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Tragic Pleasures

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Tragic Emotion

IN STUDYING the specific nature of the emotions aroused by tragedy, I draw in chapter 7 on the conclusions reached in chapter 6 about a variety of fear and pity emotions. The first section of chapter 7, "Pity and Fear in the *Poetics*," examines some of the similarities and differences between emotion aroused by tragedy and emotion aroused in other situations. Another important difference is discussed in "Flight and Pursuit": tragic pity and fear do not lead to action as do emotions in typical, real-life situations. Chapter 7 concludes with a study of the specific ways in which both rhetoric and tragedy arouse emotion.

PITY AND FEAR IN THE *POETICS*

A study of the emotional effects of tragedy must begin with the understanding that it is the function of tragedy to produce pleasure and katharsis by arousing the specific emotions of pity and fear, and only these emotions. Tragedy is defined as "imitation . . . by means of pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions" (*Po.* 1449b24–28). It is "peculiar" (*idion*) to tragedy to imitate pitiable and fearful events (1452b33), and the "proper pleasure" of tragedy is that which comes from pity and fear (1453b11–13). *Phobos* and *eleos*, or their cognates, occur frequently in conjunction in the *Poetics*, although Aristotle also uses synonyms for these terms. *dema* . . . *otktra* ("terrible . . . pitiable". 1453b14), *phrittein kai eleen* ("to shudder and to pity". 1453b5). The *ekplēxis* and wonder aroused by tragedy are not emotional effects separate from pity and fear. Instead, *ekplēxis* is another term for the emotional effects of tragedy: pity and fear, which include an element of wonder. Nor is it the function of tragedy to arouse such emotions as anger. Aristotle's statement that *dianoia* (thought) arouses emotions "like pity, or fear, or anger, and all that are such as these" (1456a38–b1) appears in the context of a general account of the "rhetorical" (1456b35) uses of *dianoia*, and should not be taken as an indication that it is the *function* of tragedy to arouse anger as well as pity and fear.¹

¹ Pace Janko, *Poetics* I, on 1456a38

Aristotle follows tradition in holding that tragedy arouses pity and fear. Gorgias writes that poetry produces "very fearful [*periphobos*] shuddering and much-weeping pity" (DK B11. *Encomium of Helen*, 9). According to Plato (*Ion* 535c), the rhapsode produces *phobos* in the audience when he recites what is pitiable and fearful (*phoberon*) or terrible (*demon*), and (*Phaedrus* 268c) the tragedians make pitiable and fearful (*phoberas*) speeches.² In *Republic* 10.606b3, Plato criticizes poets for arousing pity inappropriately. In *Republic* 3, he forbids the poets to represent death as terrible (*dema*: 386b4), because this will cause the guardians to fear death (386a7), when they ought to be courageous. He also forbids the poets' use of "terrible [*dema*] and fearful [*phobera*] words," such as "Cocytus" and "Styx," which cause people to shudder (387b8–c4, cf. *Po.* 14.1453b5. "to shudder and to pity"). While Aristotle also holds that tragedy arouses pity and fear, he does not agree with Plato that the *phobos* aroused by poetry is the same fear that makes people cowardly in battle. On the contrary, Aristotle is careful to distinguish tragic *phobos* from the fear aroused by what is merely painful and destructive (*Po.* 14). Aristotelian tragic emotion is aroused by actions (harm of *philos* by *philos*) that are shameful as well as painful or destructive.

Pity and fear in the *Poetics*, like *phobos* and *eleos* in Aristotle's other works, are cold, painful emotions, or, to use the phrase of the *Rhetoric*, two kinds of "pain and disturbance." Because pity and fear in the *Poetics* are emotions (*pathēmata*. *Po.* 6.1449b28), they have physical and cognitive aspects: matter and form, to use the terminology of the *De anima*. One indication that fear in the *Poetics* has the same cold, painful physical aspects as fear of physical danger is Aristotle's statement that tragedy makes the viewer "shudder and pity" (*phrittein kai eleein*. 1453b5). Here, "shudder" is substituted for the more usual term *phobos*. Shuddering, a common physical manifestation of fear, is closely associated with fear in *De motu animalium* 701b22 *phrittosai kai phobountai*. The physical manifestations of tragic pity, it is reasonable to assume, are the same as those of pity in real-life situations. weeping, for example.

An objection might be raised, however, to the view that tragic fear and pity are painful emotions, as are *phobos* and *eleos* in real-life situations. Aristotle has often been said to believe that tragedy transforms emotions that are painful in real-life situations into special, "aesthetic" emotions that are pleasurable and not painful.³ This view might appear to derive support

² These passages are cited by Else, *Plato*, 139–40, who notes, however, that while *Rep* 10 frequently mentions weeping and wailing, it says nothing about fear. On tragic emotion in Gorgias and Plato, see also Pohlenz, "Anfänge" 2.461–66.

³ This is argued, for example, by Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory*, 254–73, and Schaper, "Ar-

from the differences between the *Poetics*' characterization of fear and pity and that of the *Rhetoric*. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines fear as a kind of "pain [λύπη] and disturbance [ταραχή]," and pity as a kind of "pain" (2.5.1382a21 and 2.8.1385b13). In his *Poetics*, however, pity and fear help produce pleasure: "The poet must provide the pleasure that comes from pity and fear by means of imitation" (14.1453b12–13). This passage, however, does not state that pity and fear are themselves pleasurable, it makes the very different point that pleasure comes "from pity and fear by means of imitation."⁴ Moreover, the view that tragic pity and fear are not painful would involve Aristotle in serious philosophical difficulties. In his theory, tragedy arouses pity and fear, and it is an imitation of, and thus similar to,⁵ fearful and pitiable events (e.g., 9.1452a2–3). It is not clear what this would mean if "pity" and "fear" had one sense when used in connection with the events imitated, and another when used in connection with the emotions produced by the imitation. This problem does not arise, of course, if we take Aristotle literally: tragedy is an imitation of (painfully) pitiable and fearful events, and is recognized as such because it produces (painful) pity and fear in the audience. Tragedy makes us weep and shudder; this is why we say it is an imitation of pitiable and fearful events.

Nevertheless, painful pity and fear also have a certain pleasurable element, in real life as in tragedy. Fear, according to the *Rhetoric*, necessarily involves hope of safety (1383a5–6), and hope is pleasant, since it is accompanied by the *phantasia* of that for which we hope (1370a29–32), and thus gives pleasure just as the real thing does (1370b9–10). Aristotle holds that "a certain pleasure accompanies most of our desires, for people enjoy a kind of pleasure remembering how they got something, or hoping that they will get it" (1370b14–17). Since this is so, even painful emotions such as anger have a certain element of pleasure (1370b10–11) because they include a desire for something pleasant.

It is a common Greek view that there is a certain pleasure involved in painful emotions. Aristotle explains Homer's phrase "desire for weeping" (ἔμερον γόοιο) by noting that we feel pain at the absence of a loved one, and pleasure in remembering this person.⁶ In the *Republic*, Plato associates

istotle's Catharsis," esp. 139. On the problem of "aesthetic" emotions, see further below, "Flight and Pursuit."

⁴ A good discussion of this point is that of Golden, "Epic: On pleasure and imitation," see chap. 2 ("Similarity"), chap. 7 ("Aesthetic and Real-Life Emotion"), and chap. 10.

⁵ See chap. 2 ("Similarity").

⁶ *Rhet.* 1370b25–29, quoting *Il.* 23.108, cf. similar phrases at *Il.* 24.513 and *Od.* 4.102.

pleasure with painful emotions for a different reason: he believes that the pleasure arises from fulfilling a physical or psychological need, or from relieving a burden. In *Republic* 10.606a–b, the poet is said to provide pleasure by filling and pleasing the part of the soul that is “starved for weeping” (606a4). In the *Philebus* also, Plato holds that tragedy gives us pleasure, writing that the audience feels pleasure and weeps at the same time (48a5–6). Gorgias, too, believes that pain can be mixed with pleasure, especially in aesthetic situations, for he writes in his *Encomium of Helen* (9) that those listening to poetry are filled with “grief-loving longing” (πόθος φιλοπενθήας).

Whatever these other writers may have thought, there is no indication that Aristotle believed that the pleasurable element in these painful emotions is qualitatively different in aesthetic and real-life situations. It seems likely that, in his view, painful emotions aroused by tragedy have only a greater quantity of attendant pleasure in the form of hope than these emotions have in real-life situations. Tragic fear, like fear in other situations, leads us to deliberate about safety. Tragedy, however, also gives us a greater hope of safety by helping us understand fearful things. What tragedy does not do is “transform” a painful, real-life emotion into a pleasurable, “aesthetic” emotion.

If pity and fear in the *Poetics* have the same painful physical aspects that these emotions have in Aristotle’s other works, the cognitive aspects of pity and fear in the *Poetics* are also the same, in many respects, as those of pity and fear in Aristotle’s other works. It is reasonable to suppose that the desires (final causes) involved in tragic fear and pity are the same, in most respects, as the desires involved in pity and fear in other situations: the desire to avoid painful and destructive evils (fear), and the desire to help those who suffer them (pity). It is also reasonable to suppose that the efficient cause of tragic fear, as of *phobos* in the *Rhetoric*, is a *phantasia* of future evils. The evils that arouse pity and fear in the *Poetics* are painful and destructive, just like the evils that arouse pity and fear in the *Rhetoric*. The *pathos*, a destructive or painful action, is one of the three parts of the tragic plot (*Po.* 11), and *pathē* arouse pity and fear (*Po.* 14).

The cognitive aspects of pity in the *Poetics* are also similar in other ways to these aspects of pity in the *Rhetoric*. In the *Poetics*, we feel pity for the person who does not deserve to suffer (1453a4), but we do not pity an evil person who goes either from bad to good fortune, or from good to bad fortune (1452b36–1453a4). The *Rhetoric* agrees with this account, stating that pity is felt for those who do not deserve to suffer (1385b14), and that the good fortune of someone who does not deserve it produces indignation

(νεμεσῶν), the opposite of pity (1386b9–12). The two works also agree in holding that we pity those who suffer unexpectedly. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes that it is pitiable for “some evil to come whence it was fitting for one to get something good” (1386a11–12). At *Poetics* 1452a3–4, things that occur “contrary to expectation” are said to arouse pity and fear, and at 1453b19–22 we are said to pity people who suffer at the hands of a *philos*, that is, someone from whom this would not be expected.⁷ Harm by a *philos* is also pitiable because it separates us from *philoi* (*Rhet* 1386a9–11). The parallels between the accounts of pity in the two works are brought out by Aristotle’s statement that rhetoricians who use “the actor’s art generally are more pitiable. For they make the evil appear near by placing it before our eyes” (*Rhet* 1386a32–34). Thus, pity is more easily aroused by drama than it is in real-life situations.

There are, however, a number of ways in which the account of pity and fear in the *Poetics* differs from that of the *Rhetoric*. One difference is more apparent than real. The *Rhetoric* states that people feel pity “if they think that some people are *epieikeis*. For someone who thinks that no one is [*epieikēs*] will think that everyone deserves evil” (1385b34–1386a1). But *Poetics* 13 states that the change from good to bad fortune of the *epieikēs* does not arouse pity (1452b34–36). As noted above, *epieikēs* is a slippery word, it means “outstanding in excellence” in *Poetics* 13, but in *Poetics* 15 it has a broader, more social sense. In the *Rhetoric* passage, also, this term may simply mean “good” or “decent,” but not exceptionally so. In that case, there would be no conceptual inconsistency between *Poetics* 13 and the *Rhetoric*: in both works, we pity those who are good enough so as not to deserve evil, but not exceptionally excellent. Moreover, it is important to note that *Rhetoric* 1385b34–1386a1 does not say that people pity the *epieikēs*.⁸ It makes the very different point that people with the generally cynical belief that no one is *epieikēs* will think that all people deserve what they get.

Another difficulty concerns the different accounts given in the two works of the people for whom pity and fear are felt. According to the *Rhetoric*, fear is felt for ourselves: “those things that people fear for themselves” (1386a27–28), and pity, not fear, is felt for those who are like us in age, character, disposition, social status, and family (1386a24–25). The *Poetics*, on the other hand, states that “fear is felt *peri* the person like [us]”

⁷ On pity, fear, and the unexpected, see the introduction to chap. 5.

⁸ Cope, *Rhetoric*, ad loc., mistranslates this passage, Grimaldi, *Rhetoric II*, correctly interprets it.

(1453a5–6). This statement is often taken to mean that we feel fear, of an unusual kind *for* someone (e.g., Oedipus).⁹ This interpretation not only makes the *Poetics* conceptually inconsistent with the *Rhetoric*; it also tends to remove the distinction between pity and fear. Following this account, it is hard to explain how fear for Oedipus is different from pity for him. A better way of reading *Poetics* 1453a5–6 is to take *peri* to mean “concerning” or “in the case of,” rather than “for”:¹⁰ we feel fear (for ourselves) in the case of the sufferings of someone who is like us. When we see someone like us suffering, we reason that we ourselves are also such as to suffer, and then come to feel fear for ourselves.¹¹ This interpretation is in accord with the views on the arousal of fear expressed in the *Rhetoric*, I argue below.

Another difference between the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* is that pity and fear in the *Poetics* are more closely correlated than they are in the *Rhetoric*. This difference, however, is due to the different concerns of the two works rather than to conceptual inconsistencies.

In the *Poetics*, tragedy is often said to arouse both pity and fear.¹² When Aristotle mentions one emotion without the other, or writes “either . . . or” or “neither . . . nor,”¹³ on the other hand, his usage might appear to suggest that the two emotions may be separable. But this occasional disjunction is in most cases only a stylistic variant, without real significance.¹⁴ In only one passage does Aristotle make an explicit distinction between the two emotions. Here (1453a4–6), he states that pity is felt for the person who is undeserving of bad fortune, while fear is felt concerning the person “like” us. This very distinction shows how closely interrelated the two emotions are, for in the best tragedy, the person who moves between good and bad fortune is both like us and undeserving of bad fortune. Moreover, if pity is felt only by those who believe they can themselves suffer evils, and who therefore view these evils as fearful, in tragedy, as in

⁹ See Else, *Argument*, 372, and Bywater, *Aristotle on the Art*, 215.

¹⁰ For *peri* with the accusative in this broader sense (“about, in the case of”), see LSJ C.I.5 and Bonitz, 3c.

¹¹ Dupont-Roc and Lallot, *Poétique*, 239, mention a “raisonnement d’analogie” of this kind, which Bywater’s criticisms (*Aristotle on the Art*, 211–12) of Lessing (*Hamb. Dram. St.*, 75) fail to take into account.

¹² Pity and fear. 1449b27, 1452a2–3, 1452b32, 1453b1, 1453b5 (*phobesthai* substituted for *phobesthai*), and 1453b12.

¹³ This occurs at 1452a38–b1, 1452b36, 1453a1–6, 1453b9, 1453b14 (*deina ē osktra*), 1453b17, 1456b1, and 1456b3.

¹⁴ Pace Gudeman, *Aristoteles*, 163, and Bywater, *Aristotle on the Art*, 212. An exception (the monstrous 1453b9) that proves the rule is discussed below.

the real-life situations dealt with in the *Rhetoric*, pity cannot be aroused without fear.¹⁵

There are reasons to believe that in bad tragedies, and in certain real-life situations, fear can be aroused without pity. In real life, fear is typically aroused by the appearance of a particular, perceptible danger to ourselves. A bad tragedy, like a horror film, might arouse fear of this kind by its use of such visual effects as terrifying masks. Aristotle condemns this kind of effect at 1453b8–10: “Those who produce only the monstrous [τερατώδεις] by means of spectacle, and not the fearful, have no share in tragedy.” “The monstrous” is a kind of horror very different from the true tragic quality, “the fearful,” that accompanies the pitiable. A bad tragedy might also arouse fear without pity by representing a particular danger that immediately threatens the audience—for example, the Spartans attacking Athens. Such a play would be more like history than poetry because it would “speak of the particular” instead of “the universal” (1451b6–7). Again, a bad tragedy might arouse grief and sorrow for one’s own past sufferings, and fear of suffering such things again, without arousing pity. Phrynichus’s *Capture of Miletus* was a play of this sort. Herodotus (6.21) writes that when it was presented the audience fell to weeping and the poet was fined “for reminding them of their own evils” (ὥς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκῆμα κακά).¹⁶ Phrynichus not only offended the Athenians, he was, according to Aristotle’s views, guilty of writing bad tragedy. By representing a particular event he was writing history. Moreover, by representing something too close to the experience of those in the audience, he aroused in them extreme sorrow for themselves, which, like the kind of extreme fear for oneself mentioned in *Rhetoric* 1386a17–24, is incompatible with pity.

Because rhetoric often deals with situations that are not admissible in a good tragedy, we find more examples of the arousal of fear without pity in the *Rhetoric* than in the *Poetics*. Three passages are of particular interest

1. 1375a7–8 That crime is greater “at which the hearers experience fear rather than [μᾶλλον ἢ]¹⁷ pity.”

¹⁵ On this point in connection with the *Rhetoric*, see Grimaldi, *Rhetoric II*, 146.

¹⁶ Contrast Plato’s statement that poetry arouses emotion by leading us ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλοτριῶν εἰς τὰ οἰκεία, “from others’ [παθῆ] to our own” (*Rep.* 10.606b6–7). Cf. Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen* 9 ἐπ’ ἄλλοτριῶν ἴδιον τι πάθημα, “from others [to] a *pathos* of our own.”

¹⁷ Cope, *Rhetoric*, ad loc., correctly translates the phrase in this way, W. Rhys Roberts in Barnes, *Oxford Translation*, incorrectly translates it as “more than.”

2. 1385b32–34 People who do not pity include “those who feel extreme fear, for those who experience *ekplēxis* do not pity because they are absorbed in their own suffering.”¹⁸

3. 1386a17–24 People feel terror and not pity when those suffering are “very closely related to them. They feel about these people as if they themselves were about to suffer. For this reason Amasis, as they say, did not weep over his son being led away to death, but he did do so over his friend begging. For the latter is pitiable, the former terrible [*demon*]. The terrible is different from the pitiable, and drives out pity and is often useful for the opposite. (For) they (do not) pity any longer when the terrible is near themselves.”¹⁹

The first of these three passages deals with a situation excluded (*Po.* 1453a8–9) from a well-constructed tragedy: a great crime, committed as a result of vice. In the *Rhetoric* passage, Aristotle is discussing crimes that are “injustices” (1374b24), defined as “things not contrary to reasonable expectation, and that result from vice” (1374b8–9). The pity in question in the first passage must be an emotion that would, in the case of a lesser crime, be felt for the victim (rather than for the perpetrator about to be punished, since we do not pity someone who deserves to suffer). The fear, on the other hand, must be that of suffering from a similar injustice ourselves.²⁰ This first passage deals with the same case as the second passage, that in which people in extreme fear for themselves do not pity others.

In the second and third passages, Aristotle gives two reasons why, in some cases, we fear for ourselves and do not pity others. First, we do not pity those who are very closely related to us because in their case we feel as if we ourselves were about to suffer (1386a18–19). This is because our *philo*i belong to and are part of ourselves (1385b28–29), and fear is felt for ourselves and for what belongs to us (1385b15). That this kind of fear is

¹⁸ μήτ' αὐ φοβούμενοι σφόδρα (οὐ γὰρ ἐλεοῦσιν οἱ ἐκπεπληγμένοι διὰ τὸ εἶναι πρὸς τῷ οἰκίῳ πάθει) On πρὸς τῷ οἰκίῳ πάθει as “absorbed in” their own sufferings, see Cope, *Rhetoric*, ad loc

¹⁹ I translate Kassel's text *Ars rhetorica*. It should be noted, however, that there are serious textual difficulties. The last sentence as it appears in the MSS, “Again, they pity when the terrible is near themselves,” seems to contradict the previous sentence “For the terrible is different from pity and drives out pity. For this reason, Kassel follows J. Vahlen (*Gesammelte philologische Schriften*, 73ff.), who added οὐ γὰρ before εἴ, negating this last sentence. On the problems of text and interpretation of this passage, see Grimaldi, *Rhetoric II*, 145–47.

²⁰ See Cope, *Rhetoric*, 1 266

not only compatible with, but also conducive to, pity for someone who is not a close relative is shown by Aristotle's example in the third passage quoted above. Amasis wept at his friend's misfortune soon after he failed to weep at his son's.

The second reason is given in the second passage. Extreme fear or *ekplēxis*²¹ in the face of one's own immediate danger prevents pity for anyone else. Aristotle has in mind such cases as those of soldiers deserting their weaker friends as they flee in panic, and people trampling others as they attempt to escape from a fire. In these cases, those who feel extreme fear are so absorbed in their own, immediate, particular dangers that they cannot reflect on anything else. This fear is so extreme that it leaves no room for any other emotion. Moreover, it often requires immediate practical action, such as flight, which is incompatible with any kind of reflection. While a rhetorician may, in some circumstances, want to arouse extreme fear of this sort, a good tragedy will avoid this.

In many respects, then, the *Poetics* and Aristotle's other works, especially the *Rhetoric*, hold the same views about the physical and cognitive aspects of pity and fear, and about the relationship between these emotions. In the *Poetics* and in Aristotle's other works, pity and fear are cold, painful emotions, aroused by (a *phantasia* of) painful and destructive future evils, and in the *Poetics*, as in the *Rhetoric*, pity is felt for someone who does not deserve to suffer. The main differences I have discussed thus far are that pity and fear are more closely linked in the *Poetics* than in the *Rhetoric*, and that tragic fear is felt "concerning" someone similar to us, while in the *Rhetoric* fear is felt "for ourselves." Another difference between the two works is that pity in the *Rhetoric* is felt for past and present as well as future evils (1386a28–34), while tragic pity is more closely connected with future evils. This is clear from passages such as *Poetics* 14.1453b21, where pity is said to be aroused when someone "kills or is about to kill" someone else. The close connection of pity with fear in the *Poetics* also indicates that tragic pity is best aroused by future evils.

Another difference between the accounts of pity and fear in the *Poetics* and in the *Rhetoric* is highly significant. While *phobos* and *eleos* in the *Rhetoric* are aroused at the *phantasia* of evils that are merely physically painful or destructive, the evils that arouse tragic pity and fear are those that appear to be shameful and disgraceful as well as painful or destructive. *Phobos*

²¹ The term *ekplēxis*, used here to refer to an emotion incompatible with pity, cannot have the same meaning it does in the *Poetics*, where *ekplēxis* is compatible with pity. On *ekplēxis*, see chap. 6.

in the *Poetics* has the broader sense the term has in *EN*1115a9–14, where it refers to fear of disgrace as well as to fear of physical pain and death

That the tragic emotions are concerned with evils that bring disgrace is clear from a number of passages in the *Poetics*. The best plot, writes Aristotle, concerns the downfall of someone “with great good reputation and good fortune” (*Po.* 1453a10). This downfall necessarily includes disgrace and loss of good reputation. More telling, Aristotle writes that an action in which an enemy kills an enemy does not excite pity [and fear] “except in respect to the *pathos* itself” (1453b18). Tragic pity and fear are properly aroused only when *philos* harms, or is about to harm, *philos* (1453b19–22). Thus, while a painful or destructive event is enough to arouse *phobos* in the restrictive sense of the *Rhetoric* (fear of physical danger), and pity for others who suffer this kind of evil, it is not enough to arouse tragic fear and pity. Like *aischunē* and *aidōs*, tragic fear and pity are concerned with evils, such as harm to *philos*, that bring disgrace. We pity Oedipus less because he suffers physical pain at his blinding (a painful *pathos*) than because he has suffered the greatest disgrace a human being can suffer: his acts of parricide and incest have cut him off completely from the human community. Aristotle also makes it clear that tragic fear and pity differ from the fear and pity that are concerned only with physical danger when he writes in *Poetics* 14 that pity and fear should come from the structure of events and not from “spectacle.” Spectacle, he explains, may be “monstrous,” but it does not produce the “proper pleasure” of tragedy (1453b8–11). Tragedy should not merely produce the fear of physical danger that is aroused, for example, by terrifying masks.

Thus, tragic fear resembles the shame emotions (fear of disgrace) in that it is concerned, in part, with disgraceful evils. To give an account of tragic fear, we can adapt the definition of *phobos* in *Rhetoric* 2.5 in order to take disgrace into account. Tragic fear can be characterized as “pain and disturbance at the *phantasia* of imminent evils that are destructive or painful, and disgraceful.” Similarly, tragic pity can be characterized, by adapting the definition of pity in *Rhetoric* 2.8, as “pain at an apparent destructive, painful, and disgraceful evil, of someone who does not deserve to get it, that one could expect oneself, or someone belonging to oneself, to suffer, and this, when it appears near.”

Because it is concerned with disgrace, tragic *phobos* has much in common with *kataplēxis*, excessive fear of disgrace, in Aristotle’s ethical works. Like *kataplēxis*, tragic *phobos* is, in part, an intense emotional reaction to evils that appear to bring disgrace. While viewing a tragedy, however, we do not fear these evils directly for ourselves, but “concerning the person

like us." When we see Oedipus, for example, suffering painful and disgraceful evils, we reason that we also are such as to suffer these evils, and then come to fear for ourselves. While we pity rather than blame Oedipus, whose suffering is undeserved, for ourselves we simply fear suffering the pain and disgrace, whether deserved or undeserved, that result from doing disgraceful actions. It is a mistake to view Aristotelian tragic emotion as simply "a violent non-moral *frisson*" aroused by pollution.²² Because tragic fear involves a fear of pollution and disgrace, it includes a desire to avoid them, and, like *kataplēxis*, it has definite "moral" elements. Aristotle's use of the term *ekplēxis* to refer to tragic emotion is of particular interest in view of the similarities between tragic fear and *kataplēxis*. *Ekplēxis* is closely related to *kataplēxis* linguistically and conceptually. Moreover, *ekplēxis* is connected with shame in Plato. As noted in chapter 6, the *ekplēxis* produced by Socrates' words resembles Aristotelian *kataplēxis* in many respects.

The association of shame with tragic emotion, as I will argue in detail in chapter 10, helps explain the benefits of tragic emotion. The usual view is that tragic fear is a kind of *phobos*, in the restrictive sense of fear of physical danger. However, it is hard to see how the arousal of this kind of fear can be beneficial. It would instead appear to be conducive to cowardice. On the other hand, it is easy to understand why the arousal of intense fear of painful and disgraceful evils can be beneficial. This emotional extreme can counterbalance a preexisting emotional extreme of shamelessness, thereby helping produce the proportionate blend of shame with shamelessness that constitutes, in part, the praiseworthy mean state of *aidōs*. Just as two friends with opposite emotional characteristics correct and bring each other to the intermediate state (*EE* 1239b25–1240a4), so, within the individual, tragic fear can be an antidote for shamelessness, and help produce *aidōs*.

The idea that tragic pity and fear help produce *aidōs* finds support in Greek literature. Pity was traditionally associated with *aidōs*. Moreover, the representation of fearful things in art and literature was traditionally thought to be beneficial in producing the good kind of shame: reverence and fear of wrongdoing (*aidōs*, *sebas*). In the *Oresteia* in particular, fear that results from pollution and wrongdoing is transformed into fear that prevents wrongdoing. At *Agamemnon* 1164, the Chorus, in response to Cassandra's prophecies about kin-murder, uses the uncompounded form of *ekplēxis*: "I am stricken" (*peplēgmai*). According to the Hypothesis of the

²² Adkins, *Merit*, 98, uses this phrase to characterize emotion aroused by pollution.

Agamemnon, this very part of the drama “is wondered at [*thaumazetai*] as having *ekplēxis* and sufficient pity.”²³ These same elements—pity, fear (or *ekplēxis*), and wonder—are combined in Aristotelian tragic emotion, which is also aroused by kin-murder. In the *Eumenides*, the fear that results from pollution and wrongdoing is transformed into the fear of wrongdoing that prevents kin-murder. This fear is what Aristotle calls *aidōs*. While he does not explicitly say that tragedy produces *aidōs*, this view is not only in accord with Greek traditional views, it also best explains his theory of katharsis of pity and fear.

If tragedy helps produce *aidōs*, it helps provide the kind of habituation *aidōs* provides in Aristotle’s ethical works. By leading us to feel fear in response to actions that are shameful as well as destructive or painful, tragedy helps us feel pain and pleasure, love and hate, correctly. Tragedy also helps in the development of the intellectual abilities of *phronēsis*, *prohairesis*, and *nous* for which *aidōs* and habituation are prerequisites. It does this by leading us to pay attention to the opinions and undemonstrated sayings of experienced older people, and of the wise, the poets. The tragic poets, with their vivid examples, help us understand what kinds of acts are painful, destructive, and shameful, and helps us want to avoid doing them.²⁴

That tragedy can be of some use even to philosophers is shown by the numerous examples from tragedy given in Aristotle’s ethical works. It is of more use, however, to the better class of ordinary citizens, those with whom Aristotle is concerned in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9. These are the *epieikeis*, those “decently advanced in habits” (1180a8) who are not, however, excellent in the strict sense. At *Poetics* 1462a2, Aristotle uses the term *epieikēs* when he defends tragedy against those who claim that it appeals to the *phauloi* rather than to the *epieikeis* (1462a2–4). He also requires in *Poetics* 13 that the tragic agent be “like” us (1453a5–6), and neither exceptionally excellent and just, nor evil and depraved (1453a7–9). It would seem that the audience for tragedy is obedient to *aidōs* and requires habituation throughout life, like the “decent people” of *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9. Part of this habituation is given by tragedy.

Although tragic pity and fear differ in some ways from the pity and fear aroused in typical real-life situations, it is misleading to call them different emotions. Rather, just as the real-life emotions of fear and pity are aroused

²³ Lines 13–14 in Page, *Aeschylus*.

²⁴ See chap. 6 (“*Aidōs*, Excellence, and Habituation”). On the way in which poetry helps produce *phronēsis*, see Carnes Lord, *Education*, 177–79.

in different ways in different circumstances, so these same emotions of pity and fear are aroused in one way by, for example, a production of *The Trojan Women*, and in another way by actual war. Because emotions are responses to external circumstances, they will naturally vary as these circumstances vary. Moreover, Aristotle does not hold one uniform view of particular emotions in real-life situations. For example, *phobos* is sometimes said to include expectation of disgraceful evils (*EN* 1115a9–14), and sometimes to exclude this object of fear (*Rhet.* 2.5). Tragic *phobos*, then, does not differ from real-life *phobos* in including expectation of disgraceful evils. Nor do the particular circumstances in which it is aroused mark it as a special, “aesthetic” emotion, qualitatively different from real-life emotion. The next section discusses other important differences in the circumstances in which emotion is aroused, in aesthetic and real-life contexts.

AESTHETIC AND REAL-LIFE EMOTION

Flight and Pursuit

One important difference between emotional responses in aesthetic situations and those in real life is that, while in real life emotion typically leads to action, this is obviously not true of emotional responses in aesthetic situations.²⁵ Aristotle’s reaction to this is significantly different from that of many modern philosophers. While modern aestheticians are usually puzzled that we can be moved (emotionally) by fictions,²⁶ for Aristotle, the most interesting question is why we are not moved to act in aesthetic situations. That is, he finds it much harder to understand why we do not run screaming from a stage villain or rush to help a victim than why we weep and feel pity at the theater in the first place. For Aristotle, the latter response is unproblematic.

Before considering emotional reactions in aesthetic situations, it will be helpful to examine Aristotle’s views on the more typical, real-life cases. I have examined Aristotle’s views on the arousal of emotion: I now consider how emotion typically leads to limb motion, flight or pursuit. Aristotle

²⁵ Some of the material in this section was previously published in Belfiore, “Pleasure.” Many of the ideas expressed here, however, differ substantially from my earlier views. An earlier version of “Flight and Pursuit” was read as “Aristotle on Not Being Moved by Fictions” at the annual meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Society for Aesthetics, Asilomar, Calif., April 1989, where I benefited from helpful discussions.

²⁶ Some recent discussions of this topic are those of Charleton, “Feeling,” Eaton, “Sadness,” Mannison, “Fiction,” and Radford and Weston, “Anna Karenina.”

describes the process by which perception leads to limb motion in the *De motu animalium*: "That is why it is pretty much at the same time that the creature thinks it should move forward and moves, unless something else impedes it. For the affections [*pathē*] suitably prepare the organic parts, desire the affections, and *phantasia* the desire; and *phantasia* comes about either through thought or through sense-perception" (DMA 702a15–19).²⁷

In Aristotle's view, thought and perception are the efficient causes of our seeing something as an object of avoidance or pursuit (*phantasia*); this leads to a desire to flee or pursue. These cognitive responses constitute the form of an emotion. In turn, desire leads to heating or chilling (the matter of an emotion).²⁸ In the passage just quoted, Aristotle merely says that "desire [prepares] the affections [*pathē*]." What he must mean, however, is that desire prepares *the rest of* the emotion in question—its physical aspects, or matter, the heating and expansion or chilling and contraction that characterize pleasurable and painful emotions respectively. After both the matter and the form of the emotion are "prepared," another step is necessary before limb motion can take place: "the creature thinks [*voēi*] it should move." Unlike heating and chilling, and the involuntary movements of bodily parts that are consequent on heating or chilling, limb motion requires "thought" or "the command of thought" (DMA 703b7–8: *κελεύσαντος τοῦ νοῦ*). Finally, "unless something else impedes it," Aristotle writes, "the affections [*pathē*] suitably prepare the organic parts" so that limb motion takes place.²⁹

A specific example of an angry action illustrates the process Aristotle has in mind. I perceive that Alcibiades is making an obscene gesture in my direction (perception). I see this as a slight (*phantasia*), and because of this (ὕπὸ τοῦδε: the efficient cause of DA 403a) I come to have a desire to give pain in return (ἐνεκα τοῦδε: the final cause of the *De anima*). These cognitive aspects of anger, its form, then produce the physical reactions that constitute its matter: the boiling of the blood around my heart, so that I experience the complete *pathos*. Finally, I think that I should move or give a command, and move my hand, hitting Alcibiades in the nose.

The process that, according to *De motu animalium* 702a15–19, leads from perception to limb motion can be expressed schematically in the following simplified explanatory model:

²⁷ Here and in the rest of chap. 7, I quote Nussbaum's translations in *De motu animalium*.

²⁸ On this process and related topics, see chap. 6 ("Pity, Fear, and Physical Danger").

²⁹ Nussbaum, *De motu animalium*, 356, argues cogently that the "organic parts" are the limbs.

I.

1. thought or sense-perception
2. *phantasia*
3. desire
4. matter
5. command
6. flight or pursuit

The *De motu animalium* account, and my schema of it, are of course oversimplifications. The specific details would vary from case to case and emotion to emotion. Moreover, even in typical cases the sequence is not strictly temporal. Nevertheless, this schema can serve as a model to explain the process by which perception leads to limb motion.

The typical, real-life sequence, from perception to flight or pursuit, is unproblematic in Aristotle's view. Nor does he believe that our feeling real emotions in aesthetic situations needs to be explained. For Aristotle, emotion aroused in aesthetic situations is not a peculiar, unusual kind of emotion. Instead, because it is caused by a *phantasia* of something as, for example, fearful or pitiable, it is paradigmatic, and in fact less in need of explanation than real-life emotion.³⁰ In real life, our response is mixed with a great many other factors that may prevent our seeing something as fearful and pitiable: other emotions, physical discomfort, preoccupation with daily cares, distracting noises and sights. In aesthetic situations it is easier to put aside these things that obscure and blunt our emotional response. What needs explanation, in Aristotle's view, is not the power of this response, but its lack of real-life consequences.

In the *De motu animalium*, Aristotle asks: "But how does it happen that thinking is sometimes accompanied by action and sometimes not, sometimes by motion and sometimes not?" (701a7–8). This is a significant question in ethical situations, and it is of primary importance in aesthetic cases, where thought and emotion typically do not lead to limb motion. *De motu animalium* 701a discusses how a practical syllogism leads to action: "For example, whenever someone thinks that every man should take walks, and that he is a man, at once he takes a walk . . . if nothing prevents or compels him" (701a13–16). There is no need to enter into the

³⁰ Compare Charlton, "Feeling," 215: "All imagining, even that of purely imaginary things, involves desire or feeling. It follows, then, that unless we are very expert at imagining in real life we shall be more easily moved by represented situations than by real ones." See also Easterling, "Character," 89, and S. K. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 310, quoted by Easterling.

modern controversies about the practical syllogism in Aristotle's ethical works in order to gain some understanding of how, in the simpler, aesthetic cases, we can be prevented from acting after we experience an emotion ³¹ Aristotle's theory that a 'command' ([5] in schema I, above) to pursue or flee is needed before the occurrence of voluntary limb motion (6) goes a long way toward answering the question about how thinking sometimes fails to lead to limb motion

The command in question is a command to pursue or flee, an assertion that something is, in this particular case, to be fled or pursued This command or assertion is different from the *phantasia* of something as an object of avoidance or pursuit ³² The physical reactions of heating and chilling can occur in the absence of an actual object, as a result of *phantasia* and thought (*DMA* 701b16–22) Not only heating and chilling, but also involuntary movements of bodily parts consequent on heating or chilling occur in the absence of a "command" "[Animals] also display involuntary movements in some of their parts By involuntary I mean such move-

ments as those of the heart and the penis, for often these are moved when something appears, but without the command of thought" (*DMA* 703b4–8) However, a command is necessary for limb motion, as opposed to these involuntary movements, to occur The *De anima*, like the *De motu animalium*, holds that a command or "assertion" is needed for limb motion "For the thinking soul *phantasmata* are like sensations When it asserts or denies that they are good or bad, it flees or pursues" (431a14–16) The distinction between emotion (including desire and involuntary movements consequent on heating or chilling) and limb motion, for which a command is needed, is particularly clear in another passage in the *De anima*

The theoretical mind contemplates nothing that is to be acted on, nor does it say anything about what is to be fled or pursued, while motion is always [motion] of something fleeing or pursuing something But not even when

³¹ It should be noted, however, that my account of the aesthetic case was influenced by Dahl's view that the practical syllogism [is] at least in part a model for explaining action on the basis of desire (*Reason*, 27) Dahl opposes (29) J. M. Cooper's more restrictive view of the practical syllogism *Reason and Human Good*, chap. 1, sec. 2, and appendix

³² Of course, this command may involve an additional *phantasia* a perception of this object as something to be fled here and now For the other animals, *phantasia* takes the place of the beliefs and thoughts that lead to the actions of human beings (*DA* 428a21–22, 433a11–12) However, the *phantasia* that leads to limb motion is not the same *phantasia* that causes involuntary movements consequent on the matter of fear pounding of the heart and shuddering My account of *phantasia* is an oversimplification, for explanatory purposes, of a complex and controversial subject See chap. 6, n. 1

the mind contemplates something of this kind does it at once give a command to take flight [κελεύει φεύγειν] or pursue. For example, it often thinks of something fearful or pleasant, but it does not give a command to flee [κελεύει δὲ φοβεῖσθαι], though the heart is moved, or if [it thinks of] something pleasant, some other part (DA 432b27–433a1)

In this passage, κελεύει δὲ φοβεῖσθαι (“give a command to flee”) is equivalent to κελεύει φεύγειν (“give a command to take flight”) immediately preceding, so φοβεῖσθαι should be translated “to flee.” To translate it “to be afraid,” as is usually done, obscures Aristotle’s point that we may feel emotion, complete with, for example, the pounding of the heart that is consequent on cognitive responses, without necessarily moving our limbs.³³ As *De anima* 431a14–16 makes clear, the command to flee or pursue is (at least in the case of rational beings) an assertion or denial that something is good or bad. It is an assertion that this thing before us is indeed, in the present case, an object to be fled or pursued. Only after this assertion will flight or pursuit take place, unless, as the *De motu animalium* notes, “something else impedes” (702a16–17, cf. 701a16).

The cases when something does prevent action are of particular interest in aesthetic cases, for, clearly, emotion experienced at the theater or when viewing pictures differs from emotion felt in other situations in that it does not normally lead to limb motion. Aristotle discusses one case in which something impedes action in the *De anima*

Opining is not up to us. For [the opinion] is necessarily either true or false. Again, when we have the opinion that something is terrible or fearful, we are at once affected in correspondence [with this opinion] [*sumpaschomen*], and similarly if [we have the opinion that something is] cheering. But with respect to *phantasia* we are just as if we were contemplating terrible or cheering things in a picture (DA 427b20–24)

Exactly what is it that Aristotle thinks we do experience in the picture-viewing case? A common misunderstanding of this passage, going back to Themistius, is that we experience *no* reactions in the picture-viewing

³³ In this passage, φοβεῖσθαι is translated as ‘to be afraid’ by Furley, *Voluntary* 2.57, and as ‘fear’ by Hamlyn, *De anima*, and Hicks, *De anima*. It is translated as ‘the emotion of fear’ by J. A. Smith in Barnes, *Oxford Translation*. An exception is Rodier, *Tratté*, who correctly translates this verb as *fuir* (to flee) and defends this interpretation in his note ad loc. Following the incorrect translation and interpretation, in Belfiore, *Pleasure*, 355–58, I confused the command to flee with a command to be afraid, to experience the *pathos* in the sense of desire and involuntary physical reactions.

case.³⁴ Following this interpretation, we experience an emotion when we have an opinion that something is frightening, but when we view pictures we do not experience any emotion at all. This interpretation, however, goes against the evidence of many passages examined above in chapters 6 and 7, which assert quite clearly that *phantasia* (the efficient cause of an emotion), to which picture-viewing is compared in *De anima* 427b20–24, produces desire (the final cause of an emotion), which in turn produces heating, chilling, and involuntary movements of bodily parts.

A better interpretation of *De anima* 427b20–24 takes into account Aristotle's views expressed in other passages. For example, in 432b27–433a1, quoted above, Aristotle states that theoretical thinking can be of something terrible or pleasant, and can cause us to have the involuntary movements of bodily parts that are consequent on the matter of emotion, without in itself leading to limb motion. Theoretical thinking in this passage is different from "practical thought" (*DA* 433a18). The latter leads to action because, unlike theoretical thinking, it is concerned with what is *to be fled* or pursued (φευκτοῦ καὶ διωκτοῦ: *DA* 432b28), and because it gives a command to flee. Aristotle's views in *De anima* 427b20–24 are based on a similar distinction between the practical opinion that something is to be fled in this particular case and a more theoretical *phantasia* that does not make this assertion. Opinion (*doxa*) that something is fearful implies the belief (*pistis*: *DA* 428a20–21) that it is a practical object to be fled in the present instance. It thus leads us to have reactions that correspond to this belief (*sumpaschomen*).³⁵ In the picture-viewing case, however, we experience a *phantasia* of something as fearful or pleasant without a belief that it is to be fled in the present instance. That is why, in the aesthetic case, we experience emotional reactions and involuntary movements without actually fleeing or pursuing.

What impedes flight in the picture-viewing case is a judgment that the frightening thing in the picture is not to be fled. This is clear from an informative passage in *On Dreams*:

³⁴ "We do not experience the corresponding emotions at all [οὐ συμπάσχομεν οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν], but like those contemplating things drawn in pictures, we do not experience any reactions at all [πάσχομεν οὐδεν]": Themistius, 89.18–19. This passage is quoted with approval by Rodier, *Traité*, on 427b23, and by Hicks, on *DA* 427b23, who states that those viewing pictures are "wholly unaffected."

³⁵ *Sumpaschein* does not necessarily mean "to sympathize." Instead, this word and its cognates indicate a correspondence between two things, one of which may affect the other. While this may be an emotional correspondence (*Pol.* 1340a13), it can also be one between two physical entities (*PA* 653b6, 690b5, *On Sleep* 455a34), or between psychological and physical characteristics (*Pr. An.* 70b16).

In anger and in every kind of desire, all are easily deceived, and the more so the more they experience the *pathē*. For this reason also, to people in a fever there sometimes appear [*phainetai*] to be animals on the walls, because of the slight similarity of combinations of lines. And these [effects] sometimes agree in intensity with the *pathē* [emotions and illnesses], so that if they are not very ill, they realize that this is false, but if the *pathos* is greater, they may even move in accordance with these things [that appear to them]. The cause of this is that the authoritative sense and that to which the appearances [*phantasmata*] come do not judge with the same faculty. (*On Dreams* 460b9–18)³⁶

In this example, combinations of lines (wall-paintings) appear (*phainetai*) to be animals to those in the delirium of fever. Since this *phantasia* can lead to limb movement, it is clear that it must have emotional content: people in delirium see the lines as frightening animals, and are frightened. That this *phantasia* has emotional content is also clear from Aristotle's comparison of those in fever to people who experience such emotions as anger. In both cases, *phantasia* does not lead to limb motion if it is opposed by a judgment of the authoritative sense. In that case, people are frightened or angry because of their *phantasia*, but they are restrained by judgment from fleeing or pursuing in accord with their emotions.

Aristotle also opposes *phantasia* and judgment in another passage in *On Dreams*: "In general, the ruling sense asserts what comes from each [particular] sense, unless something else more authoritative contradicts it. For in every case something appears [*phainetai*], but we do not in every case have the opinion that what appears is [true]; but [we do so only when] the judging part of the soul is restrained, or is not moving with its proper movement" (*On Dreams* 461b3–7). The reports of the senses involve *phantasiai* that are then confirmed or contradicted by judgment. Aristotle's example of dreaming makes the same point more graphically:

If one perceives that one is asleep, and [perceives] the sleepy state [*pathos*] in which the perception [occurs], it appears [*phainetai*], but something in one-self says that Coriscus appears, but [that] it is not Coriscus. For often when one is asleep something in the soul says that what appears is a dream. But if it escapes one's knowledge that one is sleeping, nothing contradicts the *phantasia*. (*On Dreams* 462a2–8)

³⁶ Modrak, *Perception*, 149, cites *On Dreams* 460b11–16 and 461b1–8 in connection with DA 427b20–24. She identifies the "authoritative sense" mentioned in the *On Dreams* passages with the "common sense" (discussed in her chap. 3, 55–80).

All these passages help us interpret *De anima* 427b20–24. In the case of picture-viewing, we do not assert that the terrible thing in the picture is really to be fled now, and no flight results, because a judgment that this is just a picture impedes assent to the report of perception and *phantasia*. We will nevertheless experience an emotion, and, if our emotion is intense enough, we might, like those in fever, assent and actually flee, being incapable of making the judgment that contradicts the evidence of the senses.

The foregoing discussion allows us to conclude that aesthetic cases, according to Aristotle, differ in very specific ways from simple, real-life cases in which emotional arousal leads to limb motion. Schema II outlines the sequence that leads from emotional arousal to response in these special cases. Like schema I, this is a simplified explanatory model, based on the account in *De motu animalium* 702a15–19 of emotional arousal, and not a description of a real temporal sequence that invariably occurs.

II

- 1 thought or sense-perception
- 2 *phantasia*
- 3 desire
- 4 matter and involuntary movements
- 5 judgment that impedes a command to flee or pursue

In the aesthetic case, of course, the judgment is that this thing that appears frightening, for example, is a lion in a picture, or a murder in a play. Only after we make this judgment will we be able to experience the aesthetic pleasure of learning that is so important in the *Poetics*. This aesthetic pleasure is only possible, in Aristotle's view, because we are at the same time moved emotionally by fiction, and *not* moved by it to act.

This account of emotional reactions in aesthetic cases is plausible. In aesthetic cases we experience the same emotions that we do in real-life situations, but because we do not normally have the opinion that the things before us are real, we do not run screaming from a lion in a picture. While normal people are emotionally aroused by drama, only a madman like Don Quixote rushes onto the stage to attack the villain and rescue the victim.³⁷ Modern science supports this view. Psychological studies have shown that people asked to imagine frightening situations report feeling fear, and experience increased heart rates and other physiological reactions,

³⁷ See Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, part 2, chap. 26, where Don Quixote attacks the Moors in a puppet show, believing that they are real people. I owe this example to Peter Belfiore.

without, of course, actually running away. This is why imagery is an important tool in the treatment of phobias.³⁸

Tragedy and Rhetoric

The arousal of pity and fear by tragedy is more complex than the simple explanatory model just outlined suggests. In typical real-life situations, fear is aroused very directly by, for example, the perception of a lion and the *phantasia* that it is a fearful object. Tragic fear, in contrast, is aroused more indirectly by a kind of reasoning process. Tragedy, like rhetoric, arouses fear by leading us to understand that we, like others, are “such as to suffer” — we are members of the class of those who suffer. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle tells the rhetorician how to arouse fear in this way:

When it is better for people to be afraid, it is necessary [sc. for the rhetorician] to put them in such a state [as to believe] that they are such as to suffer [τοιοῦτοί εἰσιν οἷοι παθεῖν], for others who are greater have also suffered. And [it is necessary] to show people who are like [those in the audience] suffering or having suffered, and by means of those from whom they did not think [to suffer] this, and things they did not think to suffer, and at a time when they did not think to suffer. (1383a8–12)

The rhetorician arouses fear by leading the audience to engage in a reasoning process that resembles a practical syllogism whose conclusion is an emotion.³⁹ Because fear is aroused by “the *phantasia* of an imminent destructive or painful evil” (*Rhet.* 1382a21–22), it can be aroused by persuading people that, because they are “such as to suffer” this evil, it is likely and imminent. In *Rhetoric* 1383a8–12, just quoted, Aristotle tells the rhetorician that when he wants to produce fear in his audience he must show them that “they are such as to suffer” by demonstrating the following points:

- 1 Others *greater than* themselves have suffered
- 2 Others *like* themselves have suffered or are suffering
- 3 Others have suffered by means of those from whom they did *not expect to suffer*

³⁸ See, for example, Lang et al., ‘Emotional Imagery,’ and Lang, ‘Imagery in Therapy.’

³⁹ An account, different from mine, of the similarity between the arousal of emotion by tragedy and the practical syllogism is given by Packer, ‘Conditions.’ While Packer does not discuss *Rhet.* 1383a8–12, the importance of this passage for an understanding of the *Poetics* is noted by many others. Dupont-Roc and Lallot, *Poétique*, 239; Lain Entralgo, *Therapy*, 227; Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 176–77; and Kokolakis, ‘Greek Drama,’ 174.

4. Others have suffered things they *did not expect to suffer* and at times when they *did not expect to suffer*.

The reasoning process involved in the arousal of fear in the "syllogism" at *Rhetoric* 1383a8–12 may be schematized as follows (step 2 is bracketed because it does not correspond to an explicit statement in this passage):

1. X suffered when this was not expected.
- [2. Therefore, X is such as to suffer.]
3. X is greater than we are.
4. X is like us.
5. Therefore, we also are such as to suffer.
6. Fear.

In this case, fear is aroused by the use of a rhetorical example. In the schema above, X is an example of ourselves, because X and we are "under the same universal" (we are both "such as to suffer"); however, X is better known (in the relevant respects) than we are to ourselves.⁴⁰ We first see that, because X suffered when this was not expected, X is such as to suffer. We then see that, because we ourselves are like X, but even more likely to suffer (since X is "greater" than we are), we also are such as to suffer. This realization makes us believe danger to be imminent, because it is likely, and so leads us to feel fear.

This is the method Aristotle recommends for arousing fear in those who do not believe they could suffer anything from anyone, at any time (*Rhet.* 1382b31–33). These fearless people include those who "are or are thought to be in great good fortune, for which reason they are hubristic, and contemptuous, and bold" (1383a1–2). To arouse fear in these people, the rhetorician must show that, because even those who do not expect to suffer are in fact such as to suffer, this confidence is based on a false belief. The sufferings of the great (the rich and powerful) are particularly good examples, for these people might least of all expect to suffer. From these examples, people reason that "if what is less likely to occur by nature has occurred, then what is more [likely to occur]" will also occur (*Rhet.* 1392b15–16).⁴¹

This is exactly the way in which the poet best arouses fear, according to the *Poetics*. The poet should represent the sufferings of a particular kind of person:

⁴⁰ On the rhetorical example, see chap. 2 ("Representation" and "*Theōria*").

⁴¹ The arousal of fear by an argument *a fortiori* is noted by Kokolakis, "Greek Drama," 174.

1. Someone *greater* than the people in the audience, that is, someone with "great good reputation and good fortune" (1453a10)
2. Someone *like* the audience (1453a5–6)
3. Someone who suffers at the hands of a *philos* (1453b19–22), from whom this *is not expected*.
4. Someone who suffers things that occur *contrary to expectation* (1452a3)
5. Someone who suffers things that happen according to what is *probable or necessary* (1451a38).

In hearing the story of fearful events in a tragedy, we go through the same reasoning process we go through in hearing the rhetorician who arouses fear. We first understand that because Oedipus, for example, suffered when he could least have been expected to suffer, Oedipus is such as to suffer. We then see that, because we ourselves are like Oedipus, but even more likely to suffer (since Oedipus is "greater" than we are), we also are such as to suffer. Just as the rhetorician can arouse fear in people who are "hubristic, and contemptuous, and bold," thinking that they can suffer nothing (1382b31–1383a2), so tragedy can arouse fear in an overconfident and hubristic audience. Tragedy, however, is more effective than rhetoric in leading us to see someone like Oedipus as a person who is such as to suffer, for the tragic plot is a *probable or necessary* sequence of events ([5] above). Tragedy thus leads us to see that even unexpected suffering is probable or necessary.⁴²

The previous analysis provides a better understanding of what Aristotle means when he writes that tragic fear is felt "in the case of [*peri*] the person who is like" us (1453a5).⁴³ Oedipus arouses in us fear for ourselves, just as the examples used by the rhetorician arouse fear for ourselves. What we feel, in watching Oedipus, is an extreme fear (*phobos*, *ekplēxis*) of suffering, as Oedipus does, pain and disgrace, even when this is least to be expected. The fear aroused by tragedy and rhetoric involves an understanding of universals rather than a reaction to a perceptible danger, like that presented by a lion about to spring. This kind of fear depends on a realization of our own vulnerability and mortality that is all the more powerful for being less dependent on the presence of a perceptible danger.

Only after fear is aroused in this way can a second, similar kind of reasoning process lead us to feel pity in response to both tragedy and rhetoric. Pity is causally and conceptually dependent on fear, being "pain at an apparent destructive or painful evil of someone who does not deserve to get it, that one could expect oneself, or someone belonging to oneself, to

⁴² On "contrary to expectation" in the *Poetics*, see the introduction to chap. 5

⁴³ On this statement, see above, "Pity and Fear in the *Poetics* "

suffer, and this, when it appears near" (*Rhet.* 1385b13–16). We pity others, Aristotle writes, when we remember that similar things have happened to us, or expect them to happen (1386a1–2)—when we realize that we are "such as to suffer" what someone else is in fact suffering. After we arrive at this kind of universal understanding and feel fear for ourselves, we can feel pity for someone else, by another reasoning process.

- 1 X suffers what we are such as to suffer
- 2 X does not deserve to suffer
- 3 Therefore, we pity X

Pity is aroused by a kind of education in fear. *Rhetoric* 1385b27–28, significantly, tells us that among those inclined to pity are "the educated, for they reason well."

In the *Poetics* as in the *Rhetoric*, pity is said to be felt for someone who does not deserve to suffer (*Po.* 1453a5). This person is someone who does not deserve punishment for vicious acts, and whose social position, wealth, and other external goods make suffering objectively unlikely. Such a person, like the person concerning whom fear is felt, can least *expect* to suffer, and is also *greater than* we are. The person pitied is also, of course, *like* us in suffering what we also are such as to suffer. In the *Poetics*, then, we pity the same person concerning whom we feel fear, and the interdependence of the two emotions increases the intensity of each. The dramatic and visual effects of tragedy also contribute to the arousal of pity (*Rhet.* 1386a31–34).

Of course, we do not consciously go through all the logical steps listed above before we experience fear and pity at the theater. However, the syllogistic process spelled out in *Rhetoric* 1383a8–12 provides a useful explanatory model that has practical applications for rhetorician and poet. Although the foregoing explanation may seem unduly abstract and overly logical, Aristotle's ideas about the arousal of fear and pity are in fact clear and simple, and they were shared by many in the ancient world.⁴⁴ A specific example from Greek literature can give us a better understanding of how the rhetorician and the poet arouse fear and pity in practice. While this example is drawn from epic, it is also applicable to tragedy, for these genres are closely related in Aristotle's view. both have the same end (*Po.* 1462b12–15), and excellence is the same in both (1449b17–20).⁴⁵

In *Iliad* 24 486–516, Priam arouses fear and pity in Achilles just as

⁴⁴ On the rhetorical commonplaces shared by Aristotle and other ancient writers, see Stevens, "Commonplaces," and Macleod, *Iliad*, 4–6 and 5 n. 1

⁴⁵ Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 10 595b9–c2, who calls Homer the "first teacher and leader" of tragedy

Aristotle's rhetorician and poet arouse these emotions in the audience ⁴⁶ Priam, who has come to ransom Hector's body from Achilles, supplicates his son's murderer, and asks him to have *aidōs* (αἰδέομαι) for the gods and to pity (ἐλέησον) Priam himself (503). In this speech, Priam's first words are "Remember your father, godlike Achilles" (486). Achilles' father Peleus, he says, is *like* Priam in age (487) and in absence from and love for his son (488–92). Next, Priam makes the point that he, Priam, does not *deserve to suffer*, in the social sense of this phrase. He had a great many excellent sons, including Hector, the finest of all, who defended the city and the Trojans. Now, however, Priam is forced to give a limitless ransom for him (493–502). These remarks call attention to Priam's great wealth and power: he was *greater* than Achilles and Peleus. Moreover, because of his great power and wealth, and the excellence and number of his children, Priam, had *least expected* to suffer what he has suffered. Priam has all this time been visibly pitiable, in a suppliant's position, with torn clothes and the dirt of mourning covering his head. His last lines (505–6) call attention to this. Aristotle advises the rhetorician to use the same techniques Priam employs in this speech. According to the *Rhetoric*, we fear for ourselves when we see the sufferings of someone who is *greater* than we are, but also *like* us, and who did not *expect to suffer*. We pity the person who does not *deserve to suffer*, who suffers what we or one of our own might expect to suffer, when this suffering appears near. We also pity others when we ourselves have parents, wives, or children, "for these belong to oneself and are such as to suffer" (*Rhet.* 1385b28–29). People also pity others for misfortunes such as old age and physical suffering (1386a8), and they pity others when they place these sufferings "before the eyes," by using pitiable gestures, voice, and appearance (1386a31–32).

Priam's appeal is successful, making Achilles experience in succession fear and pity. First, Achilles feels *fear* for his father. "He aroused in him [sc. Achilles] a desire to bewail his father" (507, cf. 511–12). ⁴⁷ Next, Achilles feels *pity* for Priam (οἰκτιρῶν 516). This passage from the *Iliad* shows us exactly how fear and pity are aroused by a reasoning process in which we are led to see ourselves and others as instances of the same uni-

⁴⁶ On this passage, see Burkert, *Mitleidsbegriff*, 104–7. Kennedy, *Persuasion*, 93, discusses it as an example of emotional appeal in rhetoric. On the significance of the passage within the *Iliad* as a whole, see the insightful comments of Macleod, *Iliad*, Introduction, (sections 1–3, esp. 26–27). I discuss *Il.* 24 further in chap. 10.

⁴⁷ While Homer does not explicitly say that Achilles feels *fear*, rather than pity, for Peleus, he certainly feels a more personal grief for this close *philos* than he feels for Priam, whom he pities (516). In Homer, as in Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1385b28–29), one's close *philoi* are a part of oneself.

versal. Priam, like an Aristotelian rhetorician, causes Achilles to feel fear by showing that his father, like Priam, is such as to suffer. Priam then leads Achilles to feel pity by showing that he, Priam, who does not deserve to suffer, has suffered what Peleus also might expect to suffer.

While Priam arouses fear and pity just as Aristotle's rhetorician and poet do, Priam is more like the rhetorician than the poet in arousing emotion for a specific, practical purpose. Priam states this goal as he mentions his son:

Hektor; for whose sake I come now to the ships of the Achaians
to win him back from you, and I bring you gifts beyond number.
(*Il.* 24.501–2: Lattimore)

Priam's next line, "Then have *aidōs* for the gods, Achilles, and pity for me" (503), seeks to persuade Achilles to show pity by returning Hector's body and taking the ransom. After both men weep, Achilles indicates that he will indeed take the action Priam desires:

he rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand, and set him
on his feet again, in pity for the grey head and the grey beard.
(*Il.* 24.515–16: Lattimore)

To take Priam by the hand and raise him is to accept him as a suppliant, to promise to grant his request.⁴⁸ In arousing fear and pity in order to persuade Achilles to take specific action, Priam resembles Stesichorus in the *Rhetoric*, who, after using the story of the horse and the stag as an example of Phalaris the dictator, draws the practical conclusion, the "moral" of the story: "So you also see that in wishing to punish your enemies you do not suffer what the horse did."⁴⁹ Because rhetoric has a practical goal, the emotion it arouses (if the speaker is successful) is followed, just as it is in typical real-life situations, by a "command," an opinion or assertion that what appears to us to be, for example, pitiable really is to be pitied, and by specific action like that taken by Achilles. In rhetorical situations, emotional arousal and action occur just as they do in schema I above ("Flight and Pursuit").

Unlike rhetoric, poetry is not limited by specific, practical goals; it arouses emotion in order to lead us to contemplate.⁵⁰ *Iliad* 24 also clarifies this difference between poetry and rhetoric.

Priam cannot see beyond his own immediate circumstances. As Colin

⁴⁸ See Gould, "Hiketeia," 79–80, on the ritual acceptance of suppliants in general, and on the Priam-Achilles passage in particular.

⁴⁹ *Rhet.* 1393b8–23, discussed in chap. 2 ("Representation").

⁵⁰ On this point, see chap. 2 ("*Theōria*").

Macleod points out, Priam's statement that he has borne "things such as no other man on earth has ever yet endured" (505) shows that "he has yet to learn to bear his suffering through the knowledge that it is typically human."⁵¹ It is Achilles who attains this understanding of the human condition that the *Iliad* itself, as tragic poetry, gives its audience.⁵² After acknowledging Priam as a suppliant, Achilles considers Priam's pitiable condition (543–48) and that of Peleus (534–42) as part of the human condition as a whole.

Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals,
that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows
(*Il* 24 525–26 Lattimore)

Achilles' reaction to pitiable and fearful events goes beyond practical considerations. It is a more philosophical, "theoretical" response that looks beyond the sufferings of particular individuals who are "such as to suffer," to attain a tragic understanding that suffering is the universal condition of all humans, because they are mortals and not gods. Homer's juxtaposition of Priam's and Achilles' speeches shows us the differences between them, and leads us also to an understanding of the more philosophical, poetic point of view.

If we are philosophers, we can, like Achilles, have this response even in real-life situations. Even if we are not, however, we can have a philosophical experience of this kind when we enjoy epic and tragedy as imitations of things we have seen before. Once fear and pity have been aroused by tragedy we do not go on to take action, by, for example, giving aid to Oedipus, whom we pity. Instead, a judgment impedes a command to flee or give aid, as it does in schema II above. Like the dreamer who perceives that he is asleep (*On Dreams* 462a2–8, quoted above, "Flight and Pursuit"), we realize that this is an imitation and not a situation in which it is appropriate to give aid or take some other action. At this point, we are able to view the imitation in the theoretical way Aristotle discusses in *Poetics* 4: "People take pleasure seeing images, because it happens that while they contemplate they learn and reason what each thing is for example, that this is that. For if someone has not happened to see something previously, the imitation will not give pleasure as an imitation" (1448b15–18).

⁵¹ Macleod, *Iliad*, 127, on 486–506

⁵² Macleod makes these points *ibid.*, 27 (Achilles' insight), and 7–8 (the *Iliad* as tragic poetry)

When we contemplate the tragedy as an imitation, we recollect the things we have seen previously of which it is an imitation. We reason and learn that *this* plot, a probable or necessary sequence of events that arouses pity and fear, is an imitation of *that* sequence of fearful and pitiable events that we have seen before. In this way, we come to understand that the probable or necessary sequence of events that we see, for example, in Sophocles' *Oedipus* also occurs in real life. We learn not only that we and Oedipus are such as to suffer but, like Achilles, we learn that all humans are such as to suffer, because they are mortals and not gods. In this tragic response, the arousal of fear is necessary to the arousal of pity, just as it is in rhetoric. However, because of the imitative context of tragedy, emotion is followed by a judgment that impedes a command to flee or pursue, and then by *theōria*. The poet, unlike the rhetorician, has no immediate, practical goal, but instead leads us to contemplate an imitation as an imitation, for its own sake. *Theōria* is accompanied by the complex intellectual and emotional responses involved in katharsis.

In chapter 7 I have examined Aristotle's views on the emotions aroused by tragedy in light of the views on emotion expressed in his other works. The first section noted the similarities and differences between the accounts of pity and fear in the *Rhetoric* and in the *Poetics*. Many differences are due to the different concerns of these two works rather than to real conceptual inconsistencies. One important conceptual difference, however, is that pity and fear in the *Poetics* are aroused by evils that are disgraceful as well as painful or destructive, while in the *Rhetoric* these emotions are aroused by evils that are merely painful or destructive. "Flight and Pursuit" discussed another important way in which emotions aroused in aesthetic situations differ from emotions aroused in other circumstances. In real-life situations, emotion typically leads to action: flight or pursuit. In aesthetic situations, however, a command to flee or pursue is impeded by a judgment that this is not a situation that requires action. Nevertheless, in aesthetic situations we experience the cognitive and physical aspects of an emotion (e.g., pounding of the heart), just as we do in real-life cases. Chapter 7 concluded with a study of the "practical syllogism" by means of which fear and pity are aroused by rhetoric and tragedy. While both arouse these emotions in similar ways, tragedy, unlike rhetoric, does not have an immediate, practical goal, but leads us to contemplate imitations for their own sake. For this reason, tragedy gives us a deeper understanding of the human condition as a whole.

