POETICS

CHAPTER 1

The subject I wish to discuss is poetry itself; its species with their respective capabilities, the correct way of constructing plots so that the work turns out well, the number and nature of the constituent elements of each species, and anything else in the same field of inquiry.

To follow the natural order and take first things first, epic and tragic poetry, comedy and dithyrambic, and most music for the flute or lyre are all, generally considered, varieties of \textit{mimēsis}, differing from each other in three respects, the media, the objects, and the mode of \textit{mimēsis}. ['Media' needs explaining]: in some cases where people, whether by technical rules or practised facility, produce various \textit{mimēses} by portraying things, the media are colours and shapes, while in others the medium is the voice; similarly in the arts in question, taken collectively, the media of \textit{mimēsis} are rhythm, speech, and harmony, either separately or in combination.

For example, harmony and rhythm are the media of instrumental music, rhythm alone without harmony the medium of dancing, as dancers represent characters, passions, and actions by rhythmic movement and postures.

The art that uses only speech by itself or verse [that is, rhythmical speech], the verses being homogeneous or of different kinds, has as yet no name; for we have no common term to apply to the [prose] mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and to the Socratic dialogues, nor any common term for \textit{mimēses} produced in verse, whether iambic trimeters or elegiacs or some other such metre. True, people do attach the making [that is the root of the word \textit{poieis}] to the name of a metre and speak of elegiac-makers and hexameter-makers; they think, no doubt, that 'makers' is applied to poets not because they make \textit{mimēses} but as a general term meaning 'verse-makers', since they call 'poets' or 'makers' even those who publish a medical or scientific


CHAPTER 2

The objects of this \textit{mimēsis} are people doing things, and these people [as represented] must necessarily be either good or bad, this being, generally speaking, the only line of divergence between characters, since differences of character just are differences in goodness and badness, or else they must be better than are found in the world or worse or just the same, as they are represented by the painters, Polygnotus portraying them as better, Pauson as worse, and Dionysius as they are; clearly therefore each of the varieties of \textit{mimēsis} in question will exhibit these differences, and one will be distinguishable from another in virtue of presenting things as different in this way.

These dissimilarities can in fact be found in dancing and instrumental music, and in the arts using speech and unaccompanied verse: Homer for instance represents people as better and Cleophon as they are, while Hegemon of Thasos, the inventor of parodies, and Nicoclares, the author of the \textit{Dei lu}, represent them as worse . . .; this is also the differentia that marks off tragedy from comedy, since the latter aims to represent people as worse, the former as better, than the men of the present day.

CHAPTER 3

There is still a third difference, the mode in which one represents each of these objects. For one can represent the same objects in the same

\textit{media}
(i) sometimes in narration and sometimes becoming someone else, as Homer does; or
(ii) speaking in one's own person without change, or
(iii) with all the people engaged in the mimesis actually doing things.

These three, then, media, objects, and mode, are, as I said at the beginning, the differentiae of poetic mimesis. So, if we use one of them [to separate poets into classes], Sophocles will be in the same class as Homer, since both represent people as good, and if we use another, he will be in the same class as Aristophanes, since they both represent people as actively doing things. . . .

So much for the number and nature of the differentiae of poetic mimesis.

CHAPTER 4

Poetry, I believe, has two overall causes, both of them natural:

(a) Mimesis is innate in human beings from childhood—indeed we differ from the other animals in being most given to mimesis and in making our first steps in learning through it—and pleasure in instances of mimesis is equally general. This we can see from the facts: we enjoy looking at the most exact portrayals of things we do not like to see in real life, the lowest animals, for instance, or corpses. This is because not only philosophers, but all men, enjoy getting to understand something, though it is true that most people feel this pleasure only to a slight degree; therefore they like to see these pictures, because in looking at them they come to understand something and can infer what each thing is, can say, for instance, 'This man in the picture is so-and-so.' If you happen not to have seen the original, the picture will not produce its pleasure qua instance of mimesis, but because of its technical finish or colour or for some such other reason.

(b) As well as mimesis, harmony and rhythm are natural to us, and verses are obviously definite sections of rhythm. . . .

To inquire whether even tragedy [as distinct from epic] is sufficiently elaborated in its qualitative elements, judging it in itself and in its relation to the audience, is another story. At any rate, after originating in the improvisations of the leaders of the dithyramb, as comedy did in those of the leaders of the phallic songs still customary in many Greek

cities, tragedy gradually grew to maturity, as people developed the capacities they kept discovering in it, and after many changes it stopped altering, since it had attained its full growth. The main changes were:

(i) in the number of actors, raised from one to two by Aeschylus, who made the choral part less important and gave speech the leading role; Sophocles added a third—and also scene-painting;

(ii) in amplitude: as tragedy developed from the satyr-style, its plots were at first slight and its expression comical, and it was a long time before it acquired dignity;

(iii) in metre: the iambic trimeter replaced the trochaic tetrameter, which had been used before as suitable for a satyr-style poetry, that is, for productions involving more dancing; when verbal expression came to the fore, however, nature herself found the right metre, the iambic being the most speakable of all metres; this we can see from the fact that it is the one we most often produce accidentally in conversation, where hexameters are rare and only occur when we depart from conversational tone;

(iv) in the increased number of episodes.

There is no need to say more of this or of the other developments that gave it beauty; it would take too long to go through them in detail.

CHAPTER 5

Comedy is, as I said, a mimesis of people worse than are found in the world—'worse' in the particular sense of 'uglier', as the ridiculous is a species of ugliness; for what we find funny is a blunder that does no serious damage or an ugliness that does not imply pain, the funny face, for instance, being one that is ugly and distorted, but not with pain.

. . .

CHAPTER 6

I shall deal later with the art of mimesis in hexameters and with comedy; here I want to talk about tragedy, picking up the definition of its essential nature that results from what I have said.

Well then, a tragedy is a mimesis of a high, complete action ('complete' in the sense that implies amplitude), in speech pleasurably enhanced, the different kinds [of enhancement] occurring in separate
sections, in dramatic, not narrative form, effecting through pity and fear the catharsis of such emotions. By 'speech pleasurably enhanced' I mean that involving rhythm and harmony or song, by 'the different kinds separately' that some parts are in verse alone and others in song.

One can deduce as necessary elements of tragedy (a) [from the mode] the designing of the spectacle, since the mimesis is produced by people doing things; (b) [from the media] song-writing and verbal expression, the media of tragic mimesis; by 'verbal expression' I mean the composition of the verse-parts, while the meaning of 'song-writing' is obvious to anybody. [Others can be inferred from (c) the objects of the mimesis.] A tragedy is a mimesis of an action; action implies people engaged in it; these people must have some definite moral and intellectual qualities, since it is through a man’s qualities that we characterize his actions, and it is of course with reference to their actions that men are said to succeed or fail. We therefore have (i) the mimesis of the action, the plot, by which I mean the ordering of the particular actions; (ii) [the mimesis of] the moral characters of the personages, namely that [in the play] which makes us say that the agents have certain moral qualities; (iii) [the mimesis of] their intellect, namely those parts [of the play] in which they demonstrate something in speech or deliver themselves of some general maxim.¹

So tragedy as a whole will necessarily have six elements, the possession of which makes tragedy qualitatively distinct [from other literary kinds]: they are plot, the mimesis of character, verbal expression, the mimesis of intellect, spectacle, and song-writing. The media of mimesis are two, the mode one, the objects three, and there are no others. Not a few tragedians do in fact use these as qualitative elements; indeed virtually every play has spectacle, the mimesis of character, plot, verbal expression, song, and the mimesis of intellect.

The most important of these elements is the arrangement of the particular actions [as the following arguments show]:

(a) A tragedy is [by definition] a mimesis not of people but of their actions and life. Both success and ill success are success and ill success in action—in other words the end and aim of human life is doing something, not just being a certain sort of person; and though we consider people’s characters in deciding what sort of person they are, we call them successful or unsuccessful only with reference to their actions. So far therefore from the persons in a play acting as they do in order to represent their characters, the mimesis of their characters is only included along with and because of their actions. So the particular actions, the plot, are what the rest of the tragedy is there for, and what the rest is there for is the most important.

(b) [By definition] a work could not be a tragedy if there were no action. But there could be a tragedy without mimesis of character, and the tragedies of most of the moderns are in fact deficient in it; the same is true of many other poets, and of painters for that matter, of Zeuxis, for instance, in comparison with Polygnotus: the latter is good at depicting character, while Zeuxis’ painting has no mimesis of character to speak of.

(c) If you put down one after another speeches that depicted character, finely expressed and brilliant in the mimesis of intellect, that would not do the job that, by definition, tragedy does do, while a tragedy with a plot, that is, with an ordered series of particular actions, though deficient in these other points, would do its job much better.

(d) The most attractive things in tragedy, peripeteia and recognition scenes, are parts of the plot.

(e) Novices in poetry attain perfection in verbal expression and in the mimesis of character much earlier than in the ordering of the particular actions; this is also true of almost all early poets.

The plot therefore is the principle, or one might say the principle of life,² in tragedy, while the mimesis of character comes second in importance, a relation similar to one we find in painting, where the most beautiful colours, if smeared on at random, would give less pleasure than an uncoloured outline that was a picture of something. A tragedy, I repeat, is a mimesis of an action, and it is only because of the action that it is a mimesis of the people engaged in it. Third comes the mimesis of their intellect, by which I mean their ability to say what the situation admits and requires; to do this in speeches is the job of political sense and rhetoric, since the older poets made their people speak as the former directs, while the moderns make them observe the rules of rhetoric. Of these two, the mimesis of character is that [in the play] which makes plain the nature of the moral choices the personages make, so that those speeches in which there is absolutely

¹ 'Throughout the rest of the treatise 'mimesis of character' and 'mimesis of intellect' are used without square brackets to translate ethos and dianoia in this technical sense (translator’s note).

² 'The 'principle of life' renders psyche ('soul'), which stands to the living body in the same relation as plot to tragedy; it is 'what the rest is there for' as in argument (a), and it is what the living body essentially is as in argument (b). In traditional language it is both a 'final cause' and the 'formal cause'. Cf. De Anima 415b 8ff. (translator’s note).
nothing that the speaker chooses and avoids involve no mimēsis of character. By ‘mimēsis of intellect’ I mean those passages in which they prove that something is or is not the case or deliver themselves of some general statement. Fourth comes the expression of the spoken parts, by which I mean, as I said before, the expression of thought in words; the meaning is the same whether verse or prose is in question. Of the others, which are there to give pleasure, song-writing is the most important, while spectacle, though attractive, has least to do with art—"with the art of poetry, that is; for a work is potentially a tragedy even without public performance and players, and the art of the stage-designer contributes more to the perfection of spectacle than the poet's does.

CHAPTER 7

Now that these definitions are out of the way, I want to consider what the arrangement of the particular actions should be like, since that is the prime and most important element of tragedy.

Now, we have settled that a tragedy is a mimēsis of a complete, that is, of a whole action, 'whole' here implying some amplitude (there can be a whole without amplitude).

By 'whole' I mean 'with a beginning, a middle, and an end'. By 'beginning' [in this context] I mean 'that which is not necessarily the consequent of something else, but has some state or happening naturally consequent on it', by 'end' 'a state that is the necessary or usual consequent of something else, but has itself no such consequent', by 'middle' 'that which is consequent and has consequents'. Well-ordered plots, then, will exhibit these characteristics, and will not begin or end just anywhere.

It is not enough for beauty that a thing, whether an animal or anything else composed of parts, should have those parts well ordered; since beauty consists in amplitude as well as in order, the thing must also have amplitude—and not just any amplitude. Though a very small creature could not be beautiful, since our view loses all distinctness when it comes near to taking no perceptible time, an enormously ample one could not be beautiful either, since our view of it is not simultaneous, so that we lose the sense of its unity and wholeness as we look it over; imagine, for instance, an animal a thousand miles long. Animate and inanimate bodies, then, must have amplitude, but no more than can be taken in at one view; and similarly a plot must

have extension, but no more than can be easily remembered. What is, for the poetic art, the limit of this extension? Certainly not that imposed by the contests and by perception. . . . As the limit imposed by the actual nature of the thing, one may suggest 'the ampler the better, provided it remains clear as a whole', or, to give a rough specification, 'sufficient amplitude to allow a probable or necessary succession of particular actions to produce a change from bad to good or from good to bad fortune'.

CHAPTER 8

Unity of plot is not, as some think, achieved by writing about one man; for just as the one substance admits innumerable incidental properties, which do not, some of them, make it a such-and-such, so one man's actions are numerous and do not make up any single action. That is why I think the poets mistaken who have produced Heracleids or Theseids or other poems of the kind, in the belief that the plot would be one just because Heracles was one. Homer especially shows his superiority in taking a right view here—whether by art or nature: in writing a poem on Odysseus he did not introduce everything that was incidentally true of him, being wounded on Parnassus, for instance, or pretending to be mad at the mastering of the fleet, neither of which necessarily or probably implied the other at all; instead he composed the Odyssey about an action that is one in the sense I mean, and the same is true of the Iliad. In the other mimetic arts a mimēsis is one if it is a mimēsis of one object; and in the same way a plot, being a mimēsis of an action, should be a mimēsis of one action and that a whole one, with the different sections so arranged that the whole is disturbed by the transposition and destroyed by the removal of any one of them; for if it makes no visible difference whether a thing is there or not, that thing is no part of the whole.

CHAPTER 9

What I have said also makes plain that the poet's job is saying not what did happen but the sort of thing that would happen, that is, what can happen in a strictly probable or necessary sequence. The difference between the historian and the poet is not merely that one writes verse and the other prose—one could turn Herodotus' work into verse and it would be just as much history as before; the essential difference is that
the one tells us what happened and the other the sort of thing that would happen. That is why poetry is at once more like philosophy and more worth than history, since poetry tends to make general statements, while those of history are particular. A 'general statement' means (in this context) one that tells us what sort of man would, probably or necessarily, say or do what sort of things, and this is what poetry aims at, though it attaches proper names; a particular statement on the other hand tells us what Alcibiades, for instance, did or what happened to him.

That poetry does aim at generality has long been obvious in the case of comedy, where the poets make up the plot from a series of probable happenings and then give the persons any names they like, instead of writing about particular people as the lampooners did. In tragedy, however, they still stick to the actual names; this is because it is what is possible that arouses conviction, and while we do not without more ado believe that what never happened is possible, what did happen is clearly possible, since it would not have happened if it were not.

Though as a matter of fact, even in some tragedies most names are invented and only one or two well known: in Agathon’s Aithous, for instance, the names as well as the events are made up, and yet it gives just as much pleasure. So one need not try to stick at any cost to the traditional stories, which are the subject of tragedies; indeed the attempt would be absurd, since even what is well known is well known only to a few, but gives general pleasure for all that.

It is obvious from all this that the poet should be considered a maker of plots, not of verses, since he is a poet qua maker of mimēsis and the objects of his mimēsis are actions. Even if it is incidentally true that the plot he makes actually happened, that does not mean he is not its maker; for there is no reason why some things that actually happen should not be the sort of thing that would probably happen, and it is in virtue of that aspect of them that he is their maker.

Of defective plots or actions the worst are the episodic, those, I mean, in which the succession of the episodes is neither probable nor necessary; bad poets make these on their own account, good ones because of the judges; for in aiming at success in the competition and stretching the plot more than it can bear they often have to distort the natural order.

Tragedy is a mimēsis not only of a complete action, but also of things arousing pity and fear, emotions most likely to be stirred when things happen unexpectedly but because of each other (this arouses more

Chapter 9—11

Surprise than mere chance events, since even chance events seem more marvellous when they look as if they were meant to happen—take the case of the statue of Mitüs in Argos killing Mitüs’ murderer by falling on him as he looked at it; for we do not think that things like this are merely random); so such plots will necessarily be the best.

Chapter 10

Some plots are simple, some complex, since the actions of which the plots are mimēsis fall naturally into the same two classes. By ‘simple action’ I mean one that is continuous in the sense defined and is a unity and where the change of fortune takes place without peripeteia or recognition, by ‘complex’, one where the change of fortune is accompanied by peripeteia or recognition or both. The peripeteia and recognition should arise just from the arrangement of the plot, so that it is necessary or probable that they should follow what went before; for there is a great difference between happening next and happening as a result.

Chapter 11

A peripeteia occurs when the course of events takes a turn to the opposite in the way described, the change being also probable or necessary in the way I said. For example, in the Oedipus, when the man came and it seemed that he would comfort Oedipus and free him from his fear about his mother, by revealing who he was he in fact did the opposite. Again in the Lyceus, Lyceus was being led off and it seemed that he would be put to death and that Danaus who was with him would kill him, but the earlier actions produced Danaus’ death and Lyceus’ release.

Recognition is, as its name indicates, a change from ignorance to knowledge, tending either to affection or to enmity; it determines in the direction of good or ill fortune the fates of the people involved. The best sort of recognition is that accompanied by peripeteia, like that in the Oedipus. There are of course other kinds of recognition. For a recognition of the sort described can be a recognition of inanimate objects, indeed of quite indifferent ones, and one can also recognize whether someone has committed an act or not. But the one mentioned has most to do with the plot, that is, most to do with the action; for a

1 That is, in a way involving surprise.
recognition accompanied by peripeteia in this way will involve either pity or fear, and tragedy is by definition a mimēsis of actions that rouse these emotions; it is moreover such recognitions that lead to good or bad fortune.

Since recognition involves more than one person, in some cases only one person will recognize the other, when it is clear who the former is, and sometimes each has to recognize the other: Orestes, for example, recognized Iphigenia from her sending the letter, but a second recognition was necessary for her to recognize him.

These then are two elements of the plot, and a third is pathos. I have dealt with the first two, peripeteia and recognition. A pathos is an act involving destruction or pain, for example deaths on stage and physical agonies and woundings and so on.

So much for the parts of tragedy that one ought to use as qualitative elements.

CHAPTER 13

What ought one to aim at and beware of in composing plots? And what is the source of the tragic effect? These are the questions that naturally follow from what I have now dealt with.

Well, the arrangement of tragedy at its best should be complex, not simple, and it should also present a mimēsis of things that arouse fear and pity, as this is what is peculiar to the tragic mimēsis.

So it is clear that one should not show virtuous men passing from good to bad fortune, since this does not arouse fear or pity, but only a sense of outrage. Nor should one show bad men passing from bad to good fortune, as this is less tragic than anything, since it has none of the necessary requirements; it neither satisfies our human feeling nor arouses pity and fear. Nor should one show a quite wicked man passing from good to bad fortune; it is true that such an arrangement would satisfy our human feeling, but it would not arouse pity or fear, since the one is felt for someone who comes to grief without deserving it, and the other for someone like us (pity, that is, for the man who does not deserve his fate, and fear for someone like us); so this event will not arouse pity or fear. So we have left the man between these. He is one who is not pre-eminent in moral virtue, who passes to bad fortune not through vice or wickedness, but because of some piece of ignorance, and who is of high repute and great good fortune, like Oedipus and Thyestes and the splendid men of such families.

CHAPTER 14

So the good plot must have a single line of development, not a double one as some people say; that line should go from good fortune to bad and not the other way round; the change should be produced not through wickedness, but through some large-scale piece of ignorance; the person ignorant should be the sort of man I have described—certainly not a worse man, though perhaps a better one.

This is borne out by the facts: at first the poets recounted any story that came to hand, but nowadays the best tragedies are about a few families only, for example, Alcmeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and others whose lot it was to suffer or commit fearful acts.

Well then, the best tragedy, judged from the standpoint of the tragic art, comes from this sort of arrangement. That is why those who censure Euripides for doing this in his tragedies and making many of them end with disaster are making just the same mistake. For this is correct in the way I said. The greatest proof of this is that on the stage and in the contests such plays are felt to be the most properly tragic, if they are well managed, and Euripides, even if he is a bad manager in the other points, is at any rate the most tragic of the poets.

Second comes the sort of arrangement that some people say is the best: this is the one that has a double arrangement of the action like the Odyssey, and ends with opposite fortunes for the good and bad people. It is thought to be the best because of the weakness of the audiences; for the poets follow the lead of the spectators and make plays to their specifications. But this is not the pleasure proper to tragedy, but rather belongs to comedy; for in comedy those who are most bitter enemies throughout the plot, as it might be Orestes and Aegisthus, are reconciled at the end and go off and nobody is killed by anybody.

Now though pity and fear can be elicited by the spectacle, they can also be elicited just by the arrangement of the particular actions [that make up the plot], and this is a prior consideration and the sign of a better poet. For the plot ought to be so composed that even without seeing the action, a man who just hears what is going on shudders and feels pity because of what happens; this one would feel on hearing the plot of the Oedipus, for instance. But to produce this effect via the spectacle has less to do with the art of tragedy and needs external aids.

To go further and use the spectacle to produce something that is
merely monstrous, instead of something that rouses fear, is to depart entirely from tragedy. For one should look to tragedy for its own pleasure, not just any pleasure; and since the poet's job is to produce the pleasure springing from pity and fear via mimêsis, this clearly ought to be present in the elements of the action.

What sort of events, then, do seem apt to rouse fear, or [rather] pity? This is my next subject. In such actions, people must do something to those closely connected with them, or to enemies, or to people to whom they are indifferent. Now, if it is a case of two enemies, this arouses no particular pity, whether the one damages the other or only intends to; or at least, pity is felt only at the pathos considered in itself. The same is true in the case when people are indifferent to each other.

The cases we must look for are those where the pathos involves people closely connected, for instance where brother kills brother, son father, mother son, or son mother—or if not kills, then means to kill, or does some other act of the kind.

Well, one cannot interfere with the traditional stories, cannot, for instance, say that Clytaemnestra was not killed by Orestes or Eriphyle by Alcmene; what one should do is invent for oneself and use the traditional material well. Let me explain more clearly what I mean by 'well'. One can make the act be committed as the ancient poets did, that is, with the agents knowing and aware [whom they are damaging]; even Euripides has the example of Medea killing her children with full knowledge. [And they can have knowledge and not act.] Or they can commit the deed that rouses terror without knowing to whom they are doing it, and later recognize the connection, like Sophocles' Oedipus; this indeed happens outside the play, but we have examples in the tragedy itself, for example, Astydamas' Alcmene and Telemon in the Wounded Odysseus. Again, apart from these one might through ignorance intend to do something irreparable, and then recognize the victim-to-be before doing it. These are the only possible ways, as they must either do it or not, and in knowledge or ignorance.

The worst of these is to have the knowledge and the intention and then not do it; for this is both morally outraging and untragic—'untragic' because it involves no pathos. That is why nobody does behave in this way except very rarely, as Haemon, for example, means to kill Creon in the Antigone. The second worst is doing it: the better form of this is when the character does it in ignorance, and recognizes his victim afterwards; for this involves no feeling of outrage and the recognition produces lively surprise. But the best is the last, for example, the case in the Cretanastes where Merops means to kill her son and does not, but recognizes him instead, and the case involving brother and sister in the Iphigenia in Tauris; again in the Helen the son recognized his mother when on the point of giving her up.

As I said before, this is why tragedies are about very few families. As it was not art but chance that led the poets in their search to the discovery of how to produce this effect in their plots, they have to go to the families in which such pathos occurred.

So much for the arrangement of the particular acts and the qualities required of plots.

CHAPTER 15

In the representation of character, there are four things that one ought to aim at:

(a) First and foremost, the characters represented should be morally good. The speech or action will involve mimêsis of character if it makes plain, as said before, the nature of the person's moral choice, and the character represented will be good if the choice is good. This is possible in each class: for example, a woman is good and so is a slave, though the one is perhaps inferior, and the other generally speaking low-grade.

(b) The characters represented should be suitable: for example, the character represented is brave, but it is not suitable for a woman to be brave or clever in this way.

(c) They should be life-like; this is different from the character's being good and suitable in the way I used 'suitable'.

(d) They should be consistent: for even if the subject of the mimêsis is an inconsistent person, and that is the characteristic posited of him, still he ought to be consistently inconsistent.

In the representation of character as well as in the chain of actions one ought always to look for the necessary or probable, so that it is necessary or probable that a person like this speaks or acts as he does, and necessary or probable that this happens after that. Clearly then, the dénouements of plots ought to arise just from the mimêsis of character, and not from a contrivance, a deus ex machina, as in the Medea and in the Iliad about the setting off. The contrivance should be used instead for things outside the play, either all that happened beforehand that a human being could not know, or
all that happens later and needs foretelling and reporting; for we attribute omniscience to the gods. In the particular actions themselves there should be nothing irrational, and if there is it should be outside the tragedy, like that of Sophocles’ Oedipus.

Since a tragedy is a mimesis of people better than are found in the world, one ought to do the same as the good figure-painters; for they too give us the individual form, but though they make people lifelike they represent them as more beautiful than they are. Similarly the poet too in representing people as irascible and lazy and morally deficient in other ways like that, ought nevertheless to make them good, as Homer makes Achilles both good and an example of harsh self-will.

CHAP. 19

As I have dealt with the other qualitative elements, I now have to talk about the representation of intellect and about verbal expression. The representation of intellect we may take to be covered by the Rhetoric; for it does belong rather to that inquiry. What is involved in the representation of intellect is every effect to be produced by speech. Its sections are proof and disproof, rousing emotion (pity, fear, anger, and so on), making a thing look important or unimportant. Clearly in the plot too one ought to proceed from just these same main heads, when one needs to produce an effect of pity or fear, likelihood or importance. There is some difference, though; in the action these should be obvious without one’s being told, whereas the other effects should be produced in words by the person using them and should result from his words, as the speaker would be quite unnecessary if the desired result were obvious without his saying anything.

So far as verbal expression goes, one branch of inquiry is that into the forms of speech. Knowledge of this really falls under the study of delivery and is the province of the expert in that subject. I mean such questions as ‘What is a command, a wish, a statement, a threat, a question, an answer?’ and so on. A poet’s knowledge or ignorance in this sphere does not leave him open to any critical censure worth bothering about. For anyone would think pretty trivial the fault censured by Protagoras, when he says: ‘Homer thinks he is beginning with a prayer and in fact uses a command, when he says, “Sing of the wrath, goddess”, since to tell somebody to do something or not is a command.’ So let us leave that alone, since it belongs to another field and not to poetry.

Verbal expression as a whole has the following parts: element, syllable, linking word, articulatory word, noun, verb, termination, statement.

An element is an indivisible sound, not any sound, but that capable of producing intelligible utterance; for some animals produce indivisible sounds, which I do not, however, call elements. This class has three subdivisions: sounded, half-sounded, and soundless. A sounded element is that which has an audible sound without any contact occurring. A half-sounded element is one that produces an audible sound when contact does occur: such are s and r. A soundless element is one where contact occurs without the element itself having any audible sound, though it is audible when combined with elements that have audible sound: such are g and d. The elements in these three classes can be further classified, according to the shape of the mouth, the place of contact, rough or smooth breathing, length or shortness of quantity, and accent, acute, grave, or intermediate. One can investigate the subject further in works on metric.

A syllable is a composite non-significant sound made up of a voiceless element and one with voice: gr, for example, is a syllable by itself without a, and also if a is added to make gra. But the investigation of this too is a matter of metric.

A linking word is (a) a non-significant sound which neither prevents nor produces the formation from a number of sounds of one significant utterance; it ought not to stand alone at the beginning of a statement: examples are men, toi, dé, de [the linking particles]; (b) a non-significant sound that naturally produces from a plurality of sounds that nevertheless signify one thing a single significant utterance: examples are amphi, peri, and the rest [of the prepositions].

An articulatory word (arthron) is a non-significant sound that indicates the beginning or end or dividing point of a statement; it is naturally put at either end (?) of a statement or in the middle.

A noun is a composite significant sound with no temporality, and made up of parts not in themselves significant. For in compound words we do not take the parts to be significant in themselves; in Theodorus, for example, the doron has no significance.

A verb is a composite significant sound with temporality, and, like a noun, is made up of parts not in themselves significant; by ‘with

4 In modern terminology: vowels, fricatives, and stops.