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Tragic Pleasures

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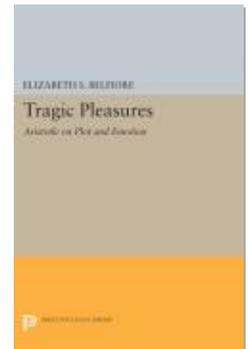
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Necessity, Probability and Plausibility

NECESSITY AND PROBABILITY

THE MOST IMPORTANT structural principle governing the tragic plot is that the events that make it up should follow one another “according to probability or necessity” (*kata to eikos ē to anagkaiōn*).¹ Each of the three parts of the plot must follow this rule. Aristotle explicitly states that the two parts of a complex plot, recognition and *peripeteia*, should come about “by necessity or probability” (1452a18–20, 1452a24). It is clear that the third part of the plot, the *pathos*, should also come about “by necessity or probability,” for *Poetics* 14, where Aristotle discusses kinds of *pathē*, begins with the statement that the fearful and the pitiable should come “from the organization of the events itself” (1453b2–3)—that is, from the plot structure (1453b4). That this means “according to probability or necessity” is shown by the parallel statement at 1452a18–20 “These things [sc., recognition and *peripeteia*] should come about from the organization of the plot itself, so that it happens that they come to be by necessity or probability as a result of what went before.”

The principle of necessity or probability governs the tragedy as a whole, as well as each of the three parts of the plot. In his definition, Aristotle states that tragedy is an imitation of a “complete” (*teleias* 6.1449b25) action. He repeats this definition in *Poetics* 7. “We have assumed that tragedy is imitation of a *complete* and *whole* action” (1450b23–24). He then explains that a *whole* action is one that proceeds from beginning to middle to end according to probability or necessity (1450b26–31, cf. 23.1459a19–20). This action will begin at good fortune and end at bad fortune, or vice versa (7.1451a12–14). It will have order (7.1450b37), and it will be *one* and *whole*, because none of its parts can be changed or removed without changing the whole (9.1451b30–35). Aristotle’s phrasing in these passages shows that the terms “one,” “whole,” and “complete” are used synonymously, to characterize an action that moves, according to

¹ The phrase *kata to eikos ē to anagkaiōn*, or a close variant thereof, is used in connection with the events of the plot at 1451a12–13, 1451a27–28, 1451a38, 1451b9, 1451b35, 1452a20, 1452a24, 1454a34, 1454a35, and 1454a36

necessity or probability, from beginning (good or bad fortune) to end (bad or good fortune).² A plot that is not one, whole, and complete is defective in one or more ways. It may be “episodic,” lacking organization according to necessity or probability (1451b33–35), it may be “double,” having one ending for good people and another for bad (1453a31–33), it may imitate more than one action (1451a16–19). Character as well as plot should follow the principle of necessity or probability (1454a33–36). It is this principle of necessity or probability in plot and character that distinguishes poetry from history. Poetry speaks of “the universal,” that is, “what kinds of things it happens that a certain kind of person says or does according to probability or necessity” (1451b8–9).

Although the *Poetics* makes it clear that the principle of necessity or probability is extremely important, Aristotle does not define or explain either “necessity” (*to anagkaion*) or “probability” (*to eikos*) in this work. To understand these concepts, it will be helpful to begin by analyzing the role necessity and probability play in individual passages in the *Poetics*, taking into consideration Aristotle’s statements about these concepts elsewhere.

The principle of “necessity or probability” is introduced in the definitions of “beginning,” “middle,” and “end” in *Poetics* 7.

The beginning is that which is not itself after something else by necessity, but after it something else is or comes to be by nature [*pephuken*] The end, on the contrary, is that which is itself after something else by nature, either by necessity or for the most part, but after this there is nothing else The middle is that which is itself after something else, and after it there is something else (1450b27–31)

Although the term “probability” (*to eikos*) does not appear in this passage, Aristotle substitutes the equivalent expression “for the most part.”³ Here,

² Pace Gudeman, *Aristoteles*, 191–92. The terms “one” and “whole” are close synonyms in *Meta* 1023b26–28, while at 1024a1–3 a whole is said to be something that has a beginning, middle, and end, and the order of whose parts makes a difference. W. D. Ross, *Metaphysics*, on 1023b26, notes that the definition of “whole” here is equivalent to the definition of *telosion* (complete) given at 1021b12–13. Clark, *Man*, 50, gives a good definition of “whole”: “A whole is something complete, perfect without addition and dependent for that perfection upon its arrangement.”

³ On the equivalence of *to eikos* and what happens ‘for the most part’ (*ὡς ἐπι το πολυ*) in Aristotle’s thought, see the passages cited by Sorabji, *Necessity*, 55 n. 36. *Pr An* 2 27 70a5, and *Rhet* 1 2 1357a34, 2 25 1402b16, and 1403a1 (that is, Kassel’s 1402b35–36). See also Dupont-Roc and Lallot, *Poétique*, 211–12, and Goldschmidt, *Temps physique*, 248. On Aristotle’s concept of ‘for the most part,’ see Sainte-Croix, “History,” 47–50.

he uses the three expressions “necessity,” “by nature,” and “for the most part”: the beginning is that which does not follow something else *by necessity*, and after which something else *by nature* is or comes to be; the end is that which is *by nature* after something else either *by necessity* or *for the most part*; the middle is that which comes after something else [by necessity or for the most part], and after which something else comes in this way. These three expressions have interconnected meanings.

Other passages in the *Poetics* help us understand what Aristotle means when he writes, in *Poetics* 7 and 15.1454a36, that one thing comes after another by necessity or probability. In *Poetics* 9 1452a4–6, Aristotle contrasts events that occur “because of each other” (*di’ allēla*) with those that happen “of themselves and by chance.” He also contrasts what happens “because of” something else with what happens merely “after” something else in *Poetics* 10: “These things [sc., recognition and *peripeteia*] should come about from the organization of the plot itself, so that it happens that they come about by necessity or probability as a result of what went before. It makes a great difference whether this comes about because of this or after this” (1452a18–21). These passages tell us that events that follow one another by necessity or probability occur “because of” and not merely “after” other events, that is, they are efficiently caused by other events. The events linked to one another by efficient causation make up the whole process of change (*metabasis*: 1452a16) that constitutes the tragic plot. The concept of efficient causation is also relevant to an understanding of Aristotle’s views on the two divisions of the tragic plot, the *desis*, “complication,” and the *lusis*, “solution.”⁴ When Aristotle writes that the *lusis* is that part of the tragedy “from the beginning of the change [*metabaseōs*] to the end” (18.1455b28–29), we should remember that, in other works, he defines the efficient cause as “the beginning of the change [*metabolē*].”⁵

The structural principle of probability or necessity is further elucidated by the parallels between tragedy and natural processes discussed in chapter 2. Natural processes occur “always or for the most part”, that is, they occur with regularity and not by chance. Similarly, the events of a tragic “organization” (*sustasis*) occur “by necessity,” “by nature,” or “for the most part” rather than by chance. The tragic plot also resembles a biological *sustasis* in having an intelligible structure that is organized for the sake of an end, its function. Thus the events of the plot are not only the efficient

⁴ In translating *lusis* as “solution” I follow Janko, *Poetics* I

⁵ For example, *Phy* 194b29–30 and *Meta* 1013a29–30 Cf *Post An* 94a22, where the efficient cause is defined as “that which begins a process”

causes of one another; they also occur for the sake of an end, the function and final cause of tragedy. Final and efficient cause work together in tragedy, as they do in natural processes.

Just as Aristotle's use of the expressions "by nature" and "for the most part" is more understandable in the context of the analogy between tragic and biological *sustaseis*, so his use of the term "necessity" in the *Poetics* is less puzzling when placed in this biological context.

"Necessity" is a strong word to use, especially of events that are the efficient causes of one another. Aristotle does not generally use it to characterize actions, for action is something that "can be otherwise," and is thus not "necessary."⁶ Aristotle makes this point in the *Rhetoric*: "Few [of the premises] that make up rhetorical syllogisms are necessary (for most of the things with which judgments and considerations deal can be otherwise; people deliberate and consider about the things they do, and things done are all of this kind, and practically none of these things is from necessity)" (*Rhet.* 1357a22–27). If this is Aristotle's view, we might well wonder why he insists that in the tragic plot, an imitation of action, events should proceed according to "necessity." Commentators often tacitly assume that the concept of necessity is not really in question here in any meaningful way, for, after all, Aristotle writes of "*probability or necessity*."⁷ If the term "necessity" served no real function in the *Poetics*, however, Aristotle could easily have omitted it altogether. It is important to explore why, in most cases, he does use *to anagkaron* along with *to eikos*, or the equivalent phrase "for the most part," when he refers to the principle that governs the plot structure.⁸

Aristotle's definitions of three senses of "necessary" (*anagkaron*) in the "dictionary" of *Metaphysics* 5.5 help us understand what "necessity" means in the *Poetics*. "Necessary" means (1) that without which it is not possible to live, or for the good to be or come to be (1015a20–26); (2) the compulsory, or force (1015a26–33); (3) that which cannot be otherwise (1015a33–b9). The third sense is clearly not relevant to the *Poetics*, for the human actions with which tragedy deals can be otherwise, as *Rhetoric*

⁶ For exceptions, see Sorabji, *Necessity*, 238.

⁷ Some representative comments are those of Else, "Aristotle so carefully uses the double formula 'according to probability or necessity' throughout the *Poetics*; for necessity can never be absolute in the sublunar world" (*Argument*, 305), and Halliwell: "Necessity [is] an ideal though scarcely attainable standard" (*Aristotle's Poetics*, 106). That necessity in the *Poetics* is "hypothetical" is noted, all too briefly, by House, *Poetics*, 61, Gallop, "Animals," 153, and Gellrich, *Tragedy*, 112.

⁸ Some exceptions that prove the rule are discussed in the next section.

1357a22–27 states. On the other hand, tragedy does deal with what is necessary in the sense of compulsory. In fact, Aristotle gives an instructive example from tragedy in discussing the second definition: “As Sophocles also says, ‘but force makes it necessary for me to do this’ ” (1015a30–31).⁹ “This,” what Electra is compelled to do in Sophocles’ play, is her lamentation (254–55). In her speech at 254–309, Electra discusses the bad fortune that compels her to lament: her own ill-treatment, her father’s murder, her mother’s and Aigisthus’s triumph, the absence of Orestes. These circumstances are the *necessary* conditions within which her lamentation and indeed all her actions take place. Her speech concludes with this very point: “But in evil circumstances / there is great necessity to practice evils” (308–9). “Necessity” in the sense of “compulsion or force” is clearly relevant to this and other tragic plots, in which actions take place under certain unavoidable circumstances.

It is the first sense of “necessary,” however, the one connected with the nature (*phusis*) of a living thing, that is of most interest. The “necessary” in this sense is “that without which, as contributing cause, it is not possible to live (for example breathing and food are necessary to a living thing, for it cannot exist without these), and things without which it is not possible for the good to be or come to be” (1015a20–23). Aristotle also discusses this “hypothetical necessity” in a number of other passages. For example, in *On Sleep* 455b26–28, he writes: “I mean the necessity that depends on a hypothesis, that if a living thing is to exist having its own nature, by necessity something must belong to it, and if these things belong, others [must also] belong.”¹⁰ The kind of necessity that belongs to living things is, unlike the kind of necessity that “cannot be otherwise,” compatible with, rather than opposed to, what happens “for the most part.”¹¹ That which is “by nature” is not only “for the most part,”¹² but

⁹ The reference is to *Electra* 256, as W. D. Ross notes, *Metaphysics*, on 1015a30.

¹⁰ This passage is cited *ibid.*, on 1015a20ff., among a number of other passages concerning “hypothetical necessity”. *Phy.* 199b34, *PA* 639b24, 642a9. See also *Meta.* 1072b12. For some recent discussions of the highly controversial topic of “hypothetical necessity,” see Balme, *De partibus animalium*, 76–84 and “Teleology and Necessity”, Sorabji, *Necessity*, 143–54, Charles, “Hypothetical Necessity”, Gotthelf, “Aristotle’s Conception”, J. M. Cooper, “Hypothetical Necessity”

¹¹ Nonhypothetical necessity and what happens “for the most part” are opposed, for example, in *Meta.* 1026b27–30, *Pr. An.* 32b5–6, and *Rhet.* 1357a31–32

¹² In a number of the passages cited by Sorabji, *Necessity*, 50 n. 20, “for the most part” and “nature” are linked: *GA* 727b29–30, 770b9–13, 777a19–21, *PA* 663b28–29, *Pr. An.* 25b14, 32b4–13.

can also be “by (hypothetical) necessity.” Aristotle explains this idea in the *Prior Analytics*:

{“The possible” means} in one sense that which comes to be for the most part and falls short of necessity, for example, that a human being turns grey or grows or wastes away, or in general what belongs by nature [*to pephukos*] (For this is not continually necessary, because a human being does not always exist, but if a human being exists it is, either by necessity or for the most part) (*Pr An* 32b5–10)

In this passage, Aristotle distinguishes the kind of necessity that applies to eternal things, which cannot be otherwise, from that which applies to living things, just as he did in *Metaphysics* 5.5. Although living things “can be otherwise,” so that nothing can belong to them “by necessity” in one sense of the term, things can belong to them in another sense of “necessity” because of the nature they have as living things. What happens according to this kind of “necessity” can also happen “for the most part.”

Aristotle links “by nature,” “for the most part,” and “by necessity” in *Poetics* 7, just as he does in the *Prior Analytics* passage just quoted. In the definition of the beginning, middle, and end (1450b27–31), the expression “by nature” (*pephuken*) links the two concepts of “by necessity” and “for the most part”: “The end is that which is itself after something else by nature, either by necessity or for the most part.” Events that occur “by necessity” or “for the most part” are, that is, events that occur “by nature,” in *Poetics* 7, just as is the case in *Prior Analytics* 32b5–10. Because “for the most part” is equivalent to *to eskos* in *Poetics* 7,¹³ Aristotle’s expression “according to probability or necessity” in the *Poetics* refers to things that happen by nature. It is a formula like the others Aristotle uses to refer to things that happen by nature: “always or for the most part” (*Phy.* 198b34–36, *Rhet.* 1369a35–36), “by necessity or for the most part” (*Pr. An.* 32b5–10), and “in all cases or for the most part” (*PA* 663b28–29).

The events of the tragic plot occur “by nature,” “for the most part,” or “by (hypothetical) necessity” because tragedy is a *sustasis*, like that of a living thing, organized for the sake of an end. The nature of the tragic *sustasis*, however, depends on human nature in two ways. First, the end and function of tragedy is to produce certain effects in human beings. Second, because tragedy imitates human action, the events that constitute the tragic plot occur according to the necessity of *human* nature. According

¹³ See above, n 3

to *Rhetoric* 1.10, human actions that are due to necessity are caused either by force or by nature (1368b32–36),¹⁴ and what happens by nature happens “either always or for the most part” (1369a35–b2). Those human actions that are due to the necessity of nature surely include those that allow us to live in accord with our physical or “political” nature. In book 1 of the *Politics*, Aristotle makes it clear that the necessity of human nature leads, in the first place, to the reproductive union of male and female: “It is necessary, first, for those to couple who cannot exist without each other, for example, female and male for the sake of generation. And this is not by choice, but just as in other animals and plants, the striving to leave behind another such as oneself is natural” (1252a26–30).¹⁵ From this primary association develop the household and the polis, something that exists by nature, as the end of human life. the polis “comes into being for the sake of living, and exists for the sake of living well. And so every polis exists by nature, if indeed the first communities do also. For it is the end of these, and nature is the end” (1252b29–32).

In Aristotle’s view, then, many human actions are “necessary” in the first sense defined in *Metaphysics* 1015a20–23: “that without which . . . it is not possible to live . . . and that without which it is not possible for the good to be or come to be.” Actions that are necessary in this sense include activities that preserve the physical nature of humans, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and reproducing. They also include activities, such as those that create and preserve “political” relationships, that are necessary for a good human life. All these activities are due to “nature” and “necessity,” and are not, like the actions about which people deliberate (*Rhet* 1357a22–27), due to choice. As *Politics* 1252a26–30 states, coupling occurs by nature and not by choice. It is likely that Aristotle also considered acts done because of certain emotions to be “necessary,” for he writes of acts due “to anger and other emotions that are necessary or natural to humans” (*EN* 1135b21–22).

Aristotle’s views on tragedy make good sense if “necessity” in the *Poetics* is connected with human nature in this way. In *Poetics* 9, Aristotle defines the “universal” (*to katholou*) in terms of necessity or probability: “The universal is what kinds of things it happens that a certain kind of person says or does according to probability or necessity” (1451b8–9). The universal

¹⁴ See Cope’s note (*Introduction*, 218–33) on the discussion in *Rhet* 1.10 of the various causes of action. Cf. *EN* 1112a30–33, and the other passages cited by Grimaldi, *Rhetoric I*, on 1368b32–1369a2.

¹⁵ See also Plato, *Rep* 5.458d, who contrasts a “natural” or “erotic” necessity with a “geometric necessity.”

with respect to human actions must concern, in the first place, what all human beings have in common if they function as human beings at all. The *Politics* tells us that to be human is to participate in *philia* and “political” relationships. A human being, in Aristotle’s view, is essentially a “political animal,” and being “political” begins with and is based on *philia* relationships. Any threat to these relationships is a threat to our humanity, and so best arouses pity and fear. It is no accident, then, that tragedy is concerned with *philia* relationships and with threats to them. This general principle helps explain why the specific events that make up a tragic plot occur according to probability or necessity. Because *philia* relationships are necessary to human life, harm of *philoi* by *philoi* will by necessity lead to bad fortune, at least once it becomes known. This is what happens in the plot of *Oedipus the King*. Moreover, because it is against human nature for *philoi* to harm *philoi* deliberately, recognition of *philia* will by necessity lead people to try to avert such a terrible event (*pathos*), so as to enjoy the good fortune that necessarily results from benefiting *philoi* and preserving (*sōtēria* 17.1455b12) them.¹⁶ This is what happens in *Iphigenia in Tauris*. In these two best plots, then, one event follows another by the necessity of human nature.

Ēthos, the second most important of the six qualitative parts of tragedy, must also follow the principle of necessity or probability. “One should always seek either necessity or probability in the *ēthē* just as in the organization of the events, so that [one should represent] a person of a certain kind saying or doing things of a certain kind according to either necessity or probability, and this should come after that either by necessity or by probability” (1454a33–36). This requirement also is to be understood in terms of human nature. *ēthos* is an indication of the kinds of choices made by a human being with a certain *individual* nature in a given set of circumstances. Aristotle’s definition of “the universal” in *Poetics* 9 includes this kind of necessity also. “a certain kind of person.”¹⁷

What happens according to “necessity” in the *Poetics*, then, happens by (human) nature. Because things that happen by nature do not happen with

¹⁶ The term *sōtēria*, used in *Po* 17 to refer to the final “rescue” in the *Iphigenia* plot, is frequently used in Greek literature of preservation of *philoi*. See Blundell, *Helping*, 32–33.

¹⁷ Note, however, that “the universal” in *Po* 9, which includes the kind of necessity connected with *ēthos*, differs from “the universal” in the narrower sense of “plot,” that which the poet is said to “set out in universal form” (*ektithesthai katholou* 1455b1) in *Po* 17. In the plot outlines given as examples in *Po* 17, *ēthos* is omitted, for the choices Orestes makes are not included in the plot outline of “the *Iphigenia*.” However, his *philia* relationship to *Iphigenia* (“brother” 1455b6) is part of the universal that constitutes the plot.

complete regularity, however, Aristotle frequently uses the expression “according to *probability* or necessity” in the *Poetics*, just as he uses expressions like “always or for the most part” in other works, to refer to what happens by nature “Necessity” in the *Poetics* also refers to what is forced or compelled, for the events of a tragic plot are constrained by certain unavoidable external circumstances In the plot of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, for example, Iphigenia is compelled to serve as priestess in a rite that includes human sacrifice These two aspects of “necessity” are, however, not really distinct in the *Poetics* one event of the plot causes another by the necessity of human nature, constrained by external circumstances

Although I have been discussing necessity in the *Poetics* in terms of Aristotle’s philosophical views, his concept is far from narrowly philosophical It is in fact remarkably similar to the concept of necessity that Martin Ostwald attributes to Thucydides, in an account that makes him appear to be more poet than historian¹⁸ Ostwald argues convincingly that the kind of necessity that leads, in Thucydides’ history, to wars and other important human actions is produced by a combination of external factors and universal human motives, the most powerful of which are fear, prestige, and self-interest¹⁹ The Peloponnesian War, for example, was made necessary by the growth of the Athenian empire, combined with the fear this produced in the Spartans “The Athenians becoming great and causing fear in the Lacedaemonians made it necessary [*anagkasas*] for them to go to war”²⁰ Similarly, the Aristotelian tragic plot deals with the kind of necessity produced by the motivation proper to human nature (hypothetical necessity) in a given set of circumstances (force)

PLAUSIBILITY, PLOT, AND EPISODE

I have been translating *to eikos* as “probability” when it is used in conjunction with “necessity” to characterize the sequence of events that make up the plot structure In this context, *to eikos* refers to what happens “for the most part,” and the entire phrase “according to the *eikos* or necessity” refers to what happens “by nature”—that is, always or for the most part While

¹⁸ The view that Thucydides is more poet than historian is held, for example, by Sainte-Croix, *History* See also the description of Thucydides’ narrative technique given by J. de Romilly, *Histoire et raison chez Thucydide*, 47–48 (quoted by Ostwald, *Anagkē*, 44)

¹⁹ Ostwald, *Anagkē* Ostwald cites Thucydides 1.75.3 and 1.76.2 for the motives of fear, prestige, and self-interest (29)

²⁰ Thucydides 1.23.6, discussed *ibid.*, 1–5

eikos in this sense is nearly always accompanied by “necessity,” in one passage a variant of *eikos* alone is used to refer to what happens according to probability or necessity. At 9 1451b13, Aristotle writes of those “organizing the plot by means of *eikota*” Here, the *eikota* are the universal (*ta katholou*: 1451b7); they are what happens according to probability or necessity (1451b6–9).²¹

Another sense of *eikos*, however, is relevant to an understanding of certain other passages in the *Poetics* in which *eikos* occurs without “necessity.” *Eikos* can mean “plausible” instead of “probable” when it is used to refer to what is *apparently* “for the most part.” *Eikos* in this sense can refer to what is apparently true as opposed to what is really so. This idea emerges from *Rhetoric* 1402b14–16. conclusions drawn from what is *eikos* are drawn from what is “for the most part, either really or apparently” The two senses of *eikos* are of course closely related, for things tend to be plausible and believable when they really happen “for the most part,” that is, “according to probability.” On the other hand, the unusual also occurs regularly. In two passages, the *Poetics* mentions the paradox that “it is *eikos* that some things should happen even contrary to the *eikos*” (1456a24–25, cf 1461b15). Here, Aristotle may be punning on the two senses of *eikos*. it is probable and plausible that some things should happen “contrary to probability.”

Plausibility, whether expressed by *eikos* or by another term, such as *pitbanon* (believable), is an important concept in Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. Tragedians, Aristotle writes, keep the names of actual historical figures because “the possible is believable [*pitbanon*], for we do not believe the things that have not happened to be possible, but it is clear that the things that have happened are possible” (9.1451b16–18) Ideally, events in a tragic plot are both possible and plausible, but plausibility is more important. At 1460a26–27 Aristotle writes that the poet “should choose impossible and *eikota* [plausible] things rather than possible and unbelievable [*apitbana*] things.” Here, *eikota* is a synonym for “believable.” In a parallel passage, in fact, Aristotle uses “believable” (*pitbanon*) instead of *eikota*: the poet should prefer “the believable and impossible” to the “unbelievable and possible” (1461b11–12).

The conceptual distinction between “plausibility” and “probability” is especially important for an understanding of Aristotle’s views on plot and episode. While the events that make up the plot itself must be “probable

²¹ This point is made by Heath, “Comedy,” 351 n. 28

[*eikos*] or necessary," those that make up the episodes need only be *eikos* in the sense of "plausible."

Aristotle sometimes uses the term "episode" in the technical sense of "act" between choral odes, one of the quantitative parts of tragedy. "Episode" in this sense is to be connected with the entrance (*epesodion*) of an actor.²² Aristotle also uses "episode" in another sense (or senses, as some believe), to contrast a certain part of tragedy or epic with the plot. "Episode" is used in this sense in *Poetics* 17.1455b1, where the poet is said to first set out stories in universal form, that is, to outline the plot, and then to "episodize" (*epesodioun*: cf. 1455b13), and in *Poetics* 23 (1459a35–37), where the (epic) poet is said to "interrupt" (*διαλαμβάνει*) the poem with episodes. These uses of "episode" and cognates have aroused a great deal of controversy. Some take these episodes to be "nonessential added scenes." Others have argued that they have an essential role in the dramatic action, without, however, giving an adequate account of how the episodes can play this role and still be meaningfully distinct from the events of the plot.²³ Although Malcolm Heath falls into this second category, arguing that dramatic episodes are segments of the plot, his account of *epesodioun* in *Poetics* 17 is very helpful. According to Heath, *epesodioun* means to supply "circumstantial details appropriate to the persons involved."²⁴ This view is correct provided we stipulate that episodes are merely plausible, while the events of the plot itself are probable or necessary. A study of Aristotle's concepts of necessity, probability, and plausibility in connection with his statements about episodes and the episodic, in the *Poetics* and in other works, supports this view.

²² On "episode" in this sense, see Nickau, "Epesodion," 160, who cites *Po.* 12.1452b16, 12.1452b20, and 18.1456a31.

²³ "Non-essential added scenes" is Else's phrase, *Argument*, 326 n. 85. The view that episodes are "nonessential" was opposed by Gilbert, "*Epesodion*," who takes "episode" to mean "any action that is a subordinate but necessary component of the integral action of the play" (64). Nickau (followed, in the main, by Friedrich, "*Epesodion*," argues that the episodes are necessary to the whole, and that to "episodize" is to work out "the realization of all of the particulars of the action" ("die Ausführung aller Einzelheiten der Handlung": 163). Nickau's interpretation has the advantage of giving the episodes a real dramatic function and of taking into account Aristotle's statement that they should be "appropriate" (*oikeia*. 1455b13) It tends, however, to blur the distinction between plot and episode, and, as Nickau admits (165–66), it does not apply to *epesodiōdeis* in 1451b33. Heath, *Poetics*, 101, who follows Nickau's account of "episode" in *Po.* 17, nevertheless has justified difficulties in reconciling this account with Aristotle's statement at 1459a35–37 that episodes "interrupt" the poem. On "episode," see also Heath, *Unity*, 49–55, who distinguishes between epic and dramatic episodes.

²⁴ Heath, *Unity*, 52.

The distinction between plot and episode is made in *Poetics* 17, where Aristotle writes that the poet should first “set out in universal form” (*ek-tithesthai katholou*: 1455b1; cf. *to katholou*: 1455b2) the Iphigenia story, and then “episodize” (*epeisodioun*: 1455b1, cf. 1455b12–13). In *Poetics* 17, *to katholou*, “the universal,” is equivalent to *to mythos*, “the plot.” This equivalence is indicated by Aristotle’s definition of “the universal” in *Poetics* 9 in terms of “probability or necessity,” the same principle that is said to govern the “organization of the events,” or plot, in *Poetics* 7.²⁵ The universal is the entire sequence of necessary or probable events that constitute the tragic change from beginning to middle to end. It includes, but is not limited to, the three parts of the plot: *pathos*, recognition, and *peripeteia*. If this is the universal, it is reasonable to infer that the “episodes” that are opposed to it in *Poetics* 17 occur according to something less than probability or necessity. This view is confirmed by Aristotle’s statement at 9.1451b33–35 that “episodic” (*epeisodiōdeis*) plots are those in which the “episodes” occur after one another, but not by probability or necessity.

Aristotle also uses the term “episodic” (*epeisodiōdes*) in two passages in the *Metaphysics*. At 1075b37–1076a2, Aristotle criticizes those who give different first principles (*archai*) for different things because these people “make the being of the whole episodic, for nothing contributes [*sumballetai*] to anything else by being or not being.” The same point is made at 1090b19–20, where, significantly, Aristotle compares nature to a tragedy: “It does not appear from the phenomena that nature is episodic, like a bad tragedy.” In these passages, Aristotle denies that nature is “episodic,” as it would be if there were many first principles, and if each thing did not “contribute” (*sumballetai*: 1076a2; cf. *sumballesthai*: 1090b15) to the others by its being. Because it is not in fact “episodic,” but is governed by one first principle according to which everything contributes to everything else, nature, in Aristotle’s view, is like a tragedy that imitates one whole action, whose parts cannot be changed or removed without making a difference to the whole (*Po.* 8.1451a30–35). A tragedy of this kind, like nature, is governed by one first principle (*archē*), its “soul” (6.1450a38–39), that is, by a plot in which events succeed one another according to necessity or probability. The *Metaphysics* passages, then, support the view that what is “episodic” lacks the kind of unity given by probability or necessity.

²⁵ The arguments of Dupont-Roc and Lallot, *Poétique*, 285–86, against this view are not convincing.

An episode can, however, be *eikos* in the sense of “plausible.”²⁶ The distinction between necessary or probable plot and plausible episode can be best understood by looking at Aristotle’s specific examples

In *Poetics* 17 (1455b3–12), Aristotle sets out “the universal” of “the Iphigenia,” that is, the plot common to Euripides’ and Polyidos’s versions of the story (quoted in chapter 3). It is helpful to divide this plot outline into beginning, middle, and end.²⁷ The beginning is the situation from which the other events follow by necessity or probability, but which does not itself follow anything else in this way. The beginning of this plot consists in, first, the external circumstances that constrain the action of the story. a certain girl was supposedly sacrificed, but actually came to a foreign land, it is the law to sacrifice strangers to a goddess in this land, and the girl holds this priesthood (1455b3–8). Second, the arrival of the girl’s brother (ἐλθὼν 1455b8) is part of the beginning, because it makes the following events necessary, but does not itself follow other events by probability or necessity. As we saw in chapter 3, the brother’s purpose in going is excluded from the plot outline because this would be part of *ēthos* rather than plot. Aristotle also explicitly excludes from “the universal” anything that makes the beginning itself probable or necessary. the oracle of the god, he writes, is “outside the universal” (1455b7–8). If the arrival of the brother did follow anything else “by probability or necessity,” it would, of course, not be a beginning. The arrival of the brother, we should note, is the only part of the beginning represented in the stage action in Euripides’ play.

The beginning causes the events that constitute the middle to occur by necessity or probability. These events are the capture of the brother, his being about to be sacrificed by his sister, and the recognitions that occur together with *peripeteia*. The brother’s arrival and the other circumstances that constitute the beginning lead by probability or necessity to his capture (ληφθεῖς) and to his being “about to be sacrificed” (θύεσθαι μέλλων. 1455b9) by his sister. It is the law to sacrifice foreigners, and the sister is compelled to be the instrument of this law. Moreover, because the brother believes his sister to be dead, he cannot suspect that the priestess is actually his sister. Furthermore, human nature, constrained by these circumstances, makes it probable or necessary that recognition will occur (ἀνεγνώ-

²⁶ According to Tsagarakis, Porphyry connects episodes with “the believable,” a synonym for “the plausible” “Every episode is used by the poet for the sake of either the believable or the useful” (*Questionum Homeriarum ad Iliadem {Odysseam} pertinentium reliquiarum*, ed H Schrader, 30), quoted in Greek by Tsagarakis, “*Katachrēsis*,” 305

²⁷ I discuss this plot outline in more detail in Belfiore, “Iphigenia”

οἶσεν. 1455b9). Given human nature, *philia* relationships are uppermost in the thoughts of a person who is about to die and who has time to reflect on this circumstance. The revelation of these thoughts, in a way that leads to recognition, is, then, probable or necessary, unless another event (which would be part of a different plot, and therefore of a different tragedy) occurs to prevent recognition. Although Aristotle does not explicitly mention a *peripeteia*, a “change to the opposite of the things done,” in this plot outline, his statement at 1455b12 (“thence is salvation”) shows that a *peripeteia* in fact takes place together with the recognition, for the recognition marks the beginning of the change to the good fortune of salvation. Indeed, recognition and reunion with *philois* is itself good fortune. The *peripeteia* follows the recognition by probability or necessity, for *philois* in such a situation will naturally, if they recognize one another, do all they can to avoid harming each other and to give aid instead.

Finally, the events of the middle make the end, the good fortune of salvation, probable or necessary (“thence is salvation” 1455b12), for it is probable or necessary that people who do all they can to escape will succeed, if nothing prevents them—unless another event, which is not part of *this* plot, occurs to make another *peripeteia* necessary or probable.

These necessary or probable events that make up the plot are distinct from the episodes. After outlining “the universal of the Iphigenia,” Aristotle writes (1455b12–15). “After this, adding²⁸ the names, [the poet should] ‘episodize.’ The episodes should be appropriate, for example, in the case of Orestes, the madness by means of which he was captured, and the salvation by means of the purification.” These episodes are, as Heath writes, “circumstantial details appropriate to the persons involved.”²⁹ That is, while the escape (“salvation”) itself is part of the universal, the purification is a circumstance appropriate to Orestes the matricide, whose name has now been added. Similarly, the capture itself is part of the plot, while the madness by means of which it takes place is a circumstantial detail appropriate to Orestes, who is pursued by his mother’s Furies.

²⁸ On ὑποθέματα, see chap. 3, n. 42.

²⁹ Heath, *Unity*, 52. In Heath’s view, *oikeia* means “appropriate to the persons” whose names are set down by the poet (1455b12–13). This view is also defended by Bywater, *Aristotle on the Art*, 246; Rostagni, *Poetica*, 101–2; and Else, *Argument*, 511. Others take *oikeia* to mean “appropriate to the story.” D. W. Lucas, *Poetics*, on 1455b13, and Gude-man, *Aristoteles*, 311. Both views have some validity, for, while *oikeia* in this passage refers primarily to persons, the episodes, like the persons themselves, must be appropriate to a universal in which a certain kind of person says and does certain kinds of things according to probability or necessity (1451b8–9).

The particular means by which capture and salvation are brought about in the play are explicitly called episodes, but it is less clear what we are to make of Aristotle's two examples of ways in which recognition is brought about. Orestes "recognizes," or "makes himself known,"³⁰ Aristotle writes, "either as Euripides or as Polyidos wrote it, saying, as was *erikos*, that not only his sister but he also had to be sacrificed" (1455b9–11). Recognition itself is clearly part of the plot, but are these two ways of bringing about recognition part of the universal (the plot), or are they episodes?

Although these examples are included in the outline of the universal in such a way as to make them appear, at first, to be parts of it, there are some compelling objections to this view. There is, first, a logical objection. Aristotle calls his plot outline "the universal . . . of the *Iphigenia*" (1455b2–3). However, if the two mutually exclusive ways of bringing about recognition are both parts of a plot, they must be parts of two different plots (see 1451a30–35), and of two different universals.

A second objection to taking Aristotle's examples to be parts of the plot emerges from additional information given in *Poetics* 16. While the *Poetics* 17 outline mentions both Euripides and Polyidos, it stresses Polyidos's way of bringing about recognition, stating that it takes place by means of Orestes' speech. In *Poetics* 16 this same speech of Orestes is cited as an example of an inferior way of bringing about recognition. "by reasoning" (1455a4–8). *Poetics* 17 is not explicit enough about Euripides' way of bringing about recognition to allow us to be certain which of the two recognitions in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* he has in mind. that of Orestes by Iphigenia or that of Iphigenia by Orestes (both mentioned at 11.1452b5–8). Of these, the recognition of Orestes by Iphigenia is placed in *Poetics* 16 in the inferior category of recognitions brought about by means of things "made up by the poet." Orestes is recognized because "he says what the poet, but not the plot, requires" (16.1454b30–35). It is unlikely that these two inferior ways of bringing about recognition—Euripides' way of bringing about the recognition of Orestes by Iphigenia, and Polyidos's way of bringing about recognition "through reasoning"—form part of a probable or necessary plot structure, though they might well be episodes. However, the means by which Euripides brings about the recognition of Iphigenia by Orestes might be thought to form part of the plot. This way of bringing about the recognition, by means of the letters Iphigenia sends,

³⁰ The active form of the verb ἀνεγνώρισεν presents problems at 1455b9, as it does elsewhere in the *Poetics*. See chap. 5 ("Recognition"), esp. n. 61.

is given as an example of the best way of bringing about recognition in *Poetics* 16, one that comes “from the events themselves” (1455a16–19). If “from the events themselves” means “by probability or necessity” in this passage, Iphigenia’s sending of the letters would be part of a probable or necessary plot structure in *Poetics* 16.³¹ Even so, however, we could not conclude that the examples given in *Poetics* 17 are part of the plot, for there Aristotle stresses Polyidos’s inferior way of bringing about recognition “by reasoning,” which is opposed, in *Poetics* 16, to the way of bringing about recognition “from the events themselves.”

While there are serious objections to the view that the ways of bringing about recognition cited in *Poetics* 17 form part of the plot, they can plausibly be seen as two episodes belonging to different versions by different playwrights of the same Iphigenia plot.³² Each is a particular method of bringing about the same event (recognition) in the same plot, that is, in the same tragedy (18.1456a7–9). The recognition itself follows by probability or necessity from Orestes’ capture. However, the methods of bringing it about are plausible rather than necessary or probable, for different episodes can and do bring about the same event equally well.³³ Moreover, people in the circumstances in which Iphigenia and Orestes find themselves do not send letters or reason as Orestes does about their sisters “by nature” or “for the most part,” although both events are plausible in the plays in which they occur.

Instead of being parts of the plot, Euripides’ and Polyidos’s ways of bringing about recognition are episodes that supply circumstantial details appropriate to Orestes and Iphigenia. In Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Iphigenia gives the letter to Orestes, saying:

Tell Orestes, son of Agamemnon:
 “She who was slaughtered at Aulis sends this,
 living Iphigenia, but to those in Argos, dead.”

(769–71)

³¹ The meaning of the phrase “from the events themselves” is discussed below.

³² The identity of Polyidos is problematic, since he is called a sophist at 16.1455a6, and we know of no tragedian of that name. However, as Else notes (*Argument*, 509–10), ἐποίησεν (“made”) in 1455b10 clearly marks him as a dramatist in *Po.* 17; cf. Gallavotti, *Aristotele*, 164.

³³ Nickau, “Epeisodion,” 162, makes the point that other plausible episodes could also have been used, but he does not see that this conflicts with his view that the episodes are “necessary” (“nötig”).

While these and other details given by Euripides' Iphigenia are appropriate to the individuals involved and to the story, they are not probable or necessary. In Polyidos's version of the Iphigenia story, the recognition occurs because Orestes says that his sister was sacrificed, and it is his lot also to be sacrificed (*Po* 16 1455a8). This speech is appropriate to Orestes, for he alone has such a sister, but it is no more probable or necessary than another speech.

If Aristotle's examples in *Poetics* 17 are of episodes that bring about the recognitions, *eikos*, when used of Orestes' speech at 1455b10, means "plausible" rather than "probable." It is suggestive (if not conclusive, for *eikos* alone means "probable or necessary" at 9 1451b13), that *eikos* at 1455b10 occurs without its frequent companion, "necessity." This same speech of Orestes is also said to be *eikos*, again without "necessity," at 16 1455a7. Moreover, Iphigenia's desire to send a letter to her brother is said to be *eikos* at 16 1455a18–19, and not "*eikos* or necessary."

Additional linguistic evidence also suggests that the Euripides and Polyidos examples are episodes. Aristotle uses the word *dia* (by means of) in connection with what are explicitly called episodes in *Poetics* 17 "the madness by means of which [*di' hēs*] he was captured and the salvation by means of [*dia*] purification" (1455b14–15). Significantly, the different methods of bringing about recognition are also referred to throughout *Poetics* 16 as the "means by which" (*dia*) recognition is brought about. At 1454b32 Iphigenia's letter is said to be "the means by which" (*dia*) she is recognized, and at 1455a16–19 Iphigenia's recognition by Orestes is said to be brought about "by means [*di'*] of *eikota*."³⁴ As Else points out, the discussion of recognition in *Poetics* 16 "adds nothing on the connection of *anagnorisis* [recognition] with the structure of the complex plot or on its emotional function, but limits itself strictly to studying the *techniques* of recognition," "the *methods* for the recognition of persons."³⁵ The word *dia* in *Poetics* 16, then, is used to refer to the methods of bringing about recognition, just as it is used in *Poetics* 17 to refer to the methods of bringing about capture and salvation that are explicitly called episodes. These methods of bringing about recognition can plausibly be seen as different ways of supplying appropriate circumstantial details. This is true of even the best method of bringing about recognition, that "from the events

³⁴ The word *dia* is also used in this way at 16 1454b21, 1454b25, 1454b26, 1454b32, and 1454b37.

³⁵ Else, *Argument*, 484 (emphasis in original).

themselves" (1455a16–19). The recognition itself is a part of the plot that comes about "from the organization itself of the plot . . . either by necessity or according to probability" (1452a18–20). The best method of bringing about the recognition, however, does not come about in this way, but "from the events themselves . . . by means of plausible things [*di' eikotōn*]" (1455a16–17). That is, the best method of bringing about recognition is an "appropriate" episode (1455b13) in which the persons involved say what the plot requires (see 1454b34–35)

The same distinction between necessary or probable plot and plausible episode can be applied to Aristotle's outline (17.1455b16–23, quoted in chapter 3) of the "story" (*logos*) of the *Odyssey*—that is, its plot.³⁶ What belongs to the plot, the probable or necessary sequence of events, is (1) the beginning, a man's return home after a long absence to find suitors threatening his household; (2) the middle: the recognitions (e.g., Odysseus's recognition by Telemachus, the Nurse, and Penelope), and his attack on the suitors, and (3) the end, his salvation from the dangers that surround him at home, and the suitors' destruction. "The rest is episode." Among the episodes are the ways in which the recognitions are brought about (for example, the tokens of the scar and the bed), and the way in which salvation is achieved (the bow, the locking up of the suitors). These episodes are plausible, but they are not necessary or probable.

The foregoing analysis of plot and episode illuminates Aristotle's account of the complication and the solution. These views are integral to his theory of plot structure.³⁷ After distinguishing plot and episode in *Poetics* 17, Aristotle discusses in *Poetics* 18 the division of the plot into the complication and the solution. Like the beginning, middle, and end, the *desis* (complication) and the *lusis* (solution) are divisions of the probable and necessary sequence of events that make up the plot. Their importance is apparent from Aristotle's statement (1456a7–9) that the same tragedy is one that has the same plot, that is, the same "tying up" (*plokē*, here used as an equivalent of "complication"), and solution. Aristotle defines "complication" and "solution" at the beginning of *Poetics* 18

Of every tragedy one [part] is the complication and the other the solution
The things outside [*exōthen*] and often some of those inside are the compli-

³⁶ Kassel, *De arte poetica* ("Index Graecus, s v λογος) correctly notes that λογος (story) is equivalent to μῦθος (plot) at 1455b17. Dupont-Roc and Lallot, *Poétique*, incorrectly distinguish the two (180, 286).

³⁷ Pace Else, *Argument*, 517–22.

cation; the rest is the solution. By “complication” I mean the [tragedy] from the beginning until the last part from which it changes to good or bad fortune. By “solution” I mean the [tragedy] from the beginning of the change until the end. Just as in the *Lynceus* of Theodectus, the complication consists in the things done before [*ta propepragmena*] and the capture of the child and again the [] of them. The solution is that part from the accusation of murder until the end. (1455b24–32)

This passage presents a number of problems. Even if the textual difficulty at 1455b31 could be resolved, Aristotle’s example would be of limited usefulness in the absence of Theodectes’ *Lynceus*.³⁸ A more tractable difficulty concerns the meaning of “the things done before” (*ta propepragmena*: 1455b30) and the things “outside” (1455b25). Both the “things done before” and the things “outside” are said to be part of the complication, and it is reasonable to suppose that these expressions refer to the same events. However, because these events are part of the complication, and therefore part of the plot, they cannot be “outside” in the same sense as that in which the oracle in the Iphigenia story in *Poetics* 17 is “outside” (1455b7–8), for the oracle is “outside” “the universal” and “the plot”; that is, it is not part of the plot.³⁹ Instead, the “things done before” and those “outside” the plot in *Poetics* 18 must be events such as the sacrifice at Aulis and Iphigenia’s settlement in a foreign land, which are mentioned in the outline of the Iphigenia plot. These are “outside” the action represented on stage, but they are part of the beginning of the plot, because the other events follow them by necessity or probability.

In spite of these difficulties, it is not hard to use Aristotle’s unusually clear definitions of “complication” and “solution” in analyzing specific plays. The complication includes at least some of the beginning, and the solution includes the end, of the plot. How much of the beginning and middle are part of the complication and how much part of the solution will vary a great deal from play to play, but will depend in part on whether

³⁸ The reading δῆλωσις, preserved by the Arabic translation and favored by Else, *Argument* (521), Gudeman, *Aristoteles*, and Janko, *Poetics 1*, is a promising way of filling the gap. Kassel, *De arte poetica*, does not explain why he finds the testimony of the translation “incertissimum.” For some speculative reconstructions of the *Lynceus*, see Else, *Argument*, 521–22, and Xanthakis-Karamanos, *Studies*, 53–54.

³⁹ Aristotle’s use of the term “outside” (*exō*) is confusing. He also uses it at 1460a29, writing that Oedipus’s ignorance of how Laius died is *exō tou metabeumatōs*. This must mean much what it does at 1455b7–8, not a part of the plot at all. *Exō* (*tēs tragōdias, tou dramatos*) at 1454b3 and 1454b7 has this sense also.

the plot is complex (having recognition, *peripeteia*, or both) or simple (lacking both). In a simple plot, the action moves continuously in one direction, that of the change. Accordingly, the beginning of the change, the point at which the solution begins, will be either in the “things done before,” which are “outside” the action represented on stage, or in that part of the beginning that is represented on stage in tragedy or narrated in epic. For example, in the *Iliad*, which has a simple plot (1459b14), the beginning of the change is the quarrel in book 1 between Agamemnon and Achilles. Everything after this is the solution. In a complex plot, on the other hand, a change in direction is marked by *peripeteia*, recognition, or both, and the solution will begin at this point. In this case, the solution begins somewhere in the middle of the play. In Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, the “beginning of the change,” the point “from which it changes” (ἐξ οὗ μεταβαίνει 1455b27) to bad fortune, occurs in the scene where the Corinthian messenger sets in motion the events that make recognition and bad fortune probable or necessary. Aristotle in fact tells us (11 1452a22–26) that a *peripeteia*, a “change to the opposite,” takes place in this scene. While *peripeteia* is not itself the tragic change, as I will argue in chapter 5, it often marks the beginning of this change.

In the *Iphigenia* plot, as in that of the *Oedipus*, the solution begins at that point in the play at which *peripeteia* and recognition coincide.⁴⁰ Until the recognition, Orestes appears to be headed toward bad fortune, and just before the recognition, in Aristotle’s plot outline, he is said to be “about to be sacrificed.” Aristotle explicitly indicates the beginning of the change in this plot, stating “thence [sc. from the recognition] is salvation” (ἐντεῦθεν ἡ σωτηρία 1455b12). This recognition is the beginning of the solution, the point “from which it changes” (ἐξ οὗ μεταβαίνει 1455b27). Aristotle’s outline of the *Odyssey* plot also suggests that the solution coincides with a recognition: “being recognized by some and attacking, he himself was saved” (1455b21–22).

The solution, then, follows by necessity or probability from the complication, just as the events of the plot that make up the middle and end follow from the preceding events by necessity or probability. The complication-solution division, however, is not simply a logical one, as is the beginning-middle-end division. It marks the structural and emotional fo-

⁴⁰ Pace Else, who locates the beginning of the solution in both plays in or just after the prologue (*Argument*, 520), and Bywater (*Aristotle on the Art*, 248) who, without explanation, locates that of the *Iphigenia* at line 391, and that of the *Oedipus* in the opening scene. On this point, see further below, chap. 5 (*Peripeteia*), esp. n. 40.

cal point of the tragedy, the height of good fortune or the depth of bad fortune from which the tragic change begins.⁴¹

This concludes the study of Aristotle's views on the plot as a whole. The plot is a necessary or probable sequence of events, and it is distinct from both *ēthos* and episode. I have argued that actions that occur "according to probability [*to eikos*] or necessity" are those that occur "for the most part" and according to a "hypothetical necessity," or because of compulsion. They do not occur according to the kind of necessity that characterizes things that "cannot be otherwise." Necessary human actions are those that occur according to the necessity of human nature, constrained by external circumstances. I have also argued that *eikos* sometimes means "plausible" rather than "probable" in the *Poetics*. In particular, episodes are not "probable (*eikos*) or necessary," as are the events of the plot, but merely "plausible" (*eikos*), for other episodes could bring about the events of the plot equally well.

It is now time to look more closely at the three parts of the plot: *pathos*, recognition, and *peripeteia*. In the first section of chapter 5 these parts will be studied individually, while the second section will consider how these parts help, in combination, to produce different kinds of plots.

⁴¹ In *Po.* 15.1454a37-b2, the term *lusis* does not have the technical sense of part of a tragedy, but instead has its ordinary sense of "solution of difficulties," the meaning it has in *Po.* 25 (1460b6). At 1454a37-b2, Aristotle writes "It is clear that the *luses* of plots should come about from the plot itself, and not, as in the *Medea*, from the machine, and in the *Iliad* the things concerning the sailing away." *Lusis* in the technical sense of the part of tragedy from the beginning of the change until the end is not introduced until *Po.* 18. Moreover, the technical sense would not be appropriate in *Po.* 15. Here, Aristotle states that the *lusis* should come about "from" (*ex*) the plot itself and not "from" (*apo*) the machine, as it does in the *Medea*. However, the machine is used to allow *Medea* to escape after she has taken vengeance on Jason, and not at the beginning of the change, which occurs when Creon grants *Medea* a day's grace. In Aristotle's other example of an improperly contrived *lusis*, the sailing away in *Il.* 2 has nothing at all to do with the beginning of the change. The machine of the *Medea* is, however, a *lusis* in the sense of a solution of difficulties in the story. This is also true of the intervention of Athena, used in *Il.* 2 to stop the Greeks from running away. In each case, the plot has reached an impasse that is resolved not by probability or necessity but by divine intervention.