰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἄλλως ἔχειν ἢ ὡς τὸ κύριον παρὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς γιγνόμενον τὸ μὴ ἰδιωτικὸν ποιήσει, διὰ δὲ τὸ κοινωνεῖν τοῦ εἰωθότος τὸ σαφὲς ἔσται.	So there must be some kind of mixture of these. The one sort—the foreign word, the metaphor, the ornament, and the other kinds mentioned—will keep the diction from being ordinary or commonplace, while the standard word will give it clarity. Not the least contribution 1458b to diction that is both clear and not ordinary is made by lengthenings, shortenings, and alterations of words. Because they differ from the standard form and depart from the usual, they will make it not ordinary; and because they share in the usual, it will be clear.
1458b ὥστε οὐκ ὀρθῶς ψέγουσιν οἱ ἐπιτιμῶντες τῷ τοιούτῳ τρόπῳ τῆς διαλέκτου καὶ διακωμῳδοῦντες τὸν ποιητήν, οἷον Εὐκλείδης ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὡς ῥᾴδιον ὂν ποιεῖν εἴ τις δώσει ἐκτείνειν ἐφ' ὁπόσον βούλεται, ἰαμβοποιήσας ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ λέξει "Ἐπιχάρην εἶδον Μαραθῶνάδε βαδίζοντα," καὶ "οὐκ † ἂν γεράμενος † τὸν ἐκείνου ἐλλέβορον." τὸ μὲν οὖν φαίνεσθαί πως χρώμενον τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ γελοῖον· τὸ δὲ μέτρον κοινὸν ἁπάντων ἐστὶ τῶν μερῶν· καὶ γὰρ μεταφοραῖς καὶ γλώτταις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις εἴδεσι χρώμενος ἀπρεπῶς καὶ ἐπίτηδες ἐπὶ τὰ γελοῖα τὸ αὐτὸ ἂν ἀπεργάσαιτο. τὸ δὲ ἁρμόττον ὅσον διαφέρει ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπῶν θεωρείσθω ἐντιθεμένων τῶν ὀνομάτων εἰς τὸ μέτρον.	So those who find fault with this way of speaking, and make fun of the poet for it, are wrong—like Euclides the elder, who claimed it was easy to write poetry if one were allowed to lengthen syllables as much as one liked, and who lampooned it in that very diction: "I saw Epichares walking to Marathon," and "not … his hellebore." Now, to be seen using this device in an obvious way is ridiculous; but moderation applies to all the parts alike. Someone using metaphors, foreign words, and the other kinds inappropriately, and deliberately for comic effect, would achieve the same result. How much difference appropriate use makes should be observed in epic verse, by inserting standard words into the meter.[43]
καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γλώττης δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μεταφορῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἰδεῶν μετατιθεὶς ἄν τις τὰ κύρια ὀνόματα κατίδοι ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγομεν· οἷον τὸ αὐτὸ ποιήσαντος ἰαμβεῖον Αἰσχύλου καὶ Εὐριπίδου, ἓν δὲ μόνον ὄνομα μεταθέντος, ἀντὶ κυρίου εἰωθότος γλῶτταν, τὸ μὲν φαίνεται καλὸν τὸ δ' εὐτελές. Αἰσχύλος μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ Φιλοκτήτῃ ἐποίησε φαγέδαιναν ἥ μου σάρκας ἐσθίει ποδός, ὁ δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐσθίει τὸ θοινᾶται μετέθηκεν. καὶ νῦν δέ μ' ἐὼν ὀλίγος τε καὶ οὐτιδανὸς καὶ ἀεικής, εἴ τις λέγοι τὰ κύρια μετατιθεὶς νῦν δέ μ' ἐὼν μικρός τε καὶ ἀσθενικὸς καὶ ἀειδής· καὶ δίφρον ἀεικέλιον καταθεὶς	With foreign words, metaphors, and the other kinds too, anyone who substituted standard words would see that what we say is true. For instance, Aeschylus and Euripides wrote the same iambic line, but Euripides changed just one word, putting a foreign word in place of a standard, customary one; and the one line seems beautiful, the other cheap. Aeschylus in his *Philoctetes* wrote, "the ulcer that eats the flesh of my foot," and Euripides replaced "eats" with "feasts on." Again, take "and now one who is puny and of no account and un-

42 The answer to the riddle is cupping, a medical treatment in which a heated bronze cup was applied to the skin.
43 The lines Euclides quotes scan as verse only if ordinary short syllables are treated as long; the second line is corrupt in the Greek.

GREEK

ENGLISH

ὀλίγην τε τράπεζαν, δίφρον μοχθηρὸν καταθεὶς μικράν τε τράπεζαν· καὶ τὸ "ἠιόνες βοόωσιν," ἠιόνες κράζουσιν.

seemly"; suppose someone substituted standard words and said, "and now one who is small and weak and ugly." Or "setting down an unseemly stool and a puny table" as "setting down a poor stool and a small table"; or "the shores bellow" as "the shores shout."

ἔτι δὲ Ἀριφράδης τοὺς τραγῳδοὺς ἐκωμῴδει ὅτι ἃ οὐδεὶς ἂν εἴπειεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τούτοις χρῶνται, οἷον τὸ δωμάτων ἄπο ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀπὸ δωμάτων, καὶ τὸ σέθεν καὶ τὸ ἐγὼ δέ νιν καὶ τὸ [1459a] Ἀχιλλέως πέρι ἀλλὰ μὴ περὶ Ἀχιλλέως, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα. διὰ γὰρ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἐν τοῖς κυρίοις ποιεῖ τὸ μὴ ἰδιωτικὸν ἐν τῇ λέξει ἅπαντα τὰ τοιαῦτα· ἐκεῖνος δὲ τοῦτο ἠγνόει. ἔστιν δὲ μέγα μὲν τὸ ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰρημένων πρεπόντως χρῆσθαι, καὶ διπλοῖς ὀνόμασι καὶ γλώτταις, πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι. μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ' ἄλλου ἔστι λαβεῖν εὐφυΐας τε σημεῖόν ἐστι· τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἐστιν.

Again, Ariphrades used to ridicule the tragedians for using expressions no one would use in conversation, such as *dōmatōn apo* ("the house from") instead of *apo dōmatōn* ("from the house"), and *sethen*, and *egō de nin*, and [1459a] *Achilleōs peri* ("Achilles about") instead of *peri Achilleōs* ("about Achilles"), and so on. But precisely because they are not among the standard expressions, all such things make the diction not ordinary; and he did not realize this. It is a great thing to use each of the kinds mentioned appropriately, including double words and foreign words, but by far the greatest is to be good at metaphor. This alone cannot be learned from anyone else, and it is a sign of natural gifts: to make good metaphors is to see resemblances.

1459a τῶν δ' ὀνομάτων τὰ μὲν διπλᾶ μάλιστα ἁρμόττει τοῖς διθυράμβοις, αἱ δὲ γλῶτται τοῖς ἡρωικοῖς, αἱ δὲ μεταφοραὶ τοῖς ἰαμβείοις. καὶ ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἡρωικοῖς ἅπαντα χρήσιμα τὰ εἰρημένα, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἰαμβείοις διὰ τὸ ὅτι μάλιστα λέξιν μιμεῖσθαι ταῦτα ἁρμόττει τῶν ὀνομάτων ὅσοις κἂν ἐν λόγοις τις χρήσαιτο· ἔστι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα τὸ κύριον καὶ μεταφορὰ καὶ κόσμος. περὶ μὲν οὖν τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς ἐν τῷ πράττειν μιμήσεως ἔστω ἡμῖν ἱκανὰ τὰ εἰρημένα.

Of the kinds of words, double words suit dithyrambs best, foreign words suit heroic verse, and metaphors suit iambic verse. In heroic verse all the kinds mentioned are useful. But in iambic verse, since it imitates speech as closely as possible, the fitting words are those one would also use in conversation: that is, the standard word, metaphor, and ornament. Let this be enough, then, about tragedy and imitation through action.

UNITY IN EPIC

Epic, like tragedy, needs a single unified action, which Homer alone fully achieved.

GREEK

ENGLISH

περὶ δὲ τῆς διηγηματικῆς καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ μιμητικῆς, ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς μύθους καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις συνιστάναι δραματικοὺς καὶ περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν ἔχουσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος, ἵν' ὥσπερ ζῷον ἓν ὅλον ποιῇ τὴν οἰκείαν ἡδονήν, δῆλον, καὶ μὴ ὁμοίας ἱστορίαις τὰς συνθέσεις εἶναι, ἐν αἷς ἀνάγκη οὐχὶ μιᾶς πράξεως ποιεῖσθαι δήλωσιν ἀλλ' ἑνὸς χρόνου, ὅσα ἐν τούτῳ συνέβη περὶ ἕνα ἢ πλείους, ὧν ἕκαστον ὡς ἔτυχεν ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα. ὥσπερ γὰρ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους ἥ τ' ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ἐγένετο ναυμαχία καὶ ἡ ἐν Σικελίᾳ Καρχηδονίων μάχη οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ συντείνουσαι τέλος, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐφεξῆς χρόνοις ἐνίοτε γίνεται θάτερον μετὰ θάτερον, ἐξ ὧν ἓν οὐδὲν γίνεται τέλος. σχεδὸν δὲ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν τοῦτο δρῶσι.

As for the art of imitation that narrates in verse, it is clear that its plots, as in tragedies, should be constructed dramatically, around a single action that is whole and complete, with a beginning, middle and end, so that, like a single whole living creature, it may produce its proper pleasure. Its structures should not be like histories, which must set out not one action but one period of time, with everything that happened in it to one person or more, each of these events related to the others only by chance. Just as the sea battle at Salamis and the battle against the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time without tending toward the same end, so too in successive periods

GREEK

διὸ ὥσπερ εἴπομεν ἤδη καὶ ταύτῃ θεσπέσιος ἂν φανείη Ὅμηρος παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, τῷ μηδὲ τὸν πόλεμον καίπερ ἔχοντα ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος ἐπιχειρῆσαι ποιεῖν ὅλον· λίαν γὰρ ἂν μέγας καὶ οὐκ εὐσύνοπτος ἔμελλεν ἔσεσθαι ὁ μῦθος, ἢ τῷ μεγέθει μετριάζοντα καταπεπλεγμένον τῇ ποικιλίᾳ. νῦν δ' ἓν μέρος ἀπολαβὼν ἐπεισοδίοις κέχρηται αὐτῶν πολλοῖς, οἷον νεῶν καταλόγῳ καὶ ἄλλοις ἐπεισοδίοις [δὶς] διαλαμβάνει τὴν ποίησιν. οἱ δ' ἄλλοι περὶ ἕνα ποιοῦσι καὶ [1459b] περὶ ἕνα χρόνον καὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν πολυμερῆ, οἷον ὁ τὰ Κύπρια ποιήσας καὶ τὴν μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα. τοιγαροῦν ἐκ μὲν Ἰλιάδος καὶ Ὀδυσσείας μία τραγῳδία ποιεῖται ἑκατέρας ἢ δύο μόναι, ἐκ δὲ Κυπρίων πολλαὶ καὶ τῆς μικρᾶς Ἰλιάδος [[πλέον] ὀκτώ, οἷον ὅπλων κρίσις, Φιλοκτήτης, Νεοπτόλεμος, Εὐρύπυλος, πτωχεία, Λάκαιναι, Ἰλίου πέρσις καὶ ἀπόπλους [καὶ Σίνων καὶ Τρῳάδες]].

ENGLISH

one thing sometimes follows another without any single end resulting from them. Yet most poets, one might say, do this.[44]

That is why, as we have already said, Homer would seem marvelous compared with the others in this respect too: he did not try to make the war as a whole his subject, even though it had a beginning and an end. The plot would have been too large and not easy to take in at one view—or, if kept to a moderate length, too tangled by its variety. As it is, he has taken a single part, and used many of the others as episodes, such as the Catalogue of Ships and other episodes with which he diversifies the poem. The others compose about one person, [1459b] one period, or one action with many parts, like the author of the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad*. As a result, only one tragedy can be made from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, or two at most, but many from the *Cypria*, and more than eight from the *Little Iliad*: *The Judgment of the Arms*, *Philoctetes*, *Neoptolemus*, *Eurypylus*, *The Beggar's Mission*, *The Spartan Women*, *The Sack of Troy*, *The Departure*, *Sinon* and *The Trojan Women*.[45]

EPIC COMPARED WITH TRAGEDY

Epic shares tragedy's kinds and parts but differs in length and meter, and allows more of the wondrous.

GREEK

1459b ἔτι δὲ τὰ εἴδη ταὐτὰ δεῖ ἔχειν τὴν ἐποποιίαν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ, ἢ γὰρ ἁπλῆν ἢ πεπλεγμένην ἢ ἠθικὴν ἢ παθητικήν· καὶ τὰ μέρη ἔξω μελοποιίας καὶ ὄψεως ταὐτά· καὶ γὰρ περιπετειῶν δεῖ καὶ ἀναγνωρίσεων καὶ παθημάτων· ἔτι τὰς διανοίας καὶ τὴν λέξιν ἔχειν καλῶς. οἷς ἅπασιν Ὅμηρος κέχρηται καὶ πρῶτος καὶ ἱκανῶς. καὶ γὰρ τῶν ποιημάτων ἑκάτερον συνέστηκεν ἡ μὲν Ἰλιὰς ἁπλοῦν καὶ παθητικόν, ἡ δὲ Ὀδύσσεια πεπλεγμένον (ἀναγνώρισις γὰρ διόλου) καὶ ἠθική· πρὸς δὲ τούτοις λέξει καὶ διανοίᾳ πάντα ὑπερβέβληκεν.

διαφέρει δὲ κατά τε τῆς συστάσεως τὸ μῆκος ἡ ἐποποιία καὶ τὸ μέτρον. τοῦ μὲν οὖν μήκους ὅρος ἱκανὸς ὁ εἰρημένος· δύνασθαι γὰρ δεῖ συνορᾶσθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ τέλος. εἴη δ' ἂν τοῦτο, εἰ τῶν μὲν ἀρχαίων ἐλάττους αἱ συστάσεις εἶεν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ πλῆθος τραγῳδιῶν τῶν εἰς μίαν ἀκρόασιν τιθεμένων παρήκοιεν. ἔχει δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἐπεκτείνεσθαι τὸ μέγεθος πολύ τι ἡ ἐποποιία ἴδιον διὰ τὸ

ENGLISH

Further, epic must have the same kinds as tragedy: it must be simple or complex, a work of character or of suffering. It has the same parts too, apart from song and spectacle: it needs reversals, recognitions and sufferings, and its thought and diction must be good. Homer used all of these, both first and adequately. Of his two poems, the *Iliad* is structured as simple and a work of suffering, the *Odyssey* as complex (there is recognition throughout) and a work of character. On top of this, he surpassed everyone in diction and thought.

Epic differs in the length of its structure and in its meter. As for length, the limit already stated is adequate: one must be able to take in the beginning and the end in one view. This would be so if the structures were shorter than those of the old epics, and came to about the length of the tra-

44 Both battles were fought in 480 BC, at Salamis against the Persians and at Himera in Sicily.
45 The *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad* were lost epics telling other parts of the Trojan War story.

GREEK

ἐν μὲν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἅμα πραττόμενα πολλὰ μέρη μιμεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν μέρος μόνον· ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ διὰ τὸ διήγησιν εἶναι ἔστι πολλὰ μέρη ἅμα ποιεῖν περαινόμενα, ὑφ' ὧν οἰκείων ὄντων αὔξεται ὁ τοῦ ποιήματος ὄγκος.

ὥστε τοῦτ' ἔχει τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἰς μεγαλοπρέπειαν καὶ τὸ μεταβάλλειν τὸν ἀκούοντα καὶ ἐπεισοδιοῦν ἀνομοίοις ἐπεισοδίοις· τὸ γὰρ ὅμοιον ταχὺ πληροῦν ἐκπίπτειν ποιεῖ τὰς τραγῳδίας. τὸ δὲ μέτρον τὸ ἡρωικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας ἥρμοκεν. εἰ γάρ τις ἐν ἄλλῳ τινὶ μέτρῳ διηγηματικὴν μίμησιν ποιοῖτο ἢ ἐν πολλοῖς, ἀπρεπὲς ἂν φαίνοιτο· τὸ γὰρ ἡρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν (διὸ καὶ γλώττας καὶ μεταφορὰς δέχεται μάλιστα· περιττὴ γὰρ καὶ ἡ διηγηματικὴ μίμησις τῶν ἄλλων), τὸ δὲ ἰαμβεῖον καὶ τετράμετρον [1460a] κινητικὰ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀρχηστικὸν τὸ δὲ πρακτικόν. ἔτι δὲ ἀτοπώτερον εἰ μιγνύοι τις αὐτά, ὥσπερ Χαιρήμων. διὸ οὐδεὶς μακρὰν σύστασιν ἐν ἄλλῳ πεποίηκεν ἢ τῷ ἡρῴῳ, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἴπομεν αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις διδάσκει τὸ ἁρμόττον αὐτῇ αἱρεῖσθαι.

1460a Ὅμηρος δὲ ἄλλα τε πολλὰ ἄξιος ἐπαινεῖσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ ὅτι μόνος τῶν ποιητῶν οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ ὃ δεῖ ποιεῖν αὐτόν. αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν· οὐ γάρ ἐστι κατὰ ταῦτα μιμητής. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι αὐτοὶ μὲν δι' ὅλου ἀγωνίζονται, μιμοῦνται δὲ ὀλίγα καὶ ὀλιγάκις· ὁ δὲ ὀλίγα προοιμιασάμενος εὐθὺς εἰσάγει ἄνδρα ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ ἄλλο τι ἦθος, καὶ οὐδέν' ἀήθη ἀλλ' ἔχοντα ἦθος. δεῖ μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν, μᾶλλον δ' ἐνδέχεται ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ τὸ ἄλογον, δι' ὃ συμβαίνει μάλιστα τὸ θαυμαστόν, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁρᾶν εἰς τὸν πράττοντα· ἐπεὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Ἕκτορος δίωξιν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ὄντα γελοῖα ἂν φανείη, οἱ μὲν ἑστῶτες καὶ οὐ διώκοντες, ὁ δὲ ἀνανεύων, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔπεσιν λανθάνει.

τὸ δὲ θαυμαστὸν ἡδύ· σημεῖον δέ, πάντες γὰρ προστιθέντες ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὡς χαριζόμενοι. δεδίδαχεν

ENGLISH

gedies presented at a single hearing. Epic has a great advantage when it comes to extending its magnitude. In tragedy it is not possible to imitate many parts of the action as they happen at the same time, but only the part on stage performed by the actors; whereas in epic, because it is narrative, one can present many parts being carried out simultaneously, and these, if they are relevant, add to the poem's bulk.[46]

So this is an advantage that makes for grandeur, for giving the listener variety, and for diversifying with dissimilar episodes; for sameness quickly sates the audience and makes tragedies fail. The heroic meter proved fitting through experience. If someone were to compose a narrative imitation in any other meter, or in several, it would seem inappropriate. The heroic is the most stately and weighty of the meters—which is why it admits foreign words and metaphors most readily, since narrative imitation too is more elaborate than the others—while the iambic and the tetrameter [1460a] are meters of movement, the one suited to dancing, the other to action. It would be stranger still if someone mixed them, as Chaeremon did. That is why no one has composed a long structure in any meter other than the heroic; rather, as we said, nature itself teaches us to choose what fits it.[47]

Homer deserves praise for many other things, and especially because he alone among poets is not ignorant of what he himself should do. The poet himself should say as little as possible, since it is not in this that he is an imitator. The others take part in person throughout and imitate little, and seldom; but Homer, after a brief preface, at once brings on a man or a woman or some other character—none without character, but each with a character of their own. Now, the wondrous must be created in tragedies, but epic has more room for the irrational, the chief source of the wondrous, because we do not see the person acting. The pursuit of Hector, if it were on stage, would seem ridiculous—the others standing still and not pursuing, and Achilles shaking his head to hold them back—but in epic it goes unnoticed.

The wondrous is pleasant. A sign of this: everyone adds something when they tell a story, assuming it

46 At the Athenian festivals a poet's tragedies were performed in a set of three on a single day.
47 The heroic meter is the dactylic hexameter of Homer's epics.

GREEK	ENGLISH
δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ψευδῆ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο παραλογισμός. οἴονται γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ὅταν τουδὶ ὄντος τοδὶ ᾖ ἢ γινομένου γίνηται, εἰ τὸ ὕστερον ἔστιν, καὶ τὸ πρότερον εἶναι ἢ γίνεσθαι· τοῦτο δέ ἐστι ψεῦδος. διὸ δεῖ, ἂν τὸ πρῶτον ψεῦδος, ἄλλο δὲ τούτου ὄντος ἀνάγκη εἶναι ἢ γενέσθαι ᾖ, προσθεῖναι· διὰ γὰρ τὸ τοῦτο εἰδέναι ἀληθὲς ὂν παραλογίζεται ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ὡς ὄν. παράδειγμα δὲ τούτου τὸ ἐκ τῶν Νίπτρων.	will please. It is Homer above all who has taught the others how to tell falsehoods as they should. This is a matter of false inference. When one thing's being or happening entails another thing's being or happening, people think that if the later thing is the case, the earlier one also is or happens. But this is false. So if the first thing is false, but there is something else that would necessarily be or happen if it were true, the poet should add this second thing. Because we know it is true, our soul falsely infers that the first is true as well. An example of this is the Bathing Scene.[48]
προαιρεῖσθαί τε δεῖ ἀδύνατα εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ δυνατὰ ἀπίθανα· τούς τε λόγους μὴ συνίστασθαι ἐκ μερῶν ἀλόγων, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν μηδὲν ἔχειν ἄλογον, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος, ὥσπερ Οἰδίπους τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι πῶς ὁ Λάιος ἀπέθανεν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐν τῷ δράματι, ὥσπερ ἐν Ἠλέκτρᾳ οἱ τὰ Πύθια ἀπαγγέλλοντες ἢ ἐν Μυσοῖς ὁ ἄφωνος ἐκ Τεγέας εἰς τὴν Μυσίαν ἥκων. ὥστε τὸ λέγειν ὅτι ἀνῄρητο ἂν ὁ μῦθος γελοῖον· ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ οὐ δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοιούτους. † ἂν δὲ θῇ καὶ φαίνηται εὐλογωτέρως ἐνδέχεσθαι καὶ ἄτοπον † ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν Ὀδυσσείᾳ ἄλογα τὰ περὶ τὴν ἔκθεσιν ὡς οὐκ ἂν ἦν ἀνεκτὰ δῆλον ἂν 1460b γένοιτο, εἰ αὐτὰ φαῦλος ποιητὴς ποιήσειε· νῦν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀγαθοῖς ὁ ποιητὴς ἀφανίζει ἡδύνων τὸ ἄτοπον.	One should prefer impossibilities that are probable to possibilities that are unconvincing. Stories should not be built out of irrational parts. Ideally they should contain nothing irrational at all; failing that, it should lie outside the plot—like Oedipus not knowing how Laius died—and not inside the play, like the people reporting the Pythian games in the *Electra*, or the man in the *Mysians* who comes from Tegea to Mysia without speaking. So to say that the plot would otherwise have been ruined is ridiculous: one should not construct such plots in the first place. If a poet does include something irrational and it seems it could be made more reasonable, even an absurdity may be admitted. Even the irrational elements in the *Odyssey* about his being put ashore would clearly 1460b be intolerable if a poor poet had handled them; as it is, the poet makes the absurdity disappear by sweetening it with his other merits.[49]
1460b τῇ δὲ λέξει δεῖ διαπονεῖν ἐν τοῖς ἀργοῖς μέρεσιν καὶ μήτε ἠθικοῖς μήτε διανοητικοῖς· ἀποκρύπτει γὰρ πάλιν ἡ λίαν λαμπρὰ λέξις τά τε ἤθη καὶ τὰς διανοίας.	The diction should be worked up elaborately in the slack parts, those that express neither character nor thought; for, conversely, overly brilliant diction obscures character and thought.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Aristotle shows how to answer critics' objections to poets, especially Homer.

GREEK	ENGLISH
περὶ δὲ προβλημάτων καὶ λύσεων, ἐκ πόσων τε καὶ ποίων εἰδῶν ἐστιν, ὧδ' ἂν θεωροῦσιν γένοιτ' ἂν φανερόν. ἐπεὶ γάρ ἐστι μιμητὴς ὁ ποιητὴς ὡσπερανεὶ ζωγράφος ἤ τις ἄλλος εἰκονοποιός, ἀνάγκη μιμεῖσθαι τριῶν ὄντων τὸν	As for problems and their solutions—how many kinds there are and of what sort—this would become clear if we consider it as follows. Since the poet is an imitator, like a painter or any other im-

48 In the Bathing Scene (*Odyssey* 19), Penelope trusts the disguised Odysseus because he accurately describes the clothes Odysseus once wore.

49 In Sophocles' *Electra* a false report of Orestes' death at the Pythian games is anachronistic; in *Odyssey* 13 the Phaeacians put Odysseus ashore on Ithaca without his waking. The sentence beginning "If a poet does include" is corrupt in the Greek.

GREEK

ἀριθμὸν ἕν τι ἀεί, ἢ γὰρ οἷα ἦν ἢ ἔστιν, ἢ οἷά φασιν καὶ δοκεῖ, ἢ οἷα εἶναι δεῖ. ταῦτα δ' ἐξαγγέλλεται λέξει ἐν ᾗ καὶ γλῶτται καὶ μεταφοραὶ καὶ πολλὰ πάθη τῆς λέξεώς ἐστι· δίδομεν γὰρ ταῦτα τοῖς ποιηταῖς. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ ὀρθότης ἐστὶν τῆς πολιτικῆς καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς οὐδὲ ἄλλης τέχνης καὶ ποιητικῆς. αὐτῆς δὲ τῆς ποιητικῆς διττὴ ἁμαρτία, ἡ μὲν γὰρ καθ' αὑτήν, ἡ δὲ κατὰ συμβεβηκός. εἰ μὲν γὰρ προείλετο μιμήσασθαι…

ἀδυναμίαν, αὐτῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία· εἰ δὲ τὸ προελέσθαι μὴ ὀρθῶς, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἵππον ⟨ἅμ'⟩ ἄμφω τὰ δεξιὰ προβεβληκότα, ἢ τὸ καθ' ἑκάστην τέχνην ἁμάρτημα, οἷον τὸ κατ' ἰατρικὴν ἢ ἄλλην τέχνην [ἢ ἀδύνατα πεποίηται] ὁποιανοῦν, οὐ καθ' ἑαυτήν. ὥστε δεῖ τὰ ἐπιτιμήματα ἐν τοῖς προβλήμασιν ἐκ τούτων ἐπισκοποῦντα λύειν. πρῶτον μὲν τὰ πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν τέχνην· ἀδύνατα πεποίηται, ἡμάρτηται· ἀλλ' ὀρθῶς ἔχει, εἰ τυγχάνει τοῦ τέλους τοῦ αὐτῆς (τὸ γὰρ τέλος εἴρηται), εἰ οὕτως ἐκπληκτικώτερον ἢ αὐτὸ ἢ ἄλλο ποιεῖ μέρος. παράδειγμα ἡ τοῦ Ἕκτορος δίωξις. εἰ μέντοι τὸ τέλος ἢ μᾶλλον ἢ ⟨μὴ⟩ ἧττον ἐνεδέχετο ὑπάρχειν καὶ κατὰ τὴν περὶ τούτων τέχνην, [ἡμαρτῆσθαι] οὐκ ὀρθῶς· δεῖ γὰρ εἰ ἐνδέχεται ὅλως μηδαμῇ ἡμαρτῆσθαι.

ἔτι ποτέρων ἐστὶ τὸ ἁμάρτημα, τῶν κατὰ τὴν τέχνην ἢ κατ' ἄλλο συμβεβηκός; ἔλαττον γὰρ εἰ μὴ ᾔδει ὅτι ἔλαφος θήλεια κέρατα οὐκ ἔχει ἢ εἰ ἀμιμήτως ἔγραψεν. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἐὰν ἐπιτιμᾶται ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθῆ, ἀλλ' ἴσως ⟨ὡς⟩ δεῖ, οἷον καὶ Σοφοκλῆς ἔφη αὐτὸς μὲν οἵους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδην δὲ οἷοι εἰσίν, ταύτῃ λυτέον. εἰ δὲ μηδετέρως, ὅτι οὕτω φασίν, οἷον τὰ περὶ θεῶν· ἴσως γὰρ οὔτε βέλτιον οὕτω λέγειν οὔτ' ἀληθῆ, ἀλλ' εἰ ἔτυχεν [1461a] ὥσπερ Ξενοφάνει· ἀλλ' οὖν φασι. τὰ δὲ ἴσως οὐ βέλτιον μέν, ἀλλ' οὕτως εἶχεν, οἷον τὰ περὶ τῶν ὅπλων, "ἔγχεα δέ σφιν ὄρθ' ἐπὶ σαυρωτῆρος·" οὕτω γὰρ τότ' ἐνόμιζον, ὥσπερ καὶ νῦν Ἰλλυριοί.

ENGLISH

age-maker, he must always imitate one of three things: things as they were or are, things as people say or think they are, or things as they ought to be. These are conveyed in diction that includes foreign words, metaphors, and many modifications of language; for we allow poets these. Besides, correctness is not the same in politics as in poetry, nor in any other art as in poetry. Within the art of poetry itself there are two kinds of error: one belongs to the art itself, the other is incidental. If the poet chose to imitate…

…through lack of ability, the error belongs to the art itself. But if the error lies in choosing something incorrectly—a horse, say, with both right legs thrown forward at once—or is a mistake belonging to some particular art, such as medicine or any other, it does not belong to the art itself. So one must examine the criticisms raised in the problems in the light of these points, and resolve them. First, those that concern the art itself. If impossibilities have been composed, it is an error; but it is justified if it achieves the end of the art itself (the end has been stated), that is, if in this way it makes that part or some other part more astonishing. An example is the pursuit of Hector. If, however, the end could have been achieved as well or better also in accordance with the art concerned with these things, the error is not justified; for, if possible, there should be no error at all.

Further, which kind of thing is the error in: matters of the art, or something else, incidental to it? It is less serious not to know that a female deer has no horns than to paint one unrecognizably. Besides, if the criticism is that something is not true, perhaps it is as it ought to be—as Sophocles, too, said that he portrayed people as they ought to be, and Euripides as they are; this is the way to resolve it. If it is neither, then say that this is what people say—for example, the stories about the gods. Perhaps it is neither better nor true to speak of them so, but, as it may be, [1461a] as Xenophanes thought; still, that is what people say. Other things are perhaps not better, but that is how they were—for example, what is said about the weapons: "their spears stood upright on their butt-spikes"; for that was the custom then, as it still is now among the Illyrians.[50]

50 Xenophanes, a sixth-century BC poet and philosopher, attacked the way Homer and Hesiod portray the gods.

GREEK	ENGLISH
1461a περὶ δὲ τοῦ καλῶς ἢ μὴ καλῶς εἰ εἴρηταί τινι ἢ πέπρακται, οὐ μόνον σκεπτέον εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ πεπραγμένον ἢ εἰρημένον βλέποντα εἰ σπουδαῖον ἢ φαῦλον, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς τὸν πράττοντα ἢ λέγοντα πρὸς ὃν ἢ ὅτε ἢ ὅτῳ ἢ οὗ ἕνεκεν, οἷον εἰ μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ, ἵνα γένηται, ἢ μείζονος κακοῦ, ἵνα ἀπογένηται. τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὴν λέξιν ὁρῶντα δεῖ διαλύειν, οἷον γλώττῃ τὸ "οὐρῆας μὲν πρῶτον·" ἴσως γὰρ οὐ τοὺς ἡμιόνους λέγει ἀλλὰ τοὺς φύλακας· καὶ τὸν Δόλωνα, "ὅς ῥ' ἦ τοι εἶδος μὲν ἔην κακός," οὐ τὸ σῶμα ἀσύμμετρον ἀλλὰ τὸ πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν, τὸ γὰρ εὐειδὲς οἱ Κρῆτες τὸ εὐπρόσωπον καλοῦσι· καὶ τὸ "ζωρότερον δὲ κέραιε" οὐ τὸ ἄκρατον ὡς οἰνόφλυξιν ἀλλὰ τὸ θᾶττον.	As to whether something has been said or done well or not well by someone, one must look not only at the thing itself that was done or said, to see whether it is excellent or base, but also at the person doing or saying it, to whom, when, by what means, or for what purpose: for instance, to bring about a greater good, or to avert a greater evil. Other objections must be resolved by looking at the diction: for instance, by a foreign word in "first against the *ourēas*," since perhaps he means not the mules but the sentries. And of Dolon, "who was bad in *eidos*," not that his body was ill-proportioned but that his face was ugly, for the Cretans call someone with a handsome face *eueidēs*. And "mix it *zōroteron*" means not "undiluted," as for drunkards, but "quicker."[51]
τὸ δὲ κατὰ μεταφορὰν εἴρηται, οἷον "πάντες μέν ῥα θεοί τε καὶ ἀνέρες εὗδον παννύχιοι·" ἅμα δέ φησιν "ἦ τοι ὅτ' ἐς πεδίον τὸ Τρωικὸν ἀθρήσειεν, αὐλῶν συρίγγων τε ὅμαδον·" τὸ γὰρ πάντες ἀντὶ τοῦ πολλοί κατὰ μεταφορὰν εἴρηται, τὸ γὰρ πᾶν πολύ τι. καὶ τὸ "οἴη δ' ἄμμορος" κατὰ μεταφοράν, τὸ γὰρ γνωριμώτατον μόνον. κατὰ δὲ προσῳδίαν, ὥσπερ Ἱππίας ἔλυεν ὁ Θάσιος, τὸ "δίδομεν δέ οἱ εὖχος ἀρέσθαι" καὶ "τὸ μὲν οὖ καταπύθεται ὄμβρῳ." τὰ δὲ διαιρέσει, οἷον Ἐμπεδοκλῆς "αἶψα δὲ θνήτ' ἐφύοντο τὰ πρὶν μάθον ἀθάνατ' εἶναι ζωρά τε πρὶν κέκρητο." τὰ δὲ ἀμφιβολίᾳ, "παρῴχηκεν δὲ πλέω νύξ·" τὸ γὰρ πλείω ἀμφίβολόν ἐστιν. τὰ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς λέξεως.	Other things are said by metaphor, for instance: "All the gods and men were sleeping through the night," while at the same time he says: "Whenever he gazed toward the Trojan plain, the din of pipes and flutes." "All" is said metaphorically instead of "many," since "all" is a kind of "many." And "alone without a share" is metaphorical, since what is best known is "alone." Some are resolved by accentuation, as Hippias of Thasos resolved "we grant him to win his prayer" and "the part of which is rotted by rain." Some by punctuation, as in Empedocles: "At once things became mortal that before had learned to be immortal, and unmixed things before were mixed." Some by ambiguity: "more of the night has passed," for "more" is ambiguous. Others by the customary use of language.[52]
τὸν κεκραμένον οἶνόν φασιν εἶναι, ὅθεν πεποίηται "κνημὶς νεοτεύκτου κασσιτέροιο·" καὶ χαλκέας τοὺς τὸν σίδηρον ἐργαζομένους, ὅθεν εἴρηται ὁ Γανυμήδης Διὶ οἰνοχοεύειν, οὐ πινόντων οἶνον. εἴη δ' ἂν τοῦτό γε ⟨καὶ⟩ κατὰ μεταφοράν. δεῖ δὲ καὶ ὅταν ὄνομά τι ὑπεναντίωμά τι δοκῇ σημαίνειν, ἐπισκοπεῖν ποσαχῶς ἂν σημήνειε τοῦτο ἐν τῷ εἰρημένῳ, οἷον τῷ "τῇ ῥ' ἔσχετο χάλκεον ἔγχος" τὸ ταύτῃ κωλυθῆναι ποσαχῶς ἐνδέχεται, ὠδὶ ἢ ὠδί, ὡς μάλιστ' ἄν τις ὑπολάβοι· κατὰ τὴν καταντικρὺ ἢ ὡς 1461b Γλαύκων λέγει, ὅτι ἔνιοι ἀλόγως προϋπολαμβάνουσί τι καὶ αὐτοὶ καταψηφισάμενοι συλλογίζονται, καὶ ὡς εἰρηκότος ὅ τι δοκεῖ ἐπιτιμῶσιν, ἂν ὑπεναντίον ᾖ τῇ αὑτῶν οἰήσει. τοῦτο δὲ πέπονθε τὰ	People call wine mixed with water "wine"; hence "a greave of new-wrought tin." And workers in iron are called "bronzesmiths"; hence Ganymede is said to "pour wine" for Zeus, although the gods do not drink wine. This, though, could also be metaphor. Whenever a word seems to imply some contradiction, one should consider how many senses it could have in the passage: for instance, in "there the bronze spear was stopped," in how many ways it could have been stopped there—this way or that—taking it as one best can. This is the opposite of what 1461b Glaucon describes: some

51 *Ourēas* normally means "mules" (*Iliad* 1.50), and *eidos* normally means "form" or "appearance."
52 Changing an accent or breathing changes the sense: read as *ou* ("not") instead of *hou* ("of which"), the second line says the wood is not rotted by rain.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	περὶ Ἰκάριον. οἴονται γὰρ αὐτὸν Λάκωνα εἶναι· ἄτοπον οὖν τὸ μὴ ἐντυχεῖν τὸν Τηλέμαχον αὐτῷ εἰς Λακεδαίμονα ἐλθόντα.	people make an unreasonable assumption in advance, pass judgment themselves, and then reason from it; and as though the poet had said whatever they believe, they criticize him if something contradicts their own notion. This is what has happened with the matter of Icarius. People think he was a Spartan, and so it seems absurd that Telemachus did not meet him when he went to Sparta.[53]
1461b	τὸ δ' ἴσως ἔχει ὥσπερ οἱ Κεφαλλῆνές φασι· παρ' αὐτῶν γὰρ γῆμαι λέγουσι τὸν Ὀδυσσέα καὶ εἶναι Ἰκάδιον ἀλλ' οὐκ Ἰκάριον· δι' ἁμάρτημα δὲ τὸ πρόβλημα † εἰκός ἐστιν †. ὅλως δὲ τὸ ἀδύνατον μὲν πρὸς τὴν ποίησιν ἢ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον ἢ πρὸς τὴν δόξαν δεῖ ἀνάγειν. πρός τε γὰρ τὴν ποίησιν αἱρετώτερον πιθανὸν ἀδύνατον ἢ ἀπίθανον καὶ δυνατόν·... τοιούτους εἶναι οἷον Ζεῦξις ἔγραφεν, ἀλλὰ βέλτιον· τὸ γὰρ παράδειγμα δεῖ ὑπερέχειν. πρὸς ἅ φασιν τἄλογα·οὕτω τε καὶ ὅτι ποτὲ οὐκ ἄλογόν ἐστιν· εἰκὸς γὰρ καὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰκὸς γίνεσθαι.	But perhaps it is as the Cephallenians say: they claim that Odysseus married one of their own, and that her father was Icadius, not Icarius. So the problem probably arises from a mistake. In general, the impossible must be justified by reference to poetry, to what is better, or to common opinion. With respect to poetry, a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility. ... people such as Zeuxis painted; but it is better so, for the model should surpass reality. Irrational things are to be justified by reference to what people say; and also on the ground that sometimes they are not irrational, since it is probable that things also happen contrary to probability.[54]
	τὰ δ' ὑπεναντίως εἰρημένα οὕτω σκοπεῖν ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἔλεγχοι εἰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὡσαύτως, ὥστε καὶ † αὐτὸν † ἢ πρὸς ἃ αὐτὸς λέγει ἢ ὃ ἂν φρόνιμος ὑποθῆται. ὀρθὴ δ' ἐπιτίμησις καὶ ἀλογίᾳ καὶ μοχθηρίᾳ, ὅταν μὴ ἀνάγκης οὔσης μηθὲν χρήσηται τῷ ἀλόγῳ, ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδης τῷ Αἰγεῖ, ἢ τῇ πονηρίᾳ, ὥσπερ ἐν Ὀρέστῃ ⟨τῇ⟩ τοῦ Μενελάου. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐπιτιμήματα ἐκ πέντε εἰδῶν φέρουσιν· ἢ γὰρ ὡς ἀδύνατα ἢ ὡς ἄλογα ἢ ὡς βλαβερὰ ἢ ὡς ὑπεναντία ἢ ὡς παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην. αἱ δὲ λύσεις ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ἀριθμῶν σκεπτέαι. εἰσὶν δὲ δώδεκα.	Things said in apparent contradiction should be examined as refutations are in arguments: whether it is the same thing, in relation to the same thing, and in the same way; so that the poet contradicts himself either with respect to what he himself says or to what a practically wise person would assume. Criticism for irrationality and for depravity is correct when there is no necessity and the poet makes no use of the irrational element, as Euripides with Aegeus, or of the wickedness, as with Menelaus in the *Orestes*. So critics bring objections of five kinds: that things are impossible, or irrational, or harmful, or contradictory, or contrary to correctness in the art. The solutions should be sought from the points listed; and there are twelve of them.[55]

IS EPIC OR TRAGEDY BETTER?

Aristotle argues that tragedy is superior to epic.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	πότερον δὲ βελτίων ἡ ἐποποιικὴ μίμησις ἢ ἡ τραγική, διαπορήσειεν ἄν τις. εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἧττον φορτικὴ βελτίων,	One might raise the question whether epic or tragic imitation is better. If the less vulgar is better,

53 Icarius was the father of Penelope, Odysseus' wife.
54 Some words are lost after "unconvincing possibility."

GREEK

τοιαύτη δ' ἡ πρὸς βελτίους θεατάς ἐστιν ἀεί, λίαν δῆλον ὅτι ἡ ἅπαντα μιμουμένη φορτική· ὡς γὰρ οὐκ αἰσθανομένων ἂν μὴ αὐτὸς προσθῇ, πολλὴν κίνησιν κινοῦνται, οἷον οἱ φαῦλοι αὐληταὶ κυλιόμενοι ἂν δίσκον δέῃ μιμεῖσθαι, καὶ ἕλκοντες τὸν κορυφαῖον ἂν Σκύλλαν αὐλῶσιν. ἡ μὲν οὖν τραγῳδία τοιαύτη ἐστίν, ὡς καὶ οἱ πρότερον τοὺς ὑστέρους αὐτῶν ᾤοντο ὑποκριτάς· ὡς λίαν γὰρ ὑπερβάλλοντα πίθηκον ὁ Μυννίσκος τὸν Καλλιππίδην ἐκάλει, τοιαύτη δὲ δόξα καὶ περὶ [1462a] Πινδάρου ἦν· ὡς δ' οὗτοι ἔχουσι πρὸς αὐτούς, ἡ ὅλη τέχνη πρὸς τὴν ἐποποιίαν ἔχει.

[1462a] τὴν μὲν οὖν πρὸς θεατὰς ἐπιεικεῖς φασιν εἶναι ⟨οἵ⟩ οὐδὲν δέονται τῶν σχημάτων, τὴν δὲ τραγικὴν πρὸς φαύλους· εἰ οὖν φορτική, χείρων δῆλον ὅτι ἂν εἴη. πρῶτον μὲν οὐ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἡ κατηγορία ἀλλὰ τῆς ὑποκριτικῆς, ἐπεὶ ἔστι περιεργάζεσθαι τοῖς σημείοις καὶ ῥαψῳδοῦντα, ὅπερ [ἐστὶ] Σωσίστρατος, καὶ διᾴδοντα, ὅπερ ἐποίει Μνασίθεος ὁ Ὀπούντιος. εἶτα οὐδὲ κίνησις ἅπασα ἀποδοκιμαστέα, εἴπερ μηδ' ὄρχησις, ἀλλ' ἡ φαύλων, ὅπερ καὶ Καλλιππίδῃ ἐπετιμᾶτο καὶ νῦν ἄλλοις ὡς οὐκ ἐλευθέρας γυναῖκας μιμουμένων. ἔτι ἡ τραγῳδία καὶ ἄνευ κινήσεως ποιεῖ τὸ αὑτῆς, ὥσπερ ἡ ἐποποιία· διὰ γὰρ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκειν φανερὰ ὁποία τίς ἐστιν· εἰ οὖν ἐστι τά γ' ἄλλα κρείττων, τοῦτό γε οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῇ ὑπάρχειν.

ἔπειτα διότι πάντ' ἔχει ὅσαπερ ἡ ἐποποιία (καὶ γὰρ τῷ μέτρῳ ἔξεστι χρῆσθαι), καὶ ἔτι οὐ μικρὸν μέρος τὴν μουσικήν [καὶ τὰς ὄψεις], δι' ἧς αἱ ἡδοναὶ συνίστανται ἐναργέστατα· εἶτα καὶ τὸ ἐναργὲς ἔχει καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναγνώσει καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων· ἔτι τῷ ἐν ἐλάττονι μήκει τὸ τέλος τῆς μιμήσεως [1462b] εἶναι (τὸ γὰρ ἀθροώτερον ἥδιον ἢ πολλῷ κεκραμένον τῷ χρόνῳ, λέγω δ' οἷον εἴ τις τὸν Οἰδίπουν θείη τὸν Σοφοκλέους ἐν ἔπεσιν ὅσοις ἡ Ἰλιάς)· ἔτι ἧττον μία ἡ μίμησις ἡ τῶν ἐποποιῶν (σημεῖον δέ, ἐκ γὰρ ὁποιασοῦν μιμήσεως πλείους τραγῳδίαι γίνονται), ὥστε ἐὰν μὲν ἕνα μῦθον ποιῶσιν, ἢ βραχέως δεικνύμενον μύουρον φαίνεσθαι, ἢ ἀκολουθοῦντα τῷ τοῦ μέτρου μήκει ὑδαρῆ· λέγω δὲ οἷον ἐὰν ἐκ πλειόνων πράξεων ᾖ συγκειμένη, ὥσπερ ἡ Ἰλιὰς ἔχει πολλὰ τοιαῦτα μέρη καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια ⟨ἃ⟩ καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔχει μέγεθος· καίτοι ταῦτα τὰ ποιήματα συνέστηκεν ὡς ἐνδέχεται ἄριστα καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μιᾶς πράξεως μίμησις.

ENGLISH

and the less vulgar is always the one addressed to a better audience, it is quite clear that the one that imitates everything is vulgar. For the performers, as though the audience will not notice unless they add something themselves, go through a great deal of movement—like poor pipe-players rolling around when they have to imitate a discus, and dragging the chorus leader about when they play the *Scylla*. Tragedy, then, is like this, in the way earlier actors regarded their successors: Mynniscus used to call Callippides an "ape" for overdoing things, and the same view was held of [1462a] Pindarus. As these actors stand to their predecessors, so the art of tragedy as a whole stands to epic.[56]

Epic, then, they say, is for decent audiences who have no need of gestures, while tragedy is for inferior ones; so if it is vulgar, clearly it would be the worse. But first, this charge is against the art of acting, not poetry, since one can overdo the gestures in epic recitation too, as Sosistratus did, and in singing, as Mnasitheus of Opus used to do. Second, not all movement is to be rejected—any more than all dancing—but only that of inferior people, which was the criticism made of Callippides and is now made of others: that they imitate women who are not free. Further, tragedy achieves its effect even without movement, just as epic does, for its quality is evident from reading. So if it is superior in other respects, this fault at least need not belong to it.

Next, tragedy has everything epic has (it can even use its meter), and in addition, no small part of it, music and spectacle, through which pleasures are produced most vividly. Then, too, it has vividness both in reading and in performance. Also, the end of the imitation is achieved in a shorter length; [1462b] for what is more concentrated is more pleasing than what is diluted over a long time—I mean, for instance, if someone were to put Sophocles' *Oedipus* into as many lines as the *Iliad*. Again, the imitation of the epic poets is less unified (a sign of this: several tragedies come from any one of their imitations), so that if they compose a single plot, it either seems cut short if briefly presented, or watery if it keeps to the length that suits the meter. I mean, for instance, if it is composed of several ac-

55 In Euripides' *Medea,* Aegeus arrives unexplained just when Medea needs a refuge.
56 Mynniscus, Callippides and Pindarus were actors; Mynniscus acted in Aeschylus' plays.

GREEK	ENGLISH
	tions, just as the *Iliad* has many such parts, and the *Odyssey*, which also have magnitude in their own right. And yet these poems are constructed as well as they could be, and are, as far as possible, the imitation of a single action.
1462b εἰ οὖν τούτοις τε διαφέρει πᾶσιν καὶ ἔτι τῷ τῆς τέχνης ἔργῳ (δεῖ γὰρ οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἡδονὴν ποιεῖν αὐτὰς ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰρημένην), φανερὸν ὅτι κρείττων ἂν εἴη μᾶλλον τοῦ τέλους τυγχάνουσα τῆς ἐποποιίας. περὶ μὲν οὖν τραγῳδίας καὶ ἐποποιίας, καὶ αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν καὶ τῶν μερῶν, καὶ πόσα καὶ τί διαφέρει, καὶ τοῦ εὖ ἢ μὴ τίνες αἰτίαι, καὶ περὶ ἐπιτιμήσεων καὶ λύσεων, εἰρήσθω τοσαῦτα....	If, then, tragedy is superior in all these respects, and also in achieving the function of the art (for these arts should produce not just any pleasure but the one we have described), it is clear that it would be better than epic, since it achieves its end more fully. About tragedy and epic, then—both themselves and their kinds and parts, how many there are and how they differ, the causes of their being good or not, and about criticisms and their solutions—let this much be said...[57]

57 The *Poetics* breaks off here; a second book, on comedy, has been lost.