

ARISTOTLE

- 10 καθαρίσει ἔστι γενέσθαι ταύτας τὰς ἀνομοιότητας, καὶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους δὲ καὶ τὴν ψιλομετρίαν, οἷον Ὅμηρος μὲν βελτίους, Κλεοφῶν δὲ ὁμοίους, Ἡγήμων δὲ ὁ Θάσιος ὁ τὰς παρωδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος καὶ Νικοχάρης ὁ τὴν Δειλιάδα χείρους· ὁμοίως
- 15 δὲ καὶ περὶ τοὺς διθυράμβους καὶ περὶ τοὺς νόμους, ὥσπερ γὰρ¹⁰ Κύκλωπας Τιμόθεος καὶ Φιλόξενος μιμήσαιο ἄν τις. ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ διαφορᾷ καὶ ἡ τραγωδία πρὸς τὴν κωμωδίαν διέστηκεν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ χείρους ἢ δὲ βελτίους μιμείσθαι βούλεται τῶν νῦν.
- III Ἔτι δὲ τούτων τρίτη διαφορὰ τὸ ὡς ἕκαστα τούτων
- 20 μιμήσαιο ἄν τις. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμείσθαι ἔστιν ὅτε μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα ἢ ἕτερόν τι γιγνόμενον ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ, ἢ ὡς τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντας ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας τοὺς μιμουμένους. ἐν τρισὶ δὲ ταύταις διαφοραῖς ἡ μίμησις ἔστιν, ὡς εἵπομεν κατ' ἀρχάς, ἐν
- 25 οἷς τε καὶ ἄ καὶ ὡς. ὥστε τῇ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἂν εἴη μιμητῆς Ὀμήρω Σοφοκλῆς, μιμοῦνται γὰρ ἄμφω σπουδαίους, τῇ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἄμφω. ὅθεν καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαι τινες αὐτὰ φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρῶντας. διὸ καὶ ἀντιποιοῦνται τῆς τε τραγωδίας καὶ τῆς κωμωδίας οἱ Δωριεῖς

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aulos and lyre, these variations can occur, as well as in prose writings and metrical works without melody: for example, Homer represented superior people, Cleophon¹⁵ those like ourselves, Hegemon of Thasos¹⁶ (the first composer of parodies) and Nicochares¹⁷ (author of the *Deiliad*) inferior characters. Likewise with dithyrambs and nomos: for one could represent Cyclopes as did Timotheus and Philoxenus.¹⁸ This very distinction separates tragedy from comedy: the latter tends to represent people inferior, the former superior, to existing humans.

There is, beside these, a third distinction—in the *mode* of mimesis for these various objects. For in the same media one can represent the same objects by combining narrative with direct personation, as Homer does; *or* in an invariable narrative voice; *or* by direct enactment of all roles. These, then, are the three distinctions underlying mimesis, as we said at the outset: media, objects, modes. Accordingly, in one respect Sophocles could be classed as the same kind of mimetic artist as Homer, since both represent elevated characters, but in another the same as Aristophanes, since both represent people in direct action. Hence the assertion some people make, that dramas are so called because they represent people in action.¹⁹ Thus, the Dorians actually lay claim to tragedy and comedy (comedy

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- 30 (τῆς μὲν γὰρ κωμωδίας οἱ Μεγαρεῖς οἷ τε ἐνταῦθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης καὶ οἱ ἐκ Σικελίας, ἐκέθην γὰρ ἦν Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ ποιητῆς πολλῶ πρότερος ὢν Σιωνίδου καὶ Μάγνητος· καὶ τῆς τραγωδίας ἔνιοι τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ)
- 35 ποιούμενοι τὰ ὀνόματα σημείον· αὐτοὶ¹¹ μὲν γὰρ κώμας τὰς περιουκίδας καλεῖν φασιν, Ἀθηναίους¹² δὲ δήμους, ὡς κωμωδοὺς
- 1448b οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ κωμάζειν λεχθέντας ἀλλὰ τῇ κατὰ κώμας πλάνῃ ἀτιμαζομένους ἐκ τοῦ ἄστεως· καὶ τὸ ποιεῖν αὐτοὶ μὲν δρᾶν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ πράττειν προσαγορεύειν. περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν διαφορῶν καὶ πόσαι καὶ τίνες τῆς μιμήσεως εἰρήσθω ταῦτα.
- IV Ἐοίκασι δὲ γεννηῆσαι μὲν ὅλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτία δύο τινές
- 5 καὶ αὗται φυσικαί. τό τε γὰρ μιμείσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παιδῶν ἐστὶ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὶς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας.
- 10 σημείον δὲ τούτου τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων· ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὀρώμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφὰς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αὔτιον δὲ καὶ

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being claimed by the Megarians both here on the mainland, contending it arose during their democracy,²⁰ and in Sicily, the homeland of the poet Epicharmus, a much earlier figure than Chionides and Magnes;²¹ and tragedy being claimed by some of those in the Peloponnese);²² and they cite the names as evidence. They say that they call villages *kōmai*, while the Athenians call them *dēmoi*; their contention is that comic performers [*kōmōdoi*] got their name not from revelling [*kōmazein*] but from wandering through villages when banned from the city. And they say their own word for acting is *dran*,²³ while the Athenians' is *prattein*. So much, then, by way of discussion of the number and nature of the distinctions within mimesis.

It can be seen that poetry was broadly engendered by a pair of causes, both natural. For it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to engage in mimesis²⁴ (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understanding); and equally natural that everyone enjoys mimetic objects. A common occurrence indicates this: we enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as the forms of the vilest animals and of corpses. The explanation

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δὲ ἐπεισοδίων πλήθη, καὶ τὰ ἄλλ' ὡς ἕκαστα κοσμηθῆναι
30 λέγεται ἔστω ἡμῖν εἰρημένα· πολὺ γὰρ ἂν ἴσως ἔργον εἶη
διεξιέναι καθ' ἕκαστον.

V Ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία ἐστὶν ὡς περ εἴπομεν μίμησις φαυλοτέρων
μέν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πάσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστὶ τὸ
γελοῖον μόριον. τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἰσχρὸς
35 ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθύς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον
αἰσχρὸν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὀδύνης. αἱ μὲν οὖν τῆς
τραγωδίας μεταβάσεις καὶ δι' ὧν ἐγένοντο οὐ λελήθασιν, ἡ δὲ
1449b κωμῳδία διὰ τὸ μὴ σπουδάζεσθαι ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλαθεν· καὶ γὰρ
χορὸν κωμῳδῶν ὀψέ ποτε ὁ ἄρχων ἔδωκεν, ἀλλ' ἐθέλονται ἦσαν.
ἤδη δὲ σχήματά τινα αὐτῆς ἐχούσης οἱ λεγόμενοι αὐτῆς ποιηταὶ
μνημονεύονται. τίς δὲ πρόσωπα ἀπέδωκεν ἢ προλόγους ἢ πλήθη
5 ὑποκριτῶν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἡγγνόηται. τὸ δὲ μύθους ποιεῖν²¹ τὸ
μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ Σικελίας ἦλθε, τῶν δὲ Ἀθῆνησιν Κράτης πρῶτος
ἦρξεν ἀφέμενος τῆς ἰαμβικῆς ἰδέας καθόλου ποιεῖν λόγους καὶ
μύθους.

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Further changes concerned the number of episodes.⁴⁵ And we shall take as read the ways in which other features of tragedy are said to have been embellished; it would no doubt be a large task to discuss them individually.

Comedy, as we said,⁴⁶ is mimesis of baser but not wholly vicious characters: rather, the laughable is one category of the shameful.⁴⁷ For the laughable comprises any fault or mark of shame which involves no pain or destruction: most obviously, the laughable mask is something ugly and twisted, but not painfully. Now, tragedy's stages of development, and those responsible for them, have been remembered, but comedy's early history was forgotten because no serious interest was taken in it: only at a rather late date did the archon grant a comic chorus;⁴⁸ previously performers were volunteers. It is from a time⁴⁹ when the genre already had some formal features that the first named poets of comedy are remembered. Who introduced masks, prologues, various numbers of actors, and everything of that kind, has been lost. The composition of plots originally came from Sicily; of Athenian poets Crates was the first to relinquish the iambic manner and to create stories and plots with an overall structure.⁵⁰

Aristotle *Poetics* 3.1448a–1449b.

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