

# ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

## 6 Principles of Tragedy

### 1. Plot (mythos)

Refers to the "structure of incidents" (actions). The best plot should be "complex" (i.e. involve a change of fortune). It should imitate actions arousing fear and pity. Thus it should proceed from good fortune to bad and involve a high degree of suffering for the protagonist.

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

When a character is affected by reversal(s) of fortune (peripeteia), at first he suffers (pathos) and then he can realize (anagnorisis) the cause of his misery or a way to be released from the misery.

### 2. Character (ethos)

It is much better if a tragical accident happens to a hero because of a mistake he makes (hamartia) instead of things which might happen anyway. That is because the audience is more likely to be "moved" by it. A hero may have made it knowingly (in Medea) or unknowingly (Oedipus).

Main character should be: good, appropriate, consistent, "consistently inconsistent"

### 3. Thought (dianoia)

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

### 4. Diction (lexis)

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

### 5. Melody (melos)

The Chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors. It should be an integral part of the whole, and share in the action

### 6. Spectacle (opsis)

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