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Introduction

The meaning of catharsis and, particularly, its Aristotelian use in his celebrated formal definition of tragedy that can be found in *Poetics* (1449b24-28) have been debated for centuries, prompting a wide range of interpretations. In fact, the exegetic history of Aristotle's treatise shows peculiar features, including its having been recurrently assumed as the point of reference and the foundation of both aesthetic and dramaturgical theories. Also owing to the incompleteness of the transmitted text, the interpretation of different passages has been bent to fit diverse aesthetic needs. This issue gets even more complicated when one comes to consider catharsis, also because over time it has undergone a double de-contextualization. On the one hand, the whole treatise on poetic art has been taken out of both its original cultural milieu and the Aristotelian corpus, and, on the other, the formal definition of tragedy has been isolated from the rest of *Poetics*. This has inevitably favoured the overlapping of religious-spiritual and psychological (atonement/redemption of the soul and sublimation/ennoblement respectively) categories.

As a consequence, many scholars have concentrated precisely on that definition – despite its unfinished and rather fragmentary formulation – and taken it as a starting point in order to interpret Greek tragedy and the 'tragic' as an aesthetic and existential category. Besides, the *Katharsis-Frage*, that is, the 'catharsis question' as the German scholars call it, did not embrace only philological and classical studies, but also literary ones in a broad sense, as well as dramaturgical practices and aesthetic and philosophical interpretations. Thus, catharsis has eventually become "the most famous word of Aristotle's *Poetics*, intended as immediately self-evident mostly by those that know least about its complexity".[1] In a sense, it has been turned into an

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[1] "[L]a parola forse più conosciuta della *Poetica*, citata come immediatamente evidente tanto più quanto meno si è a conto della sua problematicità" (Lanza 1987: 61).

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"antonomastic and all-embracing term"[2] for the entire Aristotelian dramatic theory. However, none of the many exegetic models proposed can be said to be free from difficulties or inconsistencies, so that still today the issue is far from being settled.[3]

To summarize the main points of this problem it is worth quoting the crucial passage (1449b24-28) as cited in Rudolf Kassel's (1965) edition:

> ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.
>
> [Tragedy, then, is mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions. (Trans. by Halliwell 1999: 47-9)].

As already mentioned, a centuries-old hermeneutical tradition has loaded these few lines with meanings that certainly go beyond what Aristotle actually meant; at times scholars believed they could find in them not only a description of tragedy, understood as the historical phenomenon of ancient Greece, but also a formula to determine the essence and character of artistic production in general. Aristotle does concentrate in them some pivotal concepts of his poetological lexicon, including terms such as *mimesis* and *logos*, which indicate essential elements of poetry, as he discussed at length in his treatise. Catharsis only – which seems to indicate tragedy's main target – lacks further elucidation in *Poetics*.

An unquestionable aspect is that tragedy works through emotional means to produce that kind of "pleasure" (ἡδονή) which is peculiar to it (1453b11). It is in any case a pleasure deeply connected with the emotional sphere. Plato deemed poetry to be dangerous for the stability of the soul (*Resp.* 3, 387b-c), since it provokes *eleos* and *phobos*, and, at the same time, lamented the fact that tragedy "feeds and waters" (τρέφει . . . ἄρδουσα) the low instincts of the human soul instead of "drying them up" (αὐχμεῖν).[4] On the contrary, Ar-

[2] "[T]ermine antonomastico e onnicomprensivo" (Tesi 1994: 117).

[3] Suggestions have also been made to remove the passage on catharsis as a false annotation, a textual interpolation (cf. Scott 2003; Veloso 2007). However, cutting a passage that makes interpretation difficult looks like a shortcut rather than a solution. Cf. Halliwell 2011: 260-5.

[4] Cfr. Plat. *Resp.* 10, 606d: Καὶ περὶ ἀφροδισίων δὴ καὶ θυμοῦ καὶ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν τε καὶ λυπηρῶν καὶ ἡδέων ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἃ δή φαμεν πάσῃ πράξει ἡμῖν ἕπεσθαι, ὅτι τοιαῦτα ἡμᾶς ἡ ποιητικὴ μίμησις ἐργάζεται· τρέφει γὰρ ταῦτα ἄρδουσα, δέον αὐχμεῖν, καὶ ἄρχοντα ἡμῖν καθίστησιν, δέον ἄρχεσθαι αὐτὰ ἵνα βελτίους τε καὶ εὐδαιμονέστεροι ἀντὶ χειρόνων καὶ ἀθλιωτέρων γιγνώμεθα. ["And the same is true of

istotle considered *eleos* and *phobos* as the two typically tragic passions and, as they are instruments of catharsis, they must not be repressed, but rather fully deployed.

It is well known that what just cited is the only passage in *Poetics* where Aristotle uses the term catharsis in a poetological sense. The other instance occurring in the treatise (1455b15) refers to the meaning of ritual purification with reference to the myth of Orestes and his "rescue by purification" (σωτηρία διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως). It is rather in the eighth book of *Politics*, in the outline of an educational programme to be adopted in a well-governed ideal city, that we find an important occurrence of the term catharsis with reference to art and, therefore, comparable to the term used in *Poetics*, which Aristotle explicitly refers to for a full discussion of this concept (*Pol.* 8, 1341b38-40). Many scholars have called attention to this passage as the basis for an understanding of the concept of tragic catharsis, although the context of *Politics* is different in some respects. In fact, in it the Aristotelian presentation pivots on the issue of the possible utility of music for education. The Stagirite starts with a distinction among different types of melodies: "ethical" (τὰ μὲν ἠθικὰ), which affect the character and are useful in education; "practical" (τὰ δὲ πρακτικὰ), suitable to accompany the action for recreation and relaxation; and those he calls "enthusiastic" (τὰ δ' ἐνθουσιαστικὰ), fit to excite emotions with particular strength.[5] This tripartite schema overlaps with a tendential bipartition which distinguishes between music to be listened to (coinciding with character music, which has an educational goal) and music to be performed (action music, more suitable for excitation and leisure).[6]

sex and passion and all the painful and enjoyable emotions in the soul which we indeed say accompany us in all our activities, because poetical imitation produces such effects in us. You see it feeds and waters these things when they should be made wither, and makes them control us when they should be controlled in order for us to become better, happier people instead of worse and more wretched". (Trans. by Emlyn-Jones and Preddy 2013: 435-7)].

[5] Arist. *Pol.* 8, 1341b32-36: ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν διαίρεσιν ἀποδεχόμεθα τῶν μελῶν ὡς διαιροῦσί τινες τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, τὰ μὲν ἠθικὰ τὰ δὲ πρακτικὰ τὰ δ' ἐνθουσιαστικὰ τιθέντες, καὶ τῶν ἁρμονιῶν τὴν φύσιν <τὴν> πρὸς ἕκαστα τούτων οἰκείαν, ἄλλην πρὸς ἄλλο μέλος, τιθέασι . . . ["And since we accept the classification of melodies made by some philosophers, as ethical melodies, melodies of action, and passionate melodies, distributing the various harmonies among these classes as being in nature akin to one or the other". (Trans. by Rackham 1932: 669)].

[6] Ibid. 1341a36-41: φαμὲν δ' οὐ μιᾶς ἕνεκεν ὠφελείας τῇ μουσικῇ χρῆσθαι δεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ πλειόνων χάριν (καὶ γὰρ παιδείας ἕνεκεν καὶ καθάρσεως – τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν, νῦν μὲν ἁπλῶς, πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον – τρίτον δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν πρὸς ἄνεσίν τε καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῆς συντονίας ἀνάπαυσιν) [and as we say that music ought to be employed not for the purpose of one benefit that it confers but on account of several (for it serves the purpose both of education and of purgation – the

The term catharsis is used precisely to indicate the functionality of "enthusiastic" music (τὰ δ' ἐνθουσιαστικὰ), exemplified through what he calls "sacred melodies" (ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν), capable of producing a state of possession and ecstasy in responsive listeners.[7] However, Aristotle does not provide an explanation of this concept and rather refers to his own "writings on poetics" (ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς, ibid.: 1341b39-40) for a fuller discussion. All the same, his description of the cathartic process remains interesting: the enthusiastic or "sacred" music performed on the aulos[8] triggers emotions (fear or pity, but also ecstatic rapture) that everyone can feel to various degrees of intensity, but towards which some are more inclined than others. After the delirium has reached its climax while listening to tunes that violently arouse the soul, the more inclined ones, who are particularly prone to possession, calm down "as if they had received some medicinal treatment and a catharsis" (ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως, ibid.: 1342a10-11). The ensuing effect is characterized by relief accompanied by a sense of pleasure (κουφίζεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς, ibid.: 1342a14-15).

Therefore, Aristotle knows of melodies capable of inducing the catharsis of terrifying and soothing passions that have been at first intensified by music. Among them, however, he only focuses on the musical catharsis taking place in the theatre and specifically directed towards a simple public made up of ordinary men and women with little culture. Thus, in the Aristotelian conception, music can serve several purposes, such as education, amusement, and intellectual recreation. However, an important question remains open: does the purely musical catharsis spoken of in the eighth book of *Politics* coincide with the one mentioned in *Poetics*, or are they two differently premised phenomena working differently? Scholars are divided on this issue: on the one hand, the formal definition of tragedy given in *Poetics* (1449b24-28) seems to point to catharsis as a phenomenon exclusively linked to tragedy, without any involvement of musical aspects. On the other hand,

term purgation we use for the present without explanation, but we will return to discuss the meaning that we give to it more explicitly in our treatise on poetry – and thirdly it serves for amusement, serving to relax our tension and to give rest from it". (Trans. by Rackham 1932: 669-71)].

[7] Ibid. 1342a 7-11: καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς κινήσεως κατοκώχιμοί τινές εἰσιν, ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν ὁρῶμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθισταμένους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως· ["for some persons are very liable to this form of emotion, and under the influence of sacred music we see these people, when they use tunes that violently arouse the soul, being thrown into a state as if they had received medicinal treatment and taken a purge". (Trans. by Rackham 1932: 671)].

[8] On the function of the aulos in producing the cathartic effect, both in musical catharsis and – as trigger of *phobos* – in tragic catharsis, cf. Provenza 2009.

the poetic catharsis could be simply a peculiar interpretation of the more general musical catharsis.[9]

Aristotle appears to have been the first to use catharsis as a category of poetic creation. Before him, the term – connected with the verb καθαίρω ('purge', 'purify', 'expiate') – belonged to the medical-biological, ritual-religious and philosophical spheres, and covered a whole semantic spectrum that included several acceptations of the idea of "purification" both in material and spiritual sense.[10] The term catharsis, for example, could refer to physical hygiene (washing one's hands before eating, before performing sacrifices, before praying; washing oneself after a journey) that had both a ritual and a profane meaning. In religion, forms of catharsis are attested that combine physical and psychic aspects having the general aim of restoring an order that has been disrupted (for example, the removal of a "stain" that makes a person ἀκάθαρτος, "impure"). In the medical field (see, for instance, the works of the Hippocratic corpus) the term is used to indicate either the external cleansing of a wound (removing its pus), or the removal of liquids from inside the body (for example depurating the stomach through emetics, from the intestines through enemas, from the skin through perspiration, etc.).[11] The concept of catharsis likely to have originally belonged to the ritual-religious sphere (indicating a decontamination ritual through which culprits could rid themselves of the stain that had made them dangerous to society) and then spread to lay medicine. The fact that, alongside categories already long established within the poetological field (*mimesis*, *phobos*, *eleos*), Aristotle chose to use a category like catharsis, up to then not included among them, might be understood as his answer to Plato's reserves on the dangerous effects of tragedy on the spectators (Seidensticker 2009: 7). The passions aroused by the tragic performance, in fact, would be subsequently removed through the cathartic process, thus producing "harmless pleasure" (χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ is indeed the syntagma utilized in *Politics* 8, 1342a16).

An age-old question, on which the interpreters of tragic catharsis have always been divided, is the issue of the two *pathemata* (*eleos* and *phobos*) produced by tragedy – according to the Aristotelian definition – 'of which' or 'through which' catharsis takes place. Why are only those two passions

[9] On the two types of catharsis cf. Flashar 2007. A famous interpretation based on the substantial identity of musical and tragic catharsis is given by Dirlmeier 1940. The question of a possible catharsis of comedy remains open, as Aristotle is supposed to have spoken of it in the lost second book of *Poetics*. Especially on this cf. Janko 1984; 1992; Sutton 1994 and Matt Cohn's article included in the present issue of *Skenè. JTDS.*

[10] On the meanings of catharsis in ancient Greek, see Pfister 1935. On contexts of use of the term in pre-Aristotelian times cf. in particular Moulinier (1952: 152-76), Hoessly 2001, and the essays collected in Vöhler and Seidensticker 2007.

[11] A collection of numerous attestations of this can be found in Craik 2006.

mentioned and not any others? As a matter of fact, pity and fear are mentioned exactly because they are typically tragic passions, different for instance from those aroused by comedy or other artistic genres. The question is further complicated by τῶν τοιούτων which is found in the definition: "the catharsis of such emotions" (τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν). Should we posit the existence of other passions, besides fear and pity, that are somehow connected with tragedy, but about which Aristotle did not wish to say anything? Light was shed on this by Jacob Bernays in his celebrated essay *Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie* [*Outlines of Aristotle's Lost Work on the Effect of Tragedy*] (Bernays 1857: 150-4). The Greek word τοιοῦτος is semantically equal to the German *solcher* and to the English *such* and can have two meanings: a) in a strict sense, it indicates persons or things identical to those mentioned, thus meaning "this"; b) in a broader sense, it indicates persons or things which are "similar" or "akin" to those mentioned.[12]

After all, one only needs to read the *Poetics* to see that Aristotle normally uses the pair of nouns ἔλεος/φόβος ('pity', 'compassion'/'fear', 'terror') and the corresponding adjectives ἐλεεινόν/φοβερὸν ('moving pity', 'piteous'/'causing fear', 'terrible'), or some synonyms. Only in one point (1456a33-b8) does he include also ὀργή, 'anger'; but his discourse here is general and not specifically directed to tragic poetry. Therefore, in the definition Aristotle refers solely to *eleos* and *phobos*, without considering other qualitatively different passions (such as anger). If anything, his use of *toiutos* suggests that there may be quantitative differences in tragic emotions (Seidensticker 2009: 10). In fact, next to ἔλεος and φόβος there are synonyms that indicate greater or lesser intensity: as regards pity, we can find, for example, οἶκτος ('lamentation', 'piteous wailing'), συγγνώμη ('forbearance'), ὀδυρμός ('lamentation'), and as concerns fear there are δέος ('fear'), φρίκη ('shuddering'), ἔκπληξις ('consternation'), ταραχή ('upheaval'), all terms implying a different degree of intensity.

The fact that Aristotle takes only *eleos* and *phobos* into account as tragic emotions is confirmed in chapter 1 of *Poetics*, where he intends to define "the most beautiful tragedy" (1452b31: τῆς καλλίστης τραγῳδίας). Here he mentions the pair *eleos* and *phobos* in contraposition to other possible emotional reactions. In particular, he identifies three models combining a certain hero with a certain action which are not suitable to produce the desired effect of tragedy. The case of the blameless hero who falls into misfortune without making any errors (ἁμαρτία) is "repugnant" (μιαρόν), because it does not excite *eleos* or *phobos*, but rather a sense of distress and indignation (1452b34-

[12] Cf. Lucas 1968: 97. It must not be forgotten that the pair *eleos*/*phobos* have been part of the poetological tradition at least since the time of sophistry (cf. Gorgias, *DK* 82B11, 9):

6: πρῶτον μὲν δῆλον ὅτι οὔτε τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς ἄνδρας δεῖ μεταβάλλοντας φαίνεσθαι ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν, οὐ γὰρ φοβερὸν οὐδὲ ἐλεεινὸν τοῦτο ἀλλὰ μιαρόν ἐστιν·).[13] Likewise, the case of an evil character who falls into misfortune rouses no *eleos* and *phobos*, but only a certain feeling of philanthropic sympathy (φιλάνθρωπον), which cannot be denied even to those who seem to deserve whatever destiny they get (1453a1-7: οὐδ' αὖ τὸν σφόδρα πονηρὸν ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταπίπτειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ φιλάνθρωπον ἔχοι ἂν ἡ τοιαύτη σύστασις ἀλλ' οὔτε ἔλεον οὔτε φόβον, ὁ μὲν γὰρ περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιόν ἐστιν δυστυχοῦντα, ὁ δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον, ἔλεος μὲν περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιον, φόβος δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον, ὥστε οὔτε ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε φοβερὸν ἔσται τὸ συμβαῖνον).[14] Finally, the case of an evil character who meets with success appears as "the least tragic of all" (ἀτραγῳδότατον), since it does not achieve the necessary effect (1452b36-1453a1: οὔτε τοὺς μοχθηροὺς ἐξ ἀτυχίας εἰς εὐτυχίαν, ἀτραγῳδότατον γὰρ τοῦτ'ἐστὶ πάντων, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔχει ὧν δεῖ, οὔτε γὰρ φιλάνθρωπον οὔτε ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε φοβερόν ἐστιν).[15] Thus, μιαρόν is a non-specific *pathos* of the tragic effect, while φιλάνθρωπον is a *pathos* insufficient fully to achieve the tragic effect. Some specific conditions have to occur for the tragic emotions to develop to the right degree. In particular, in order to arouse fear (*phobos*) the hero must be the same as, or similar (ὅμοιος), to the spectator; in order to excite pity (*eleos*) he must suffer some underserved misfortune.

In the second book of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle examines *eleos* and *phobos* separately, and underlines the close relationship between them as well as, consequently, their intrinsic reciprocity. In defining *phobos*, he says that we feel it for something that arouses our pity, when it befalls others (1382b25-26). Similarly, we feel *eleos* towards someone when we think that what has befallen him/her has also befallen someone in our family, or when we fear that it could happen to us or to someone in our family. Both *eleos* and *phobos* are aroused by the same type of event (or by the person who suffers the event): an agonizing and devastating pain.[16] Another requisite taken into account

[13] "[C]lear that neither should decent men be shown changing from prosperity to adversity, as this is not fearful nor yet pitiable but repugnant". (Trans. by Halliwell 1999: 69).

[14] "Nor, again, should tragedy show the very wicked person falling from prosperity to adversity: such a pattern might arouse fellow-feeling, but not pity or fear, since the one is felt for the underserving victim of adversity, the other for one like ourselves (pity for the underserving, fear for one like ourselves); so the outcome will be neither pitiable nor fearful". (Trans. by Halliwell 1999: 69-71).

[15] "[N]or the depraved changing from adversity to prosperity, because this is the least tragic of all, possessing none of the necessary qualities since it arouses neither fellow-feeling nor pity nor fear". (Trans. by Halliwell 1999: 69).

[16] Arist. *Rhet.* 2, 1382a22: ἔστω δὴ φόβος λύπη τις ἢ ταραχὴ ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακοῦ φθαρτικοῦ ἢ λυπηροῦ ["let fear be defined as a painful or troubled feeling caused

by Aristotle is the 'closeness' of the evil that we fear or of the victim that we feel pity for, a closeness not only in time and space, but also emotional (the person hurt must be akin to us).

The nature that passions acquire in Aristotle's aesthetic theory is an element of crucial importance on which scholars are divided. On the one hand, some believe that fear and pity are psycho-physical "elementary passions, indomitable by nature" ("naturhaft ungebrochene Elementaraffekte") which overwhelm the spectator (Schadewaldt 1955: 137). These scholars tend to accept Bernays's interpretation, according to which catharsis is a process of removal to be understood mainly at a physiological body level. Other scholars attach great importance to Aristotle's discourse on passions in the second book of *Rhetoric* and in some of his other works (*On the Soul*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*), and maintain that – especially as regards pity – it is also necessary to consider the cognitive processes and moral judgements which are essential to enable the spectator to judge whether a character has or has not deserved his destiny. The basic idea of such exegesis is that the spectator of a tragedy faces the experience of the overthrow of an individual, who does not deserve the severity of his downfall and whose failure to gain success is due to an understandable mistake. The spectators observing the aspects of such failure are made to feel compassion for the protagonist in so far as they understand that he does not deserve it and they will be afraid for themselves in so far as they will realize that they could make the same error too. In other words, the spectator learns how to experience the correct feelings in accordance with what characters and events deserve. In this perspective, catharsis operates a 'sanitization' of feelings, as it were. The German philologist Arbogast Schmitt is today the first advocate of this interpretation, which largely recalls Lessing's formulation and to which we will return shortly.[17]

One of the most complex points, on which generations of scholars (especially German ones) have been divided, is related to the object of catharsis. As regards grammar, three different interpretations are possible:

a) catharsis of fear and pity (objective genitive): through pity and fear tragedy achieves the catharsis of those passions;

by the impression of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain"]; 1385b13: ἔστω δὴ ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ φθαρτικῷ ἢ λυπηρῷ τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν ["let pity then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it" (Trans. by Freese 1926: 201, 225)].

[17] Cf. Schmitt 1994: 331-45; 2008: 334-48, 486-518. Cf. also Cessi 1987: 250ff. For an interesting attempt to analyse Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* and Aeschylus's *Oresteia* in the light of this model, in which emotional, ethical and cognitive elements are present at the same time, see Zierl 1994.

b) catharsis from fear and pity (separative genitive): the cathartic process frees the spectator from pity and fear;
c) catharsis produced by fear and pity (subjective genitive): through pity and fear tragedy achieves the catharsis typical of those passions. In this case fear and pity act as active agents of the cathartic process.

Thus, these grammatical interpretations seem to suggest that the process of catharsis may concern either the passions, or the spectators (who are freed from passions), or, finally, the passions themselves may be said to achieve a catharsis.[18] Making a necessary simplification, we can identify the following prevailing interpretative models:[19]

1) Catharsis as 'ennoblement' of passions, as *purificatio*, that is, quantitative and qualitative purification of tragic passions. The genitive τῶν παθημάτων is understood as objective genitive and the cathartic process is framed within a global conception that considers the theatre as an institution with educational aims. Purification from passions can be understood in two different ways: quantitatively (the excess of passions is removed) and qualitatively (passions are cleansed of the impure elements). In either case, from the observation of the exemplary events on the stage the spectators learn to use passions in an appropriate and balanced way, that is, in the right situation and for the right person. They learn to harness them and thus avoid falling into the unpleasant consequences that such passions can determine. Those who accept this interpretation relate the theory of tragic catharsis more or less explicitly to the Aristotelian doctrine of *mesotes* (the ideal happy medium between extremes as a guiding principle).

This reading (which could be defined as 'moralistic' or 'educational') has a long list of advocates dating back to Pier Vettori, Alessandro Piccolomini, Pierre Corneille, Daniel Heinsius, up to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Among the modern scholars who can be ascribed to this group, in spite of their specific positions, we can mention Stephen Halliwell and the previously recalled Arbogast Schmitt, since both of them agree on the merging of the cognitive-philosophical component with the emotional one, thus realigning passions and reason.[20] Along the same lines, Carlo Diano has proposed that the tragic catharsis be included in the broader Greek doctrine of the so-called

[18] See Stephen Halliwell's thorough overview of possible interpretations of catharsis (1986: 350-6). Cf. also Lucas 1968: 273-90; Belfiore 1992: 257-90; Lear 1988; Schrier 1998: 300; Zanatta 2011. For the historical reconstruction of the interpretations of the concept cf. Matthias Luserke's edited collection of texts (1991).

[19] I am following Seidensticker's summary outline (2009: 15ff).

[20] Halliwell defines tragic catharsis as the benefit that results from "the conversion and integration of ostherwise painful emotions into the pleasurable experience of mimetic art" (2011: 253).

τέχνη ἀλυπίας (the art of freeing the soul from pain) theorized by Antiphon, comprising also the *praemeditatio futurorum malorum* already practiced by Anaxagoras. Basically, this would be a technique of 'apprenticeship of misfortune', aimed at training the spectators to learn how to bear the evils and misfortunes that might befall them.[21]

The weak point of this hermeneutical model is that the brief definition of tragedy given by Aristotle in his *Poetics* does not actually contain any reference to the moral aspects of passions and of human behaviour. Indeed, in the eighth book of *Politics* the effect of catharsis connected with music explicitly excludes any connection with education, rather referring to the sphere of amusement and relaxation.[22] Moreover, if the aim was really the 'purification' of passions, it is not clear why such pre-eminence is given to fear and pity and not to other passions such as anger, ambition, envy.

2) Catharsis as 'removal' of passions, *purgatio*, that is, a process that frees one from the passions triggered by tragedy with an ensuing sense of relief and ease. In this model, the genitive is understood as separative and the Aristotelian sentence can therefore be explained as "catharsis from such passions", with the conception of theatre as a therapeutic institution in the background. This is the medical interpretation of catharsis, whose most famous proponent – its "patron-saint",s as Halliwell has it (1986: 353) – is Jacob Bernays, who explicitly spoke of a "pathological point of view" ("ein pathologischer Gesichtspunkt", 1857: 141). As a matter of fact, in the Renaissance this path had already been followed, notably by Lorenzo Giacomini in his 1586 *Dialogo de la purgazione de la tragedia* [*Dialogue on the purgation of tragedy*]. Therefore, the analogy with medicine had been discovered long before Bernays, but, if acknowledged, that kind of interpretation was usually combined with ethical and didactic ones.[23] In the twentieth century, it was especially Wolfgang Schadewaldt and Hellmut Flashar who proposed again the hermeneutical tradition, openly referring to Bernays's work. The former

[21] Cf. Diano 1968. Diano's interpretation moves from Francesco Robortello's sixteenth-century commentary on *Poetics* (1548); cf. Diano 1960. On the stoic matrix of that exegesis, cf. Donadi 2007: 118-21.

[22] See the extract of *Politics* 8, 1341a17-24 where Aristotle explicitly contrasts *mathesis* ("learning") with catharsis and argued that the aulos should not be used in school because, among other reasons, "it is not moralizing but rather orgiastic, so that it ought to be used for occasions of the kind at which attendance has the effect of catharsis rather than instruction." (Trans. by Rackham 1932: 665, adapted); (ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ αὐλὸς ἠθικὸν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὀργιαστικόν, ὥστε πρὸς τοὺς τοιούτους αὐτῷ καιροὺς χρηστέον ἐν οἷς ἡ θεωρία κάθαρσιν μᾶλλον δύναται ἢ μάθησιν). On the conception of music in the eighth book of *Politics* and in particular on Aristotle not assigning music any function of moral education cf. Ford 2004.

[23] On the medical interpretation of catharsis before Bernays, see Ugolini 2011: 80-8.

concentrated his attention on the pair *phobos* and *eleos*, and suggested that the usual translation "fear" ("Furcht") and "pity" ("Mitleid") – which had become canonical with Lessing – should be dropped in favour of the more appropriate "terror" ("Schrecken") and "misery" ("Jammer") (Schadewaldt 1955). The Greek terms *phobos* and *eleos* would then indicate basic emotional dispositions, such as the tendency to weep and wail or to get suddenly scared. Schadewaldt maintains that, once the validity of Bernays's discovery has been recognized, we should resolutely leave aside all the Christian and moralistic implications that have often undermined the studies on the topic, and accept what to most is highly unacceptable: catharsis simply indicates a "crudely elementary" ("Roh-Elementares") procedure that occurs at a psychosomatic level, as "purge" ("Purgierung") or "evacuation" ("Fortschaffen") (ibid.: 152-3). By using this typically medical term, Aristotle simply meant to indicate the features of the specific pleasure of tragedy, without any pedagogic objectives, and without aiming at the moral improvement of the spectator (ibid.: 156). As an art theorist, Aristotle confined himself to stating this, while as a political theorist he meant to contradict the Platonic educational model by developing a refined "public hygiene" ("Staatshygiene"): entertainment acts as a medical therapy (ibid.: 162).[24]

For his part, Flashar confirmed and endorsed Schadewaldt's interpretation, showing that not only the term catharsis, but also the terms *eleos* and *phobos* – exactly in this combination – take on a specific meaning both in the poetic tradition and in the medical field (Flashar 1956). In Hippocratic terminology, as well as in Aristotle's biological writings, *eleos* and *phobos* indicate tendentially pathological physical states caused either by an excess of humidity and heat, or by a chilling and excessive dryness of the cerebral tissues. Specific physical symptoms are generally associated with them: shivers, tremors, heart palpitations, hair standing on end are associated with *phobos*, while weeping and tearful eyes are associated with *eleos*. According to the principles of the Hippocratic tradition, diseases proceed from humoral dysfunction in the body, and the doctor's therapeutic action consists in provoking a *krisis*, leading up to the expulsion of the harmful humours. This is exactly the type of process that Aristotle imagined should take place during the performance of a tragedy (elimination of excessive cold and humidity from the body).[25]

[24] Another eminent German scholar, Max Pohlenz (1956), responded to Schadewaldt's essay by challenging not so much the physiological explanation of tragic catharsis, but rather its supposed purely conclusive and instantaneous effect. He underlined, instead, the nature of the constant exercise guaranteed by the theatrical experience, a perspective irreconcilable with a purely hedonistic exegesis of the tragic effect. Cf. Condello 2009.

[25] A physiological case that can be used as an example to explain the mechanism of catharsis is the one mentioned in *Problemata* 4, 30 (a work of the Peripatetic school), where a

The hermeneutical perspective moving from Bernays is based on what Aristotle states in the eighth book of *Politics*, as well as on the assumption that the tragic and the musical catharsis coincide. In addition, this explanation leads us to understand Aristotle's *Poetics* as his attempt to respond to Plato's proposal to exclude tragic performances from the public educational programmes on account of their capacity to satisfy the most elementary needs of the spectator, thus feeding the irrational part of their soul. Thus, Aristotle would have formulated the theory of tragic catharsis in order, on the one hand, to confirm that the specific pleasure of tragedy lies in arousing fear and pity, and, on the other, to prove that during the performance the spectators free themselves from such passions. Consequently, the tragedy not only does not represent a destabilizing threat to the functioning of the state, but, on the contrary, provides healthy and harmless entertainment.

In support of this interpretation, we can refer to the common experience whereby through weeping and wailing we reach both physical and mental appeasement, a form of emotional regulation that is well-known and practiced in the funeral rites of many cultures (cf. Seidensticker 2009: 199). Many scholars, however, deem it unacceptable that Aristotle could have conceived the unburdening of emotions as the aim of the masterpieces of Greek tragedy. Here also a classicistic legacy is likely to come into play: if the medical interpretation were accepted, and catharsis were therefore conceived as "a mechanism of visceral emptying of the soul from toxins", it would follow that "a very large chunk of metaphysical lucubrations on poetry would disappear and leave in despair a whole series of thinkers or would-be thinkers who could no longer find the consolation of mirroring themselves in Aristotle".[26] Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that – apart from catharsis – *Poetics* also refers to other aims of tragedy, such as the philosophical quality of poetry (ch. 9), or the pleasure of learning, which is connected with tragic mimesis (ch. 4). Aristotle may have intended to focus, in the definition, on the specific aim of tragedy only (that is, catharsis), without mentioning the further aims common to the other literary genres.

reason is given for the greater sexual propensity of individuals with a melancholic disposition. The cause lies in the presence of excess air in the body, which the individual tends to get rid of (ἀποκαθαίρεται) by expelling sperm (tantamount to releasing air). This mechanism is connected to a feeling of relief (κουφίζονται). The similarity between this example and tragic catharsis is recalled, among others, by Dirlmeier (1949: 91) and Gentili (1994: 130).

[26] "[Se si dovesse infatti concordare che la *katharsis* aristotelica non è altro che] un meccanismo di svuotamento viscerale dell'anima da alcune tossine . . . una fetta grossissima di elucubrazioni metafisiche sulla poesia scomparirebbe e lascerebbe in crisi una serie di pensatori o di aspiranti tali che non troverebbero più la consolazione di potersi rispecchiare in Aristotele" (Lanza 2002: 62).

3) Catharsis as *clarificatio*, that is, intellectual clarification, explanation of tragic events: during the performance, the spectator comes to understand the general and existential meaning of the plot, moving from the specific (the cases of pity and fear on the stage) to the universal (the general meaning of the cases performed on the stage). The specific pleasure of tragedy would therefore be cognitive. The best known supporters of this interpretation are Samuel Henry Butcher (1895) and, above all, Leon Golden (1962; 1976), to whom we owe the happy concise formula of catharsis as "intellectual clarification". Clearly, this perspective gives great importance to the cognitive state of mimetic arts, as emerges from the fourth chapter of *Poetics*. By and large, those who follow this interpretation deny any identity between the musical catharsis of the eighth chapter of *Politics* and that of *Poetics*.

Following the same interpretative path, other scholars have tried to combine the cognitive dimension with the emotional one. One example is Pier Luigi Donini, who powerfully summarizes what, according to him, should have been the effect of tragedy on the spectator:

> [T]hanks to the skilful reconstruction and the uninterrupted consequentiality of the narration, he [the spectator] will recognize the causes that explain the story being told and take it to a certain end, he will understand the final cause of the action, the efficient cause, the factor that intervenes at the crucial time of the story to bring about either misfortune or salvation for the character; and this understanding will produce a pleasure in him, a pleasing emotion that can rightly be said – as in chapter 9 – to "proceed from pity and fear", because pity and fear are, in turn, excited by the well-woven facts presented by the poet, those same facts that, once understood in their causal determination, are also at the basis of the cognitive pleasure. (Donini 2008: CIV-V)[27]

[27] "[G]razie alla sapiente ricostruzione e alla consequenzialità ininterrotta del racconto riconoscerà (*scil.* lo spettatore) le cause che spiegano la vicenda narrata e la conducono a quel certo fine, capirà quale sia la causa finale dell'azione, quale quella efficiente, quale il fattore che nel momento decisivo della vicenda interviene a produrre la svolta verso il disastro o la salvezza del personaggio; e questa comprensione produrrà in lui un piacere, un'emozione piacevole che può giustamente essere detta – come appunto dice il cap. IX – 'provenire da pietà e paura', perché pietà e paura sono a loro volta suscitate dai fatti bene intrecciati dal poeta, gli stessi fatti che, una volta compresi nella loro determinazione casuale, sono all'origine anche del piacere cognitivo". Donini's interpretation, based on the meaning of the participle περαίνουσα ('leading to achievement', 'crowning'), tends to diminish the import of catharsis as the principal effect of tragedy. Tragic performances, then, would be a 'crowning' of the *paideia* process, reserved to adults with a well-educated character who have already purified their passions through suitable musical education (as prescribed in *Politics* 8). These individuals learn to substitute pity and fear with "the cognitive pleasure of a lesson of practical wisdom on the meaning of life, on why things in life must necessarily, or at least plausibly, go in a certain way, given a certain aim of the actions and a certain character of the agents" [Il piacere cognitivo di

4) Catharsis as intellectual *purificatio*, that is, as purification of tragic events by showing that the hero is innocent and his actions are not repugnant. This thesis – which can be defined as 'structural' or 'dramatic' – has been argued mainly by Gerald F. Else in his commentary on *Poetics* (1957: 225-31). Therefore, catharsis would not indicate an effect of the tragedy on the spectators, but the resolution of the dramatic tension within the story performed. In other words, the playwright stages events and situations that arouse pity and fear for the protagonist and, during the action, resolves the greatest part of the conflicts by steering the story towards a foreseeable logical conclusion. Else defines catharsis as "a process operated by the poet through his 'structure of events'" (ibid.: 230). *Pathemata*, then, are not understood as 'passions' or 'emotions' at all, but rather as 'incidents' or 'actions'. From this perspective, catharsis is a process totally intrinsic to dramatic action and refers to the way in which the play illuminates the tragic qualities of the events, and through such cognitive 'clarification' produces a type of pleasure which is appropriate to the tragic genre, a pleasure that consists in subordinating the emotional excitement to the intellectual understanding.[28]

The interpretations illustrated under points 3 and 4 diverge from those under points 1 and 2 first and foremost for the different semantic value given to the term *pathemata*, understood as 'sufferings', that is, the 'painful events' performed on the stage, and not 'passions' or 'emotions', as generally intended by the supporters of the moral or medical catharsis. However, this meaning appears considerably problematic, not to say debatable, and it seems likewise arduous to understand catharsis as equivalent to the cognitive experience achieved through mimesis.

From the ancient times, down to Renaissance treatises and, finally, modern interpretations, the hermeneutical tradition has built many exegetical models around Aristotle's text. They are numerous and often in contrast with one another and none of them is wholly satisfactory and devoid of internal contradictions. The nine contributions collected in this issue of *Skené.*

una lezione di saggezza pratica sul senso della vita, sul perché le cose nella vita vadano in un certo modo necessariamente, o quanto meno plausibilmente, dati un certo fine delle azioni e un certo carattere degli agenti." (Donini 2008: CIX)]. Cf. also Donini 1998.

[28] For a recent revival of this thesis, cf. Loscalzo 2003. Charles Segal's interpretation is possibly attuned to this position, in that he considers catharsis from a ritual and performative perspective and sees it as a solution to the emotional conflicts that emerge during the performance through rituals which are either alluded or carried out on the stage (Segal 1996). For her part, Elizabeth S. Belfiore has purported the identification of catharsis with the specific pleasure deriving from tragic poetry by interpreting the cathartic process as an allopathic phenomenon: the catharsis of different passions, such as irascibility, insolence, ruthlessness, takes place through fear and pity (1992: 337ff.).

JTDS do not intend to compare these models, nor to introduce new ones. The aim is to investigate some specific themes that are especially related to the way in which the concept of "catharsis" has continued to be productive over time as regards both the hermeneutics of the Aristotelian text and the dramaturgical theory and praxis that through time and in different places have interrogated the meaning of that category and raised questions on how to adapt it (or reject it).

The first three articles are devoted to the ancient theory of tragic catharsis and examine specific themes and aspects that have not received scant attention in traditional studies. Original and stimulating is Andrew Ford's attempt, in "Catharsis, Music and the Mysteries in Aristotle", to relate Aristotle's theory of tragedy to one of the meanings that catharsis could have had in the ancient Greek culture, that is, the ecstatic release provided by certain mystery cults (the so-called 'telestic catharsis' or 'ritual catharsis'). No doubt, there are significant analogies between theatrical praxis and the mystery initiations that intended to alleviate the fear and anxiety of the initiated (Dionysian and Corybantic rituals), and, indeed, Aristotle himself mentions it in the eighth book of *Politics*. Besides, the parallelism between 'dramatic catharsis' and 'telestic catharsis' perfectly connects with Aristotle's strictly anthropological approach to the poetic arts.

Matt Cohn takes up again and injects new ideas into a subject that has been discussed for centuries, that is, the possibility to identify the features typical of a 'comic' catharsis symmetrical to the 'tragic' one. Relying on previous studies by Richard Janko and Stephen Halliwell, in his essay "Comedy, Catharsis, and the Emotions: From Aristotle to Proclus", the author suggests that for Aristotle comedy should elicit not only pleasurable emotions, such as the emotion associated with laughter, but also certain painful ones. In Aristotle's philosophical theory, such emotions have to do with pity and fear, and the cathartic process occurring in comedy is parallel, and complementary, to that of tragedy. The late ancient sources available to us (*Tractatus Coislinianus*, Iamblichus and Proclus), although tending to distort Aristotle's conception, do agree that comedy produced real emotions, and that they too needed a catharsis.

The 'ancient' section closes with an article by Elisabetta Matelli, "Theophrastus on Catharsis and the Need for Release from the Evils Due to Emotions", which focuses on the way Aristotle's theory on catharsis was received by his philosophical school and, more precisely, by his successor Theophrastus. The author presents a detailed outline of the uses and meanings that the term catharsis takes in Theophrastus's writings by underlining the analogies and specificities that can be found in different fields: medical, botanical, religious and musical. If, on the one hand, Theophrastus's originality and autonomy from his Master's conceptions are self-evident, on the other,

the locution ἀπόλυσις τῶν κακῶν, "release from evils", emerges as central: it was adopted mainly to define the nature and the ultimate aim of music, although it seems to substitute the term 'catharsis' in the ethical contexts where Theophrastus elaborates his original take on this theme.

On the way from antiquity to modernity, a moment of crucial importance for the centrality of the notion of catharsis is represented by the Renaissance. The sixteenth-century treatises focusing on the poetic art (translations, paraphrases, commentaries of Aristotle's *Poetics*, but also original and creative elaborations of it) absorbed the category of catharsis in different ways and with different approaches, overlapping levels (dramaturgical, ethical, musical, psychological) and aims (educational, purgative, hedonistic, moralistic, etc.). In "Profit, Pleasure, and Purgation – Catharsis in Aristotle, Paolo Beni and Italian Late Renaissance Poetics", Brigitte Kappl concentrates her analysis on Paolo Beni's *Commentari* on Aristotle's *Poetics* (published in Padua in 1613), the last great Italian commentary that concludes the series begun with Robortello in 1548. Within an instrumental conception of poetry, which is endowed with an educational function prevailing over hedonistic uses, Beni sees a form of moral 'utilitas' in catharsis. However, the most interesting aspect is Beni's exhaustive discussion of his predecessors' ideas about the ultimate aim of poetry (from Trissino to Robortello, Piccolomini, Minturno, and Giacomini). Those pages allow us to understand and appreciate the variety and wealth of the Renaissance hermeneutical tradition in all its nuances. This question, in any case, does not involve Italian culture only. Although Aristotle's *Poetics* was not published in England until 1623, there are traces of 'cathartic thinking' in the English early modern literary theory. This issue is addressed by Thomas Rist in his article "Miraculous Organ: Shakespeare and 'Catharsis'", in which he focuses his attention on Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (written in 1583), which is unquestionably the most significant expression of that theory at the time. Rist shows that Sidney's *Defence* is not a sufficient cause of Shakespearean cathartic thinking, but that there are other references to purgation in the English literary, medical and Christian traditions, that have offered the 'purgative basis' of Shakespeare's theatre.

Proceeding diachronically, the issue of catharsis becomes crucial in the German literary culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the merging of two fundamental hermeneutical models: on the one hand, the model elaborated by Lessing in *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767-69), based on a moralistic-edifying conception (tragedy makes the spectator ethically better), and, on the other, the one put forward by Goethe in his "Nachlese zu Aristoteles' *Poetik*", according to which the effect of tragic poetry begins and ends in the aesthetic dimension. In "'Catharsis'. From Lessing's Moral Purification to Goethe's Purity of Form", Sotera Fornaro re-examines these three authors' positions by retracing their theoretical assumptions, specific

characteristics, and implications with reference to their own dramatic production. Furthermore, as suggested by Goethe's and Schiller's epistolary exchanges, a primary function in the enhancement of the tragic effect is played by the poetic form. Drawing on Aristotle, the two masters of Weimarian classicism aim at redefining the value of the rules governing the poetic creation: these norms ignore both topic and historical time and refer to a criterion of absolute form. Only a form which is absolute, timeless, universal and detached from reality, can guarantee aesthetic perfection.

A significant caesura in the history of the studies on tragic catharsis is marked by the publication in 1857 of Jacob Bernays's study *Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie*, in which, in a new philologically-founded form, he proposed the idea that catharsis is a phenomenon to be linked mainly to the medical field and that the appropriate way to understand the concept is "*Entladung*" ("discharge", "unloading"). Focused on Bernays's hermeneutical model is Martin Vöhler's "The Pathological Interpretation of Catharsis", where the author re-examines the main theoretical steps of the question by studying the way Bernays elaborated his theory based on ancient and late ancient sources, but also through a continuous dialogue with the hermeneutical models closer to him in time (Lessing and Goethe).

Friedrich Nietzsche, in his own way a revolutionary interpreter of Greek tragedy, formulated a theory of the tragic in which the "Dionysian" effect of the ecstatic dissolution seems to replace the traditional effect of purification and sublimation of emotions. Nietzsche rarely uses the term catharsis in his *Birth of Tragedy* or elsewhere, and when he does, he is rather dismissive, seemingly rejecting out of hand the Aristotelian-inspired theory of tragic catharsis in its ancient or modern forms. In "Nietzsche, Tragedy, and the Theory of Catharsis", James I. Porter investigates the notion of catharsis in Nietzsche, showing that the catharsis theory – contrary to what is usually thought – has a central role both in the *Birth of Tragedy* and in other later writings on tragedy. In particular, in Nietzsche's view catharsis acts in the form of pity or co-suffering ("Mitleid"), identificatory fear and horror ("Furcht", "Schrecken"), and redemptive discharge ("Erlösung", "Entladung"). Thus, the way Nietzsche understands catharsis proves to be much closer to classicism's reading of tragedy than one might suppose.

This issue of *Skenè. JTDS* closes with Daniela Schönle's article, entitled "Theatrical Catharsis and its Therapeutic Effect. Catharsis in Vienna at the Turn of the Century". It concentrates on the so-called "discourse on catharsis", which developed in Vienna between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Schönle underlines that the debate was based on the reception of Bernays's 'pathological' interpretation of catharsis and on the activism of the Hellenist Theodor Gomperz, who not only spread the posi-

tion of Bernays amongst philologists, but was also able to stir interest in the topic in non-academic settings. The influence of those conceptions can be perceived in many fields such as, for instance, the nascent psychoanalysis, when, not coincidentally, Sigmund Freud and Josef Bauer called their new therapy to treat hysteria "cathartic method". As regards the theatre, Schönle focuses upon Arthur Schnitzler's one-acter *Paracelsus* and on Hermann Barr's theoretical contributions (*Dialog vom Tragischen*) in which the theatrical performance is conceived of as a therapeutic form precisely because of its "cathartic" effects.

English translation by Giovanna Stornati

Abbreviations

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Catharsis, Music, and the Mysteries in Aristotle

Abstract

Of the many meanings of catharsis available to Aristotle, two have predominated in scholarly attempts to say what the word means in the *Poetics* when "the catharsis of pity and fear produced by pity and fear" is defined as the aim of tragedy. The past thirty years have seen a concerted effort among scholars of the *Poetics* to overturn Jacob Bernays's appeal to Aristotle's use of catharsis in his *Politics* (1342a10-11) with its medical meaning of 'purgation' as the basis of his theory that tragedy provides a harmless 'outlet' for emotions; against this, Plato's notion of intellectual 'purification' as a kind of catharsis has been invoked to argue that the workings of the tragic art were fundamentally cognitive and resulted in the ethical 'clarification' of the audience. The present essay proposes that Aristotle's theory of tragedy was deeply informed by another meaning of the word in his day: the ecstatic release provided by certain mystery cults. After underlining Aristotle's familiarity with such rituals, it draws on Walter Burkert's *Ancient Mystery Cults* to bring out suggestive commonalities between mystery initiations and theatre. The 'telestic' 'initiations' (τέλη) aimed not at the afterlife but at alleviating fears and anxieties of initiates; both their secret nocturnal ceremonies and public choral processions were dramatic and highly theatrical, with an essential role played by ecstasy-inducing 'sacred tunes'. In order to discern the relevance of telestic catharsis to the Poetics it is necessary not to focus solely on the definition of tragedy in chapter 6 but to appreciate the anthropological approach to the poetic arts in chapter 4. This context supplies, if not a fully worked out model of tragic catharsis, a broad-based explanation of how human beings might respond to imitations of terrible things with pleasure and profit.

Olympias of Macedon, daughter of a king of Epirus and wife of Philip II, acquired among the ancients a reputation for religious fanaticism. According to Plutarch (*Alexander*, ch. 2), she stood out even among the women of northern Greece – whence the Bacchae had descended to wreak chaos on Thebes, and where Maenads had dismembered blameless Orpheus – in their addiction to archaic rituals connected with Orpheus and Dionysus (ἔνοχοι τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς οὖσαι καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμοῖς ἐκ τοῦ πάνυ παλαιοῦ, ibid. 2.7). Olympias's attachment to rites that brought on ecstatic frenzy bordered on barbarism and even included furnishing tame snakes to her fellow celebrants (ἡ δ' Ὀλυμπιὰς μᾶλλον ἑτέρων ζηλώσασα τὰς κατοχάς, καὶ τοὺς ἐνθουσιασμοὺς ἐξάγουσα βαρβαρικώτερον, ὄφεις

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μεγάλους χειροήθεις ἐφείλκετο τοῖς θιάσοις κτλ., ibid. 2.9).[1] Evidently an adept snake-handler, she would join in the wild dancing at those ceremonies with snakes entwined about her body and would provide her co-celebrants with the same to brandish in their processions. Plutarch notes that the spectacle was terrifying to men and speculates that this may be the reason that Philip stopped sleeping with her.

Stories involving the parentage of great kings are bound to be politicized and then distorted, but I am less interested in the prejudices of Plutarch's sources than in how Olympias's conduct may have struck her son when he was in his early teens. If the young Alexander were already contemplating how to administer the empire he would soon win, he might have turned to his tutor to ask what if anything should be done about such alarming religious practices. After all, Euripides had suggested in his *Bacchae*, a play composed for the Macedonian court, that an autocrat who tried to repress the more barbarous aspects of Dionysiac cult was bound to meet disaster, and not least when its devotees were to be found in the royal palace itself. But Alexander's more sober tutor was likely to have replied along the following lines: "A susceptibility to feelings of religious ecstasy (ἐνθουσιασμός) is something that all people are capable of feeling, just as everyone is disposed to feel pity or fear, though people differ in the degree of their susceptibility; now Olympias is obviously one of those people who are, so to speak, in the grip of such states (κατοκώχιμοί), and for them the mystery rituals with their frenzy-inducing sacred tunes (ἱερὰ μέλη) produce a catharsis that puts them back on their feet again after violently arousing their emotions (ἐξοργιάζουσι), almost as if they had gone to a doctor and been treated for an ailment; and along with the relief comes a certain pleasure. Everyone can feel a kind of *katharsis* (τινα κάθαρσιν) at that kind of music, along with a pleasant feeling of relief, to one degree or another; after all, music has the power even to charm snakes. But the resultant pleasure is harmless, a feeling of relief, and is nothing for a prince to trouble himself over very much. Still, if one desires a more thorough account of these matters, one might consult my works on poetry".

Alexander's tutor, of course, was Aristotle, and the response above is, I submit, a fair pastiche of a famous passage from the seventh chapter of *Politics* book 8 in which the philosopher discusses which kinds of tunes and musical modes (*harmoniai*) are to be permitted in a well organized state (8.7, 1341b32-1342a18):

> ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν διαίρεσιν ἀποδεχόμεθα τῶν μελῶν ὡς διαιροῦσί τινες τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, τὰ μὲν ἠθικὰ τὰ δὲ πρακτικὰ τὰ δ' ἐνθουσιαστικὰ τιθέντες, καὶ

[1] My translation adapts Perrin's Loeb 1919: 228-9. On Olympias, see Carney 2006: ch. 6, esp. 93-4. All translations from Greek are mine unless otherwise stated.

τῶν ἁρμονιῶν τὴν φύσιν <τὴν> πρὸς ἕκαστα τούτων οἰκείαν, ἄλλην πρὸς ἄλλο μέλος, τιθέασι, φαμὲν δ' οὐ μιᾶς ἕνεκεν ὠφελείας τῇ μουσικῇ χρῆσθαι δεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ πλειόνων χάριν (καὶ γὰρ παιδείας ἕνεκεν καὶ καθάρσεως – τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν, νῦν μὲν ἁπλῶς, πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον – τρίτον δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν πρὸς ἄνεσίν τε καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῆς συντονίας ἀνάπαυσιν), φανερὸν ὅτι χρηστέον μὲν πάσαις ταῖς ἁρμονίαις, οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον πάσαις χρηστέον, ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τὴν παιδείαν ταῖς ἠθικωτάταις, πρὸς δὲ ἀκρόασιν ἑτέρων χειρουργούντων καὶ ταῖς πρακτικαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐνθουσιαστικαῖς. ὃ γὰρ περὶ ἐνίας συμβαίνει πάθος ψυχὰς ἰσχυρῶς, τοῦτο ἐν πάσαις ὑπάρχει, τῷ δὲ ἧττον διαφέρει καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον, οἷον ἔλεος καὶ φόβος, ἔτι δ' ἐνθουσιασμός· καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς κινήσεως κατοκώχιμοί τινές εἰσιν, ἐκ τῶν δ'ἱερῶν μελῶν ὁρῶμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθισταμένους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως· ταὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικοὺς καὶ τοὺς ὅλως παθητικούς, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους καθ' ὅσον ἐπιβάλλει τῶν τοιούτων ἑκάστῳ, καὶ πᾶσι γίγνεσθαί τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαιμεθ' ἡδονῆς.

[Since we accept the classification of tunes made by some philosophers into the ones expressive of ethical states, the action-oriented, and those arousing religious passion (ἐνθουσιαστικά), with the various *harmoniai* assigned to them according to their natural kinship with each, and since we say that music ought to be employed not for the sake of a single benefit but for several (for it serves the purpose of education and of catharsis – the term catharsis we use for the present without elaboration but will discuss it more fully in the work on poetry – and, thirdly, for occasions of leisure to provide relief and release of stress), it is therefore clear that we should make use of all the *harmoniai*, but not all in the same way; the most ethical ones should be used for education, and the active and passion-arousing kinds for listening to when others are performing. For any experience that occurs violently in some souls is found in all, though with different degrees of intensity—for example pity and fear, and also religious ecstasy (ἐνθουσιασμός); for some persons are especially susceptible (κατοκώχιμοί) to this form of emotion, and under the influence of the sacred tunes (ἱερὰ μέλη) we see these people, when they use tunes that thoroughly arouse the soul's emotions (ἐξοργιάζουσι), being put back on their feet as if they had received medical treatment and been purged (ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως); the same experience then must come also to the compassionate and the timid and to other emotional people in general in such degree as befalls each individual of these classes, and all must undergo a kind of *katharsis* (τινα κάθαρσιν) and a pleasant feeling of relief. (Trans. by H. Rackham, adapted)]

The passage is famous because its discussion of catharsis is the best gloss we have from Aristotle himself on the meaning of that word in the *Poetics*, where it caps the definition of tragedy in chapter 6 (1449b22-7):

περὶ δὲ τραγῳδίας λέγωμεν ἀναλαβόντες αὐτῆς ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων τὸν

> γινόμενον ὅρον τῆς οὐσίας. ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.
>
> [Let us speak about tragedy, taking up from what we have said a definition of its nature: tragedy, then, will be an imitation[2] of an action that is serious and complete, having some magnitude, with seasoned language employed separately in its separate parts, with the performers acting and not narrating, bringing to completion through pity and fear the catharsis of such emotions.]

Although Aristotle promised in the *Politics* a "fuller discussion of catharsis in the work on poetry",[3] this brief mention is, apart from a passing reference to Orestes' ritual 'purification' (1455b15), the only occurrence of the term in the *Poetics*. And yet an understanding of the concept it names seems to be crucial to understanding the *Poetics* since its use here implies that the "catharsis of pity and fear" is something of a final cause for Aristotle, naming the function that tragedy, and by extension poetry, serves in human life. Accordingly, what the catharsis in *Poetics* chapter 6 means has been a source of contention since the Renaissance, with some holding that tragedy 'purges' us of harmful and unwanted emotions and others arguing it 'purifies' and even 'clarifies' our moral sentiments; in this debate much has turned on the question of how to apply the evidence from *Politics* or even whether to apply it at all.

In the passage quoted from *Politics* 8.7, Aristotle is concerned to argue that those kinds of rhythms, modes and melodies that were classified by the musical experts of his day as arousing religious frenzy (ἐνθουσιαστικά, 1341b34) have their uses in civic life, but such music is not appropriate everywhere. For example, he had argued earlier in the book that in school such music, along with the aulos on which it was played, actually interfered with learning; he says that the aulos, a reed instrument the Greeks found passionately arousing, produces "a passionate rather than ethical experience in its auditors and so should be used on those occasions that call for catharsis rather than learning",[4] It would seem, then, that the business of enthusiastic

[2] I use the term 'imitate' and its congeners merely as a convenience to designate the family of words related to μιμεῖσθαι. This is not to deny the obvious fact that in Aristotle's conception the 'mimetic arts' are arts of *representing* people in action, not 'copying' them.

[3] *Pol.* 1341b38-40: τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν . . . ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον.

[4] Ibid. 1341a17-24: ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ αὐλὸς ἠθικὸν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὀργιαστικόν, ὥστε πρὸς τοὺς τοιούτους αὐτῷ καιροὺς χρηστέον ἐν οἷς ἡ θεωρία κάθαρσιν μᾶλλον δύναται ἢ μάθησιν. Excellent commentary on the passages from the *Politics* is provided by Kraut 1997: 192-3, 202, 208-12.

music was a lot more like rock and roll than like Bach.[5] Hence it is worrying to some that following our passage from 8.7 the preeminent example Aristotle gives of an occasion that calls for "catharsis rather than learning" (κάθαρσιν μᾶλλον . . . ἢ μάθησιν) is the theatre: in the sequel to the passage quoted Aristotle explains that where enthusiastic music on the aulos will provide a kind of relief (πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν) for the spectators (8.7, 1342a16-22):

> διὸ ταῖς μὲν τοιαύταις ἁρμονίαις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις μέλεσιν ἐατέον <χρῆσθαι> τοὺς τὴν θεατρικὴν μουσικὴν μεταχειριζομένους ἀγωνιστάς· ὁ θεατὴς διττός, ὁ μὲν ἐλεύθερος καὶ πεπαιδευμένος, ὁ δὲ φορτικὸς ἐκ βαναύσων καὶ θητῶν καὶ ἄλλων τοιούτων συγκείμενος, ἀποδοτέον ἀγῶνας καὶ θεωρίας καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν.
>
> [Therefore *harmoniai* and tunes of this (kathartic, 'enthusiastic') kind must be allowed for those who deal with music as professionals in the theatre; for the audience is double, partly free and educated and partly vulgar, composed of craftsmen and labourers and the like; performances and spectacles should be provided for the latter sort to give them relaxation.]

As Aristotle, with an unappealing jaundiced eye, sees it: working for others and trading with all comers have a distorting effect on soul that warps its evaluation of what is pleasurable; nonetheless, he thinks labourers deserve in their leisure a music that "produces the pleasure that is naturally suited to their natures".[6]

The discussion of ritual catharsis in the context of theatre in *Politics* 8 has engendered a controversy especially since Jacob Bernays (1857) used it to argue for an 'outlet' theory of catharsis, taking advantage of Aristotle's description of the effects of musical catharsis as "like receiving medical treatment and being purged" (1342a10-11: ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως). Bernays' model of purging excessive feelings has been criticized for its un-Aristotelian, negative view of the emotions and for its un-Aristotelian reliance on a homeopathic model of medicine; but to my mind his essay remains nonetheless a powerful rebuttal to more recent attempts to attribute to Aristotle, as many scholars since have been wont to do, a view of tragic catharsis as an essentially cognitive process in which the spectator experiences an ethical 'clarification', to borrow, as this view does, a metaphorical use of *catharsis* in Plato.[7] In short, there is a return to

[5] Schadewaldt (1955: 153) takes the passage quoted from *Pol.* in the previous note as a decisive refutation of the idea that the experience of tragedy refines our moral sentiments; so too Ford 2004: 325-8. For modern attempts to resist this conclusion see Lord 1982: 112, Janko 1987: 182-3.

[6] Arist. *Pol.* 1342a25-6: ποιεῖ δὲ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἑκάστοις τὸ κατὰ φύσιν οἰκεῖον.

[7] E.g. *Soph.* 227c. 230c; *Phaedo* 67c, 69b; cf. Golden 1992 and Nussbaum 1992: 270, 273.

a Lessing-like view that the final cause of poetry for Aristotle is a moral kind of *catharsis* in the sense of 'purification'.[8] This return would seem to be ruled out if we understand the catharsis provided by tragedy in the *Poetics* in terms of the cathartic, enthusiastic music of religious ritual described in the *Politics*, for in a suggestive fragment Aristotle is said to have held that the purpose of undergoing mystic initiation is not to learn anything (μαθεῖν) but to experience something (παθεῖν), to undergo a change of mental state (διατεθῆναι) that enables one to cope with life.[9] Rather than going into the *Politics* again in detail (see Ford 2004), I wish to see what difference it makes if we reflect that of the many meanings that catharsis could bear – simple cleaning, ritual cleansing, medical purgation[10] – ritual catharsis through music was an experience with which the Stargirite was quite familiar. I propose that Bernays was right to reject Lessing's view of tragedy as 'a moral house of correction', but we need not take on the physiological reductiveness of Bernays' model (Destrée 2011: 49-51); after all, medical purgation is only an analogy in *Politics* 8 (ὥσπερ). But putting Aristotle's account of ritual catharsis beside the *Poetics* highlights suggestive commonalities between mystery initiations and theatre, and should at the least make us hesitate before projecting onto Aristotle an enlightened disdain for such barely civilized religious impulses. Finally, I will address the more important objections that have been raised against bringing the ritual perspective of the *Politics* into the *Poetics*.

The mystical ceremonies Plutarch describes were focused on Dionysus and his votary Orpheus, while Aristotle's mention of the 'sacred tunes' of Olympus points rather to the rites of the Great Mother by her attendants, the Corybants.[11] But both Bacchants and Corybants belong to the same sub-group of sacramental mystery rites called 'telestic'; these were 'initiations' (τέλη) in which 'ministrants' (τελοῦντες) invoked divine powers to serve the needs of 'initiands' (τελούμενοι) (Linforth 1946; Dodds 1957: 77-80). We get a fuller picture of such rites as they were conducted in Athens at about the same time from Demosthenes's *On the Crown* of 330 BC.

Aeschines, Demosthenes' opponent, had a mother something like Olympias and *On the Crown* mocks him for helping her with her initiations.

[8] Recent interpretations with bibliography of catharsis as leading to moral improvement: Halliwell 2011: 236-60; 2002: 172-6. Dissenting voices include Lear (1988) and Ferrari (1999).

[9] Arist. fr. 15, Rose: καθάπερ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιοῖ τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους ἐπιτηδείους. Cf. Burkert 1987: 69, 89.

[10] For recent studies of the ritual and medical meanings of catharsis in Aristotle's day, see Hoessly (2001) and Vöhler and Seidensticker (2007).

[11] *Pol.* 8.7, 1342a8-9: ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν; cf. 1340a8-14 on the aulos tunes of Olympus, which were acknowledged to make listeners ecstatic.

According to Demosthenes, Aeschines read a sacred book while she performed the ritual and helped the celebrants with their preparations, which involved ritual cleansing (καθαίρων), libations, dressing in fawn-skins and carrying sacred paraphernalia. As for the actual ceremonies involved, Walter Burkert has offered a speculative reconstruction:[12] the nocturnal rite was private and began with the initiands seated by a mixing bowl and smeared with mud; out of the dark an initiatory priestess appeared as if a terrifying demon; once cleansed, the initiates rose to their feet and exclaimed "I escaped from evil, I have found the better" (ἔφυγον κακόν, εὗρον ἄμεινον), to which by-standing participants like Aeschines added the ritual high piercing cry (*ololyge*) as though greeting the epiphany of a divine being. The sacred drama was followed on the next day by a public one as the group of celebrants formed a sacred band (*thiasos*) and paraded through the streets carrying their sacred objects; garlanded and brandishing snakes above their heads, they cried out mystical sacred names, *Euoi* and *Saboi*; their dancing and their triumphant rhythmic cries proclaimed that "terror ha[d] become manageable for the initiate" (Burkert 1987: 97).

Both the fearful ceremonies of the night before and the public choral performance on the following day are highly theatrical, with a close "interdependence of performers and onlookers" in both cases (ibid.: 113). And accompanying it all was a special kind of music designed to induce the state of *enthusiasmos* in initiates: the 'sacred tunes' attributed to the mythical composer Olympus of Phrygia were played on the arousing Phrygian aulos to an insistent rhythm provided by drums, tambourines, and cymbals; the combination of music, singing, shouting, and dance brought the initiands into a state in which they felt themselves to be possessed. At the end of it all, the initiates had a feeling of "calm and tranquillity and their minds were at peace" (Linforth 1946: 156). This was a life-changing experience for those being initiated as well as a stirring (and apparently alarming) one to onlookers. It remains to ask, however, how far Aristotle thought the psychological experience in initiatory ritual was comparable to the catharsis of pity and fear in the theatre of Dionysus. We begin with describing the effects attributed to telestic rites.

Scholars of Greek religion place the rituals with which we have been concerned in a special class of rites whose function was not solely to honour gods but to invoke their powers to secure benefits meeting specific needs of the 'initiands' (τελούμενοι) (Linforth 1946: 155; Burkert 1987: 18-19). In contrast to, for example, the Eleusinian mysteries which prepared initiates for the afterlife, the *teletai* associated with Dionysus and the great Mother

[12] Burkert 1987: 96-7, combining *On the Crown* 18.259-60 with *False Embassy* 19.199, 249, 281.

offered practical benefits in this life: health, wealth, and good fortune were promised, and in addition the initiatory ceremony itself provided, as Aristotle intimates, a kind of therapeutic relief from some undefined psychic distress. Indeed Burkert (1987: 97, 113) speaks of these mysteries as inducing a "psychic transformation" and "a veritable change of consciousness" in the participants.[13] As evidence for the psychology underlying Aristotle's musical catharsis Burkert (ibid.: 113) cites a text on music by the late author Aristides Quintilianus:[14]

> διὸ καὶ τὰς βακχικὰς τελετὰς καὶ ὅσαι ταύταις παραπλήσιοι λόγου τινὸς ἔχεσθαί φασιν, ὅπως ἂν ἡ τῶν ἀμαθεστέρων πτοίησις διὰ βίον ἢ τύχην ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν ταύταις μελῳδιῶν τε καὶ ὀρχήσεων ἅμα παιδιαῖς ἐκκαθαίρηται.
>
> [Accordingly they say that there is a certain logic to Bacchic and similar rites whereby the feelings of anxiety (πτοίησις) felt by less educated people, caused by their way of life or some misfortune, are cleared away (ἐκκαθαίρηται) through the melodies and dances of the ritual in a joyful and playful way.]

Aristides supports Aristotle's recommendation in *Politics* to use 'enthusiastic' music in the theatre as a way of giving relief to the lower sorts of spectators; but the case of Olympias shows that craftsmen and non-citizen labourers were not the only clients for initiatory experts (οἱ τελοῦντες). Plato can add to the picture, for, as I.M. Linforth (1946: 154-7) showed, the Corybantic rites were familiar to Plato and his readers. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates praises those forms of madness whose source is not pathological but divine. The forms of "divine madness" include poetic inspiration, divine prophecy and the madness which cures "diseases and the greatest sufferings in certain families, on account of some ancient cause of wrath".[15] When Plato specifies that these sufferings tend to run in certain families that incurred divine wrath in the distant past, we hear I think the explanations purveyed by the itinerant priests, the *argutai* and *manteis*, who sought wealthy patrons in old Athenian families. In contemporary terms we would say that a susceptibility to anxiety and nervous disorders that can be cured by rites of initiation appears to be a genetic disposition running in certain families for whom a form of psychotherapy can alleviate the effects of trauma buried in the past.

[13] Bukert compares (1987: 97) Plato's description in *Republic* 560d-e of how an oligarchic personality can be converted to a democratic one as a kind of mystical process: an emptying of the soul and a purification (κενώσαντες καὶ καθήραντες) attended by a jubilant chorus crowned with wreaths. On the fifth-century background to the tragic emotions in Plato and Aristotle, see Cerri 2007: 78-95.

[14] Aristides Quintilianus, 3.25.14-19; see Barker 1989: 531. On translating πτοίησις in the text as "anxiety", see Burkert 1987: 171, n. 156.

[15] *Phaedr.* 244d: νόσων γε καὶ πόνων τῶν μεγίστων, ἃ δὴ παλαιῶν ἐκ μηνιμάτων ποθὲν ἔν τισι τῶν γενῶν. Cf. *Phaedr.* 265b, *Laws* 815c and Burkert 1987: 19.

Here we can turn at last to the *Poetics* and ask what the tragic "catharsis of pity and fear produced by pity and fear" has in common with "the thoroughgoing arousal of violent emotion and the feeling of relief mixed with joy that comes over all who resort to telestic rites" (*Pol.* 1342a14-15). On this question I believe that progress is to be made not by bearing down once again on the notorious definition of tragedy on chapter 6 and trying to limit catharsis to a single technical sense, but by turning to chapter 4, Aristotle's excursus into the origins of the poetic arts as a whole. After establishing the kinds and forms that the poetic art has assumed in his day through an inductive diaeresis filling chapters 1-3, Aristotle turns in chapter 4 to consider how poetry arose, a subtle speculation that I will take up in three chunks. He begins (1448b4-9):

> Ἐοίκασι δὲ γεννῆσαι μὲν ὅλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτίαι δύο τινὲς καὶ αὗται φυσικαί. Τό τε γὰρ μιμεῖσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παίδων ἐστὶ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας.
>
> [It is probable to suppose that two causes brought about the art of poetry in general, and these were natural ones. For imitating is an inborn activity of human beings from childhood, and they differ from all other animals in being the most imitative of all and they learn their first lessons from mimesis, and everyone enjoys imitations.]

The crucial feature of this discussion is that Aristotle takes an anthropological approach to poetry. The anthropologist looks for 'causes' (*aitiai*) that are rooted in human nature, and Aristotle does not even mention the old traditions that poetry was a gift of the Muses or Apollo. He hits on two primary causes of poetry: our natural instincts to imitate and to take pleasure in imitations. For poetry to have arisen naturally it was necessary not only that *homo sapiens* be natural imitators, but also that that they take pleasure in the imitations of others, for a poet needs an audience. Aristotle is speculating here (ἐοίκασι) on matters of great antiquity, but he has reasons to give in support of his assumptions. As proof that human beings are natural imitators he points to the fact that children first learn by imitating; the fact that this is the way we get our *first* lessons (τὰς μαθήσεις . . . τὰς πρώτας) suggests that imitating is instinctive rather than learned behaviour.

To confirm the second proposition, that everyone enjoys imitations, Aristotle reasons from everyday experience (1448b9-19):

> σημεῖον δὲ τούτου τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων· ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὁρῶμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφὰς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αἴτιον δὲ καὶ τούτου, ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἥδιστον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας

> ὁρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος· ἐπεὶ ἐὰν μὴ τύχῃ προεωρακώς, οὐχ ᾗ μίμημα ποιήσει τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν ἢ τὴν χροιὰν ἢ διὰ τοιαύτην τινὰ ἄλλην αἰτίαν.
>
> [And experience affords a sign of the truth of this [that we enjoy imitations]: for images of things that we look upon with pain give us pleasure to contemplate when they are very precisely rendered, for example, the shapes of disgusting animals and of corpses. And the cause of this is that learning is not only extremely pleasant for philosophers, but for others too, though they share in it only to a little extent. For this reason people are pleased when they look at images, because it is possible for them to learn something as they consider them (θεωροῦντας), and to deduce (συλλογίζεσθαι) what each thing is, for example that this man is that man (οὗτος ἐκεῖνος). Since, if someone happens not to have seen (the thing represented) before, the imitation will not please qua imitation, but on account of its fine workmanship or colouring or some other such cause.]

Aristotle has observed no person who does not like imitations and infers that this is because it is always attended by a form of learning, for "all people have a natural appetite to understand" and "learning is naturally sweet".[16] But in explaining the pleasure we take in imitations as a kind of learning Aristotle opens a door for those who would say that, despite what is suggested in the *Politics*, the *Poetics* advances a theory of art which holds that the pleasure tragedy gives is one of learning something about the world. If imitations please us because they afford a kind of learning, it might follow that the true aim of the imitative arts is to teach. When one adds that the difference between poetry and history is that poetry represents not particular facts but the kinds of things that happen (ch. 9), the pleasure tragedy gives its audience may be that of learning (even 'deducing', on a narrow construction of *sullogizesthai*) patterns of human behaviour from the structured plots of plays. This is a widespread current understanding of the *Poetics*.[17]

But such views misconstrue this passage by making the process too intellectual. Aristotle's use of θεωροῦντας for 'considering' an image is not

[16] *Metaphys.* 980a.21: πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει. Cf. *Rhet.* 1371b4-1: "learning is sweet, as is wondering . . . as it leads to learning" (ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ μανθάνειν τε ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ θαυμάζειν . . . ὥστε μανθάνειν τι συμβαίνει). Plato similarly defined 'wonder' as "the peculiar *pathos* of the philosopher": μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: *Theaet.* 155d.

[17] E.g. Golden (1992: 5-29) and Keesey (1979), both proposing a very intellectualist account of tragic pleasure (see Nussbaum 1992: 281); more nuanced, though still fundamentally cognitive, versions of how viewing tragedies can lead to ethical development are Halliwell 1986: 198-9; 2002: 177-88, 221; Janko 1987: 187; 2011: 372-7; Belfiore 1992: 345-53; Nussbaum 1992; Depew 2007. For a penetrating critique of these approaches, see Destrée 2011.

to be confused with philosophical 'contemplation', θεωρία, the highest form of human intellection (*Eth. Nic.* 10.8, 9). Nor does *sullogizesthai* point to some rigorous process of reasoning. All that Aristotle seems to have in mind is that when we 'consider' a portrait we 'deduce' in the sense of figure out that it is meant to represent a particular person (or thing) in the world, as 'that painting is a painting of Socrates'. Aristotle's phrase 'this man is that man' (οὗτος ἐκεῖνος) is not to be glossed as the formal conclusion of a conscious process of reasoning, as '*QED*'; it is more like an 'Aha!' prompted by a sudden realization: in the *Rhetoric* the best metaphors provoke a quick recognition that "this thing is that thing" (τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο: *Rhet.* 3.10, 1410b19); in comedy, it is a colloquial exclamation that can be glossed 'Jesus, Maria und Joseph' (Radermacher 1954: 327 on *Frogs* 318). The expression is suggestively used by Plato in connection with the mysteries at the climax of Diotima's long speech to 'initiate' Socrates into the mysteries of love in the *Symposium* (209e-210e; cf. Burkert 1987: 153, n. 13): "this is that" (τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο) says Diotima at the moment when the much-labouring initiate finally realizes the object of the his or her toils, the final vision of love. This demotic, quasi-mystical reaction is closer to what is experienced by those who, in Aristotle's eyes, have but a moderate love of learning. It is a basic operation, but it is one that can go missing, as in Aristotle's following counterexample in which spectators consider a painting or sculpture of an object with which they are unfamiliar: such persons may enjoy the colours of the paintings or the working of the bronze for their own sake, but they will be unable to treat the object on a basic level as an imitation of something they know. Aristotle makes the same point a little later when he says, "if someone smeared the most beautiful pigments on a surface at random, he will not give as much pleasure as one who executes an image in black and white".[18]

It has been objected that to identify the subject of a painting is not learning much, and that we should rather see here an intimation of an idea drawn out of chapter 9, that because poetry is more concerned with universals than history it can be the occasion of a kind of philosophical learning. On this view, we do more than learn this painting is of that original but learn something general about the original (Else 1957: 132; Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980: 165; Sifakis 1986: 216; Halliwell 2001: 90-3). But in chapter 4 Aristotle is expressly thinking of learning at a general, low level that is available to all, for the point he is proving is that "everyone delights in imitations" (cf. Lear 1988: 307). As Malcolm Heath (2009a: 63-4) has observed, the function of the verb *sullogizesthai* is to mark this kind of pleasure in imitations as one that is available only to human beings. (Were it otherwise, mimetic animals like

[18] 1450a39-50b3: εἰ γάρ τις ἐναλείψειε τοῖς καλλίστοις φαρμάκοις χύδην, οὐκ ἂν ὁμοίως εὐφράνειεν καὶ λευκογραφήσας εἰκόνα.

apes would have developed imitative arts.) Chapter 4, then, does explain our enjoyment (*chairein*) of imitations by taking it as a form of learning, but we are not justified in assuming that learning is the essential or sole pleasure that imitations may afford. Moreover, individuals will vary greatly in the pleasure they take in learning: in *Poetics* 4 and in a passage from *Parts of Animals* (645a7-17) often cited with it, Aristotle makes a distinction between the common, popular pleasure in learning and the rarer pleasures taken by those who are "by nature" philosophers. No doubt Aristotle thought learning a very great pleasure, but it is one restricted to few (see Ford 2015: 15-17). A small amount of love of learning is all that is needed for spectators to assent to a mimetic illusion and say, "That's Agamemnon!" and thereafter to be open to tragedy's proper pleasure of arousing pity and fear through imitating his rise and fall.

The final chunk of Aristotle's speculation into the origins of poetry picks up from where he left off (1448b20-4):

> κατὰ φύσιν δὲ ὄντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μιμεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ἁρμονίας καὶ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ (τὰ γὰρ μέτρα ὅτι μόρια τῶν ῥυθμῶν ἐστι φανερὸν) ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἱ πεφυκότες πρὸς αὐτὰ μάλιστα κατὰ μικρὸν προάγοντες ἐγέννησαν τὴν ποίησιν ἐκ τῶν αὐτοσχεδιασμάτων.
>
> [Since imitating is something natural to us, as are *harmonia* and rhythm (for it is obvious that metre is rhythm cut in pieces), in the beginning those who were most naturally inclined toward these things gave birth to poetry little by little from improvisations.]

Aristotle adds a further cause to explain how poetry arose, the natural affinity we have, which is highly developed in those who become artists, for rhythm and *harmonia.* This affinity for music on our part is not one of the two natural causes of poetry, but a contingent determining condition of the art: it might have turned out that, like some animals, we were naturally insensitive to rhythm and *harmonia*; other things being equal, we would in that case still have mimetic arts – this the two natural causes are sufficient to guarantee – but our poetry would have no meter or music (nor, of course, would we have the arts of the *aulos* and *kithara*). A tone-deaf people can still tell stories about characters acting and suffering.

Because our musical aptitudes have only contingently shaped the evolution of the poetic art, Aristotle regards them as something appealing but 'extra', like a sauce on a meat. Hence he is wont to speak of adding music and/or metre to logos as a 'seasoning' or a 'sweetening' (1449b28-9: λέγω δὲ ἡδυσμένονμὲν λόγον τὸν ἔχοντα ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἁρμονίαν). Nonetheless, these extras have come to be indispensible in some art forms, as in the definition of tragedy which stipulates that it should make use of 'seasoned' language in its various parts (1449b25-6: ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν

ἐν τοῖς μορίοις). By this Aristotle means that speech seasoned with rhythm will be used in the (mostly) trimeter dialogue, while speech seasoned with rhythm and *harmonia* are used in the μέλη, 'songs', of the play.

Given our physical constitution, it was natural that these appealing forms of speech should enter into the pleasing art of poetry in an appropriate way. When dramatic dialogue evolved out of primordial choral songs, for example, "nature herself found the appropriate metre" (αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὗρε) because the iambic trimeter is closest to normal speech (1449a22-28). The same natural processes were at work when early epic poets hit on the "heroic" hexameter from trial and error (1459b32: τὸ δὲ μέτρον τὸ ἡρωικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας ἥρμοκεν), because the stateliest and weightiest of the metres (1459b34: τὸ γὰρ ἡρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν) harmonizes with heroic themes. The formal embellishments of speech in poetry are secondary causes, accidents of our natures that required time for poets to learn how best to exploit; but nature was driving the process and such embellishments are to be disregarded at the author's peril: today it would seem "unfitting" (ἀπρεπής) to compose an epic in any other metre (1459b36-39).

A more powerful embellishment than adding rhythm to speech in verse was music, which blended *harmoniai* – including the stirring ones Aristotle speaks of in *Politics* – into the mix. Aristotle declares songs, μέλη, the most important of tragedy's embellishments (1450b15-16: ἡ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων) and accordingly includes song as one of the constitutive parts of tragedy (1450a9). It follows that not only is μελοποιία, the 'composition of songs,' one of the principal ways that the tragic art is distinguished from epic (1449b32-4), it also "in no small part" makes tragedy a superior art form to music-less epic, for music makes the pleasures of tragedy most vivid and palpable.[19]

It is with our instincts for rhythm and *harmoniai* mentioned in chapter 4, I submit, that the passage from *Politics* has most to do. For the same "enthusiastic *harmoniai*" played on the aulos to such powerful effect in the mysteries were also used on the stage. To be sure, it would be reductive to simply equate theatrical and ritual catharsis, and in rejecting Bernays's medical account of tragic catharsis and the idealizing one as 'clarification' I do not propose simply to put ritual catharsis in its place. There is a difference between a telestic ritual and a drama in a theatre, even if the latter was dedicated to the god Dionysus. But the connection between *Politics* 8 and *Poetics* suggests that they are analogous forms of experience, and one may see this hinted at even in the definition of tragedy: in chapter 6, Aristotle

[19] Ibid., 1462b16-17: οὐ μικρὸν μέρος τὴν μουσικήν [καὶ τὰς ὄψεις], δι' ἧς αἱ ἡδοναὶ συνίστανται ἐναργέστατα.

says not simply that tragedy 'brings about' the catharsis of pity and fear, but that it brings this catharsis to completion, it "drives the process to an end" (περαίνουσα: *Poet.* 1449b28; cf. *LSJ* s.v.). This would seem to describe, but in a reduced form, the process of musical catharsis in ritual in which "the sacred tunes thoroughly arouse the soul's passions" (*Pol.* 1342a9-10: τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι).

One objection to the association of telestic and dramatic catharsis is that it might seem to imply that, as Gerald Else (1957: 440) put it, "we come to the tragic drama (unconsciously, if you will) as patients to be cured, relieved, restored to psychic health. But . . . Aristotle is presupposing 'normal' auditors, normal states of mind and feeling, normal emotional and aesthetic experience". Certainly Aristotle's mixed theatrical audience is not pathological (Heath 2014); but he testifies that even "normal" people respond to such music, and we have seen that telestic ritual drew on all social levels. The difference between Olympias and Aristotle is perhaps compendiously noticed in *Politics* 8.7 where people who are not addicted to orgiastic music are said to experience only a "kind of *catharsis*" from the music (1342a15: τινα κάθαρσιν). Nor is another objection made to Bernays's medical analogy pertinent: Elizabeth Belfiore (1992: 260-78) has been especially insistent that, since the medical thought with which Aristotle was familiar worked on allopathic principles, any notion of a catharsis that 'cured' the passions by arousing the passions was unthinkable. But I think it unwise to press Aristotle for a too precise model of telestic catharsis. If these skeptics were to ask Aristotle how he can believe in a homeopathic effect in religion or in the arts, as an erstwhile member of Olympias's household he could reply in the words Mark Twain is said to have used when he was asked if he believed in infant baptism: "Believe it? Heck, I've seen it!".

I have said that I do not propose telestic catharsis as the model for tragic experience, and would add that perhaps we should not focus so exclusively on that word as a key to Aristotle's views on the function of art. Catharsis is, after all, one of a series of terms to describe the pleasurable experience afforded by tragedy. In chapter 4 he uses the general term 'enjoying' (χαίρειν) to describe the natural human pleasure provoked by imitations (1448b9).[20] Soon after, he describes our feeling when recognizing a painting

[20] It is worth comparing the similar general meaning given to the noun *charis* in Plato's analysis of the correct response to works of musical art. Attempting in *Laws* 667b-d to define how a judge will distinguish fine from foul music, he uses *charis* to name the "enjoyableness" that attends such activities as learning or eating, but distinguishes this as less important than the pleasure (*hedone*) that a serious person (*spoudaios*) will take in correct eating (as in dietetics) or correct learning (leading to truth). So too the image-making arts are "enjoyable" but this is not the same as their being quantitatively and qualitatively correct. In music "enjoyable" feeling is only a common response and

as "pleasure" (ἡδονή, 1448b18) and "delighting" (εὐφράνειν, 1450b2). The same verb for delight is used of a tragedy by Agathon (1451b23; cf. 1451b25), but of course Aristotle's most important concept for literary purposes is the "proper pleasure" that belongs to a given poetic genre, whether it be comedy or tragedy (1445a36: ἡδονὴ . . . οἰκεία). The "proper pleasure" of tragedy is one that it alone is naturally suited to provide (1459a21). This pleasure should be the poet's polestar, disregarding any chance pleasure that may be available (1462b13: τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἡδονὴν), for "one must not seek every pleasure from tragedy but the one that is proper to it" (1453b11: οὐ γὰρ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν).

But how does all this stress on pleasure and Aristotle's recognition of the powerful emotional impact of tragedy fit with the fact that in chapter 4 he puts learning at the root of the pleasure of mimesis? Are we to apply some kind of Horatian *dulce/utile* dichotomy and conclude that the tragedian's goal is to teach and that the embellishments are just a way to make the lesson appealing? But to say that we enjoy imitations because deciphering them is a form of learning is far from identifying the "pleasure proper to tragedy" with learning. Heath (2001) argues that the natural pleasure of learning from *mimesis* cannot be the 'characteristic' (*oikeia*) pleasure of tragedy since it is available from other forms of imitation as well; for *all* the mimetic arts give pleasure, including painting and dance, and one would hardly take Aristotle seriously as a critic if he reduced our enjoyment of those forms to ethical inferences. Heath persuasively concludes that Aristotle's laconic text in chapter 4 does not foreclose the conclusion that "learning is not the sole, and perhaps not even the main pleasure that Aristotle expected poetry to provide" (Heath 2001: 19-20).

The telestic catharsis described in the *Politics*, then, is best set against Aristotle's anthropological account of the susceptibilities of human nature in *Poetics* ch. 4. Indeed, this chapter may be what he primarily had in mind in the *Politics* when he referred to "the work on the art of poetry" (τὰ περὶ ποιητικῆς: 1341b40) for a fuller discussion of catharsis. Scholars who have focused only on *Poetics* ch. 6 have speculated that the promised fuller discussion appeared in the lost second book of that treatise, or perhaps in another work on the topic, the *On Poets*. But by taking the full sequence of chapters 4-6 together we can understand how the catharsis of tragedy emerges from Aristotle's account of the full range of human responses to art and music, in which his experience with telestic catharsis seems to have provided a suggestive analogue. The entire discussion does supply, if not a

not sufficient to recognize truly fine music. The latter requires judging the relation of representation to object represented to know if "the truth" has been represented.

detailed account of catharsis, an explanation of how humans might respond to imitations of terrible things with pleasure and profit.

Without proposing a fully worked out model for tragic catharsis, I have argued that with this word Aristotle meant to point to the powerful reaction, not fully assimilable to cognitive reflection, that such plays at their best uniquely aroused. This is not to say that his idea of a good tragedy was a thrill-packed spectacle with one car crash after another. We can see this from the relatively marginal role he assigns to *opsis*, 'spectacle' in arousing the pleasure of tragedy: even though he acknowledges its power to 'stir the soul' (1450b17: ψυχαγωγικόν), he considers it extraneous to the poet's art properly understood. And the work of Stephen Halliwell has especially brought out how that art depended on tightly constructed and plausible plots, with all the elements of the play working together toward a single effect. The tragic art was not a matter of stirring up the audience's passions in any way that came to hand, but the subtle art of contriving to arouse in the audience "the pleasure that comes from pity and fear through mimesis" (1453b12: τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως . . . ἡδονὴν). A great deal of artistry was required on the poet's part, and no little critical attentiveness on the part of the audience. But the experience as a whole issued in something that was more like undergoing a mystic initiation than coolly appraising or observing a show. Now it might strike some critics that to compare the experience of tragedy, and *mutatis mutandis* of literature generally, to mystical initiation is to neglect what is most artful and sophisticated in what our texts have to offer. It may seem paradoxical that these complex, subtly crafted works of art should have been thought to serve to elicit such a comparatively mindless purpose. I would rather say that the Greek tragic poets show real inventiveness and skill in forging such finely made instruments of catharsis; it is to their credit and to that of their audiences – whose tastes were not only catered to but tutored by the poets – that this visceral, irresistible response could be aroused by such refined works of art.

It should be clear that the implications of this view need not be that Aristotle took an aesthetic view of tragedy as opposed to a moralizing one. Certainly, he held that poetry was for pleasure: whatever *catharsis* may be, it is a species of pleasure, a peculiar one arising from witnessing pitiable and frightening events. But the kind of intense reaction that catharsis seems to betoken is hardly disinterested enough to be called 'aesthetic' in the sense of a pleasure taken in art for the sake of art. It must also be admitted that Aristotle does not analyse this pleasure very deeply (Heath 2001) and his narrow focus on pleasure has been faulted for ignoring the political and social contexts in which the plays were first performed (Hall 1996). Simon Goldhill (2000) includes Aristotle in his deconstruction of any attempt to claim that tragedy has a purely aesthetic value. Goldhill (2000: 39) allows

that "'[p]leasure' may be one explicit aim of tragic theatre (as it is for the arenas of cricket or football or pornography or tourism)", but insists that "it is simply inadequate to use such an aim as the overriding determining criterion for *understanding the cultural politics* of the Great Dionysia (as it would be for cricket or football or pornography or tourism)" (emphasis mine). There is no doubt that, as Hall (1996) and Goldhill (2000) show (see also Goldhill 1987), the production of tragedies at the Athenian civic festivals was an eminently political affair. But Goldhill's declared aim is "understanding the cultural politics" of tragedy, while Aristotle's, as I have argued, is trying to take an anthropological approach to the phenomenon, trying to understand tragedy as a universal human art, a development of uniquely human faculties, abilities, emotions and susceptibilities (cf. Ford 2015; Heath 2009b). Doubtless, Aristotle was no more able than the rest of us to escape the blind spots of his political conditioning (complex as that would have been for the Metic from Stagira), and his conceptions of our nature as political animals was bound to be influenced by (Metic?) ideology. But for this writer of many books on politics, the very act of taking a broad view in *Poetics* was precisely an attempt to see beyond the undeniable ideological functions of the plays (which is implicit throughout the history of poetry in *Poetics* ch. 5 and explicit in *Politics* 8) and to do justice to the full range of their powers, among which something like telestic enthusiasm must figure.

My final remark concerns what I consider the weakest, but by no means the rarest version of the cognitive approach to tragedy as ethically broadening, and this is to imagine that we can learn something about life from tragedy that can help and even protect us. That line of thinking is little better than the spectator who leaves the premiere of *Oedipus Rex* concluding, "Well, if I ever get such a prophecy as Oedipus did, I'll be sure to marry a younger woman and I'll keep my temper around older men".[21] It is not only Aristotle but the whole tragic tradition that knows that the person who strolls out of the theatre of Dionysus thinking such thoughts is the ripest target for a tragic downfall that there is. It is hard to settle on a single thing that tragedy teaches, but one thing that no tragedy gives us is a paradigm from which we can draw lessons to make us (more) safe. The very confidence that philosophers place in the power of reason, the very assurance they place in their 'clarified' moral ideas, are the exact targets of tragedy. If the sight of people no worse than you broken does not make you (virtually/mimetically) afraid for your life, afraid that there is a recognition coming when you will realize you had no idea that you were going in the opposite direction than you had hoped, what you have experienced is not what Aristotle experienced when he described the experience of tragedy.

[21] Cf. Depew 2007: 145.

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Matt Cohn*

Comedy, Catharsis, and the Emotions: From Aristotle to Proclus

Abstract

This article takes a fresh look at ancient theories about the catharsis afforded by comedy. I adopt the model of Aristotelian catharsis proposed by Richard Janko and Stephen Halliwell and argue that Aristotle thought that comedy should elicit, and thus effect catharsis of, not only pleasurable emotions, such as the emotion associated with laughter, but also certain painful ones as well. In particular, Aristotle hints in the *Poetics* that certain comic plots elicit the painful emotion indignation as part of the process of eliciting pleasurable emotions that I call 'justified schadenfreude' and 'justified gratulation'. These emotions are intertwined with fear and pity in Aristotle's philosophy of the emotions, and thus the catharsis of such a comedy complements the catharsis of tragedy. I next turn to later theories in the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, Iamblichus, and Proclus. These tend to distort or diverge from Aristotle's theory, but all four are in agreement in one important respect: comedy produces real emotions, and those emotions are in need of catharsis.

During his discussion of Aristotle's catharsis, Paul Woodruff offers a rather ghoulish description of theories and their theorists: "Interpretations of *katharsis* are a cemetery of the living dead; not one of the proposed accounts remains unburied by scholars, and yet not one of them stays in its grave" (2009: 619). The project of constructing an account of the catharsis of comedy entails especial ghoulishness. While Aristotle at least mentions a tragic catharsis, he says nothing about a comic one. If he did theorize a catharsis of comedy, as I shall argue he did, then we must begin from a theory of catharsis oriented towards tragedy, saw off some limbs, and make others fit. An inquiry into Aristotle's comic catharsis will, therefore, be polemical, speculative, and tentative. But, as I hope to show, there is enough evidence to pose the important questions and give plausible answers.

I cannot offer here a full general account of catharsis and make a defense of it; I can only describe which body I have unearthed. My views are based on the accounts formulated in recent years most importantly by Stephen Halliwell and Richard Janko.[1] These take catharsis to refer to the exercise

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[1] Halliwell 1998: 168-201; 2009; 2011: 208-65; Janko 1984: 139-51; 1987: xvi-xx; 1992; 2001: 60-6; 2011: 372-7. Important predecessors are House 1956: 100-11 and Lord 1982:

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of emotions through mimesis such that those same emotions become better attuned in ordinary life. For example, by seeing in tragedy a mimesis of actions that elicit pity and fear in an appropriate way, one may feel pity and fear more appropriately outside the theatre. One merit of such an account is that it acknowledges that, for Aristotle, the emotions are to be correctly cultivated, not entirely purged. A second is that this account acknowledges the cognitive and intellectual dimensions of catharsis.[2] For my purposes, its most important features are that catharsis operates on the emotions of the spectators (rather than being within the drama itself),[3] that it functions homeopathically (rather than allopathically),[4] and that it conditions the emotions (rather than purges them).[5]

I shall begin with the question of whether Aristotle theorized a comic catharsis and then inquire into its nature. My analysis will, as much as possible, rely on the extant Aristotelian corpus, particularly the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. I shall show that this material can be used to construct provocative (but hardly definitive) responses to the most difficult and important question about Aristotle's catharsis of comedy, if he did theorize one: on what emotions does comedy ideally effect catharsis? I suggest that Aristotle's theory of the comic catharsis is subtle. While comedy for Aristotle elicits and effects catharsis on pleasurable emotions, such as the emotion associated with laughter, it may activate painful emotions as well. In particular, I argue that the *Poetics* hints that one type of comic plot elicits the painful emotion

119-79; for further representatives, see Janko 1992: 356, n. 27.

[2] As has become abundantly clear in recent years, owing especially to the work of William Fortenbaugh (see Fortenbaugh 2002 in particular), the emotions for Aristotle not only influence judgment but are constituted from evaluations and predictions; if catharsis is related to the emotions, it will also be related to cognition.

[3] This crux depends on whether the reference to παθήματα in the catharsis clause at *Poet.* 1449b28 refers to the emotions of the spectators or to the incidents of the play. I accept the former; if the incidents are really at issue, then catharsis pertains more particularly to the action of the drama, and the spectators' emotions are only indirectly implicated. For this interpretation, see especially Else 1957: 227-32, 423-50; Nehamas 1994: 272-80.

[4] See Belfiore 1992: 257-360 for the argument that catharsis is allopathic.

[5] For scepticism about this theory, see Ford 2004, but also Halliwell 2011: 236-60, answering many criticisms, most importantly the supposed dichotomy between catharsis and education. There are too many competing formulations of catharsis to enumerate here. But of particular significance are the conception of catharsis as the purgation of pathological emotions (most influentially formulated by Bernays 1880) and the conception of catharsis as intellectual clarification (see Golden 1992a: 5-40; for previous expressions, see ibid.: 32, n. 31). The former relies on an un-Aristotelian view of the emotions, whereas the latter privileges the intellect at the expense (it seems to me) of the emotions, which, of course, include a cognitive component. For these and other views, see surveys in Halliwell 1998: 350-6; Munteanu 2012: 238-50.

indignation as part of the process of activating pleasurable emotions that I call 'justified gratulation' and 'justified schadenfreude'.

After considering Aristotle, I shall turn to three later sources that mention a catharsis of comedy, the *Tractatus Coislinanus*, Iamblichus, and Proclus. Here, too, we are sometimes left reassembling *disiecta membra*, but here, too, we can speculate profitably. These theories are varied, and they approach the work of comedy in different ways and have different evaluations of its emotional effects. Yet they and Aristotle all agree that comedy elicits real emotions, that those emotions have real effects, and that those effects must be explained by positing a catharsis of the emotions of comedy – that, in short, comedy and its emotions are serious business indeed.

1. Would Aristotle Have Theorized a Catharsis of Comedy?

The idea that Aristotle would have attributed a catharsis to comedy has sometimes been disputed. Tragedy elicits painful emotions like pity and fear, and it is perhaps intuitive that these emotions require catharsis. I shall discuss the emotions of comedy in detail below, but among them seem to be pleasurable emotions related to laughter. Some scholars have rejected the comic catharsis entirely on the ground that such pleasurable emotions need no catharsis.[6] I shall argue, firstly, that there is no reason to believe that Aristotle restricted catharsis to tragedy and, secondly, that there are good reasons to think that he applied the concept to comedy.

Aristotle evidently thought that various forms of mimesis, and not just comedy, could effect catharsis. This view relies on the idea that the references to catharsis in book 8 of the *Politics* have a near connection to the catharsis mentioned in the *Poetics*, as most contemporary scholars accept.[7] There are two persuasive reasons to presume a connection. Firstly, the references to catharsis in the *Politics*, like the catharsis clause in the *Poetics*, regard mimesis and the emotions; pity and fear are mentioned as specific examples (1342a4-7, 11-15), which is, if not a direct reference to tragedy, a reference with direct relevance to tragedy.[8] Secondly, in the same passage where he

[6] Sceptics include Gudeman 1934: 145, 166; Post 1938: 24-5; Else 1957: 447; Olson 1968: 34-6, 45; Lord 1982: 149, 175-7, with n. 54; Micalella 2004: 96-9.

[7] See especially the discussion in Halliwell 2011: 238-60 on the applicability of catharsis in the *Politics* to the *Poetics*. For dissent, see Golden 1992a: 5-39; Flashar 2007: 17-79; and n. 10 below.

[8] For the reference to tragedy, see Janko 1992: 345; 2011: 519; Halliwell 2011: 238, 244-5. Cf. *Pol.* 1341a21-4: the *aulos* is more exciting (ὀργιαστικόν) than ethical (i.e., related to character), so it is more suitable for catharsis than learning. Aristotle is discussing music generally there, but it is worth noting that both tragedy and comedy featured

makes this allusion, Aristotle says that he will speak in a clearer fashion on the subject of catharsis in the *Poetics* (1341b38-40). This statement may itself be an indication that he theorized a catharsis of comedy: the clearer account of catharsis does not, of course, appear in the extant *Poetics*. If the reference is to the lost second book, which included the more complete discussion of comedy, the reason may be that catharsis is applicable to both comedy and tragedy.[9] In any case, given these resemblances, the catharsis of the *Politics* probably has bearing on the catharsis of the *Poetics*.

If the catharsis of the *Politics* does help explain the catharsis of the *Poetics*, one consequence is that there is no reason to presume that catharsis applies to tragedy alone. Aristotle says that the benefits of music generally are education, leisure (διαγωγή), and catharsis. Soon after, he notes that those who are prone to ecstasy can experience catharsis and be restored by certain songs; the same can happen to those who are disposed to pity (ἐλεήμονας) and fear (φοβητικούς), as well as those who are prone to the emotions generally (παθητικούς); others, to whatever extent they experience the emotions, will experience catharsis, too. Such music, Aristotle says, should be used by performers in the theatre (1341b32-42a18). The catharsis of the *Politics* is evidently a benefit of various kinds of music and operates on various emotions by rousing them intensely. This passage is complex and controversial, to be sure, and reasonable people will continue to differ about what it means and how it relates to the catharsis clause in the *Poetics*.[10] But it should give us cause to doubt the ideas that catharsis is a special feature of tragedy and that it operates only on pity and fear.

It is, therefore, possible that Aristotle applied the concept of catharsis to comedy. There are good reasons why he may have done so. Most scholars who have objected to the idea that Aristotle posited a comic catharsis contend that comedy is pleasurable and concerned with laughter, and pleasurable emotions need no catharsis. Yet even emotions that are pleas-

the *aulos*. Presumably it contributed to arousing the emotions and thus effecting each genre's catharsis.

[9] Thus Lucas (1968: 288): "Aristotle might have reserved his full treatment of *katharsis* for the section on comedy because it provided the more important illustration"; cf. Janko 2011: 518. But see as well Lord 1982: 148-50, resurrecting an earlier suggestion that Aristotle's promise refers to a lost discussion of poetry that came later in the *Politics* itself (one of Lord's reasons is that Aristotle would not have discussed catharsis in the sections of the *Poetics* on comedy); cf. Halliwell 1998: 190-1, n. 32.

[10] See especially Ford 2004, arguing that by music Aristotle means rhythms and tunes without words, thus excluding tragedy, as well as comedy and epic, from the discussion; the relationship between musical and dramatic catharsis would, therefore, be more ambiguous. Cf. Heath 2013: 17-18; Ford 2015: 6, n. 19; for the view *contra*, see Janko 1992: 343-6; 2011: 375, n. 1.

urable and related to laughter can be inappropriate and require moderation. Aristotle's student Theophrastus furnishes us with an example that appeared as an anecdote in his lost treatise *On Comedy*. The Tirynthians, he tells us, were useless with respect to serious things because they loved to laugh too much, and they wanted to be freed from this affliction (or passion: the word is πάθος). For advice they consulted the Dephic Oracle, which told them that their hypergelasm would cease if they could conduct a sacrifice to Poseidon without laughing (an exercise at which they failed due to a child's inopportune pun).[11] It is true that laughter and its emotions can be pleasurable, but they still need to be exercised appropriately. Aristotle himself explains more mundane deviations from the appropriate disposition with respect to jesting in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He calls one deviation buffoonery, meaning the tendency to pursue jests all the time, even in inappropriate circumstances; Aristotle mentions in this context the tendency to enjoy jests more than is appropriate. The other deviation is boorishness, which characterizes the man who tells no jokes himself and refuses to enjoy jests of others (1127b33-1128b9).[12]

Thus even pleasurable emotions that are related to laughter need to be activated at the right time, at the right objects, and to the proper degree. This need for moderation alone is a justification for a comic catharsis: Aristotle, we might suppose, could have posited comedy as a means for achieving balance in such emotions. But comedy is directly implicated in these problems by Plato. In the *Republic*, Plato lodges a series of charges against poetry, among which is the complaint that spectators' emotional responses to poetry lead to excessive emotional responses in ordinary life. He singles out comedy and tragedy in particular. Tragedy, he argues, leads one to indulge one's sense of pity inappropriately outside the theatre, and comedy leads one to joke inappropriately outside the theatre (606a-d). Shortly thereafter, he challenges the champions of poetry to justify its presence in a well-ordered state (607d). The *Poetics* as a project has, of course, been conventionally taken to be a response to the challenge, with catharsis as a retort to the particular charge that drama (and poetry in general) deleteriously affects spectators' control over their emotions.[13] Plato's complaint is that viewing

[11] Athen. 261d-e (= Theophr. fr. 709 Fortenbaugh). For the possibility that the anecdote relates to catharsis, see Fortenbaugh 2003: 106; 2005: 374-5.

[12] For the bearing of this passage on Aristotle's comic catharsis, cf. Janko 1992: 350-1; 2001: 65-6.

[13] Certainly Proclus saw Aristotle's catharsis of tragedy and comedy as a response to Plato's complaints: see *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, vol. 1: 42 and 49 Kroll (= *On Poets* fr. 56 Janko = fr. 81a Rose); cf. perhaps Olympiodorus *Commentary on Plato's Gorgias* 172.6-23, although the reference there is not clearly to Aristotle or his school. For contemporary expressions, see, e.g. Janko 1987: x-xiv; 1992: 342-3, 352-3; Golden: 1992a;

tragedy will make one too disposed to pity – ἐλεήμων, as Aristotle calls it in the *Politics* – and comedy will make one a buffoon. Aristotle's answer is that tragedy and comedy, when properly composed, do no such thing. Rather, they effect a catharsis of the emotions that those genres elicit. A theory of a comic catharsis is just as necessary as a tragic one.

2. On What Emotions Does Comedy Effect Catharsis?

I have suggested that Aristotle does not seem to restrict catharsis to tragedy; that the emotions of comedy would benefit from catharsis even if they are pleasurable; and that, if catharsis is a response to Plato's claims about the effects of drama on the emotions, Aristotle would have theorized a comic catharsis. The contours of the theory are, however, harder to map. The central and most difficult question is what specific emotions should be activated by comedy. Most earlier interpretations operate on the premise that catharsis is purgation and suggest that comedy, if it does achieve a salutary effect on ordinary spectators that persists beyond the theatre, purges emotions like anger, envy, and scorn.[14] But, as mentioned above, I reject the idea that Aristotle would have suggested that the emotions need to be purged in most people (although certain authors later in antiquity make this claim, as we shall see); rather, for Aristotle the emotions need to be conditioned such that they are exercised properly.[15]

Halliwell 1998: 184-5. For scepticism, see Nehamas 1994; Ford 2004; Woodruff 2009: 621-2; Ford 2015.

[14] Cooper (1922: 60-98) suggests a catharsis of "anger and envy" on the ground that laughing at comic exaggerations will purge the spectator of his sense of disproportion; along similar lines, Tierney (1936: 250-3) suggests envy (φθόνος) and malice (ἐπιχαιρεκακία). Smith (1928: 153-6), reviewing Cooper, proposes that the emotions of comedy derive from situations that "demolish the superiority of those we envy and establish in ourselves a sense of superiority over those with whom we are angry" and calls those emotions a mixture of "innocent mirth" and "malicious fun". Lucas (1968: 287-8), however, suggests a purgation of "scorn and over-confidence", and, perhaps, the antisocial impulses that societal strictures keep in check; cf. Sorabji 2000: 290-1, concurring with scorn and adding "the desire to laugh". Milanezi (2000: 388-96) entertains the possibility that comedy purges emotions like anger, envy, indignation, and the desire for revenge in spectators on the one hand but also uses ridicule to incite them to action on the other. Sutton (1994), beginning from Aristotle and the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, develops his own theory that comedy purges pity, fear, and other anxieties through laughter.

[15] For an interpretation of catharsis that takes it be a conditioning rather than purgation, certain bad emotions like envy (φθόνος) must be ruled out entirely from comedy because they are always faults. Envy, for example, is itself a deviation from the mean of indignation (*Nic. Eth.* 1107a8-17 and 1108a35-b6; *Eud. Eth.* 1233b16-25; cf. *Top.* 109b35-8; *Rhet.* 1387b21-88a28).

I shall begin my account from an elegant solution proposed by Janko that looks at the catharsis of drama in the round and divides the range of the emotions between comedy and tragedy. He has argued that the catharsis clause in the *Poetics* does not restrict the emotions of tragedy to pity and fear, even if pity and fear are singled out; rather, tragedy arouses and effects catharsis on painful emotions generally, including, for example, anger. He concludes that tragedy operates on the painful emotions, whereas comedy operates on the pleasurable emotions (Janko 1992: 349-51; cf. Janko 1984: 156-61; 1987: 83, 161-2; 2001: 65). I agree that, in the end, comedy elicits pleasurable emotions (and tragedy painful ones). But this broad characterization of the genre is less useful when thinking more precisely about the emotions that, according to Aristotle, may be elicited over the course of a particular comedy. I shall suggest that, while Aristotle indeed identified certain pleasurable emotions as proper to comedy, he allows space for certain painful ones as well.

There are two grounds for looking beyond a strict division between the pleasurable emotions of comedy and the painful ones of tragedy.[16] The first is that, while Aristotle clearly associates emotions with pleasure and pain, he does not clearly regard pain and pleasure to be exclusive genera into which all emotions can be classified.[17] In the case of anger, for example, Aristotle defines it as a desire for a perceived revenge accompanied by pain at a perceived slight by someone who is not fit to commit the slight (*Rhet.* 1378a31-3). Thus pain accompanies anger. But pleasure also attends all anger (πάσῃ ὀργῇ ἕπεσθαί τινα ἡδονήν), namely pleasure at the hope of revenge (*Rhet.* 1378b1-2; cf. 1370b29-33).[18] If a tragedy does elicit anger, it engenders

[16] Belfiore (1992: 269-70) raises a separate objection to Janko's formulation that must be rejected. Belfiore argues that some painful emotions contradict one another, and thus tragedy cannot operate on the painful emotions generally. Anger, for example, is incompatible explicitly with fear (*Rhet.* 1380a33) and implicitly with pity (*Rhet.* 1380b14, with 1380a5). But even if one cannot experience anger at the same time as pity, one can, over the course of a tragedy, experience different emotions at different times towards different agents. One may, for example, feel pity for Antigone and fear at the sufferings that Creon will bring about; after they have been brought to pass and the sense of fear is gone, one may feel anger at Creon but then, finally, pity him at the end of the drama. In addition, Aristotle says that fear is sometimes felt to the exclusion of pity (*Rhet.* 1385b32-4, 1386a21-4), yet they (and they alone!) remain incontrovertibly associated with tragedy.

[17] For the connection of the emotions to pleasure and pain, see *Rhet.* 1378a19-21, as well as *Nic. Eth.* 1105b21-3; *Eud. Eth.* 1220b12-14. Dow (2015: 131-81) offers a useful discussion on this connection in the *Rhetoric* in particular.

[18] Cf. the comparable characterization of θυμός at *Nic. Eth.* 1116b23-17a9; *Eud. Eth.* 1228b31. To the conception of anger as painful but also pleasurable, compare Aristotle's general discussion of pleasure in *Rhet.* 1.11: most desires (ἐπιθυμίαι) yield pleasure from either the memory of their fulfillment in the past or the prospect of their fulfillment in

both pain and pleasure.[19] Furthermore, even if Aristotle broadly associates the emotions with pain and pleasure, some do not fit obviously into either category. One of the differentia between hatred and anger is that the former is not accompanied by pain (*Rhet.* 1382a11-13); yet Aristotle does not instead associate it with pleasure.[20] There may be emotions that are simply pleasurable or simply painful, and most emotions may fall into one of these categories. But these categories are not exclusive or exhaustive and cannot provide a precise map of the dramatic emotions.

The second ground for looking beyond a strict divide between the painful emotions of tragedy and the pleasurable emotions of comedy is narratological. Aristotle describes certain pleasurable emotions as counterparts to or even consequences of painful emotions. For example, the man who feels indignation (τὸ νεμεσᾶν, pain at undeserved success) may feel pleasure at deserved misfortune (*Rhet.* 1386b25-87a3; *Eud. Eth.* 1233b24-6). He does not give a distinct name to this emotion, but we might term it 'justified schadenfreude'.[21] This has obvious implications for comedy. Feeling the pleasure of justified schadenfreude at the conclusion of the *Clouds* because Socrates and his students have gotten their just deserts may well entail feeling the pain of

the future. Thus mourning, for example, consists not only of pain at the lost but also pleasure at the memory of the same (1370b14-29). Desire is not counted among the emotions in the *Rhetoric*, but see *Nic. Eth.* 1105b21; *Eud. Eth.* 1220b13. On the theory of pleasure in *Rhet.* 1.11, including its Platonic influence, see Frede 1996; Striker 1996; Dow 2015: 163-77. See as well Sorabji 1999, discussing in particular Aspasius's (incorrect) view that Aristotle divided the emotions into the genera of pleasure and pain (*CAG* 19.1, 42.27-47.2).

[19] Here, I follow Halliwell in supposing that emotions that are described as self-regarding in the *Rhetoric*, such as fear (i.e., in the *Rhetoric* fear is felt at the prospect of one's *own* suffering), are experienced vicariously in tragedy (and, we must suppose, comedy) for the prospects of others. See Halliwell 1998: 176-7; 2002: 217-18, with n. 32; 2012: 249-50; cf. Nehamas 1994: 268-72 for similar conclusions on different grounds. If this is not the case, and the view of e.g. Konstan 2006: 155, 324, n. 43 is correct that such emotions are strictly self-regarding (meaning, even when watching tragedy, we feel fear only for our own prospective suffering), then anger, along with some other of the self-regarding emotions, may not be elicited by drama.

[20] It is perhaps significant that Aristotle's definition of the emotions at *Eud. Eth.* 1220b12-14 is rather equivocal: "I call emotions such things as anger, fear, shame, and desire, in general (ὅλως) the things which in themselves are attended, for the most part (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ), by perceived pleasure or pain". But see as well Dow (2015: 153-5), with further bibliography, for attempts to explain cases like hatred that seem to be unaccompanied by pleasure or pain.

[21] Aristotle gives the example of father killers and murderers getting their comeuppance; Coker 1992 calls this emotion 'proper schadenfreude'. Kristjánsson (2006: 96-9) suggests that it is more particularly a sense of satisfaction at seeing someone at whom one earlier felt indignation get his just deserts and thus calls it 'satisfied indignation'.

indignation earlier on, when Socrates and his students enjoyed undeserved good fortune.[22] Thus the *Clouds* engenders a painful emotion in order later to engender a pleasurable one. I shall return to this possibility later.

The single barrier to the idea that comedy may elicit painful emotions is the definition of the laughable at *Poetics* 1449a34-7, quoted below, where Aristotle delimits it to an error or ugliness that does not involve pain and is not destructive. This statement has sometimes been taken to mean that comedy should not elicit pain for its audience.[23] But this interpretation presses the statement too hard: Aristotle is more directly contrasting the treatment of characters in comedy from their treatment in tragedy, in which characters are indeed exposed to pain and destruction. The passage has bearing on the audience's emotions only indirectly through how it restricts the events of the play. If the laughable precludes pain and destruction, then it is incompatible with fear, which is a response to a painful or destructive evil (*Rhet.* 1382a21-2; cf. *Eud. Eth.* 1229a33-5). For the same reason, the laughable must also be incompatible with pity, since pity, too, is a response to a painful or destructive evil (*Rhet.* 1385b13-16).[24] But other emotions that have a painful valence may still be available to comedy. Even if comedy does ultimately aim at emotions that are pleasurable, we must entertain the idea that painful emotions also have a place.

This much has only served to broaden the possibilities; we must now consider the particular emotions that Aristotle might have ascribed to the genre. In addition to the pleasurable emotions generally, Janko has adduced laughter as a particular emotion that Aristotle associated with comedy.[25] This must be correct. It will not do to say that Aristotle would not have spoken of laughter as an emotion. He certainly can speak of emotions and their physical signals as synonymous: thus he says "shuddering" (φρίττει) when he means the emotion fear (*Poet.* 1453b5). Certainly Plato regards laughter to be just as much an emotion as envy is (*Phlb.* 50a) and speaks of laughter as part of the emotional response to comedy (*Rep.* 606c).[26] Beyond the associa-

[22] See Golden (1992a: 95-7), who uses the end of the *Clouds* to illustrate his own theory about Aristotle's comic catharsis.

[23] Else 1957: 189**;** Janko 1992: 357, n. 42; Micalella 2004: 22-4. Cf. Golden 1992a: 90, n. 88, 93 with n. 91, allowing that comedy may cause pain, but that the pain is quickly nullified by jest.

[24] Cf. *Rhet.* 1386b4, where Aristotle notes that the sufferings of noble people (σπουδαῖοι) are especially pitiable; presumably the inferior types of comedy are, conversely, not especially pitiable.

[25] Janko 1984: 143, 156-61; 1987: 79, 168-9; 1992: 350-1; Halliwell (1998: 274-5, n. 33) expresses unwarranted scepticism.

[26] Cf. [Longinus] *Subl.* 38.6: "Laughter is an emotion in the ambit of pleasure" (ὁ γέλως πάθος ἐν ἡδονῇ). It will also not do to say that there is no need for a catharsis

tion between comedy and laughter in Plato, Janko's reasoning is based partly on the *Tractatus Coislinanius*, which I discuss below, but also partly on the *Poetics* itself. Aristotle describes comedy thus (*Poet.* 1449a32-7):

> ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία ἐστὶν ὥσπερ εἴπομεν μίμησις φαυλοτέρων μέν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστι τὸ γελοῖον μόριον. τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἁμάρτημά τι καὶ αἶσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθὺς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὀδύνης.
>
> [Comedy, as we have said, is a mimesis of inferior people – not, however, in every vice; rather, the laughable is part of the ugly. The laughable is a certain error and ugliness that is painless and not destructive. For example, the laughable mask is something ugly and warped without pain.]

This passage poses problems for our purposes because Aristotle's description focuses on externals. He mentions laughter (a signal of emotion) and the causes that stimulate it, but does not give a full account of the emotion itself. Nor does Aristotle describe this emotion in the *Rhetoric*.[27] We must reconstruct it ourselves.

Fortenbaugh has hypothesized a few definitions for laughter in Aristotle using Aristotle's anatomy of emotion, which describes an emotion in terms of 1) the object of the emotion; 2) the grounds of the emotion; and 3) the state or circumstances of the subject feeling the emotion (Fortenbaugh 2003: 91-106, esp. 98-100; cf. Fortenbaugh 2002: 20-1, 120-6). I shall try to do the same for the emotion that Aristotle would have associated with comic laughter in particular on the basis of both this passage and his other statements about the emotions in the *Rhetoric*. I shall refer to the emotion itself as the 'laughter emotion', which is a rather ugly term that I have borrowed from Elder Olson's discussion of Aristotle and comedy (1968: 10-11). However, it has the merits of distinguishing the emotion that produces laughter in comedy from the laughter that can arise from a variety of other physical or emotional causes[28] and of not having the connotations of words like amusement, mirth, or cheer. We might define the laughter emotion in comedy thus:

> The laughter emotion is a pleasure[29] felt at people who appear to be inferior,

of the emotion associated with laughter: see, e.g., the anecdote about the Tirynthians recounted above.

[27] He may have given an account of laughter in the second book of the *Poetics* or, more likely, in one of his lost works on the emotions.

[28] For example, we would want to exclude the nervous laughter that might accompany an emotion like fear or laughter that is a consequence of purely physical causes (e.g. Aristotle mentions that blows to the diaphragm can cause laughter at *Part. An.* 673a10-12; cf. Fortenbaugh 2003: 97, with n. 21-2).

[29] For laughter (or, rather, a type of laughter) as pleasant, cf. *Rhet.* 1371b33-72a1 and 1380b2-5.

> and it is felt when they appear to be involved in ugliness or error that is not painful or destructive.[30] Some people will be predisposed to the laughter emotion because of their character.[31] In addition, one may feel the laughter emotion without being in any prior emotional state, but other pleasures, such as having already experienced the laughter emotion, may dispose one to it as well.[32]

Aristotle would have clarified the nature of the ugliness or error and adduced other causes for laughter in the lost book of the *Poetics*; in the *Rhetoric*, he points the reader in that direction for his division of the laughable into men, words, and deeds (*Rhet.* 1371b35-72a2; cf. 1419b1-6).[33] Even allowing for those additions, this definition is incomplete and unsatisfying: surely there are other emotions that can facilitate the laughter emotion in comedy. Our discussion of the emotions of comedy generally is also incomplete and unsatisfying: it may be that comedy for Aristotle can elicit emotions that are unconnected to the laughter emotion, just as it may be that tragedy can elicit an emotion like anger that is unconnected to (or even opposed to) fear.[34]

A particular deficiency of this account is that the laughter emotion could just as well be elicited by short, disconnected skits as by a comedy; but Aristotle thought that plot is essential to comedy, just as it is for tragedy.[35] It would be useful here to know what he thought to be the ideal story arc for comedy so that we could extrapolate from it the ideal emotional arc for its spectators. Aside from his definition of the laughable, there is one other major clue. During his discussion of the tragic plot, Aristotle turns to the question of how the ideal tragedy should end (*Poet.* 1453a30-9):

> δευτέρα δ' ἡ πρώτη λεγομένη ὑπὸ τινῶν ἐστιν σύστασις, ἡ διπλῆν τε τὴν σύστασιν ἔχουσα καθάπερ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια καὶ τελευτῶσα ἐξ ἐναντίας τοῖς βελτίοσι καὶ χείροσιν. . . . ἔστιν δὲ οὐχ αὕτη ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας ἡδονὴ ἀλλὰ

[30] I use "appear" in both clauses to preserve the evaluative quality of the emotions for Aristotle; compare, e.g. the definition of anger: "Let anger be defined as the desire, accompanied by pain, for apparent (φαινομένης) revenge on account of an apparent (φαινομένην) slight . . . " (*Rhet.* 1378a1-3).

[31] Thus youths are "laughter lovers" (φιλογέλωτες) at *Rhet.* 1389b10-11; cf. Fortenbaugh 2003: 103-6.

[32] For the idea that pleasures can complement each other, see, e.g. *Rhet.* 1380b2-5, describing how one is disposed to calmness when one is free from pain and enjoying other pleasures.

[33] The explanation of the laughable quoted above is clearly meant to contrast the content of comedy and tragedy rather than to be a comprehensive definition.

[34] On painful emotions that oppose each other, see n. 16 above.

[35] Cf. *Poet.* 1449b5-9 and 1451a36-b15: comedy differs from iambus precisely because the comic poets produced generalized plots, i.e. plots that are complete and causally coherent; see especially Heath 1989: 348-52.

> μᾶλλον τῆς κωμῳδίας οἰκεία· ἐκεῖ γὰρ οἳ ἂν ἔχθιστοι ὦσιν ἐν τῷ μύθῳ, οἷον Ὀρέστης καὶ Αἴγισθος, φίλοι γενόμενοι ἐπὶ τελευτῆς ἐξέρχονται, καὶ ἀποθνῄσκει οὐδεὶς ὑπ' οὐδενός.
>
> [The structure that some call best is second best (for tragedy). This is a tragedy that has a double structure like the *Odyssey* and concludes with the opposite outcome for those who are better and for those who are worse. . . . But this is not the pleasure from tragedy; rather, it is appropriate for comedy. There, those who are the worst enemies in the story, such as Orestes and Aegisthus, go off in the end having become friends, and nobody kills anybody.]

We are left with two possible comic plots. It is not clear which, if either, Aristotle rates best. The first is a 'just deserts' plot: such a comedy features inferior people involved in ugliness and errors; some characters are good and some are bad, and these two groups are probably, as in the *Odyssey*, at odds with each other. In the end, the good have a good outcome and the bad get their comeuppance (however, unlike the *Odyssey*, their deserts presumably do not include death, given Aristotle's observation that pain and destruction are outside the bailiwick of the laughable).[36] The second is an 'enemies reconciled' plot: this comedy likewise features inferior people involved in ugliness and errors who are at odds with each other. Unlike in the 'just deserts' comedy, we cannot tell whether the characters need be good or bad; in any case, the play resolves with their bitter hatred becoming friendship.[37]

The emotional arc of the 'just deserts' plot corresponds to an emotional arc that I alluded to earlier. Aristotle identifies an emotion that he calls 'indignation', τὸ νεμεσᾶν, which is pain at undeserved good fortune (*Rhet.* 1386b9-87b20; cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1108a35-b6; *Eud. Eth.* 1233b24-6); the spectator may feel this emotion during the play when the bad parties are enjoying their undeserved success, or at least have yet to receive their deserved punishment. Indeed, Leon Golden has suggested that indignation is the distinctive emotion of comedy for Aristotle (Golden 1992a: 92-7; 1992b; cf. Quinn 2001). In the *Poetics*, Golden argues, tragedy and comedy are constructed as antipodal. Tragedy features a loftier type; comedy features an inferior type. In tragedy, the characters experience pain and destruction; in comedy they are involved in ugliness and errors that are painless and not destructive. Tragedy evokes pity and fear, which are concerned with undeserved bad fortune; comedy, Golden reasons, will evoke pain at undeserved good fortune, indignation, which Aristotle explicitly says is most opposed to pity (*Rhet.* 1386b9). However, whereas Golden regards indignation itself to be of central

[36] But for the possibility that Aristotle may have admitted some pain and destruction into the comic, see Heath 1989: 352-3.

[37] We also cannot know whether Aristotle had in mind a particular play (e.g. Alexis's *Orestes*?); cf. Halliwell 1998: 272, n. 28.

importance, I suggest instead that the cluster of emotions with which it is associated are as or more important, especially the pleasurable ones.

As mentioned earlier, indignation is a painful emotion, but there are pleasurable ones connected to it. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes a series of emotions related to evaluations of others' characters and fortunes, including pity and indignation (1385b13-88b28).[38] He explains that people who are inclined to feel pity are also inclined to feel indignation (1386b10-16), as well as certain other emotions that are not given distinct names (1386b25-87a3). These associated emotions are: 1) pleasure at deserved suffering, which I termed above 'justified schadenfreude' (1386b26-30) and 2) pleasure at deserved good fortune, which I shall term 'justified gratulation' (1386b30-1).[39] The 'just deserts' plot may entail activating the painful emotion of indignation, but it does so as part of a process of activating those related pleasurable emotions, justified schadenfreude at the villains' comeuppance and justified gratulation at the heroes' success.[40]

Indignation and its pain need not be particularly keen in the 'just deserts' comedy and can be elicited to varying degrees. Perhaps they are keen near the end of the *Clouds*, when Pheidippides beats his father and then uses the sophistry that he has learned at Socrates's school to justify it and escape punishment. One may feel especial indignation at the unjustified success of Socrates and his school, which translates into especial justified schaden-

[38] I discuss here only the good emotions related to indignation and exclude the deviant ones, such as envy and spite, which Aristotle mentions in the *Rhetoric* but which one should not feel in response to drama or otherwise. Cf. n. 15 above. For a fuller discussion of these emotions, see especially Sanders 2008; 2014: 58-78. For the history of the term that Aristotle uses for indignation (τὸ νεμεσᾶν/νέμεσις), see Konstan 2006: 111-28; Kristjánsson (2006: 102) tries to explain Aristotle's different definitions of indignation.

[39] I base this term on Coker (1992), who calls the emotion 'proper gratulation'; Coker follows Stevens 1948.

[40] Aristotle may also hint at such a plot at *Poet.* 1453a1-7, where he rejects the tragic plot in which an especially bad person goes from good fortune to bad: such a story, he says, would have a quality that he calls "philanthropic" (φιλάνθρωπον), but not pity or fear. The interpretation of this term (like so much else in the *Poetics*) has been controversial. One interpretation holds that, like pity, the "philanthropic" is pain at another's suffering, but, unlike pity, it is irrespective of desert (see Konstan 2006: 214-18 for a recent formulation of this view). A second view holds that "philanthropic" refers to moral satisfaction at seeing someone experience deserved suffering. Carey 1988 offers a third view that subsumes the second, that "philanthropic" describes a quality of the plot, not an emotion in the audience, i.e., such a plot is pleasing or satisfying (cf. de Montmollin 1965); this is compatible with the second view in that the plot is pleasing or satisfying precisely because the events satisfy the spectators' moral sense (Carey 1988: 138). If the latter views are correct, then the sense of moral satisfaction that such a plot elicits corresponds to justified schadenfreude, and thus it partly overlaps with the 'just deserts' comedy. On the "philanthropic", see Carey 1988: 133 for earlier bibliography.

freude at their subsequent ruin and gratulation at Strepsiades's triumph. But in a play like the *Acharnians* Lamachus's unjustified good fortune is hardly belaboured. Dicaeopolis does complain about Lamachus's unjustified good fortune, but he also puts one over on the general at their first meeting, and Dicaeopolis continues to abuse Lamachus, largely through the conspicuous display of his own good fortune, right up until the end of the play, when Lamachus dies. While the *Acharnians* does evoke indignation, clearly it is more oriented towards eliciting justified schadenfreude and gratulation throughout the play. In comedies like the *Clouds* and the *Acharnians*, these emotions are elicited, of course, because justified schadenfreude and gratulation are pleasurable in themselves, but also because such pleasurable emotions will dispose one to feeling the laughter emotion.

The second plot, the 'enemies reconciled' comedy, has a rather different emotional profile. In both the 'just deserts' plot and tragedy, the spectators' emotions are based on evaluations about whether characters' good and bad fortunes are deserved. The 'enemies reconciled' plot may well involve activating indignation, justified schadenfreude, and justified gratulation to varying degrees throughout the play, but, when he describes its ending, Aristotle makes no reference to desert. As far as the bad characters are concerned, desert is ultimately irrelevant. Aristotle's comment that in such a play "nobody kills anybody" contrasts with the end of the *Odyssey*, where the bad outcome for the bad characters is their deaths at the hands of the good; in the comic plot, I take this to be a hyperbolic expression of the idea that nobody really suffers at the end of the play. If there are good and bad characters (and Aristotle does not say that there are) then, in the end, one will not feel justified schadenfreude, since the bad do not come to a bad end.

Aristotle's description of the 'enemies reconciled' comedy instead emphasizes the changeable emotions of the characters in the play. The principal characters are the worst of enemies (ἔχθιστοι). The emotion that they feel towards each other is not, in Aristotle's terminology, anger, although it may have begun as such. It is hatred, a deep-seated emotion that is differentiated from anger in that the one who feels it does not feel pain, nor does he want his enemy to suffer; he simply wants the enemy to cease to exist.[41] But, by the end of the play, the characters instead express friendship (φιλία) and perhaps calmness (πραότης), the contraries of hatred and anger (*Rhet.* 1380a5-

[41] By Aristotle's definition, anger is felt at a particular slight committed by someone who had no cause to give a slight (*Rhet.* 1378a31-3). Bitter enemies, however, do have cause to slight each other (and harm one another otherwise), and their hatred is not tied to individual offenses. For the distinction between anger and hatred and the possibility of the latter arising from the former, see *Rhet.* 1382a1-15. On the painlessness of hatred, see above, with n. 20.

1381b37).[42] But here it is important to observe the disjunction between the emotions of the spectator and the incidents onstage; one will not necessarily respond in the same way as the characters. That they would abandon such deep-seated hatred – in the case of Orestes and Aegisthus, the product of a long-standing familial feud driven by murder, cannibalism, adultery, and other grievous injuries – is perhaps a marker of their inconsistency and would qualify as ugliness or error.[43] Such ugliness and error are, of course, grounds for the laughter emotion.

If my analysis of these two comic plots is correct, then Aristotle's conception of the catharsis of comedy is distinct from the catharsis of tragedy in an important way. As Janko has suggested, comedy seems, on the whole and in the end, to elicit pleasurable emotions, chief among which is the laughter emotion. The 'enemies reconciled' comedy evidently focuses on that emotion in particular. But the 'just deserts' comedy rouses a painful emotion as a basic part of the process of rousing pleasurable ones. If tragedy does only or mainly engage with emotions that are painful, comedy may, in Aristotle's analysis, cover a wider emotional terrain than tragedy.

But the emotions of the 'just deserts' comedy are also connected to the tragic emotions in an important way. The emotions that Aristotle singles out for tragedy, namely pity and fear, are, of course, intertwined; one fears for oneself things that arouse pity when they happen to another (*Rhet.* 1382b26-7; 1386a27-8).[44] As I have noted, pity is also entwined with the emotions of the 'just deserts' comedy, namely indignation, justified schadenfreude, and justified gratulation. Indeed, in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle conflates them all under the term 'indignation' (νέμεσις), and the man who is disposed to them is the indignant man (νεμεσητικός). There, these four virtuous emotions correspond to a single virtuous disposition.[45] Thus the emotions of

[42] On calmness, see especially Konstan (2006: 77-90), who refers to it as satisfaction and suggests an interpretation of it as a "pleasurable response to a gesture that enhances one's status"; on friendship, see Konstan 2006: 167-84. This plot contrasts with tragedy in an interesting way. Aristotle says that tragic plots in which the conflict occurs amid friendships (ἐν φιλίαις) elicit pity in a way that conflicts between enemies do not (*Poet.* 1453b14-22); in the 'enemies reconciled' plot, however, the conflicts are between enemies, but conclude in friendship.

[43] Cf. Heath (1989: 352, n. 35), who notes that Orestes reconciling with Aegisthus would certainly seem ugly or shameful (αἰσχρόν) to a Greek audience. On inconsistency of character, see *Poet.* 1454a26-8, where Aristotle allows for the possibility of consistent inconsistency.

[44] On tragic pity and fear in Aristotle and their relationship to each other, see especially Halliwell 1998: 168-84; 2002: 217-30; Konstan 2005; Munteanu 2012: 70-103.

[45] *Eud. Eth.* 1233b23-6. On the conflation of the four emotions, see Coker 1992, who argues that in this passage νέμεσις must more precisely be a virtuous disposition that is constituted from the four virtuous dispositions associated with the four emotions.

tragedy and the 'just deserts' comedy form a closely related family of emotions. According to my interpretation, the catharsis of comedy complements the catharsis of tragedy.

3. What Were the Other Catharseis of Comedy?

Antiquity gives us not one but many catharseis, some of which are elaborations on, responses to, or distortions of Aristotle's.[46] Of the surviving notices, several leave one with little hope of recovering a theory of the comic catharsis, Aristotelian or otherwise. For example, the sixth-century Neoplatonist Olympiodorus claims in his commentary on Plato's *Alcibiades* to know of five varieties of catharsis (all of which, he says, can already be found in Plato!); he attributes one of these to Aristotle (6.6-7.8), but goes on to call it "Peripatetic or Stoic" (54.15-55.11) and then "Aristotelian" (145.12-146.11). Olympiodorus himself seems uncertain about the provenance of the theory, and he says little that can help us here: he does not mention comedy, tragedy, or, for that matter, music generally.[47] In this section, I shall examine three post-Aristotelian sources that explicitly mention a comic catharsis and consider in each case the nature of their accounts generally and how they may relate to Aristotle's in particular.

a) Comic Catharsis in the *Tractatus Coislinianus*

The *Tractatus* is well known because it may or may not derive from an epitome of the second lost book of the *Poetics*. The affirmative case has been argued most (in)famously by Janko; most scholars have remained sceptical but agree that there is heavy Peripatetic influence.[48] For our purposes, the passage where the *Tractatus* describes the catharsis of comedy is of chief importance (*TC* IV)[49]:

[46] For catharsis as a concept prior and up to the time of Aristotle, see the collection of essays in Vöhler and Seidensticker 2007; for a broad survey of catharsis after Aristotle, see Sorabji 2000: 288-300. Fortenbaugh (2003: 106; 2005: 374-5) holds that Theophrastus had a doctrine of comic catharsis that followed Aristotle's. This may be true, but I am afraid that little can be made of it.

[47] Janko (2011) gives this fragment as fr. †75 and excludes it from Aristotle's *On Poets*. See as well Sorabji 2000: 297-300; Heath 2013: 14.

[48] Janko 1984, a book "widely admired and disbelieved" (Heath 1989: 344, n. 1). Most recently, Watson (2012) has built on Janko's work by showing how the *Tractatus* comports with Aristotelian philosophy generally. For the case *contra*, see especially Nesselrath 1990: 102-49. Janko 2001 surveys the reactions to his thesis and answers many criticisms.

[49] I use the numbering in Janko 1984.

> κωμῳδία ἐστὶ μίμησις πράξεως γελοίας . . . δι' ἡδονῆς καὶ γέλωτος περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. ἔχει δὲ μητέρα τὸν γέλωτα.
>
> [Comedy is a representation of a laughable action . . . effecting through pleasure and laughter the catharsis of such emotions. It has laughter as its mother.]

The collocation of laughter and pleasure is rather jarring and has been much criticized.[50] By "laughter" we may understand the laughter emotion; "pleasure", however, is not an emotion, but it can be a sensation that attends certain emotions. Janko has argued that the *Tractatus* has joined an emotion and its genus: "pleasure" refers to the emotions that are accompanied by pleasure.[51] To the extent that the *Tractatus* connects comedy to the laughter emotion and suggests that the emotions of comedy are (at least in the end) pleasurable, it comports with the comic catharsis I sketched above. Yet, unlike the catharsis I described, the *Tractatus* does not allow for the possibility of painful emotions such as indignation. Indeed, even if "pleasure" here refers to the range of emotions that are, on balance, pleasurable, the *Tractatus* focuses exclusively on the importance of laughter and says nothing explicitly about other pleasurable emotions. Laughter – and not pleasure – is called the mother of comedy; in contrast, pain (meaning, according to Janko, the range of painful emotions) is the mother of tragedy.

But the author of the *Tractatus* has clearly simplified the views of Aristotle, or of whatever Peripatetic he did use for these passages. While the *Tractatus* calls laughter the mother of comedy, it hints that there are other relevant emotions. It says that there should be a due measure (συμμετρία) of fear in tragedy, just as there should be a due measure of the laughable in comedy (*TC* IX), and it concludes by dividing comedy into three categories, comedy that is excessive in laughter, comedy that tends towards the serious, and comedy that is a mixture of both types, which is the mean between the other two and presumably the optimal form (*TC* XVIII). Thus despite the prominence given laughter, and despite not naming any other emotions, the *Tractatus* does imply that there are other emotions in comedy. The question is how they relate to laughter and what they might be.

The principle is clearly that the emotions both for comedy and for tragedy must somehow be balanced. In the case of the idea that there should be a "due measure" of fear in tragedy, Bernays supposed that the *Tractatus* was reflecting an observation that Aristotle makes in the *Rhetoric* that ex-

[50] Thus Bernays (1880: 144) complains expressively that, on inspection, one finds the definition of comedy in the *Tractatus* to be a "Kohlenschatz . . . eine jämmerlich ungeschickte Travestie".

[51] Janko 1984: 156-61; 1987: 161-2; 1992: 351; cf. the parallel at *Nic. Eth.* 1105b25. For the observation that the emotions cannot, however, be strictly divided into the pleasurable and painful, see above.

cessive fear drives out pity (1385b32-4; 1386a21-4).[52] This interpretation is, I think, correct. In the case of comedy, Bernays thought that the *Tractatus* was expressing the idea that laughter – which he interprets as malicious mockery ("vernichtendes Hohngelächter", Bernays 1880: 151) – must be balanced with a more innocent pleasure.[53] This interpretation is, I think, not correct. If the *Tractatus* is a refraction of Aristotle or a theory of comedy that derives from Aristotle, then that distinction does not ring true: Aristotle nowhere expresses concern about the maliciousness of laughter in comedy.[54] Moreover, if laughter at the ugliness and error of the inferior characters of comedy is malicious, justified schadenfreude is malicious, too; but, I have argued, it is one of the few emotions that can be identified in Aristotle's treatment of comedy. In any case, whatever its relation to Aristotle, the end of the *Tractatus*, which distinguishes among comedy with an excess of the laughable, comedy that inclines towards the serious, and comedy that mixes both, shows that the balance is to be not between malicious laughter and innocent pleasure, but between the laughable and the serious.

For the emotions and catharsis of comedy, the *Tractatus* must mean that the laughter emotion must be balanced against other pleasurable emotions that are serious.[55] But, while by "serious" it may mean not-laughable, the distinction does not mean that serious emotions are opposed to the laughable. Fear and pity are related and compatible, but an excess of the former comes at the expense of the latter, and the *Tractatus* evidently recommends a balance. The underlying idea may well be that the laughter emotion must be balanced against other pleasurable emotions like schadenfreude and gratulation, which are compatible with the laughter emotion but not necessarily themselves productive of laughter. Their related emotion, indignation, is, of course, neither pleasurable nor laughable, but the emphasis may be on the cumulative sensation involved (pleasure), rather than on the emotions leading up to it.

A comedy that has an excess of laughter will, therefore, be one that elicits

[52] Bernays 1880: 142. Contrast Watson (2012: 158-63), who offers a different conception of "due measure" in tragedy (and catharsis generally: see 141-76, 179-82), according to which fear is balanced with non-fearful emotions that may be pleasurable.

[53] Cf. Smith 1928: 155 (identifying the emotions of comedy as "innocent mirth" and "malicious fun, or ridicule"); Janko 1984: 144-60, 211-12, also suggesting that "due measure" refers to the emotional balance afforded by catharsis. For scepticism that this phrase is Aristotelian, see Heath 2013: 15.

[54] This is true both of the laughter that arises at the characters in comedy, but also of laughter at real individuals outside of the play (i.e. personal abuse). See Heath 1989 for the argument that certain forms of personal abuse are fully compatible with Aristotle's views on mimesis.

[55] Watson (2012: 194-6) offers a similar interpretation.

the laughter emotion above all else. A form of the 'enemies reconciled' plot that Aristotle mentions, wherein the mortal enemies Aegisthus and Orestes end up as friends, may be an example: the change in attitudes may be very funny, but it comes at the expense of other pleasurable emotions, such as schadenfreude. A comedy that has an excess of serious emotions perhaps would be a form of the 'just deserts' plot that focuses on actions that produce indignation, gratulation, and schadenfreude at the expense of the laughable. In the most extreme form, it may even admit ruin and destruction (which Aristotle says are beyond the ambit of the laughable) and thus be indistinguishable from Aristotle's second-best tragedy.

b) Comic Catharsis in Iamblichus

The Neoplatonist Iamblichus, writing in the late third or early fourth century, mentions a catharsis of tragedy and comedy that has occasionally been connected to Aristotle.[56] Iamblichus explains that our emotional faculties become more violent by being contained, but, when exercised a little, they may be purified (ἀποκαθαιρόμεναι) and cease. He describes the process thus (*On the Mysteries* 1.11):

> διὰ δὴ τοῦτο ἔν τε κωμῳδίᾳ καὶ τραγῳδίᾳ ἀλλότρια πάθη θεωροῦντες ἴσταμεν τὰ οἰκεῖα πάθη καὶ μετριώτερα ἀπεργαζόμεθα καὶ ἀποκαθαίρομεν· ἔν τε τοῖς ἱεροῖς θεάμασί τισι καὶ ἀκούσμασι τῶν αἰσχρῶν ἀπολυόμεθα τῆς ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων ἀπ' αὐτῶν συμπιπτούσης βλάβης.
>
> [For this reason, by watching the emotions of others in comedy and tragedy, we settle our own emotions, make them more moderate, and purify them. Also, at sacred rites, by seeing and hearing shameful things, we are freed from the harm that comes about from them in action.]

Iamblichus's catharsis, like Aristotle's, is effected through mimesis and operates homeopathically on the emotions. But there are important differences; Iamblichus's catharsis is either a revision of Aristotle's or comes from another source. His view on the emotions reflects Plato's, namely that they need to be kept in check. His view of the emotional experience of mimesis likewise reflects Plato, and in particular the model that Socrates espouses when bringing the "greatest accusation" against poetry in book 10 of the *Republic* (thus Janko 2011: 520; Belfiore 1992: 284). There, Socrates, first discussing tragedy and the tragic emotions, explains that there is a part of us kept in check by force that yearns to weep for our own misfortunes. According to his account, we satisfy our desire to feel pity (and, in Plato's view, improperly cultivate

[56] Iamblichus *On the Mysteries* 1.11; Janko gives this as *On Poets* fr. 55 (= 81b Rose). See Janko 2011: 519-20 for commentary. For scepticism of its reliance on Aristotle, see Lord 1982: 176, n. 54; Belfiore 1992: 281-7; Heath 2013: 15.

it) not simply because we see the undeserved suffering of others in tragedy and pity them – we allow ourselves to grieve for the characters precisely because we watch the characters themselves grieve (*Rep.* 605c9-d6; 606a3-b10).[57] Likewise, in comedy, a repressed part of us desires to joke around, and this part is satisfied (and improperly cultivated) by seeing comic characters actualize their own desires to joke around (*Rep.* 606c2-10). Aristotle does not draw so direct a connection between the emotions of the characters and the emotions of the audience, particularly in the case of comedy.[58] His discussion emphasizes distance: comedy is a mimesis of people inferior to us, and the laughable is based on their ugliness and errors. In the case of the 'enemies reconciled' comedy, I suggested that the emotional effect of the end of the play on the spectators derives precisely from the fact that the characters' emotions seem inappropriately changeable (e.g. the mortal hatred of Aegisthus and Orestes becomes friendship).

As a consequence, Iamblichus's comic catharsis is quite different from Aristotle's. For Aristotle, the emotions in comedy arise from the same cognitive processes that give rise to the emotions in ordinary life. This is the very reason why catharsis is salutary: emotions are conditioned to be such that they are exercised correctly outside the theatre. But for Iamblichus the emotions of the spectators correspond to the emotions of the characters of comedy. The spectators yearn to do and say shameful things, just as the characters yearn to do and say shameful things in comedy; the spectators' desires are satisfied vicariously by seeing the characters in comedy fulfill their own desires. Iamblichus's catharsis is a reversal of Plato's pronouncement about the effects of such emotional identification. Plato says that watching comic characters indulge in buffoonery will lead a spectator to satisfy his desire to act like a buffoon in everyday life. Iamblichus says that watching comic characters indulge in buffoonery will, for a time, satisfy the spectator's desire to act like a buffoon so that he does not act thus in everyday life. His catharsis is a wish-fulfillment fantasy that will (for a time) exorcise the wish.

c) Comic Catharsis in Proclus

The last comic catharsis that I shall discuss is adduced by another Neoplatonist, Proclus, who was influenced by Iamblichus.[59] In his *Commentary on*

[57] On Plato's charges against tragedy in the *Republic*, see especially Halliwell 2002: 72-117; on tragic pity and fear in Plato, see Munteanu 2012: 52-69. But in this context, see as well Belfiore 1992: 283, noting that Iamblichus is above all concerned with shameless actions and emotions and that, in the case of tragedy, he may not even be concerned with pity and fear, but, say, the desire to commit parricide or incest.

[58] See Munteanu 2012: 141-237, on the relation between the spectators' emotions and the emotions internal to tragedy.

[59] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, vol. 1: 42, 49-50 Kroll; Janko gives part of

Plato's Republic, he first describes a principle that sounds very much like Aristotle's catharsis: the emotions should be satisfied in a balanced fashion and kept tractable for education. Yet Proclus goes on to reject this principle. He argues that spectators, especially youths, develop characters that are similar to the characters of comedy and tragedy and that, when watching drama, emotions are elicited in an immoderate way that precludes any kind of catharsis. The consequence is that comedy rouses a love of pleasure in the impressionable spectator and leads him to inappropriate laughter. For Proclus, there is no catharsis afforded by comedy; comedy is a disease that infects one's character. The catharsis of the comic emotions does not come from comedy.

He instead suggests "expiations" (ἀφοσιώσεις) that consist of restrained activities with a "small resemblance" (σμικρὰν ὁμοιότητα) to what is purged, but he does not explain what precisely he means. Elizabeth Belfiore has suggested that Proclus has in mind a catharsis that is not homeopathic (1992: 287-8). Yet this is not necessarily true; the means of Proclus's expiation have a small resemblance, not none. They may resemble the comic emotions in type, but be small in magnitude. His specific criticisms of the cathartic faculty of comedy are, after all, that the characters of comedy are too varied and that comedy rouses the emotions immoderately. His solution may be that an emotion should be expiated by arousing the same emotion in a carefully controlled, moderate way (the Pythagoreans had a catharsis of precisely this type, and perhaps Proclus has it in mind).[60] This could mean, for example, that the laughter emotion can be purged by means of laughing at a small, tasteful joke, rather than a full comic performance.[61]

By my count, I have adduced four comic catharseis. The first was Aristotle's, which, I argued, works not only on the pleasurable emotions like the laughter emotion, justified schadenfreude, and justified gratulation, but also on the painful emotion of indignation. It seems quite probable that he had other pleasurable (and perhaps painful) emotions in mind, but there is too little evidence to say. The second catharsis appears in the *Tractatus*, whose description privileges laughter in particular, but hints at other emotions; it

these as *On Poets* fr. 56 (= 81a Rose). For commentary, see Janko 2011: 520-1. For scepticism about the relation to Aristotle's doctrine, see Lord 1982: 176, n. 54; Belfiore 1992: 285-7; Heath 2013: 16-17.

[60] The principle is that one is given just a little taste of the emotion that is to undergo catharsis; see Olympiodorus *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades* 6.11-14; 55.1-5; 145.20-146.2.

[61] If Belfiore is correct, then Proclus's catharsis must be neither homeopathic nor allopathic; Proclus may then have in mind the idea, expressed in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, that certain emotions that are related but not the same can drive each other out (e.g. excessive fear precludes pity; anger is incompatible with fear; etc.).

can and perhaps should be folded into Aristotle's account. The third was Iamblichus's, who may take the idea of a comic catharsis from Aristotle, but who transforms it into purgation because of his Platonic conception of mimesis and the emotions. The fourth was the catharsis of Proclus, which purges the emotions that are associated with comedy without using comedy at all. As I promised in the beginning, the enterprise of reconstructing these catharseis must be both speculative, given the paucity and ambiguity of the evidence, and somewhat ghoulish, requiring, as it does, the dissection and reassembly of so many theories.

But, as messy as the enterprise is, catharsis should be of the utmost interest to scholars of ancient comedy, as well as scholars of comedy generally. It is, as I have said, perhaps intuitive that tragedy affords catharsis and exerts some sort of meaningful effect on the emotions. This is less obvious about comedy, and the sketchy evidence that I have discussed here is so important precisely because it offers a way of thinking about comedy that is foreign to most ancient scholarship. Most ancient scholars who were concerned with comedy's effects on spectators and society focused very narrowly on the ethics of laughter and were preoccupied with the effects, whether salutary or deleterious, of joking. Indeed, some trace the origins of comedy to mockery, and the conventional periodization of ancient comedy ties the different phases of comedy to the different kinds of abuse: in Old Comedy, crooked politicians and generals were explicitly made fun of; in Middle, the same were mocked more obliquely; and in New, character types became the objects of laughter.[62] Such an approach was popular, but it seems very deficient. The essence of comedy becomes joking, and the main effects of comedy become punishment and deterrence.

The ethics of joking are, of course, important. Aristotle knew this well.[63] But the force of comedy cannot be reduced to the ethical force of laughter. Aristotle (like Plato and his successors) also knew well that comedy, no less than tragedy, produces real emotional responses. These emotional responses are easy to pass over because they are often accompanied by laughter, but they may well have real effects on our emotional faculties, either immediately or over time. A theory of comic catharsis tries to engage with this problem by explaining what rousing those emotions does to the psychology of the individual (this will, of course, have ethical implications, and others too). The endeavor of reconstructing and thinking about the comic catharsis may be speculative, messy, and ghoulish, and my own reconstructions may soon be buried with so many others. But the speculation is necessary: we

[62] Nesselrath (1990: 28-45) offers the best survey of these sources and their provenance; see as well Csapo 2000 for general discussion.

[63] See, e.g. *Nic. Eth.* 1127b33-28b9.

cannot move forward without it, and the matter is too important to let alone. Reconstructing the comic catharsis means confronting on a basic level the question of how comedy changes us.

Abbreviations

CAG (1882-1909), *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, edita consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae, 23 vols, Berlin: Reimer.

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Elisabetta Matelli*

Theophrastus on Catharsis and the Need for Release from the Evils Due to Emotions

Abstract

Theophrastus had a systematic approach to the traditional problem of "catharsis" and treated the question referring to different fields of knowledge. He proved a keen and unprejudiced observer and collector of the largest possible number of experiences that may describe different kinds of catharsis. At a speculative level, he proceeded in continuity with and yet going beyond his teacher's opinions. Important building blocks in the construction of his cathartic theory were the development of the Aristotelian method through the criterion of the "more and the less", which became the guiding principle he applied to physiological enquiries into humors and warmth. This led to a consequent focus on the physiological motions connected with the ones of the soul (both explained in terms of a dynamic relationship between different degrees of "tension" and "relaxation", two key terms) and with the interpretation of ethical issues in relation to the different degrees of "tension" or "relaxation" of the motions of the soul linked to the emotions in so far as this dynamics produces both vices or virtues. The locution *apolysis tôn kakôn* ("release from evils") seemingly substituted the term "catharsis" in the ethical contexts in which Theophrastus elaborated his original take on the theme. The cathartic effect of the physiological and psychological "release from evils" operated through a precise use of the human voice (valid both in music and in the performing arts) involves both the performer and the audience: from an ethical point of view, *apolysis tôn kakôn* (i.e. catharsis) represents the unique end or purpose of his qualitative conception of music. In his view, religious piety does not consist in animal sacrifice or in traditional rites, but rather in an ethical "catharsis from evils" (*katharsis ton kakon*); therefore, this religious issue might be considered as the starting point and the conclusion of Theophrastus's philosophical theory of catharsis, a theory in which the whole range of his science is involved.

Preliminary Remarks

From the considerable production of the Peripatetic philosopher Theophrastus only a few texts have been preserved through the medieval manuscript tradition, along with a substantial number of testimonies and fragments on

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themes that touch on the whole range of knowledge defined by Aristotle. In this article I wish to address the issue of catharsis and enthusiasm in Theophrastus aware of this limitation.

In the testimonies and fragments of Theophrastus the terms catharsis and enthusiasm are kept separate. Even so, it seems possible to recognize signs of a systematic theory connecting these topics one to the other; this theory seemingly develops teachings and experiences derived from a long previous tradition (Hoessly 2001), and demonstrates a degree of originality towards his own master.

It is important to be clear at the outset that Theophrastus used the term "catharsis" several times, in keeping with the use of his master Aristotle, but never in the technical sense attributed to Pythagoras's definition of musical therapy:

> Iamb. *VP* 110
> Ὑπελάμβανε δὲ καὶ τὴν μουσικὴν μεγάλα συμβάλλεσθαι πρὸς ὑγείαν, ἄν τις αὐτῇ χρῆται κατὰ τοὺς προσήκοντας τρόπους. εἰώθει γὰρ οὐ παρέργως τῇ τοιαύτῃ χρῆσθαι καθάρσει· τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ καὶ προσηγόρευε τὴν διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς ἰατρείαν (κτλ).
>
> [He (i.e. Pythagoras) maintained that music could be very helpful to good health, if it was used in the proper ways. And he was not infrequently accustomed to use this kind of "catharsis": in fact he referred to musical healing in this way . . .][1]
>
> Porph. *VP* 33
> καὶ ὑγιαίνουσι μὲν αὐτοῖς ἀεὶ συνδιέτριβεν, κάμνοντας δὲ τὰ σώματα ἐθεράπευεν, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς δὲ νοσοῦντας παρεμυθεῖτο, καθάπερ ἔφαμεν, τοὺς μὲν ἐπῳδαῖς καὶ μαγείαις τοὺς δὲ μουσικῇ. ἦν γὰρ αὐτῷ μέλη καὶ πρὸς νόσους σωμάτων παιώνια, ἃ ἐπᾴδων ἀνίστη τοὺς κάμνοντας. ἦν <δ'> ἃ καὶ λύπης λήθην εἰργάζετο καὶ ὀργὰς ἐπράυνε καὶ ἐπιθυμίας ἀτόπους ἐξῄρει.
>
> [(Pythagoras) always paid attention to his disciples' health, curing those who were sick with physical diseases and encouraging those who suffered from psychological affections, as we have already said, the former by sung spells and magic, the latter by means of music. He had healing melodies that cured somatic troubles, and when he sang them, the sick were restored. He had also melodies that let one forget pain, soothed wrath and removed inappropriate desires.]

The Peripatetic Aristoxenus (a colleague of Theophrastus's) describes the Pythagorean catharsis with the following variant:

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Greek and Latin quotations are mine.

Aristoxenus, fr. 26.2-3 Wehrli
οἱ Πυθαγορικοί, ὡς ἔφη Ἀριστόξενος, καθάρσει ἐχρῶντο τοῦ μὲν σώματος διὰ τῆς ἰατρικῆς, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς.

[As catharsis for the body the Pythagoreans used medicine and music for the soul.]

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle used the term catharsis with reference both to tragic catharsis (*Poet.* 6, 1449b22-8) and to religious ritual (*Poet.* 17, 1455b15). Besides a few occurrences that are not significant for us now (*Pol.* 3.6, 1281b36-7, 7.11.1331a33), in the *Politics* he devotes ample space to the issue using the term catharsis and its cognates with reference to music. He presents the aulos as an orgiastic instrument useful to catharsis and lets us understand that catharsis is a quasi-therapeutic phenomenon to be distinguished from *paideia* (education), but no less important for the citizens.

Arist. *Pol.* 8.6, 1341a21-4
ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ αὐλὸς ἠθικὸν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὀργιαστικόν, ὥστε πρὸς τοὺς τοιούτους αὐτῷ καιροὺς χρηστέον ἐν οἷς ἡ θεωρία κάθαρσιν μᾶλλον δύναται ἢ μάθησιν.

[Moreover the aulos has not an ethical effect but rather orgiastic, so that it ought to be used on the occasions in which the spectacle has the purpose of purification rather than of instruction.]

In the eighth book of the *Politics* Aristotle devotes special attention to musical catharsis, promising to treat the definition of "catharsis" more precisely when he writes about poetics, but the few (important) lines we read in *Poet.* 6, 1449b24-8 and 17, 1455b15 do not seem to correspond to the intended purpose. Aristotle might have developed this topic in the lost second book of *Poetics* (Rostagni 1927: XLII; Flores 1988: 39-40 and n. 3; Janko 1984: 64) or in a lost section devoted to poetics in the *Politics* (Halliwell 1986: 190-1 and n. 32).

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b38-9
τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν, νῦν μὲν ἁπλῶς, πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον.

[Now we are speaking of catharsis without elucidation, but we shall say more explicitly what we mean by this term writing about poetics. (Trans. by Rackham 1932)]

I have selected this parenthetical remark from a long period in which Aristotle presents catharsis as the second of three features and purposes of music:

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b37-41
φαμὲν δ οὐ μιᾶς ἕνεκεν ὠφελείας τῇ μουσικῇ χρῆσθαι δεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ πλειόνων

χάριν (καὶ γὰρ παιδείας ἕνεκεν καὶ καθάρσεως – τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν . . . – τρίτον δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν πρὸς ἄνεσίν τε καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῆς συντονίας ἀνάπαυσιν)

[We say that music ought to be employed not for the purpose of one benefit that it confers but on account of several, (for it serves the purpose both of education and of *catharsis* – now we are speaking of catharsis . . . [see previous quotation] – and thirdly it may provide amusement, recreation and rest from our tension).][2]

I will return to the third purpose of music (relaxation and rest) distinct from catharsis at the end of the article. Suffice it here to say that, even if Theophrastus picks up most of the catharsis theory expressed by Aristotle in that ample section of *Politics* (*Pol.* 8.7, 1341b19-1342b34), he develops the purpose of music in a substantially different way.

Here another key passage of this section of the *Politics*:

Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1342a4-17
ὃ γὰρ περὶ ἐνίας συμβαίνει πάθος ψυχὰς ἰσχυρῶς, τοῦτο ἐν πάσαις ὑπάρχει, τῷ δὲ ἧττον διαφέρει καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον, οἷον ἔλεος καὶ φόβος, ἔτι δ' ἐνθουσιασμός· καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς κινήσεως κατοκώχιμοί τινές εἰσιν, ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν ὁρῶμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθισταμένους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως· ταὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικοὺς καὶ τοὺς ὅλως παθητικούς, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους καθ' ὅσον ἐπιβάλλει τῶν τοιούτων ἑκάστῳ, καὶ πᾶσι γίγνεσθαί τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ μέλη τὰ πρακτικὰ παρέχει χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

[The state of emotion that occurs powerfully in some souls is the same in all of them, but with varying degrees of intensity, as with pity, fear and enthusiasm. In fact, *some are very taken by this motion*, but we see that these people, when they make use of songs that excite the soul, by virtue of the sacred melodies are sedated as if they had found a cure and purification. Those who feel pity and fear necessarily experience the same, those who in general are sensitive and others, to the extent that each is affected by similar emotions, and for all of them there is purification and a pleasant relief. Similarly songs of action offer a harmless joy to people.]

Aristotle recalls what he wrote in chapter 5, where he described people who got enthusiastic when they listened to Olympus's chants, and marks own that enthusiasm is a "pathos":

[2] See discussions about the interpretation of this problematic passage in Dirlmeier 1940: 82-4; Barker 1946: 349, n. 4; Kraut 1997: 209; Schütrumpf 2005: 651-2.

> Arist. *Pol.* 8.5, 1340a8-12
> ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτι γιγνόμεθα ποιοί τινες, φανερὸν διὰ πολλῶν μὲν καὶ ἑτέρων, οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν Ὀλύμπου μελῶν· ταῦτα γὰρ ὁμολογουμένως ποιεῖ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐνθουσιαστικάς, ὁ δ' ἐνθουσιασμὸς τοῦ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἤθους πάθος ἐστίν.
>
> [But that we are affected in a certain manner is clear both from many other kinds of music and not least from the melodies of Olympus; for these admittedly make our souls enthusiastic, and enthusiasm is an affection of the character of the soul. (Trans. by Rackham 1932)]

It is also noteworthy that Aristotle speaks of different degrees of passions after the principle of "the more and the less", and presents enthusiastic people as "taken" by a "movement" (of their souls): Theophrastus will carry forward exactly these ideas.

In this regard, it is worth quoting Kraut's comment on *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b36-1342a16, which focuses on a fundamental problem:

> When music purifies, it has an effect on an adult who has already been educated and whose character has been formed. This serves an ethical purpose, but that purpose is not to educate the adult, but to surmount an emotional obstacle to virtuous activity. (Kraut 1997: 209)

As is well known, Aristotle's treatment of catharsis is at the same time fundamental and aporetic.[3]

I will focus on Theophrastus's therapeutic theory of music under the following headings:

1. Theophrastus on catharsis (scientific writings and religious perspective);
2. Theophrastus on musical healing in *On Enthusiasm(s)*;
3. Theophrastus's *On music* and the purpose of this art.

1. Theophrastus on Catharsis: His Scientific Writings and His Religious Perspective

a. *Occurrences of the Term "Catharsis" in Theophrastus*

Catharsis and its cognates are terms with an important historical background in religious rites and magical therapy to which I will return (see 1.b). Theophrastus employs the word a few times in a religious context; however, the number of these occurrences is inversely proportional to their philosophical

[3] A long-lasting debate has been engendered on this issue; see, among the others, Ničev 1982; Halliwell 1986: 350-6; Luserke 1991; Marchiori 2006; the contrasting interpretations of Belfiore 1992 and Sifakis 2001; the brief bibliographical overview in Provenza 2011: 94, n. 94 is also useful.

importance.[4] As already said, I have found no occurrence of the term catharsis in the field of music, where, as will be noted, other terms are used.

In keeping with Aristotle, Plato, and the Hippocratic School, the term is more often used to express the simple idea of "cleaning" / "washing" or more technical meanings (especially in medicine or in natural science). The different ambits define the various senses of this word. It is therefore necessary to consider the broad semantic field of catharsis and the way it is employed by Theophrastus in his entire philosophical system: in such a framework, the notion of musical healing also occurs; unlike Aristotle, though, Theophrastus conveys this notion without actually employing the term *katharsis* or its cognates.

In Theophrastus's writings on natural science,[5] the verb *kathairein* and its cognates are used in the sense of "cleaning" / "purifying" from extrinsic elements:

– In *About creatures that appear in Swarms* = 359A.16 and 18 *FHS&G*, *katharma* is used in the sense of "refuse" / "rubbish".
– In *On Sense and What is Sensed*, fr. 1 § 89.7 (Wimmer 1866: 340.18) the phrase *kathairein to halmyron* refers to the biological purgation from salinity.

Minerals are subject to "purification" too:

– Theophrastus speaks of "refined gold" in *On stones* 46.2 (Eichholz ed. 1965) (cf. Plat. *Pol.* 303d7-8).
– He writes about *katharisterion* as the "place of purification, where the grains of silver are cleaned from the mines" in *On Metals* (Theophr. 201.3 *FHS&G*).

About environmental purification:

> In *On Winds*, fr. 5 § 50.7, 8, 13 (Wimmer 1866: 386.45, 46, 51) *apokatharsis* refers to the effect of purification brought about by the snow.

[4] Janko felt that the notion of the religious origin of catharsis supported by Bernays (1857) had been superseded "since his essay it has been widely accepted that the idea of catharsis derives from medicine ('purgation') rather than from religion ('purification')" (Janko 1984: 139), but anthropological and historical research has provided the evidence that the origin of catharsis has to be attributed to sacrifices and ablutions performed in response to an ancestral conception of religious imperatives. See Lloyd-Jones 1971: 55-78, Parker 1983: 2 ("the Hippocratic doctor, in seeing 'impurity' as cause and symptom of disease is an heir to the prophet or oracle") and Burkert 1992: 55-64. A detailed *status quaestionis* can be found in Hoessly 2001: 17-81.

[5] I referred to the following editions: Hort 1916 (*Research on Plants = HP*), Einarson and Link 1976-90 (*Plants Explanations = CP*), Eichholz 1965 (*On Stones*), Fortenbaugh 2003a (*On Sweat*).

Botanic purification coincides with "pruning"[6] in:

- *HP* 9.6.3.1; *CP* 2.5.4.14, 3.7.12.10 (*katharsis*).
- *HP* 1.3.3.2, 1.9.1.13 (*anakathairein*).
- *HP* 1.1.3.15, 9.11.9.9 (*apokathairein* with the explicit sense of "cleaning away elements unnecessary by nature").
- *HP* 2.6.5.3, 2.7.1.4, 2.7.2.1, 2.7.2.6, 2.7.3.3; 4.13.3.13; *CP* 2.12.6.3, 2.15.3.12, 3.2.1.9, 3.2.2.6, 3.7.5.2, 3.7.8.3, 3.7.9.1, 3.7.10.2, 3.7.10.8, 3.8.2.2, 3.9.1.2, 3.9.5.10, 3.18.2.4, 3.19.1.5, 3.19.1.7, 3.19.3.3, 5.8.2.7-8, 5.15.3.7-8 (*diakatharsis* and its cognates).
- *CP* 5.9.11.9; *HP* 9.7.4.5 (*perikatharsis* and cognates in the sense of "pruning" / "thinning the topmost roots of the vine" and "scraping the roots clean").

In his botanical works, Theophrastus describes the effects of physiological purification ("upwards" and "downwards") provided by various herbs, plants, flowers, roots, fruits or fruit-juices. He seems to have made careful research, observing without prejudice their use by doctors, herbalists and magicians:[7]

- *Katharsis* and *kathairein* are used with reference to the purging effect that different parts of several herbs or plants induce by causing diarrhoea in *HP* 3.18.13.14, 6.3.1.13 and 16, 6.3.6.5, 9.8.4.6 9.10.2.4, 9.11.8.4 (*kathairei kato mallon*), 9.12.4.6, (*kathairei kato*), 9.13.6.11 (*kathairei kato*), 9.17.3.2.
- In *HP* 9.9.5.11-15 Theophrastus pays attention to some therapeutic properties, describing the strange fact that in the cases of *thapsia, iskhas*, *libanotis* "part of the same root should purge (*kathairein*) upwards and another part downwards", while with the "driver" (*elaterion*) "the same parts should purge both upwards and downwards". In *HP* 9.11.11.4-5 he specifies that only the herb called *libanotis* (the barren variety) has a root that "can purge (*kathairein*) both upwards and downwards". See also *HP* 9.20.3.10 and 12-13.

[6] Highland explains purging as a form of "transformative catharsis" different from purgative catharsis. He interprets the Theophrastean botanical purging as a kind of transformative catharsis applicable to human emotions as "a maturing process with profound and lasting results for the person instead of a temporary release of pent-up emotions that will need to be reapplied periodically" (2005: 162).

[7] On Theophrastus's method of gathering a great deal of information from those who cultivated and used plants for practical (including medical) use see Preus 1988: "But Theophrastus is more than simply a mirror of his sources. He has in fact philosophical motivations for his research, motivations that are similar to those that brought Aristotle to zoological investigation. . . . Theophrastus is investigating 'natures' and those natures are the functional parts of the entities that he investigates quite as much, sometimes more than, the entity as a whole" (77).

– In *Charact.* 20.6.2 the verb *kathairein* describes the disagreeability of the man who "at dinner tells how he was cleaned out top and bottom after drinking hellebore and the bile from his faeces was blacker than the broth on the table", and in *On Dizziness* 12.95 (Sharples 2003) the "persons who still have to be (properly) purged".
– *akatharsia* refers to a physical impurity in *On Sweat* 5.32 and 13.84 (Fortenbaugh 2003a).

Theophrastus also examines some specific medical purification effects:

– in a passage of *HP* 7.6.2.13 he uses *kathairein* in order to refer to the medical effect of the lettuce-juice that *purges away dropsy*.
– in *HP* 7.12.3.8 with the verb *hypokathairei* he presents the medicinal property of the pounded root of *theseion* (bitter to the taste) that *purges the bowels* (*koilian*). Cf. *HP* 9.12.3.7 about the same effect of the fruit of the wild poppy.
– *HP* 9.9.5.4 with *kathairein* he describes the fruit of the germander that *purifies bile*.
– In *HP* 9.11.9.13 he presents the fruit of the *tithymallos* (called "myrtle like") that "*purges the phlegm downwards*".
– In *HP* 9.8.4.6 he describes the purging effect of the fruit of the hellebore used by the people of Anticyra, also noting that "*this fruit contains the well-known drug called sesamodes*".

The following passages are indirectly but deeply connected with some topics that will be discussed below with regard to musical catharsis:

– In a passage of *HP* 9.9.3.4 Theophrastus writes that "cyclamen juice mixed with honey is a purge for the head" (ὁ δὲ ὀπὸς πρὸς τὰς ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς καθάρσεις ἐν μέλιτι ἐγχεόμενος), i.e. it mitigates headaches;[8] it is interesting to observe that, in the same context, he adds that the juice "is also conducive to drunkenness, if one is given a draught of wine in which it has been steeped" (καὶ πρὸς τὸ μεθύσκειν, ἐὰν ἐν οἴνῳ διαβρέχων διδῷ τις πίνειν), and that the root of cyclamen is said to be "a good charm for inducing rapid delivery and as a love potion" (ἀγαθὴν δὲ τὴν ῥίζαν καὶ ὠκυτόκιον περίαπτον καὶ εἰς φίλτρα), showing that the same kind of plant can at the time "purge" and "excite". We will return to this oxymoric cathartic effect also in relation to musical therapy.
– Theophrastus also writes about the beneficent effect of the root of the kind of poppy called *Herakleia* for purging upwards and healing epileptics: ταύτης ἡ ῥίζα καθαίρει ἄνω· χρῶνται δέ τινες πρὸς τοὺς

[8] Cf. Diosc. 2.164; Plin. 25.133, 26.149.

> ἐπιλήπτους ἐν μελικράτῳ (*HP* 9.12.5.4) [the root of this plant purges upwards: and some use it in a posset of mead for epileptics].[9]

As we shall consider below (§ 2), in *On Enthusiasm(s)* Theophrastus describes the therapeutic effect of exciting music for healing epileptics.

In another passage, he reminds us of the purifying effect of a particular variety of hellebore called 'of Melampus', which is associated with magic rituals of purification (Parker 1983: 207-8, 212-13, 215, 230, 290, n. 45):

> *HP* 9.10.4.9
> Καλοῦσι δὲ τὸν μέλανά τινες ἔκτομον Μελαμπόδιον, ὡς ἐκείνου πρῶτον τεμόντος καὶ ἀνευρόντος. καθαίρουσι δὲ καὶ οἰκίας αὐτῷ καὶ πρόβατα συνεπάδοντές τινα ἐπῳδὴν καὶ εἰς ἄλλα δὲ πλείω χρῶνται.
>
> [Some call the black variety "the hellebore of Melampus", saying that he first cut and discovered it. Men also purify houses and sheep with it, at the same time chanting an incantation. And they put it to several other uses.]

In *HP* 9.13.6.11 he describes the effect of the scorpion plant (leopard's bane) and that of the polypody, noting that the former resembles a scorpion and it is also useful against stings of that creature and for certain other purposes, adding:

> ἡ δὲ τοῦ πολυποδίου δασεῖα καὶ ἔχουσα κοτυληδόνας, ὥσπερ αἱ τοῦ πολύποδος πλεκτάναι. καθαίρει δὲ κάτω· κἂν περιάψηταί τις οὔ φασιν ἐμφύεσθαι πολύπουν.
>
> [The root of polypody is rough and sucks like the tentacles of the polyp. It purges downwards: and, if one wears it as an amulet, they say that one does not get polyps].

In *Characters*, Theophrastus describes and caricatures superstitious religious acts of purification by presenting the superstitious man as one who purifies the house frequently (*Char.* 16.7 Diggle) and asks to be purified himself (*perikathairesthai*) with a squill or a puppy (*Char.* 16.14 Diggle, see also Parker 1983: 30 and n. 65, 230-2 and n. 136).

In all these texts, Theophrastus seems to have carefully reported several cases that he called "catharsis", observing and collecting them without prejudice, only seldom adding a personal opinion. However, Theophrastus's personal beliefs about religious catharsis emerge in his *On Piety,* where the verb καθαίρειν, the adjective καθαρός, and the adverb καθαρῶς occur four times in the space of a few lines to express the need of a pure *ethos* on the suppliant's part when he is sacrificing (584A linn. 154, 156, 158, 161 *FHS&G*).

[9] This and the following translations of Theophrastus's *Research on Plants* are Hort's (1916).

It is worth quoting here the whole Theophrastean passage:[10]

> Porph. *De Abst.* 2.19.4 = 584A.154-61 *FHS&G*
> δεῖ τοίνυν καθηραμένους τὸ ἦθος ἰέναι θύσοντας τοῖς θεοῖς θεοφιλεῖς ταύτας τὰς θυσίας προσάγοντας, ἀλλὰ μὴ πολυτελεῖς. νῦν δὲ ἐσθῆτα μὲν λαμπρὰν περὶ σῶμα μὴ καθαρὸν ἀμφιεσαμένοις οὐκ ἀρκεῖν νομίζουσιν πρὸς τὸ τῶν θυσιῶν ἁγνόν. ὅταν δὲ τὸ σῶμα μετὰ τῆς ἐσθῆτός τινες λαμπρυνάμενοι μὴ καθαρὰν κακῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντες ἴωσιν πρὸς τὰς θυσίας, οὐδὲν διαφέρειν νομίζουσιν, ὥσπερ οὐ τῷ θειοτάτῳ γε τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν χαίροντα μάλιστα τὸν θεὸν διακειμένῳ καθαρῶς, ἅτε συγγενεῖ πεφυκότι.
>
> [Therefore it is necessary that when men are going to sacrifice, they approach *cleansed* in character, bringing to the gods sacrifices that are pleasing to them, but not expensive. Men do not think it sufficient for the *purity* of sacrifices that they have bright clothes on a body that is *not cleaned*. But whenever some people approach sacrifices having brightened up their bodies together with their clothing, while possessing a soul that is not *cleansed of evils*, they think it makes no difference, as if god did not take special delight in the most divine thing within us when it is *in a cleansed condition*, since it is by nature akin to him. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]

One should note how the wording μὴ καθαρὰν κακῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντες ("while possessing a soul that is not *cleansed of evils*", emphasis added) remarks in a religious context the fundamental ethical problem that even his *On Music* seeks to answer, as we will soon see.

In this work, Theophrastus reduces to absurdity the idea that in religious rites blood sacrifices are "holy acts" capable of producing catharsis; he argues that, on the contrary, they are absolutely impious, and does this with a kind of rationalistic reasoning that can be recognized also at the basis of the book *On the Sacred Disease* (attributed to Hippocrates), which exposes the internal contradictions of the widespread theory that the sacred disease (i.e. epilepsy) always stemmed from a sacred punishment from the Gods.[11] Theophrastus in his *On Piety*, like the author of *On the Sacred Disease*, redefines the word "holy" and indirectly the concept of catharsis (Laskaris 2002: 113-24).

b. *Catharsis in Theophrastus from a Religious Perspective*

The theme of purification or, more technically, of catharsis presents itself with an anthropological significance that reaches our own time as indicated by the extensive modern bibliography on the topic. Burkert, presenting different instances of purification in the ancient Greek world, cites numerous

[10] A *status quaestionis* and a critical approach to Porphyrius's contribution on Theophrastus's *On Piety* have been summarized by Fortenbaugh 1984: 262-85.

[11] *On the Sacred Disease* 1.1-13; 2.1 (Jouanna 2013); see Laskaris 2002: 108-10.

very macabre occasions on which the ritual of purification is reduced to "magical and utilitarian aspects" (Burkert 1998: 187-90).

Theophrastus's work *Peri Eusebeias* (*On Piety*) addressed directly the theme of religious sacrifice, expressing an original point of view compared to the predominant Greek tradition or even to the theory of his master Aristotle (*Pol.* 1.3, 1256b15-23): the idea of "purification" comes into play here.

In his *Homo Necans*, Walter Burkert claims that, since the Palaeolithic, the nature of the bloody rituals involving human and, later on, animal sacrifice may be interpreted as an attempt to justify the violence that human beings cause to everything that is alive (Burkert 1981: 24, also 1985: 79-83).[12]

Blood sacrifice as an individual and collective act of purification has informed religious rituals since the earliest times (Massari 1961: 281-3): animal sacrifices represent a key element in all private and public religious ceremonies of the city-states of the ancient world (not only in Indo-European culture) as a means for getting order, cleanliness, sacredness and redeeming the *miasma* (Parker 1983).

In column B, line 5 of the *Sacred Law of Selinous* (a fifth-century lead tablet describing the cathartic procedures for those convicted of murder) we read the prescription for sacrificing a pig.[13] Likewise, the *Lex cathartica of Cyrene* (end of the fourth century BC) testifies precise rules for regulating the city's purification rites of individuals guilty of familial blood crimes (*SEG* 9.72; see Parker 1983: 332-51, 352-74). The sacrifice of the pig is a *topos* (Parker 1983: 386-8). We might recall the famous image of the Apulian bell krater by the Painter of the *Eumenides* (see image 1), in which, after the matricide Orestes is *purified* by Apollo who, in Delphi, drips the blood of a pig over him. This is a clear iconographic reference to Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, in which the bloody rite of purification of the contaminated matricide is described in detail (Hoessly 2001: 108-31):[14]

(Ορ.) βρίζει γὰρ αἷμα καὶ μαραίνεται χερός,
μητροκτόνον μίασμα δ' ἔκπλυτον πέλει.
ποταίνιον γὰρ ὂν πρὸς ἑστίᾳ θεοῦ
Φοίβου καθαρμοῖς ἠλάθη χοιροκτόνοις.
. . .
(Ορ.) ἄφθογγον εἶναι τὸν παλαμναῖον νόμος,
ἔστ' ἂν πρὸς ἀνδρὸς αἵματος καθαρσίου
σφαγαὶ καθαιμάξωσι νεοθήλου βοτοῦ.
πάλαι πρὸς ἄλλοις ταῦτ' ἀφιερώμεθα
οἴκοισι, καὶ βοτοῖσι καὶ ῥυτοῖς πόροις.
Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 280-3; 448-52

[12] Walter Bukert passed away in March 2015: to him goes my grateful remembrance.
[13] *SEG* 43. 630; Dimartino 2003: 305-49; Salvo 2012: 125-57.
[14] Aesch. *Eum.* 283, 449; cf. Aesch. fr. 327 R.; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.690-720.

> [For the blood is growing drowsy and fading from my hand, and the pollution of matricide has been washed out: at the hearth of the god Phoebus, when it was still fresh, it was expelled by means of purification-sacrifice of a young pig. . . . It is the law that a man who has committed homicide must not speak until blood has dripped over him from the slaughter of a young beast at the hands of a man who can cleanse blood pollution. I have long since been purified in this way at other houses both by animal victims and by flowing streams. (Trans. by Sommerstein 2008)]

Image 1. *The Purification of Orestes in Delphi. Apulian Bell Krater by the Painter of the Eumenides (Paris, Louvre K 710).*

Burkert observes that the ritual is a demonstrative and therefore harmless repetition of the shedding of blood:

> To offer a surrogate victim to the pursuing powers of vengeance is an idea which seems natural in expiating a murder, but the essential aspect seems to

> be that the person defiled by blood should once again come into contact with blood. (Burkert 1985: 81)

As a result of this purification rite, the "visible" blood spot could be washed away and the crime – in this way – was not suppressed, but overcome (see Burkert 1985: 81; Hoessly 2001: 99-149).

Since ancient times, purification through the blood sacrifice of a male animal had therefore become a norm established in public and private rituals. The headquarters of the popular assembly and the theatre in Athens were routinely purified through a ritual in which some officials, the *peristiarchoi*, carried piglets in circles around the square, cut their throats spraying blood over the seats, cut off their genitals and eventually threw them away (Burkert 1985: 81-2). As is well known (and for this reason I will not dwell on the subject), all the Dionysian festivals revolved around the ritual sacrifice of a goat, a ram or a bull, ritual acts that, according to historians of ancient religion, alluded to the mystical ceremony of the sacrifice of the dismembered Dionysus. According to the anthropological reading of the "scapegoat" the animal victim is sacrificed to displace on to it the responsibility for a crime of which it is innocent, but from which a community feels the need to be freed (Girard 1982; Parker 1983: 24-6, 258-60; Burkert 1998: 51-3; Dimartino 2003: 326, n. 82). Similarly, in the Jewish tradition, *Leviticus* records the rituals of the "scapegoat" whose blood was shed to cleanse the temple and the altar desecrated by the sins of the Israelites (*Lev.* 16.5-10). In this regard, we recall that among the names of Dionysus there is also *Eriphos*, "kid" (Hesychius *s.v.* Ἔριφος). The apocryphal *Epistle of Barnabas* interprets the rite of the scapegoat in *Leviticus* as a symbolic foreshadowing of the self-sacrifice of Jesus.

This long, yet not exhaustive overview of the historical, cultural, and anthropological question of catharsis through blood sacrifices was necessary in order to better frame the issue against which Theophrastus argues in his *On Piety*. Large sections of this work are preserved by Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*.

As Heraclitus and Empedocles had done before him,[15] Theophrastus argues against animal sacrifice, contradicting Aristotle's point of view about the inferiority and submission of animals to human beings (*Pol.* 1, 31256b15-27). Theophrastus introduced instead the idea of an original friendship (*philia*) and familiarity (*oikeiosis*) between human beings and all the other ani-

[15] "They purify themselves from blood staining them with other blood, as if one entered the mud, wanted to wash himself in the mud" (Heraclitus B5 *DK*). Empedocles, in the *Katharmoi*, due to his belief in metempsychosis, i.e. in the possibility of a human being reincarnating as an animal, gave continuity to the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrines against eating animals and sacrificing any animated being (Empedocles 31 B 135-9 *DK*; references to the Pythagoreans in A 31, B 135, 136).

mate creatures (without exceptions). If a person aims to be truly pious, he cannot sacrifice a living being because "θυτέον οὖν ἐκ τῶν ἡμετέρων, οὐ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων" ["we should sacrifice from what is ours, not from what belongs to others"] (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.13.3 = 584A.129-30 *FHS&G*):

> ἡ γὰρ θυσία ὁσία τίς ἐστι κατὰ τοὔνομα. ὅσιος δὲ οὐδεὶς ὃς ἐκ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἀποδίδωσι χάριτας, κἂν καρποὺς λάβῃ κἂν φυτά, μὴ ἐθέλοντος.
>
> [Sacrifice, as its name suggests, is something holy, but no one is holy if he returns favours out of other people's possessions without their consent, not even if he takes crops or plants. (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.12.4 = 584A.109-12 *FHS&G*; trans. by Clark 2000)]

Instead of purifying him, the blood sacrifice spreads and contaminates the wrongdoer, requiring a further and more appropriate act of purification. Theophrastus's position is radical, as he also recommends a vegetarian diet (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.53.3 = 584C *FHS&G*).

To support his argument, Theophrastus traces the origins of sacrifice back to ancestral times, when – he says – the rites did not require the killing of animals:

> διὰ πολλῶν δὲ ὁ Θεόφραστος <ἐκ> τῶν παρ' ἑκάστοις πατρίων ἐπιδείξας, ὅτι τὸ παλαιὸν τῶν θυσιῶν διὰ τῶν καρπῶν ἦν ἔτ' εἰπὼν πρότερον τῆς πόας λαμβανομένης, καὶ τὰ τῶν σπονδῶν ἐξηγεῖται τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον.
>
> Theophrastus uses examples from many ancestral customs of different peoples to show that the ancient form of sacrifice was crops. He says, too, that even earlier grass was collected. He also explains libations, as follows. (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.20.2 = 540A.169-75 *FHS&G*; trans. by Clark 2000)

According to Theophrastus's reconstruction, the oldest forms of sacrifice offered the harvest and only after repeated famines were people led to sacrifice animals instead of offering crops.

In his research on the subject, Theophrastus describes and comments also on the Syrian-Jewish practice of sacrificing animals:

> καίτοι Σύρων μὲν Ἰουδαῖοι διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς συνήθειαν ἔτι καὶ νῦν, φησὶν ὁ Θεόφραστος, ζῳοθυτούντων εἰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμᾶς τρόπον τις κελεύοι θύειν, ἀποσταίημεν ἂν τῆς πράξεως.
>
> [Although among Syrians – Theophrastus says – Jews still even now sacrifice animals on account of a rite of sacrifice that goes back to the beginning, if someone should order us to sacrifice in the same way, we should stand back from the deed. (Porph. *De Abst.* 2.26.1 = 584A.261-3 *FHS&G*; trans. by Clark 2000][16]

[16] See Clark 2000: 150, n. 269.

Before I momentarily depart from the religious theme of purification, to which I will return later on, I would like to summarize the important idea that Theophrastus's religious catharsis – as I will further discuss below – coincides not so much with ritual practices of sacrificing and not at all with any magic procedures[17] as with the pure (i.e. cleansed from evils) *ethos tes psyches* of the offerer.

This rational but still not unreligious perspective follows in the wake of fifth-fourth century BC sophistic thought and Hippocratic medicine, strongly elaborated by the Aristotelian philosophy.

2. **Theophrastus on Musical Healing in *On Enthusiasm(s)***

Theophrastus touched on the topic of musical therapy, which his master had called "catharsis" in the *Politics*, in a work devoted to a special kind of emotion: enthusiasm.

The one-book *Peri enthousiasmou* is included in the list of Theophrastus's writings compiled by D.L. in *VP* 5.43[18] and in Ath. *Deipn.* 14.18 624A-B.[19] This title is variously translated into English as *On Frenzy*[20] or *On Inspiration.*[21] However, Apollon. *Mirabilia* 49.1-3 mentions the same book with a plural name, *Peri enthousiasmôn*, which the editors of Theophrastus's sources propose to translate as *On (Types of) Inspiration.*[22]

Meursius suggested reading *Peri enthousiasmou* (1640: 24-5); accepting the genitive plural present in the manuscripts (a *lectio difficilior*) modern editors assume that in this book Theophrastus was studying various types of behaviour that could go under the name of enthusiasm, as they shared the same physiological symptoms. Theophrastus might have also discussed analogies between the physiology of enthusiasms and those of other diseases (connected to the principles of "the more and the less", of "tensions" and "relaxations", and of "heating" and "cooling"),[23] observing that the same kind of musical healing could mitigate different pathologies; probably he also enumerated a series of examples and empirical constants with the aim

[17] On the question of magic catharsis, see Laskaris 2002: 49-53; on the cure of the Sacred Disease (*epilepsis*), see ibid.: 68-9, 98-9; Gregory 2013: 73-4.

[18] *Peri enthousiasmou, one book*, Theophr. 1 lin. 102 *FHS&G*.

[19] Theophr. 726B *FHS&G*.

[20] Hicks 1980: 491.

[21] Theophr. 1 lin. 102 *FHS&G*.

[22] Theophr. 726A *FHS&G*. Sharples translates this title as *On Inspiration* since he does not believe that the book presented a formal classification of different types of enthusiasm (1995).

[23] 271, 331A-F, 335, 438 *FHS&G*. See Matelli 1998: 214-19; 2004a: 170-3.

of defining the physiological nature of enthusiasm.

It is not clear exactly how we are to understand the term *enthousiasmos*. According to etymological lexicons, the word comes from the verbs *enthousiazo* or *enthousiao,* two verbs derived from the noun *theos*, evolved with two different types of suffix: *-azo* expresses the inchoate aspect, while the suffix *-iao* can denote, together with the desiderative value, also a state of morbidity, such as verbs *emetiao* ("I feel sick"), *ophthalmiao* ("I suffer from *ophthalmia*") and other similar cases. *LSJ* translates both *enthousiazo* and *enthousiao* without differentiating as "to be possessed or inspired by a god, to be in ecstasy" and interprets the noun *enthousiasmos* as "inspiration, enthusiasm, frenzy". I suggest that, at least for now, we can leave the question open using the term *enthusiasm* and, in each case, allowing the context of the text to determine the more precise meaning.

Three sources on Theophrastus's *On Enthusiasms* (or *On Enthusiasm*) offer complementary information about his ideas on the therapeutic effect of the aulos for healing affections of the body or of the soul:

1) Apollon. *Mirabilia* 49.1-3 = Theophr. 726A *FHS&G*[24]
῎Αξια δ' ἐστὶν ἐπιστάσεως [τὰ εἰρημένα.] <ἃ> Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ Περὶ 'Ενθουσιασμῶν ἐξεῖπεν. φησὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος τὴν μουσικὴν πολλὰ τῶν ἐπὶ ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ σῶμα γιγνομένων παθῶν ἰατρεύειν, καθάπερ λιποθυμίαν, φόβους καὶ τὰς ἐπὶ μακρὸν γιγνομένας τῆς διανοίας ἐκστάσεις. ἰᾶται γάρ, φησίν, ἡ καταύλησις καὶ ἰσχιάδα καὶ ἐπιληψίαν· καθάπερ πρὸς 'Αριστόξενον τὸν μουσικὸν ἐλθόντα - χρήσασθαι αὐτὸν †τοῦ μαντίου τοῦ τῆς Πασιφίλης δαμωτι ἀδελφῆς† - λέγεται [τὸν μουσικὸν] καταστῆναί τινα ἐξιστάμενον ἐν Θήβαις ὑπὸ τὴν τῆς σάλπιγγος φωνήν· ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἐβόησεν ἀκούων, ὥστε ἀσχημονεῖν· εἰ δέ ποτε καὶ πολεμικὸν σαλπίσειέ τις, πολὺ χεῖρον πάσχειν μαινόμενον. τοῦτον οὖν κατὰ μικρὸν τῷ αὐλῷ προσάγειν, καὶ ὡς ἄν τις εἴποι ἐκ προσαγωγῆς ἐποίησεν καὶ τὴν σάλπιγγος φωνὴν ὑπομένειν.

[The things that Theophrastus said in his *On Enthusiasms*[25] are worthy of attention. For he says that music cures many of the ills that affect the soul and the body, such as fainting, fright and prolonged disturbances of mind. For the playing of the aulos, he says, cures both sciatica and epilepsy, just as it is said that one who had been driven mad in Thebes by the sound of the trumpet went to Aristoxenus the musician – for he had consulted the oracle . . . –[26] and was restored. For he shouted so loudly when he heard it that he

[24] Ignoring the most recent scholarship on the subject and without providing any solid justifications, in his new edition of Aristoxenus's fragments, Kaiser (2010: X and 224) placed this testimony on Aristoxenus among the "*incerta*" (fr. INC4.35). Aristoxenus's fragments here quoted are taken from Wehrli's edition. See also Fortenbaugh 2011a; 2011b: 287-97.

[25] I do not follow *FHS&G* translating the title Περὶ 'Ενθουσιασμῶν with *On (Types of) Inspiration.*

[26] "The text is corrupt. Reinach's transposition gives the sense 'just as it is said that

disgraced himself, and if anyone played with a salpinx a military tune, he suffered far more, being maddened. So (Aristoxenus) gradually introduced this man to the (sound of the) aulos, and, so to speak, as a result of (this) gradual introduction he made him able to endure even the sound of the trumpet. Trans. by *FHS&G*.]

2) Ath. *Deipn.* 14.18 624 A-B = Theophr. 726B *FHS&G*
ὅτι δὲ καὶ νόσους ἰᾶται μουσικὴ Θεόφραστος ἱστόρησεν ἐν τῷ Περὶ Ἐνθουσιασμοῦ, ἰσχιακοὺς φάσκων ἀνόσους διατελεῖν, εἰ καταυλήσοι τις τοῦ τόπου τῇ Φρυγιστὶ ἁρμονίᾳ.

[Theophrastus in his *On Enthusiasm*[27] recorded that music even cures diseases, saying that sufferers from sciatica were permanently freed from illness if somebody played the aulos over the place in the Phrygian harmonia. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]

3) Gell. *NA* 4.13.1-2 = Theophr. 726C *FHS&G*
Creditum hoc a plerisque esse et memoriae mandatum, ischia cum maxime doleant, tum, si modulis lenibus tibicen incinat, minui dolores, ego nuperrime in libro Theophasti scriptum inveni.

[It is believed by many and has been put on record, that when the pains of sciatica are greatest, if a piper plays over them with gentle melodies (*si modulis lenibus tibicen incinat*), the pains are diminished (*minui dolores*). (This) I very recently found written in a book of Theophrastus. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]

It is worth anticipating here that in *On Music* Theophrastus presents enthusiasm as one of the three emotional sources of chant and music (719A-B *FHS&G*, see below § 3).

From such scant information we can only draw one conclusion as to the contents of *On enthusiasm(s)*: the text dealt with the therapeutic role of the aulos and of the Phrygian harmony for healing a physical debility (*leipothymia*, fainting), excited psychic diseases (fright / panic, *phoboi,* and epilepsy), prolonged disturbances of the mind (*hai ek dianoias ekstaseis*) and inflammatory physical pains (*sciatica*). On account of the little information gathered from our sources, I prefer not to try to define too simplistically whether the character of this musical healing was "allopathic" or "homeopathic".[28] Theophrastus probably offered both possibilities, as we might suppose from the fact that, in his reports, the aulos (that produced exciting melodies) might

Aristoxenus restored the man in Thebes who was maddened by the sound of the trumpet . . . So this man went to Aristoxenus the musician, who consulted the oracle of Pasiphae and at the same time the one at Delphi, and then gradually introduced (the man) to the sound of the aulos'" (*FHS&G*: 2.581, n. 1 on 726A).

[27] *FHS&G* translates it as "*On (Types) of Inspiration*".

[28] Provenza 2011: 94, n. 12 (with a *status quaestionis* on catharsis) and 122 (where she describes Aristoxenus's healing as "allopathic").

cure either fainting (an ailment caused by a lack of physical warmth) or pathologies due to inflammations and excessive excitements.

Four further observations may be added:

a. *Theophrastus Quoting Aristoxenus*

Theophrastus's information on Aristoxenus's musical healing through the aulos represents an important building block in the reconstruction here offered. I will return to Aristoxenus in the section devoted to Theophratus's *On Music* and in the next paragraph b) devoted to the aulos (Aristoxenus wrote a work on musical instruments, where he devoted two books to the different kinds of aulos). According to the anecdote reported by Theophrastus, Aristoxenus analysed the opposed psychological effects of two wind-instruments, the salpinx and the aulos.

The salpinx was a wind instrument like the aulos and it was used not only in war, but also in other contexts (Matelli 2004a: 160-1). The salpinx that made the Theban man mad sounded a melody called *polemikon*, "military". We know also from Aristoxenus that military songs were generally in the Dorian harmony and the enharmonic genre (Aristox. fr. 82.3; fr. 84.2 Wehrli), and were meant to inspire courage and disciplined actions (Her. Pont. fr. 163 Wehrli; cf. Plat. *Resp.* 399a3-9). In order to understand what kind of healing techniques Aristoxenus employed, it is fundamental to remember that his musical theory was a complex system, with multiple factors interrelated in each practical application (Gibson 2005). Rocconi remarks about Aristoxenus's *On Music*:

> Challenging the traditional theory according to which each distinguishable element of a musical composition (such as *harmoniai* or rhythms) is assigned an *ethos* of its own, Aristoxenus (or his epigone) proposes here [Aristox. *De mus.* 33.1142f-1143e] the alternative thesis that the character of a piece, instead, arises from the ways in which melodic and rhythmic elements are associated with each other by the musician in the *melopoiia* (i.e. "musical composition"). . . . For Aristoxenus, the *ethos* of a musical composition arises from the way in which melodic and rhythmic elements are associated with each other, as well as from the performance and interpretation of the resulting blend by the musician. (Rocconi 2011: 77, 84)

Theophrastus was surely not unaware of the complexity inherent in this musical system, where any minimal change of one of the blended components had the effect of producing a different musical *ethos*:

> The product of this blend is a musical composition whose 'character' will change if only one of its elements, for instance the rhythm – trochaic rather than paeonic – is modified. (ibid.: 80 and n. 54, commenting on Aristox. *De mus.* 33.1143b-c)

Fortenbaugh, glossing Apollonius (726A *FHS&G*), remarks that the sound of a salpinx frightened a man not because such was the nature of the instrument (see [Arist.] *On Things Heard* 803a25-7), but because, in the specific case, the Theban man probably connected the sound of the salpinx to the shock of a war (Fortenbaugh 2011a: 168).

Aristoxenus succeeded in making the Theban man able to endure even the sound of the trumpet not by means of a calming music, but by introducing him "gradually" (*kata mikron*) to the sounds of another military wind instrument, the aulos, This instrument had an important military tradition among the Dorians, as it was used in military parades, with regular rhythms, in a way that induced people to act in an orderly manner, without confusion and fear (Pol. *Hist.* 4.20; Plut. *Lyc.* 22.2-3; see Matelli 2004a; Fortenbaugh 2011: 168-9).

b. *Inquiries on the Aulos*

The aulos was a double-reeded wind instrument, technically constructed in such a way as to be able to produce particular vibrations that created enthusiasm and excitement in the audience. We have considered the effects induced by the aulos in military parades, when sounded in a certain way and with a studied blend of rhythms, harmony, and genus. The aulos, however, was also a well known orgiastic instrument. Aristotle had compared the strong emotions induced by the aulos to those of the Phrygian harmony:

> Arist. *Pol.* 8.7, 1342b2-3
> ἔχει γὰρ τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν ἡ φρυγιστὶ τῶν ἁρμονιῶν ἥνπερ αὐλὸς ἐν τοῖς ὀργάνοις· ἄμφω γὰρ ὀργιαστικὰ καὶ παθητικά.
>
> [the Phrygian mode has the same effect among harmonies as the aulos among instruments: both are orgiastic and emotional.]

Aristoxenus had written a work *On musical instruments* which contained some books on the auloi (Wehrli 1967: 78-80):

> *On musical instruments* (Περὶ ὀργάνων): fr. 94-5, 102 Wehrli.
> *On auloi* (Περὶ αὐλῶν): fr. 96 Wehrli.
> *On auletes* (Περὶ αὐλητῶν): fr. 100 Wehrli.
> *On the boring of auloi* (Περὶ αὐλῶν τρήσεως): fr. 101 Wehrli.

Theophrastus reported that Andron of Catania was the first aulos-player to make rhythmical movements with his body when he played (718 *FHS&G*). We know that Aristoxenus also wrote on dances (frr. 103-12 Wehrli).

To understand the complexity of ancient musical therapy, suffice it to mention that the connection between music and dance seems to have been first stated by the musicologist Damon in the fifth century BC, who claimed

that the "motions of the soul" generate songs and dances (Ath. *Deipn.* 14.25.5 628C = Damon 37 B 6 *DK* and Plat. *Leg.* 7.790d-e on the catharsis induced by chants and dance). The notion of the original connection between catharsis and dance movements (Moutsopoulos 2002: 123-81) must be left aside here, but one must at least remember that this tradition still survives in the "tarantism" rites of the Italian Salentus (De Martino 2015): the few fragments of Theophrastus allow us to connect musical healing explicitly only to the motions of the voice and of the soul.

Theophrastus is remembered among the Peripatetics who dealt with problems concerning "auloi, rhythms, and harmonies" (715.15-17 *FHS&G*). In *HP* 4.11.1-9 Theophrastus meticulously studied the aulos also from the technical point of view of the kind of material used (reed) and of the methods of its constructions. He collected very detailed information on the auletic reed, presenting its physical characteristics (it is more turgid and fleshy than other canes, and is seemingly "female", as it were), the best places for its cultivation and the timing of its maturation and harvesting. He even describes the construction technique of the double reed-tongue of the aulos: he is aware of a transformation in the art of building the instrument – which from simple became "flowery" – brought about by Antigenidas (fifth-fourth century BC), a change that coincided with a reform of the construction of the reeds. In the same period, precisely in the late fifth century BC, the construction of new instruments evolved in connection with the production of renewed musical compositions. Pronomos, the aulete depicted on the famous Attic red figured volute krater with the same name,[29] was the first to make *auloi* with features that allowed a full range of harmonies to be played. while previously the aulos could only play a single harmony, i.e. only Dorian, or Phrygian, or Lydian. This was a technical innovation that enhanced the pathetic effects of his "new music" (Matelli 2004a; Murray and Wilson 2004: 211-12; Hagel 2010: 327-51).

c. *The Physical and Psychological Diseases Treated by Musical Therapy*

The physical and psychological diseases cured by music in *On Enthusiasm(s)* are also studied by Theophrastus in other works and from different healing perspectives.

Beside the madness procured by panic over war considered above, it is possible to include among the "prolonged disturbances of the mind" studied by Theophrastus a series of abnormal behaviours that he observed after the consumption of psychoactive drugs (*HP* 9.11.5-6, 9.19.1; see Preus 1988: 86-8), after drunkenness (Theophrastus also wrote a book *On drunkenn*ess, see 569, 579B *FHS&G*) or after the excitement of extreme emotions.

[29] Preserved at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples (H 3240).

Among the strong emotions treated by Theophrastus also religious frenzies are of course included (719B *FHS&G*; see Matelli 1998: 204-18; 2004a: 162-3). Aristotle had presented enthusiastic persons as ones whose behavioural and psychological state is "taken over" and "inspired" by the gods (*Eth. Eud.* 1.1214a23-4), so that they are urged to act "without rational thinking and calculation":

[Arist.] *Magna Moralia* 2.8, 9.5
οἱ ἐνθουσιάζοντες ἄνευ λόγου ὁρμὴν ἔχουσι πρὸς τὸ πράττειν τι

[Enthusiastic people get, without *logos*, an impetus to act.]

As we have already seen, in *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b9-1342b35 Aristotle dealt with the issue of a "catharsis" and "healing" of the emotional negativities connected with fear, piety, and enthusiasm. All these emotions could be "more or less intense" and can enter some minds with great force, creating a state of "possession" requiring cure: whoever has a soul sensitive to music can be brought back into balance by listening to sacred hymns, as by being treated to medicine or purification. A little further on, Aristotle, carrying on the idea of the musical *ethos*, distinguishes the different effects on the behaviours produced by different harmonies, for example the *Mixolydia*, which leads to pain and meditation, the *Dorian*, which inspires composure and moderation, while "the *Phrygian* harmony seems to make people enthusiastic" (δοκεῖ ποιεῖν . . . ἐνθουσιαστικοὺς δ' ἡ φρυγιστί, Arist. *Pol.* 8.5, 1340b4-5). In a famous passage of the *Laws*, Plato had presented the same two methods for curing the sleeplessness of children and the Corybantic frenzy:

Plat. *Leg.* 7, 790d-e
τεκμαίρεσθαι δὲ χρὴ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶνδε, ὡς ἐξ ἐμπειρίας αὐτὸ εἰλήφασι καὶ ἐγνώκασιν ὂν χρήσιμον αἵ τε τροφοὶ τῶν σμικρῶν καὶ αἱ περὶ τὰ τῶν Κορυβάντων ἰάματα τελοῦσαι· ἡνίκα γὰρ ἄν που βουληθῶσιν κατακοιμίζειν τὰ δυσυπνοῦντα τῶν παιδίων αἱ μητέρες, οὐχ ἡσυχίαν αὐτοῖς προσφέρουσιν ἀλλὰ τοὐναντίον κίνησιν, ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις ἀεὶ σείουσαι, καὶ οὐ σιγὴν ἀλλά τινα μελῳδίαν, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς οἷον καταυλοῦσι τῶν παιδίων, καθαπερεὶ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσει, ταύτῃ τῇ τῆς κινήσεως ἅμα χορείᾳ καὶ μούσῃ χρώμεναι.

[The evidence of this (i.e. the importance of motion) may be seen in the fact that this course is adopted and its usefulness is recognized both by those who nurse small children and by those who administer remedies in cases of Corybantism. Thus, when mothers have children suffering from sleeplessness and want to lull them to rest, the treatment they apply is to give them not rest, but motion, for they rock them constantly in their arms; and instead of silence, they use a kind of crooning noise; and, even if artlessly, we could say, it is as if they made the aulos sing over the children, like the therapy for the

victims of Bacchic frenzy, by employing the combined movements of dance and song as a remedy.][30]

In a pamphlet attributed to Aristotle and devoted to "melancholy" (where this particular psychic disease is studied in relation to humoral physiology), enthusiasm and corybantic frenzy are also considered as diseases with a certain humoral mixture (*krasis*) and connected with a state of warmth in the seat of the intelligence, in the same way as proper pathologies are, even though their causes are different.

[Arist.] *Probl.* 30.1, 954a34-8
πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι τοῦ νοεροῦ τόπου τὴν θερμότητα ταύτην νοσήμασιν ἁλίσκονται μανικοῖς ἢ ἐνθουσιαστικοῖς, ὅθεν Σίβυλλαι καὶ Βάκιδες καὶ οἱ ἔνθεοι γίνονται πάντες, ὅταν μὴ νοσήματι γένωνται ἀλλὰ φυσικῇ κράσει.

[Many owing to this heat being near the location of the intelligence, are affected by diseases of madness or inspiration, whence come Sibyls and Bakides and all the inspired persons, when (*the condition*) comes not through disease but through natural mixture. (Trans. by Mayhew 2011)]

Among Theophrastus's works, D.L. *VP* 5.44 records a book entitled *Peri Melancholias* (1.130 *FHS&G*). Some scholars have therefore supposed that the pamphlet on melancholy quoted above might be attributed to the philosopher.[31]

Emotions and all behavioural affections are studied by Theophrastus according to the criterion of "the more and less" (*kata mallon kai hetton*) and in close connection with his biological research, which interrelates physical and psychical movements (dynamically considered as passages from a state of "tension" to one of "release" and *vice versa*, as we will also see in *On Music*). Theophrastus carried on and originally developed Aristotle's research on these topics (see 438-47, 557, 559, 719A-B *FHS&G*; Fortenbaugh 2003b: esp. 74-84; Matelli 1998; 2004a):

Fainting (leipopsychia).[32] Theophrastus assumedly wrote a work *On Fainting*. The testimonies to its existence report his physiological observations of the symptoms and his hypothesis about the possible causes of this ailment

[30] The manuscript text is corrupt and I follow the emendations of Bury and England adopted by Diès 2007 reading καθαπερεὶ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσει, ταύτῃ τῇ τῆς κινήσεως ἅμα χορείᾳ καὶ μούσῃ χρώμεναι instead of καταυλοῦσι τῶν παιδίων, καθάπερ ἡ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσεις. For Corybantic madness and its therapy in Plato, see Burkert 1985: 80, 378, n. 53; Wasmuth 2015.

[31] See van der Eijk 2005: 139 and n. 3, 167, n. 91 with discussion and bibliographic references.

[32] On the synonyms *leipopsychia* and *leipothymia*, see Fortenbaugh 2011a: 164, n. 33.

that he attributes to "a lack of those things in which there is natural heat, for example blood or natural moisture generally, as when we see people fainting from haemorrhages and rapid motions of the bowels, and fainting also occurs on account of weariness. . . . The great heat causes fainting both because it weakens the lesser (heat), and because it prevents breathing, and also because it does not allow what cools to enter" (345.10-19 *FHS&G*). Theophrastus connected fainting also to emotions: "[P]leasures and pains produce fainting, for both bring an abundance of moisture, pleasure through melting and liquefaction, pain through freezing. So when the moisture flows to the region where respiration occurs, it causes fainting" (345.30-33 *FHS&G*; see also Sharples 1995: 24-7).

Sciatica. Ath. *Deipn.* 14.18 624 A-B (= Theophr. 726B *FHS&G*) and Gell. *NA* 4.13.1-2 (= Theophr. 726C *FHS&G*) give more detailed information than 726A about the musical healing of sciatica, specifying that the aulos had to be played over the painful part of the body. According to Athenaeus (726.3B *FHS&G*), the healing harmony was the Phrygian one. Gellius introduced the idea of an aulos producing "sweet melodies", which I think has to be intended as a metonymy (the sweet final effect in the place of the means to remove pain, i.e. the exciting sounds of a Phrygian harmony played by the aulos).[33]

It is worth remarking that Theophrastus, besides reporting what many others had said about the musical healing of sciatica, also spoke about a herbal remedy for it in *HP* 9.13.6.5:

> Τὸ δὲ ἐρευθεδανὸν φύλλον ὅμοιον κιττῷ πλὴν στρογγυλότερον· φύεται δ' ἐπὶ γῆς ὥσπερ ἄγρωστις, φιλεῖ δὲ παλίσκια χωρία. οὐρητικὴ δέ, δι' ὃ καὶ χρῶνται πρὸς τὰ τῆς ὀσφύος ἀλγήματα καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἰσχιάδας.
>
> [Madder has a leaf like ivy, but it is rounder: it grows along the ground like dog's-tooth grass and loves shady spots. It has diuretic properties, wherefore it is used for pains in the loins or hip-disease.]

Epilepsy. Theophrastus also devoted an entire work to the study of epilepsy, the "sacred disease" with which, as we learn from the Hippocratic writings, "magicians, purifying and begging priests, and charlatans" were engaged (*On Sacred Disease* 1.4).

Four separate testimonies inform us that in his *Peri epilepseos* (1.101 *FHS&G*) Theophrastus argued that epileptics could be cured by the cast-off skins of the geckoes (362A-D GHS&G); however, this is the only piece of information we have on the contents of this work. We have already considered above how in *HP* 9.12.5.4 Theophrastus writes about the "cathartic" effect of the root of the variety of poppy called *Herakleia* for purging upwards and healing epilepsy.

[33] On this source, see Fortenbaugh 2011a: 165 and n. 36.

Theophrastus seems to have studied with different approaches, in at least three different works (*Inquiries on Plants*, *On Enthusiasm*, and *On Epilepsy*), three different kinds of therapy for the psychosomatic disease of epilepsy. When dealing with this disease, we have to take into account an ancient tradition of beliefs and the new approach introduced by the Hippocratic text *On the Sacred Disease*.[34] Theophrastus connected the pathological nature of epilepsy with the psychological excitement of enthusiasm, stating that both could be cured by music; however, Theophrastus's view on the healing of this pathology seems to have excluded any theory of a divine pollution.[35] It can therefore be inferred that he probably believed that an excess of black bile should affect the circuits of the head, like Plato[36] and the author of *The Sacred Disease*[37] did (about Theophrastus's theory on the four humors and their blendings, see 331A-336C *FHS&G*).

d. "*iatreuein*" *versus* "*kathairein*"

All the sources relating to Theophrastus's *On Enthusiasm(s)* use the verb *iatreuein*, "to heal" in contexts that closely recall the section of Aristotle's *Pol.* 8.7.1342a4-8, where the terms *iatreia* and *katharsis* are used together. One might wonder whether the absence of the word "catharsis" in the texts relating to Theophrastus's description of music therapy is due to chance or rather depends on a will to keep his philosophical theory separate from magical practices that were still in use in his day (see his report on the traditions of magical chants and incantations used in the cathartic rite of Melampus with the hellebore in *HP* 9.10.4.9).

3. **Theophrastus's *On Music* and the Purpose of This Art**

I have left to the end the references to music therapy in the books *On Music* not because they are of secondary importance. On the contrary, they have a fundamental meaning within the philosophical framework I have sketched above and may even help understand Theophrastus's original approach to musical therapy in relation to Aristotle's theory.

Scholars acknowledge that Aristotle himself did not carry out analytic musical research, but that his two pupils Aristoxenus and Theophrastus did so. *Suida s.v.* "Aristoxenos" (Aristox. fr. 1 Wehrli) tells of a rivalry between

[34] See van der Eijk 2005: 45-73; Gregory 2013: 69-83.

[35] See the polemic against this hypothesis by the author of *The Sacred Disease* 1.1-13; 2.1 (Jouanna 2003). "Theophrastus and our author (scil. of *On The Sacred Disease*) seem to share the same basic attitude towards older traditions" (Laskaris 2002: 44).

[36] Plat. *Tim.* 85a-b; see Laskaris 2002: 60-1.

[37] Laskaris 2002: 141-6.

Aristoxenus and Theophrastus over the succession as leader of the Lyceum won by Theophrastus. The contrast between the two has probably been exaggerated by modern scholars: their musical doctrines, even if quite different, had also points of contact (both opposed the Pythagorean identification of numbers as a cause of music, even if Aristoxenus identified it with intervals and Theophrastus with the motions of the soul, *kineseis tes psyches*; both believed that emotions can give "movements" to the voice (Sicking 1998: 107-8, 128-9, 135, 138-40); Theophrastus observed and described with care Aristoxenus's musical healing method by means of the aulos, as we have seen).

It seems that Theophrastus wrote three books *On Music* (714.1 *FHS&G*), one book *On Musicians* (714.2 *FHS&G*), and one book *On Harmonics* (714.1 *FHS&G*).

Porph. *In Harm.* 1.3 (Düring 61.16-65.15) = 716 *FHS&G* is the fundamental source for reconstructing some parts of Theophrastus's lost second book *On Music*, but we get information also from other sporadic sources (715, 718, 719A-D, 720-725 *FHS&G*).

As far as it can be reconstructed, the thrust of his interest was to dispute the Pythagorean assumption that pitch is a quantitative property of sound, arguing that differences of pitch are instead qualitative. We cannot dwell here on the many critical issues arising from this doctrine, where Aristoxenus's researches on harmony are also taken into account (Barker 1989: 110-118; Sicking 1998: 128-9, 135, 138-40). We may draw a few ideas on his musical theory from Porphyry's paraphrase, in which emotions, intended as physiological phenomena and mouvements of the soul, inflected the voice originating music:

> Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* I.5. 623A = 719A[38]
> 'καὶ γὰρ ἔναγχος' ἔφη 'τὸ βιβλίον ἀνέγνων. λέγει δὲ (fr. 90) μουσικῆς ἀρχὰς τρεῖς εἶναι, λύπην, ἡδονήν, ἐνθουσιασμόν, ὡς ἑκάστου τῶν . . . αὐτῶν παρατρέ<ποντος> ἐκ τοῦ συνήθους <καὶ παρ>εγκλίνοντος τὴν φωνήν.'
>
> [(Sossius) said: "For I recently read the book and he (i.e. Theophrastus) says that three are the sources of music: pain, pleasure and enthusiasm, because each of these emotions turns the voice aside and deflects it from its usual (inflection)". (Trans. by *FHS&G*)][39]

[38] See Fortenbaugh's commentary (2011b: 284-7).

[39] In his *De metris* 4.2 (partially quoted in 719B *FHS&G*), and probably through the intermediation of Varro (Kassel 1981: 27, n. 17, 20), the Latin grammarian Aelius Festus Aphthonius ascribed to Theophrastus the idea that strong passions like lust, anger, and enthusiasm are like the instinct of a sacred fury capable of inspiring verses and songs; see Matelli 1998: 208-18; Fortenbaugh 2011b: 285-6.

Porph. *In Harm.* 1.3 (Düring 61.22-4 and 65.13-5) = 716.7-9 and 716.130-2 *FHS&G*
ἔστι γὰρ τὸ γινόμενον κίνημα μελῳδητικὸν περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σφόδρα ἀκριβὲς ὁπόταν φωνῇ ἐθελήσῃ ἑρμηνεύειν αὐτὸ, τρέπει μὲν τήνδε, τρέπει δὲ ἐφ' ὅσον οἵα τέ ἐστι τὴν ἄλογον τρέψαι καθὸ ἐθέλει . . . μία δὲ φύσις τῆς μουσικῆς, κίνησις τῆς ψυχῆς ἡ κατὰ ἀπόλυσιν γιγνομένη τῶν διὰ τὰ πάθη κακῶν, ἣ εἰ μὴ ἦν, οὐδ' ἂν ἡ τῆς μουσικῆς φύσις ἦν.

[For *the movement productive of melody*, when it occurs in the soul, *is very accurate*, when it (the soul) wishes to express it (the movement) with the voice. It (the soul) turns it (the voice), *and turns it just as it wishes*, to the extent that it (the soul) is able *to turn the wordless voice*.[40] . . . The *nature of music is one*. It is the movement of the soul that occurs *in correspondence with*[41] its release from the evils due to the emotions; and if there were not this, neither would it be the nature of music. (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]

We have already seen that in *Pol.* 8.7, 1341b9-1342b35 Aristotle had presented different degrees of passions after the principle of "the more and the less", and described enthusiastic people as "taken" by a "movement" (of their souls).

In *On Enthusiasm(s)*, *On Music* and *On Motion* Theophrastus elaborates with originality this topic giving it an increased speculative importance:

Simp. *In Ph.* 6.4 234b10-20 (*CAG* 10: 964.29-965.6 Diels) = 271 *FHS&G*
ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὸν κορυφαῖον ἀρέσκει τῶν 'Αριστοτέλους ἑταίρων τὸν Θεόφραστον ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Περὶ κινήσεως αὐτοῦ λέγοντα, ὅτι 'αἱ μὲν ὀρέξεις καὶ ἐπιθυμίαι καὶ ὀργαὶ σωματικαὶ κινήσεις εἰσὶ καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχουσι'.

[These views also find favour with the chief of Aristotle's colleagues, Theophrastus, who says, in the first book *On Motion*, that "desires, appetites and feelings of anger are bodily motions, and have their starting point in this". (Trans. by *FHS&G*)]

[40] I have suggested here a translation of the wording οἵα τέ ἐστι τὴν ἄλογον τρέψαι which differs from the ones of *FHS&G* and Barker (1989: 111) who translated the passage as "to the extent that it is able *to turn that which is non-rational*"; Barker (1989: 111, n. 2) observes more correctly: "Just possibly the adjective should be rendered as 'wordless', rather 'non rational'". Sickings 1998: 101 translates "to the extent that it is able *to direct that which is without logos*".

[41] Sickings 1998: 106 translates "with a view to . . .", expressing the purpose of music; Fortenbaugh 2011b: 286 considers the two possible translations "in correspondence with" and "for the sake of", remarking how "the latter is stronger in that release from the evils of emotion would be the function of song, essential to its very nature. The former recognizes the result without making the release a function essential to song. For our purposes, the important point is that song is conceived of as having cathartic effect".

In *On Emotions* (438 *FHS&G*) Theophrastus explains the difference between emotions in respect of "the more and the less", showing that fault-finding, anger and rage, or friendship and goodwill are not identical in kind. An emotion differs from another when it is "intensified" (*epiteinetai*) or "relaxed" (*anietai*): these two verbs are key-words which express the dynamic of two correlated opposite kinds of motion, the "tension" (*tonos*) and the "relaxation" (*apolysis*), that always occur and, when they are "more" or "less", make the difference between health and illness and between vices (evils) and virtues.

Theophrastus also explains *eros* through the key-terms *hyperbole* ("excess") and *apolysis* ("release"):

> Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 4.20.64 (4.468.4-7 Hense) = 557 *FHS&G*
> Ἔρως δέ ἐστιν ἀλογίστου τινὸς ἐπιθυμίας ὑπερβολὴ ταχεῖαν μὲν ἔχουσα τὴν πρόσοδον, βραδεῖαν δὲ τὴν ἀπόλυσιν.
>
> [Love is an excess of a certain irrational desire, whose coming is sudden but whose release is slow.]

The physiological connections between motions of the soul and motions of the body represent a theory strictly correlated with Theophrastus's musical system. Thanks to this connection, Theophrastus can argue for the ethical purpose of music and demonstrate (against all the other writers on music) his original idea of a "qualitative" nature of music.

What is the original import of Theophrastus's theory on the correlations between motions of the body and motions of the soul in relation to music? He has a great deal of earlier material to work with, but even his few fragments and testimonies show that he evolved significantly and with originality an idea first attributed to Damon (Ath. *Deipn.* 14.25.5 628C = 37 B 6 *DK*),[42] then re-used by Plato,[43] passed into the philosophical system of Aristotle, and also developed by Aristoxenus.

Aristotle connected music to pleasure (*An. Pr.* 1.24, 41b9-10, *Pol.* 7.3, 1337b27-9, 7.5.1339b20 and 1340a3-4), and pleasure to a certain motion and release of the soul:[44]

> Arist. *Pol.* 8.2, 1337b.42-1338a1
> ἄνεσις γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη κίνησις τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀνάπαυσις.
>
> [Because the activity of play is a relaxation of the soul, and serves as recreation because of its pleasantness. (Trans. by Rackham 1932)]

[42] Lasserre 1954: 53-79; Barker 1985: 319; 1989: 118, n. 44; Moutsopoulos 2002: 124-9. See also Barker 2005: 71.

[43] Moutsopoulos 2002: 50-70, 102-3, n. 4, 127-31, 134-5, n. 10.

[44] He expresses a contrary opinion speaking of the perfect unity of pleasure (therefore without movements) in *Eth. Nic.* 10.3, 1173a.30 and 10.4, 1174b.10.

Arist. *Rhet.* 1.11, 1369b33-35
Ὑποκείσθω δὴ ἡμῖν εἶναι τὴν ἡδονὴν κίνησίν τινα τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ κατάστασιν ἀθρόαν καὶ αἰσθητὴν εἰς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν φύσιν, λύπην δὲ τοὐναντίον.

[Let it to be assumed by us that pleasure is a certain movement of the soul, a sudden and perceptible settling down into its natural state, and pain the opposite. (Trans. by Freese 1926)]

According to Theophrastus's master, the relief achieved through music is only one of its three purposes, generically described in connection with pleasure: it is not yet the precise physiological phenomenon functional to catharsis, as it is in Theophrastus.

In Theophr. 716.130 *FHS&G*, the phrase *apolysis ton kakon* is particularly significant because it is used in substitution for the term *catharsis* for describing the nature and the purpose of music.[45] When Theophrastus states that the movement productive of melody which occurs in the soul "is very accurate" and "produces a certain movement in the voice" (716.7-9 *FHS&G*), he means that music is produced by precise physical motions responding to precise physiological correlations.[46]

The term *apolysis* ("release") used instead of catharsis in *On Music* is semantically close to the sense of the verb *anietai* ("is relaxed") used in *On Emotions* (438.9 *FHS&G*), where the verb is opposed to *epiteinetai* ("is intensified"): Theophrastus says that the same emotion can be "relaxed", thus becoming a virtue, or become a vice if "intensified": the different outcome is all a question of the "more" or "less".

The words devoted by Theophrastus to both the listener's and the singer's catharsis in *On Music* are particularly worthy of attention. The same idea seems to me to emerge from a rhetorical source that reports Theophrastus's theory on the art of delivery (he wrote a lost Περὶ ὑποκρίσεως, *On acting*: D.L. *VP* 5.48), applied to orators (but scholars are allowed to suspect that the work basically treated stage acting).

I present this text, following the concordant manuscript tradition that does not need to be emended:

Athanasius, *Prolegomena in Hermogenis De Statibus* (Matelli 1999: 56-7; 2004b: 21)
καὶ Θεόφραστος ὁ φιλόσοφος ὁμοίως φησὶν εἶναι μέγιστον ῥητορικῇ πρὸς τὸ πεῖσαι τὴν ὑπόκρισιν, εἰς τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀναφέρων καὶ τὰ πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὴν κατανόησιν τούτων, ὡς καὶ τῇ ὅλῃ ἐπιστήμῃ σύμφωνον εἶναι τὴν κίνησιν τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὸν τόνον τῆς ψυχῆς.

[45] See Plat. *Crat.* 405a8-c2, where Apollo's name is etymologically connected to the verb *apolyein* (Anceschi 2007: 116-20).

[46] On the interpretation of the adverb *akribos* ("very accurate"), see Barker 1985: 316; Sickings 1998: 108-9.

> [Also the philosopher Theophrastus says in like manner that delivery is a great help to rhetoric for persuading, *referring to principles regarding the emotions of the soul and their reception*, for he thought that the *movement of the body* and the *tension of the soul are in concord with the entire science.*]

Fortenbaugh (712 *FHS&G*) followed the correction of the manuscript reading τὸν τόνον τῆς ψυχῆς (*tension of the soul*) to τὸν τόνον τῆς φωνῆς (*tension of the voice*) printed by Rabe (*RhGr*, 14.177.3-8) without declaring his emendation in the apparatus. This last reading makes much less sense in connection to the "entire science", depriving us of an important element in Theophrastus's philosophical system. Walz (1932-36: 35.16-36.4) correctly printed τὸν τόνον τῆς ψυχῆς and I think it is advisable to return to the original text.

Inside the framework so far reconstructed, the words are quite lucid and have a clear sense related to the entire Theophrastean philosophical system within which we are prompted to consider the strict connection between the "motions of the body" and the "tension of the soul" of an actor or an orator when delivering his words.

Within this philosophical framework we understand the sense of unity between the "motions of the body" and the "tension of the soul" (ἡ κίνησις τοῦ σώματος καὶ ὁ τόνος τῆς ψυχῆς) in experiencing emotions, any breakdown of which can be healed by the art of delivery, as well as of singing, an experience valid not only for the audience but – as Theophrastus precisely theorizes – first of all for the actor and the orator who, by acting, embodies the motions or, better, the "tensions" of many souls. This is a good performing method that still has a recognized validity on the stage, when actors try to impress and get a reaction from the spectators (see on this Matelli 1999 and 2004b).

The analogy between the structure of a literary composition and the physical structure of an animal body put forth by Plato (*Phaedr.* 264c) had been fully developed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, who conceived the structure and the dynamics of any poetic work in analogy with those of animal bodies.[47] With reference to our theme, it is worth observing that Aristotle described the dynamics of a dramatic plot (conceived as a mimesis *tou biou*, see *Poet.* 6, 1450a17-18) with the terms *desis* / *ploke* and *lysis* (*Poet.* 15, 1454a37, 18, 1455b.24-9), "complication" and "release". And these are two kinds of "tension" which stand very close to the physiological and psychical dynamics of catharsis described by Theophrastus. These last remarks, however, open new problems that would need to be considered under a different perspective.

[47] On this analogy, see *Poetics* 4, 1449a2-15, 7, 1450b34-36-1451a7, 23, 1459a17-26 and *Rhetoric* 3.9, 1409.29-34, 3.14, 1415b.6-8, 3.19, 1419b.19-23 (Matelli 2011: 646-7; 2012: 749-50; 2015: 297-8).

Conclusion

I hope to have shown that even the indirect and sporadic information about Theophrastus's cathartic theory on emotions is meaningful if we consider these traces in connection to the complexity of his entire philosophical system.

He appears to have reached new notions about catharsis and in particular musical catharsis, by definitively superseding the magical approach that was still alive at his time and delineating in new terms an Aristotelian idea. I will try to synthesize his method and the main results achieved: Theophrastus has a systematic approach to the problem of catharsis, through different fields of knowledge. We have followed a thread that connects botanical researches, medical physiology, psychology, ethics, acting, music, religion.

With regard to his research topics he appears to be a keen and unprejudiced observer and collector of the largest possible number of experiences that illustrate them. However, at a speculative level, he proceeds autonomously, even going against his teacher's opinions.

He extends the Aristotelian method of studying in detail even the parts as discrete entities (without forgetting the connections of the parts with the whole, as we have seen in his botanical, physiological, ethical, and musical researches): this method contributes also to his inquiry.
He further develops the Aristotelian ideas that:

1. *hedone* (pleasure) has to do with motions of the soul and is possible only when the passional negativities of the soul are mitigated,
2. ethical catharsis can be compared with physical purgations,
3. ritual melodies can effect the catharsis of the singer's soul.

He also goes beyond Aristotle in addressing:

1. the study of the physiological aspects of physical movements (the object of special enquiries in *Peri kineseos*) and the connection between them and the movements of the soul,
2. concerning music, the idea of the "qualitative" nature of music: consequently, he affirms that music has a unique purpose, the ethical *apolysis ton kakon* (i.e catharsis) (against the Aristotelian assumption of three distinct purposes of music in the *Politics*).

Important building blocks in constructing his cathartic theory are:

1. the development of the Aristotelian method by the criterion of "the more and the less", that becomes his leading principle applied to physiological enquiries into humours and warmth,
2. the correlation of physiological motions to motions of the soul, both explained in terms of a dynamic between different degrees of "tension"

and "relaxation" (two key-terms),
3. the different degrees of "tension" or "relaxation" of the motions of the soul connected to the emotions, two psychological and physiological principles that Theophrastus also uses to explain ethical vices and virtues (e.g. courage, rashness, cowardice or liberality, prodigality, meanness, etc., see 449A *FHS&G*).

Enthusiasm and musical catharsis are studied by Theophrastus within the framework of his entire philosophical system.

Concerning terminology, *katharsis* is a term used by Theophrastus to describe purifications from medical and environmental contamination, botanical purging and pruning, and acts of religious and superstitious purifications.

The locution *apolysis ton kakon* ("release from evils") seems to be a substitute for the term "catharsis" in the ethical contexts where Theophrastus elaborates his original take on this theme.

The cathartic effect of the physiological and psychological "release from evils" through precise modulations of the human voice in music and in the performing arts involves both the performer and the audience.

In his original view, religious piety does not consist in animal sacrifice or in traditional rites, but rather in the ethical purification before the gods (*katharsis ton kakon*) that the devotee can achieve. This religious issue might be considered the starting and ending point of Theophrastus's philosophical theory of catharsis, a theory in which the whole range of his human science is involved.

Abbreviations

DK Diels, Hermann and Walther Kranz (eds) [1903] (1985), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin: Weidmann.

FHS&G Fortenbaugh, William W., Pamela M. Huby, Robert W. Sharples and Dimitri Gutas (eds) (1992), *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought and Influence*, Leiden: Brill.

LSJ Liddel, Henry George, Robert Scott and Henry Stuart Jones (eds) (1968), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

SEG (1923-) *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden: Brill.

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Profit, Pleasure, and Purgation. Catharsis in Aristotle, Paolo Beni and Italian Late Renaissance Poetics

Abstract

The Cinquecento has seen an unprecedented flourishing of literary theory. While many other issues are disputed, nearly all critics agree that poetry should entertain and delight, but also produce some kind of moral benefit. When Aristotle's *Poetics* enters the debate, interpreters seek and find in his work a confirmation of their view. In his celebrated notorious catharsis clause, Aristotle seems to hint at the moral effect that should be obtained by tragedy. Since he does not explain the term in the transmitted *Poetics* text, interpreters fill in what they regard as its missing parts. The way in which they do this also reveals their own preconceptions of what should be classed as moral profit. This paper describes the range of the different meanings which are attached to Aristotelian catharsis in the secondo Cinquecento. After having explored the relationship between pleasure and profit in Aristotle, it deals with Renaissance theorists, using Paolo Beni's commentary on the *Poetics* as a starting point. Beni's commentary is the last substantial contribution to the Cinquecento debate, and his critical review of the different readings of catharsis that had been developed in the preceding decades provides us with a useful overview. Employing Beni's criticism as a guideline, the article further characterizes the various Renaissance approaches to catharsis and traces their origins.

1. Introduction – Ethics and Aesthetics in Aristotle

In times when cartoonists get gunned down for publishing offensive drawings and Capitoline Venus is covered up in order to spare the feelings of an Iranian politician, the autonomy of art, which appears to have been an essential part of our Western identity at least for the last century, is up for discussion again. To us, it seems unacceptable that art should enhance public morale and bow to the state authority. This sensitivity to external claims raised against art derives from a certain manner of looking for morals in works of art, which has flourished especially during the extensive debate on the arts in the Italian Renaissance. This debate, in turn, has inherited

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many patterns of thought from the antiquity onwards. In the field of literary theory, a major point of reference is Aristotle's *Poetics*. Since its 'rediscovery', it has massively influenced discussions on literature by providing topics and terminology, although already existing forms of discourse (such as the system of rhetoric and a concept of poetry based on Horace's *Ars poetica* and other ancient sources)[1] as well as the contemporary literary output in its diversity and novelty have often led to an adaptation of the text to the needs and expectations of its interpreters. Thus, in his ground-breaking *History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, Bernard Weinberg has argued that the interpretation of the *Poetics* is generally characterized by a tendency to rhetoricization and moralization.

Indeed, readers of Aristotle's *Poetics* will look in vain for a discussion of the moral benefits yielded by poetry. On the contrary, Aristotle repeatedly mentions the pleasure that the recipients draw from works of art. In the fourteenth chapter, for example, he insists on the notion that the emotional effect of tragedy should result from the composition of action as such. To create this effect by means of spectacle (*opsis*) would rather testify to a lack of poetic artistry (*atechnoteron*); those who use effects of staging only for the sake of the sensational or monstrous have nothing to do with tragedy:

> οὐ γὰρ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως δεῖ ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν τὸν ποιητήν, φανερὸν ὡς τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐμποιητέον. (Arist. *Poet.* 1453b10-14)
>
> [For one should not seek every kind of pleasure (*hedone*) from tragedy, but only the kind peculiar to it. And since the poet should create the pleasure which comes from pity and fear through imitation (*mimesis*), it is obvious that this should be built into the actions.]

In chapter 23, Aristotle remarks that, with regard to the composition of action, epic poetry has to conform to the same requirements as tragedy, "so that it will produce the pleasure particular to it, like an animal in its unity and integrity".[2]

Now, what is this 'specific pleasure' which Aristotle attributes to poetry? First of all, we have to keep in mind that, according to Aristotle, pleasure does not occur by itself but is always, broadly speaking, a concomitant of the soul's natural activity (*energeia*). In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle proposes the following definition of pleasure: "a certain movement of the soul and a sud-

[1] See Weinberg 1961; Herrick 1946.

[2] Arist. *Poet.* 1459a20f: ἵν' ὥσπερ ζῷον ἓν ὅλον ποιῇ τὴν οἰκείαν ἡδονήν. All translations from Greek and Latin are mine unless otherwise stated.

den and perceptible settling into the natural state (*physis*)".[3] Still in the same context he declares that this is also the reason why artistic representations, provided that they are well made, yield pleasure even if the object there represented is not pleasurable. Indeed, we do not derive pleasure from the object itself, but from the act of perceiving, that is, from learning. And in learning, Aristotle says, we experience a settling into our natural state. From these words we can infer that 'natural state' in this case is not an original state – the original state would in fact be lack of knowledge –, but a final state of perfection (*telos*), in which the respective entity has fulfilled its potential. For 'nature', in its proper sense, as is stated in the *Metaphysics*, is the essence (*ousia*) of a thing, and the essence is at the same time its perfection (Arist. *Metaph.* 1015a10-19).

Therefore, man reaches his distinctive nature when he fulfils his potential, primarily with regard to his mental abilities, in the best possible way. If he succeeds in doing so, his life will contain an optimum of pleasure. The best possible perfection of one's potential, or, more precisely, the activity of a soul which has reached its perfection, is called virtue (*arete*) by Aristotle, and in this activity resides human happiness (*eudaimonia*) (Arist. *EN* 1097b22-98a18).

The distinctive abilities of the human soul are first and foremost cognitive faculties, such as sense-perception or (even more specifically) discursive reasoning, faculties which allow us to discern something as a certain entity, whatever it is: colours, sounds, trees, refrigerators, equilateral triangles, justice and injustice, or ourselves. Depending on the quality of the perceived object, feelings of pleasure or pain are immediately connected with the act of perceiving; indirectly, desires and emotions are also involved. If I perceive, for instance, that somebody has wronged me, I immediately feel pain, and usually I also desire to get compensation or satisfaction, that is, according to Aristotle's definition, I feel anger. Rational activity has its delights too: solving a complicated mathematical problem can yield enormous pleasure. Thus, all kinds of perception, even the allegedly 'abstract' reasoning, imply (more or less intense) feelings. On the other hand, the quality and intensity of emotions depend on an act of cognition in spite of all physical factors implied in the process.

In certain contexts it is possible to approach the object of perception in such a way as to concentrate on the very perceiving, irrespective of whether the object perceived is beautiful or ugly, good or bad for us. This is exactly the case with works of art. As is well known, Aristotle generally defines art as imitation (*mimesis*): a work of art represents, it is not the 'thing' itself,

[3] Arist. *Rhet.* 1369b33-35: κίνησίν τινα τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ κατάστασιν ἀθρόαν καὶ αἰσθητὴν εἰς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν φύσιν.

but something in something else (the medium). By re-presenting, art shows and discloses something without being the thing itself. Thus, it enables us to concentrate on the object as such. When, for example, Oedipus on the stage is heading towards disaster, the spectators can calmly remain seated and focus on the development of the tragic action. Insofar as we realise what is happening on stage, namely that a person similar to us who is basically a good character brings ruin upon himself to an extent he does not deserve, we feel pity and fear, but insofar as we 'learn' what this person does and why he fails, we derive pleasure from this act of cognition as such.

Accordingly, in the chapter of the *Rhetoric* cited above Aristotle says:

> ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ μανθάνειν τε ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ θαυμάζειν, καὶ τὰ τοιάδε ἀνάγκη ἡδέα εἶναι, οἷον τό τε μιμούμενον, ὥσπερ γραφικὴ καὶ ἀνδριαντοποιία καὶ ποιητική, καὶ πᾶν ὃ ἂν εὖ μεμιμημένον ᾖ, κἂν ᾖ μὴ ἡδὺ αὐτὸ τὸ μεμιμημένον· οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ τούτῳ χαίρει, ἀλλὰ συλλογισμὸς ἔστιν ὅτι τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο, ὥστε μανθάνειν τι συμβαίνει. (Arist. *Rhet.* 1371b4-20)
>
> [Since learning and wondering are pleasant, all things connected with them must also be pleasant; for instance, a work of imitation such as painting, sculpture, poetry, and all that is well imitated, even if the object of imitation is not pleasant; for it is not this that causes pleasure, but the inference that this is that, so that, as a result, we learn something.]

We find a strikingly similar statement in the fourth chapter of the *Poetics*:

> ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὁρῶμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφὰς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αἴτιον δὲ καὶ τούτου, ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἥδιστον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὁρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος· (Arist. *Poet.* 1448b4-15)
>
> [We delight in contemplating the pictures of things we would not like to look at in real life, especially if the pictures are made with the greatest precision, for example the appearances of the vilest animals, or of corpses. The reason for this is that learning is most pleasurable not only to philosophers, but to the others as well (though they share in it only to a limited degree). For people delight in looking at the pictures for the very reason that they happen to learn and infer (*syllogizesthai*) what each thing is, for example: this is such-and-such a man.]

If we bring together the issues here mentioned, it becomes probable that the specific pleasure provided by tragedy consists in just that: the recipient (ideally) grasps the structure, the course, and the motivations of the tragic action, and in this cognitive-emotional activity of the soul he experiences pleasure.

So far we have heard nothing about moral profit – does that mean that Aristotle's approach is a purely 'aesthetic' one? A closer look at his ethical works will teach us otherwise: it is pleasure (and its opposite) which is at the core of his considerations: "ethical virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains",[4] and even, "the whole concern both of virtue and of political science is with pleasures and pains; for the man who 'practises' these well will be good, he who 'practices' them badly bad".[5] "It is by reason of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these – either the pleasures and pains they ought not or when they ought not or as they ought not, or by going wrong in one of the other similar ways that may be distinguished".[6] Therefore, it is essential for us to show feelings of pleasure and pain about the appropriate situations at the right things, for example, to pity someone who deserves it or to fear something that is a real threat. Since it is vital for our virtue and even for our happiness to have adequate emotions, it is clear that we should begin practising as early as possible: "Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought to; for this is the right education".[7]

Considering Aristotle's preoccupation with appropriateness of feelings, it seems reasonable to interpret the well-known catharsis of the emotions along these lines, too. By presenting people who, for understandable reasons, fail in their pursuits and bring about their own misfortune, tragedy arouses pity in a manner that is adequate to its object. And insofar as the tragic characters are similar to us in their moral qualities, the fear we experience in the face of a real threat for the hero's life and happiness will be appropriate. Just as medical catharsis aims at restoring the right temper in the body, tragic catharsis may be conceived as a process in which, by the arousal of adequate emotions, the soul is brought into an adequate emotional state, thus (ideally) contributing in the long run to a habitus of adequate emotional response.[8]

[4] Arist. *EN* 1104b8f: περὶ ἡδονὰς γὰρ καὶ λύπας ἐστὶν ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετή. Translations of the quotes from *Nicomachean Ethics* are by W.D. Ross; some of them have been adapted.

[5] Arist. *EN* 1105a10-13: περὶ ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας πᾶσα ἡ πραγματεία καὶ τῇ ἀρετῇ καὶ τῇ πολιτικῇ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ εὖ τούτοις χρώμενος ἀγαθὸς ἔσται, ὁ δὲ κακῶς κακός.

[6] Arist. *EN* 1104b21-3: δι' ἡδονὰς δὲ καὶ λύπας φαῦλοι γίνονται, τῷ διώκειν ταύτας καὶ φεύγειν, ἢ ἃς μὴ δεῖ ἢ ὅτε οὐ δεῖ ἢ ὡς οὐ δεῖ ἢ ὁσαχῶς ἄλλως ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου διορίζεται τὰ τοιαῦτα.

[7] Arist. *EN* 1104b11-13: διὸ δεῖ ἦχθαί πως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὥστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ· ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν.

[8] Though much ink has been spilled over Aristotelian catharsis, opinion on the matter is still divided. I would favour a view of catharsis which integrates both cognitive and emotional aspects. See Schmitt in Aristotle 2011: 333-48; 476-510; Schmitt 1994; Halliwell 1986: 184-201; and 2003. Further bibliographical references can be found in these works.

2.1 Profit and Delight in Late Renaissance Poetics

As we have seen, in Aristotle there is an intrinsic connection between ethics and aesthetics, pleasure and morals, so that they are substantially inseparable. Therefore, we should avoid any generalization intrinsic in the idea of a moralization of the *Poetics* in the Renaissance. Rather, we should ask what *kind* of morals comes into play here. This is what I will attempt to do in this paper by revealing some patterns of thought characteristic of literary theory of the late Italian Cinquecento and early Seicento, which play a decisive part in the discussions about the purpose of poetry, and of tragic poetry in particular. In this context *catharsis* will figure prominently, for the short hint at this phenomenon in chapter 6 of the *Poetics* fills in precisely the assumed gap in the treatise itself: here, at last, we seem to find the moral benefit otherwise absent in the transmitted text – and sorely missed.[9]

I will carry on my investigation by taking Paolo Beni's commentary on the *Poetics*, first published in 1613, as a guide. Beni's work completes the series of great commentaries on the *Poetics* produced in Italy during the late Renaissance, which had been started off by Robortello in 1548.[10] Beni is aware of this long line of tradition, and his approach indicates that he actually had the intention to bring to a conclusion as many issues of the scholarly debate as possible. The title page itself promises from the very start that "a hundred questions concerning poetics" ("centum poeticae controversiae") will be interspersed throughout the commentary and "explained at full length" ("copiosissime explicantur"). In fact, Beni rather exhaustingly dwells on pretty much every problem one may encounter in the *Poetics* (at times even raising

For recent research on the topic, see also Vöhler and Seidensticker 2007; Destrée 2009. Luserke 1991 presents various interpretations of catharsis developed in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Huss 2009 confronts modern discussions of Aristotelian catharsis with interpretations of the early modern period, especially Racine's.

[9] Renaissance interpretations of catharsis have repeatedly attracted scholarly attention. Major contributions are, among others, Toffanin's 1965, Della Volpe's 1954, Weinberg's 1961, and Hathaway's 1962. The latter provides a very useful comprehensive account of the range of discussion. This already broad picture has been completed, and partially reworked upon, by numerous studies on single authors; see, for instance, Mazzacurati 1985 and Ryan 1982. For further biographical detail, see also Kappl 2006. Recently, Lohse 2015 has attacked the still widely held view that literary theory in late Renaissance Italy is essentially Aristotelian. He purports the thesis that the main characteristics of this theory have their origin in late antiquity and medieval or humanist poetics and remain more or less immune to change in the course of the discussion. The present paper, which to a certain extent supports Lohse's claim, offers a short survey which attempts to shed further light on the kind of morality Cinquecento critics see at work in poetry (cf. also Kappl 2011).

[10] My references are to the second edition of 1624. For a thorough study of Beni's works and his role in the history of Renaissance criticism, see Diffley 1988.

unnecessary questions). Since in doing so he regularly discusses the opinions of his predecessors, he proves to be a good starting-point for my survey.

2.2 Wormwood and Honey

Beni's commentary proper is preceded by a speech on the usefulness and excellence of poetry. Like innumerable other specimens of this genre Beni's encomium abounds in topoi and quotations from the ancient tradition. As is the case with epideictic oratory in general, one probably should not take every word of these *encomia* on poetry too seriously, as they regularly indulge in hyperbolic and sweeping statements. Nevertheless, they reflect an old and persistently influential concept of poetry. One of its typical elements consists in the idea that poetry proves to be more ancient and just as useful – or even more useful – than the supposed 'queen of sciences', namely philosophy. Thus, Beni points out that because the first philosophers were actually poets (Democritus, Parmenides, etc. have philosophised in verses), it is generally assumed that there is an affinity between philosophy and poetry and that the two are somehow complementary. Therefore, he says, moral philosophy has been defined as a more austere form of poetry ("austerior poesis") and poetry a more alluring form of philosophy ("blandior philosophia") (Beni 1624: 1). Later on (ibid.: 27; see also 154), taking up this idea again Beni cites as principal witness Maximus of Tyre, a second-century rhetor. The relevant passage reads:

> . . . ποιητικὴν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν· χρῆμα διττὸν μὲν κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα, ἁπλοῦν δὲ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν . . . . καὶ γὰρ ποιητικὴ τί ἄλλο ἢ φιλοσοφία, τῷ μὲν χρόνῳ παλαιά, τῇ δὲ ἁρμονίᾳ ἔμμετρος, τῇ δὲ γνώμῃ μυθολογική; καὶ φιλοσοφία τί ἄλλο ἢ ποιητική, τῷ μὲν χρόνῳ νεωτέρα, τῇ δὲ ἁρμονίᾳ εὐζωνοτέρα, τῇ δὲ γνώμῃ σαφεστέρα; (Max. Tyr. 4.1)
>
> [. . . poetry and philosophy; a thing twofold, indeed, according to name, but simple according to essence. . . . For what else is poetry than philosophy, ancient by time, metrical from harmony, and mythological from design? And what else is philosophy rather than poetry, more recent in time, more unpretending in harmony, and clearer in its intention?]

Elsewhere Maximus illustrates the method of poetry in an especially vivid and memorable fashion:

> καθάπερ δὲ οἱ ἰατροὶ τοῖς κακοσίτοις τῶν καμνόντων τὰ πικρὰ τῶν φαρμάκων ἀναδεύσαντες προσηνεῖ τροφῇ ἀπέκρυψαν τὴν τοῦ ὠφελοῦντος ἀηδίαν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ παλαιὰ φιλοσοφία καταθεμένη τὴν αὐτῆς γνώμην εἰς μύθους καὶ μέτρα καὶ σχῆμα ᾠδῆς, ἔλαθεν τῇ περιβολῇ τῆς ψυχαγωγίας κεράσασα τὴν ἀηδίαν τῶν διδαγμάτων. (Max. Tyr. 4.6)

[And as physicians mingle bitter medicines with sweet nutriment for the sick when they loathe food, and thus conceal the unpleasantness of the remedy; in like manner, ancient philosophy, inserting its meaning in fables, and in the measures and form of verse, concealed by the vestment of delight the unpleasantness of its precepts.]

The simile of the physician already occurs in a similar form in Plato (*Leg.* 658e-60a), but has received its 'classic' expression in Lucretius: just as the physician renders the originally bitter medicine – i.e. the philosophical content – palatable by covering the rim of the cup with sweet honey, Lucretius says, he has translated his not exactly user-friendly subject matter into poetic form so that the reader, charmed by the poetic devices, takes in the profitable lessons without noticing:

> Nam vel uti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
> cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
> contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
> ut puerorum aetas inprovida ludificetur
> labrorum tenus, interea perpotet amarum
> absinthi laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
> sed potius tali facto recreata valescat,
> sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
> tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
> volgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti
> carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
> et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle;
> si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
> versibus in nostris possem, dum percipis omnem
> naturam rerum ac persentis utilitatem.
> (Lucr. 4.11-25)

[For as physicians, when they seek to give / Young boys the nauseous wormwood, first do touch / The brim around the cup with the sweet juice / And yellow of the honey, in order that / The thoughtless age of boyhood be cajoled / As far as the lips, and meanwhile swallow down / The wormwood's bitter draught, and, though befooled, / Be yet not merely duped, but rather thus / Grow strong again with recreated health: / So now I too (since this my doctrine seems / In general somewhat woeful unto those / Who've had it not in hand, and since the crowd / Starts back from it in horror) have desired / To expound our doctrine unto thee in song / Soft-speaking and Pierian, and, as 'twere, / To touch it with sweet honey of the Muse – / If by such method haply I might hold / The mind of thee upon these lines of ours, / Till thou dost learn the nature of all things / And understandest their utility. (Trans. by William Ellery Leonard, Lucretius 2004: 104)]

Beni deploys Lucretius's verses in his discussion about the purpose of poetry (Beni 1624: 155). There he insists that neither pleasure ("delectare" /

"dulce"), nor pleasure combined with profit ("prodesse", "utile"), as Horace (*Ars* 333-44) commends, can be the aim of poetry. Rather, pleasure must be restricted to a merely instrumental use. The simile implies first of all that the contents of poetry are derived from philosophy and therefore cannot be its distinguishing feature. What constitutes poetry is rather the form of the work, like style, verse, etc. Indeed we observe that the focus on poetic form is prominent in the literary theory of the time. While in Aristotle the defining characteristic of poetry is the condensed and intensified (re)presentation of human action (*mimesis praxeos*), that is, a specific content, most Renaissance interpreters hold that poetry without verse in inconceivable or at least deficient.[11] Furthermore, the simile suggests that the (philosophical) content as such is disgusting and becomes enjoyable only through additional ingredients – at least for the general public. As happens in the quotation from Lucretius, as the honey-trick is employed with children, whereas adults can be expected to cope with the bitter-tasting potion, so poetry becomes philosophy for the common people.

This is exactly the idea we find in one of the major sixteenth–century treatises on poetics, that is, Giangiorgio Trissino's treatise *De la poetica* (1529, Weinberg 1970-74: 1.23), as well as in many other authors, such as Minturno (1970: 44, referring to comedy), Partenio (1560, Weinberg 1970-74: 2.522), Bernardo Tasso (1562, Weinberg 1970-74: 578-9), Carriero (1582, Weinberg 1970-74: 3.280-1), Faustino Summo, a colleague of Beni's in Padua (Weinberg 1970-74: 4.164), and works, such as the anonymous *De re poetica libellus* (1588, Weinberg 1970-74: 456-7), and even in Alessandro Piccolomini's commentary to the *Poetics*. Piccolomini, too, refers to the Lucretian simile (1575: 372) and contends that not only comedy, but also tragic and epic poetry primarily aim at entertaining and instructing the illiterate crowd ("moltitudine"). The well-educated can do without the sweetening of philosophical tenets by means of poetic sugar-coating (ibid.: 415). The most extensive exploitation of this simile is to be found in Scipione Ammirato's treatise *Il Dedalione o ver del poeta* (1560, Weinberg 1970-74: 3: 477-512). Ammirato also clearly states what the notion of poetry conveyed by the simile means for the purpose of poetry: as the physician aims at restoring the health of the body, Ammirato says, so the philosopher generally attempts to reestablish the soul's health; but if he does so in a pleasurable manner, he becomes a poet. The "primary and absolute" goal always remains profit, that is, health. Pleasure has an auxiliary function only (ibid.: 498).

[11] For Beni, dramatic poetry is an exception to this rule. In drama the use of prose is appropriate for the sake of verisimility (see Weinberg 1970-74: 4.348-93).

2.3 The End(s) of Poetry

Having commented on the first five chapters of the *Poetics*, Beni wonders what an Aristotelian definition of poetry in general should look like, since Aristotle himself does not offer one. After several attempts, he arrives at the following result: "poetry is a speech ("oratio") of not too short length, imitating action, motivating men to virtue not without great delight, and guiding them to a good and happy life".[12] In Beni's opinion, this definition is satisfying because it contains all the explanatory factors (i.e. 'causes') which, according to Aristotle, are required in the investigation of natural entities or artefacts in order to gain proper knowledge. Since poems also rank among artefacts and Aristotle compares them several times with living beings, it is certainly not out of place to apply the doctrine of the four causes when dealing with poetry. In order to explain the entities of the empirical world, one has to consider four 'causes' (*aitiai*), as Aristotle says: 1) the material cause, in the case of a house, for example, stone, wood or the like, in the case of a living being, the bodily organs and the materials of which they consist; 2) the efficient cause, e.g. the architect and the craftsmen, and the parents, respectively; 3) the formal cause, which can also be described as the inner form (*eidos*), function (*ergon*), or "what it is to be this thing" (*to ti en einai*) or its "substance" (*ousia*), e.g. shelter against bad weather, cold, etc. In the case of a living being the third cause would correspond to the (activities of the) soul. The *eidos* is responsible for the way in which the materials are arranged so as to fulfil their proper function. As such, it is also 4) "the for-the-sake-of-which" (*to hou heneka*), the purpose or end (*telos*) that the craftsmen have in mind when they put together the building materials, and the final outcome in the generation of a living being. Since things are what they are (a house, or a dog) only when they have reached this point and are able to fulfil their function, the formal and final cause are in fact identical.[13] If we apply this model to poetry, by virtue of his craft the poet will be the "causa efficiens", while language and music will be the material. The formal cause, the one that makes poetry poetry, just like the soul in a living being, will be the *mythos*, that is, the plot *qua* imitation of action. "Principle and, as it

[12] "Poesis est oratio non exiguae magnitudinis actionem imitans, qua non sine magna iucunditate ad virtutem excitentur et ad bene beateque vivendum dirigantur mortales" (Beni 1624: 148).

[13] This eventually holds true also for the efficient cause. Since the builder has to have in mind the *eidos* of the house in order to build it, and since living beings which procreate offspring also have to have in themselves the *eidos* they pass on, in some way also formal cause and efficient cause are identical. Therefore the principal causes are form and matter. See Arist. *Ph.* 2.3; 194b16-95a3; *Metaph.* 7.7-8.

were, the soul of tragedy is the plot (*mythos*)".[14] If we assume that the "causa formalis" and the "causa finalis" coincide, poetry has reached its end and perfection (*telos*) when it imitates human action in the best possible way. We get an idea of what this is supposed to mean in the already mentioned chapter 4 of the *Poetics*: a fine work of imitation (*mimema*) is obviously one that succeeds in making clear who a man is and what he does (and why he fails), a representation of human action whereby the action as such is elucidated so as to become comprehensible.

It is clear that a *mimema* of this kind has an effect on the recipient: insofar as, when following the tragic action, the spectator or reader comprehends what he sees or reads, the *mimema* will have a specific emotional effect on him: it will stir adequate fear and adequate pity, and, at the same time, produce delight by enabling the recipient to gain a certain kind of knowledge.

If we take seriously what Aristotle says about the emotions in his ethical works, we can hardly doubt that this effect has moral relevance. That is, after all, the reason why art can and should be part of education. However, this effect is not something the poet aims at *qua* poet, since, as a poet, he only strives to create the perfect *mimema*.

For his part, Beni makes a different classification (apart from the "causa efficiens"); he identifies the factual actions of real men as the material cause of poetry, since, in his opinion, this is the raw material the poet reshapes through the means available to him. The formal cause is assumed to be imitation, the final cause is interpreted as incitement to virtue. Beni adds pleasure ("voluptas") as an "instrument" ("instrumentum"). Contrary to his usual effort to employ the right Aristotelian terminology,[15] this passage reveals the emergence of a long-lasting tradition of schematizing, which could already be found in fourteenth-century "accessus" literature.[16] There "materia" traditionally denotes the subject matter, and "causa formalis" the mode of representation, not its specific object. Beni's remarks on the Aristotelian concept of *mimesis* make clear that he also primarily conceives "imitatio" as a formal poetic device (1624: 45-50). The "causa finalis" is equated with the author's intention ("intentio") or the work's moral benefit ("utilitas"), and not, as in Aristotle, with its intrinsic goal which consists in the perfection of the work itself.

This procedure here adopted by Beni is symptomatic of his way of pro-

[14] Arist. *Poet.* 1450a38f: ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας.

[15] In defining "action" (*praxis*), for example, Beni underscores that it has to be understood in the sense expounded in Aristotle's ethics as human action originating in choice and deliberation (Beni 1624: 149).

[16] See, for instance, Nicholas Trevet's "expositio" to Seneca's *Hercules furens*, cited in Scott and Minnis 1988: 346.

ceeding. In the contemporary endless debates about whether the purpose of poetry is to delight ("dilettare", "delectare"), to benefit ("giovare", "prodesse"), or both, the idea that the best possible composition of action itself is the inherent goal of poetry somehow gets almost completely lost. Antonio Riccoboni, Beni's predecessor in Padua, is one of the few exceptions. In the first chapter ("on the nature of poetry") of his *Poetics*, he explicitly states that "fabula", or *mythos*, is the *telos* of poetry (Riccoboni 1970: 4). Also Lorenzo Giacomini, in his *De la purgazione de la tragedia* (1586), argues for regarding the poem itself – which he defines as the imitation of human action in an embellished language – as *telos*; the possible effects may vary, depending on the different genres and the respective condition of the recipients (Weinberg 1970-74: 3.352).

Beni, by contrast, like the majority of interpreters, declares that moral profit is necessarily the only purpose of poetry – necessity, however, is not an intrinsic one, which derives from the thing itself, but originates from a superior authority, namely politics. This becomes quite clear in the following consideration taken from Beni:

> Quamquam non est dissimulandum poesim, cum primo appareret inter mortales, voluptatis causa exceptam, quaesitam, cultam, retentam: ita ut eius tum ortum et incrementa, tum in primis usum reputanti, voluptas fere illius finis videri possit. (1624: 153-4)
>
> [It cannot be denied that poetry, when it made its first appearance among men, was accepted, sought after, cultivated, and maintained for the sake of pleasure ("voluptatis causa"). Therefore, when you consider the origin of poetry, its development, and above all its use, pleasure can pretty much seem to be its purpose.]

Even so, Beni says, it is true that man is a political animal ("civile animal") and can achieve happiness only in society, and that is why poetry, like everything else, has to be directed to the appropriate end, which is "honorable profit" ("honesta utilitas"). Later on this idea comes into sharper relief:

> Quod si prisci illi mortales, qui primi fabulis operam dedere, de huiusmodi poematum ideis non cogitarunt et voluptatem verius quam utilitatem spectarunt, cogitarunt procedente tempore philosophi et legislarores . . . ; qui quemadmodum ex Aristotele satis constat, poesim humaenae utilitati et publico bono referendam statuerunt. (ibid.: 234)
>
> [If people in ancient times who first dealt with telling stories have not thought about these literary forms (*sc.* epic, tragedy, and comedy, which, according to Beni, are useful for different sections of society) and rather paid attention to pleasure than to benefit, still in the course of time philosophers and legislators . . . *did* think about it. As becomes clear from Aristotle, they have decreed

> that poetry should be orientated towards human benefit and public welfare. (Emphasis added)]

Of course, even though Beni abides by the moral function of poetry, in his argumentation the separation of ethics and aesthetics has already been accomplished: history itself suggests that there *may* be poetry without a moral function, simply because, *de facto*, poetry originally *did* not have such a function.

3. Catharsis

Since Aristotle has nothing to say about moral benefit in the *Poetics*, interpreters hustle to define tragedy. In a definition, as we have seen, you expect that a purpose ("finis", *telos*) is mentioned, and the purpose ought to be moral benefit. Aristotle's definition mentions catharsis – so this cannot be anything else but the moral benefit we desire. The definition is:

> ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. (Arist. *Poet.* 1449b24-28)

> [Tragedy is mimesis of a serious, complete action which has a certain magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements [used] separately in the (various) parts (of the play); (represented) by people acting and not by narration; accomplishing by means of pity and fear a catharsis of these emotions.]

Up to this day, scholars have not come to terms with the last words of this famous sentence. In Beni's time, the debate about it was already so difficult to be reconstructed, that our commentator needs several pages to review even the most important contributions to this question. He dedicates a separate extensive "controversia" to this question (Beni 1624: 166-74). Although many other issues are doubtful, Beni is confident that in mentioning catharsis Aristotle has delineated the purpose of tragedy, that is a kind of moral benefit ("utilitas") (ibid.: 165-6).

3.1 "Tranquillitas animi" and "Praemeditatio"

Problems start with Aristotle's wording: "accomplishing by means of pity and fear a catharsis of these emotions / emotions of this kind". With regard to the phrase *katharsin ton . . . pathematon*, the Greek genitive *pathematon* generally indicates separation as well as an object. In the first case, the soul would be purged *from* affects, in the second, the affects themselves would be purged.

According to Beni, there is no doubt that catharsis cannot simply mean an elimination of emotions, since Platonists as well as Aristotelians reject the notion of complete freedom from passions (*apatheia*) (ibid.: 166). Beni just states this without giving any reasons. And indeed, in chapter 2.3 of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle himself points out with gratifying clarity that virtue is not to be identified with *apatheia*:

> διὸ καὶ ὁρίζονται τὰς ἀρετὰς ἀπαθείας τινὰς καὶ ἠρεμίας· οὐκ εὖ δέ, ὅτι ἁπλῶς λέγουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὡς οὐ δεῖ καὶ ὅτε, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα προστίθεται. (Arist. *EN* 1104b23-26)
>
> [This is why some thinkers define the virtues as states of impassivity (*apatheia*) or tranquillity, though they make a mistake in using these terms absolutely, without adding: in the right or wrong manner, and at the right or wrong time and the other qualifications.]

Almost all commentators agree on this, at least if we go by their choice of words. Therefore, Beni concludes, purgation here can only be used in the sense of moderation. Beni's short hint touches on a problem with which quite a few interpretations of catharsis in the Renaissance are tainted; starting from the tranquillity of mind ("tranquillitas animi") as an ideal of life, transmitted to them mainly by the writings of Cicero, many interpreters tend to mistrust emotions to a certain degree, even if they consider a complete eradication of emotions as undesirable or impossible.[17] This is also suggested by the common translation of the Greek term *pathos* as "perturbatio" – Cicero remarked that this term denotes something vicious in itself (Cic. *Fin.* 3.35). In the introduction to his treatise on poetics, Trissino points out that "a tranquil and pleasant life without any perturbation" ("un vivere tranquillo e soave senza alcuna perturbazione") is the supreme good to be achieved in life – and of course poetry helps us to obtain it (Weinberg 1970-74: 1.23). Even in the writings of commentators who argue against *apatheia*, this ideal lurks in the background. A typical example is Robortello's interpretation of catharsis. His *Commentarii* are the first full-fledged commentary to Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Cinquecento and, as such, it sets the scene for further discussion. On the one hand, Robortello, starting from a passage of *Politics* ,[18] declares that:

[17] Hathaway (1962: 209) thus describes Cicero's role: "He was the undercover man, the power behind the throne, for there can be little doubt that the image of the tranquil man, the man above passion, came to the Renaissance through Cicero, whatever its origin was". See also ibid.: 215.

[18] Ar. *Pol.* 1340a14-18: ἐπεὶ δὲ συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὴν μουσικὴν τῶν ἡδέων, τὴν δ' ἀρετὴν περὶ τὸ χαίρειν ὀρθῶς καὶ φιλεῖν καὶ μισεῖν, δεῖ δηλονότι μανθάνειν καὶ συνεθίζεσθαι μηθὲν οὕτως ὡς τὸ κρίνειν ὀρθῶς καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς ἐπιεικέσιν ἤθεσι καὶ ταῖς καλαῖς πράξεσιν· ("Since it is the case that music is one of the things that give pleasure, and that virtue has to do with feeling delight and love and hatred in the right

> virtutem in nulla alia re consistere, quam ut homines discant laetari recte, amare, odisse, nullaque in re magis oportere homines exerceri, quam ut assuescant iudicare recte et laetari mansuetis ac probis moribus laudatisque actionibus. (Robortello 1968: 53)
>
> [virtue consists in nothing else but in learning to feel delight, love, hate in the right manner, and that men have to practice nothing more than getting used to judge correctly and to delight in gentle and virtuous characters and praiseworthy actions].

To this he adds that tragedy presents people whom we have every right to pity and things that everyone, even the wise man, fears with good reason. All this seems to point towards an arousal of appropriate emotions and insofar comply with the basic tenets of Aristotelian ethics. On the other hand, in a subsequent passage we finds what Robortello advertises as tragedy's "greatest benefit":

> cum enim communis sit omnium mortalium fortuna, nullusque sit, qui calamitatibus non sit subiectus, facilius ferunt homines, si quid adversi acciderit, eoque se solacio plane firmissimo sustentant, quod aliis etiam idem accidisse meminerint. (Ibid.)
>
> [Since fortune is common to all men and since there is nobody who is not subject to calamities, people bear it more easily when they experience something adverse, and console themselves by remembering that others have already suffered the same.]

Fortune, being blind, may strike anybody – and indeed has already stricken many people, also better people than us. By becoming aware of this time and again, we will not be overcome by grief if some thing bad befalls us. Preparing yourself in advance by imagining all kinds of adverse events that may happen to you – the so-called "premeditation of future evils" ("praemeditatio futurorum malorum") – is a spiritual exercise, especially practised by the Stoics. It is part of the resources that the would-be "sapiens", the wise man, employs to brace himself against the perils of the outside world so as not to lose his peace of mind.

Whereas in Robortello this tranquil man is only hinted at, Alessandro Piccolomini is very outspoken about what kind of goal he has in mind: tragedy, he says, like every form of poetry, aims at moral profit – and this profit is described as follows:

> non potendo l'huomo gustare, et conseguir maggior'utilità, che in posseder'una vera tranquillità dell'animo, da cui non può star separata la virtuosa

way, there is obviously nothing that is more important to learn and get used to than to judge correctly and to delight in virtuous characters and noble actions").

> vita sua; et d'altronde non potendo ricever macchia questa tranquillità, se non per colpa delle passioni dell'animo; di quì è, ch'in cosa alcuna non si son tanto affatigati i Filosofi per render tranquillo l'animo, quanto in cercar di purgarlo da quegli affetti. (Piccolomini 1575: 101)
>
> [One cannot enjoy and gain a greater benefit than possessing a true tranquillity of mind, from which virtuous life cannot be separated. This tranquillity can only be tarnished by passions of the soul. This is the reason why philosophers have made the greatest efforts to render the mind tranquil by trying to purge it from those emotions.]

But while the Stoics believed that emotions have to be eradicated root and branch, if man wants to be happy, the followers of Aristotle realized that the emotions, provided they stay within their confines, are natural and necessary to human life, and that, in order to obtain a tranquil life, one does not have to extirpate them (nature would not allow this anyway). It is sufficient to purge ("purgare"), moderate ("moderare"), and, all in all, reduce them to a certain good measure ("ridurre ad un certo buono temperamento") which is prescribed by reason (Piccolomini 1575: 101-2). Thus, on the one hand, Piccolomini pleads in favour of emotions remaining within certain boundaries and, on the other, he sticks to the ideal of the tranquillity of mind.

Premeditation theory also reappears in Piccolomini, though in a slightly different version: as Robortello before him, he also points out that we would experience less pain, if we realized how easily every man is subject to it. Besides, there is yet another wholesome effect one may obtain: seeing how even the ones who most favoured by fortune may instantly fall into misery, we curb our own hopes and mitigate our joys, thinking about their fragility (ibid.: 102). Not only is tranquillity of mind disturbed by wrong assumptions about present or future evils, but also about present or future goods. Tragedy should therefore guard against the latter too.

Stoic traits become even more clearly visible in Antonio Sebastiano Minturno's dialogue *De poeta* (1559). In the first book a comprehensive therapy against the Platonic 'trauma' – i.e. that poetry corrupts the citizens – is performed. In words similar to Robortello, Vopiscus, who in Minturno's work plays the role of an "advocatus Aristotelis", declares:

> Age vero adversis rebus assuescere ad humanarum casus miseriarum perferendos plurimum valet. . . . Itaque tantum abest, ut ea consuetudine permotiones animi augeamus, ut si quid accidat, quod vehementius perturbet, id levius ferre possimus. Fit enim ut qui non semel Oedipodis, Orestae, Aiacis, Hecubae, Niobes, Iocastae gravi fortuna fuerit concitatus, ei si quid incommodi evenerit, hoc improvisum non sit. At *praemeditatio futurorum malorum lenit eorum adventum, quae venientia longe ante videris.* (Minturno 1970: 64-5, emphasis added; see also 179)

> [Besides, getting used to misfortune makes a huge contribution to enduring the vicissitudes of human existence. . . . Hence this habituation by no means fosters the perturbations in our souls – rather, we can bear it more easily when something happens that is apt to throw us into disarray. For to anybody who has become upset not only once by the terrible fate of Oedipus, Orestes, Ajax, Hecuba, Niobe or Iocasta, misfortune will not come unexpected. But *the consideration of evils beforehand* ("praemeditatio futurorum malorum") *mitigates the approach of evils whose coming one has long foreseen.*]

The key phrase, "praemeditatio futurorum malorum", unmistakably reveals the provenance of Vopiscus/Minturno's notion of tragedy. In fact, the section here emphazised is a literal quote from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.29). As he carries on his discussion, Minturno borrows from his model on a even larger scale:

> Mihi vero nulla disciplina, nullaque ratio videtur, quae *tam obtundat elevetque aegritudinem quam* Tragica poesis, cum sit subiectio quaedam sub oculos, nihil esse, quod accidere non possit, atque spectatio *conditionis humanae. . . . Neque enim qui rerum naturam, qui vitae varietatem, qui imbecillitatem generis humani* in ea, tanquam in speculo, cernit, *moeret, cum haec cogitat. Sed tum vel maxime sapientis fungitur munere.* Nam *adversis casibus triplici consolatione* medetur. *Primum quod posse accidere diu cogitaverit; quae cogitatio una maxime molestias omnes extenuat et diluit. Deinde quod humana ferenda intelligit. Postremo quod videt nullum malum nisi culpam. Culpam autem nullam esse, cum id, quod ab homine praestari non* possit*, evenerit.* (Minturno 1970: 65, emphasis added)

> [In my view, there is no doctrine and no method *so well fitted to deaden and alleviate distress as* tragic poetry, because it brings, as it were, before our eyes *that there is no event which may not happen*, and a spectacle *of our state as human beings. . . . For the man who* – like in a mirror – discerns in it *nature, the diversity of life and the weakness of humanity, is not saddened by reflecting upon these things, but in doing so he fulfils most completely the function of wisdom. For in adversity he finds a threefold relief to aid his restoration; first because he has long since reflected on the possibility of mishap, and this is by far the best method of lessening and weakening all vexation; secondly because he understands that the lot of man must be endured in the spirit of a man; lastly because he sees that there is no evil but guilt, but that there is no guilt when the issue is one against which a man can give no guarantee.* (trans. from Cicero by J. E. King, Cicero 1927: 267-9, emphasis added)]

Indeed, Minturno's alleged words, which have been marked as an especially significant statement (Hathaway 1962: 228), derive from Cicero (see emphases in the quotations above)! Of course, Cicero is not speaking about tragedy at this point (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.34), but is defending the utility of "praemeditatio" against Epicurus. Whereas Cicero writes that there is nothing so well

suited to soothe anguish as considering the human condition ("meditatio condicionis humanae"), Minturno boldly replaces "contemplation of human condition" with "tragic poetry". Thus, catharsis suddenly becomes an exercise in Stoic equanimity. Not only does tragedy assist us against the impositions of blind Fortuna, which can befall even the completely innocent, but, as Minturno further explains, educates us to exercise more caution ("prudentia") against harmful passions. For example, seeing how Priam plunges into deep misery on account of royal arrogance or indulgence towards his children, or Oedipus on account of foolishness or imperiousness, we will strive to be free from any disease ("morbus") of this kind (Minturno 1970: 63-4). In this momentous reading, tragedy turns out to be the presentation of deterring examples. By making us visualize the dire consequences of passions or other mental defects, it exhorts us to improve our mental health.[19]

3.2 "Prudentia" and "Ratio", not "Purgatio"

Concerning the just mentioned forms of purgation, Beni is less worried about their Stoic origins. Rather, he disapproves of them because purgation is not accomplished directly by the tragic emotions (fear and pity), but results from thinking. This means that they do not take Aristotle' s phrase "by means of pity and fear" seriously enough. First of all Beni (1624: 168) quotes some lines taken from the comic poet Timocles, transmitted by Athenaeus (6.223b4-d6), on the benefits of tragedy – lines which have been employed by several of Beni's predecessors, for example Robortello (1968: 53-4) and Minturno (1970: 179). The Timocles-fragment tells us that, at the end of a performance, we leave the theatre "instructed" (*paideutheis*):

ὁ μὲν ὢν γὰρ πένης
πτωχότερον αὑτοῦ καταμαθὼν τὸν Τήλεφον
γενόμενον ἤδη τὴν πενίαν ῥᾷον φέρει.
. . .
ἅπαντα γὰρ τὰ μείζον' ἢ πέπονθέ τις
ἀτυχήματ' ἄλλοις γεγονότ' ἐννοούμενος

[19] Minturno's use of the term "morbus" may also be be traced back to the *Tusculan Disputations*, see Cic. *Tusc.* 3.7: "Haec enim fere sunt eius modi quae Graeci πάθη appellant; ego poteram 'morbos', et id verbum esset e verbo, sed in consuetudinem nostram non caderet. Nam misereri, invidere, gestire, laetari, haec omnia morbos Graeci appellant, motus animi rationi non obtemperantes" ["These belong, speaking generally, to the class of emotions which the Greeks term *pathe*: I might have called them 'diseases' (morbi), and this would be a word-for-word rendering: but it would not fit in with Latin usage. For pity, envy, exultation, joy, all these the Greeks term diseases, movements that is of the soul which are not obedient to reason". (Trans. by J. E. King, Cicero 1927: 233)].

> τὰς αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ συμφορὰς ῥᾷον φέρει.
> (Timocles fr. 6.9-11, 17-19 Kock = Athenaeus 6.223c-d)

> [The poor man, for instance, learns that Telephus was more beggarly than himself, and from that time on he bears his poverty more easily . . . For he is reminded that all his calamities, which are greater than mortal man has ever borne, have happened to others, and so he bears his own trials more easily. (Trans. by Charles B. Gulick, Atheneus 1927-41: 7)]

This, Beni concedes, is comforting and yet of little avail in attempting to understand catharsis. Firstly, the effect is achieved not by fear and pity but by rational deliberation ("ratio", "prudentia"). Secondly, it is not specific to tragedy: historiography may have the same impact, or even be more effective, since it offers a vast number of examples, and real ones ("exempla et plurima et vera"); eventually, everyday experience ("quotidiani casus") may be sufficient to bring home the same message (Beni 1624: 168). Piccolomini's interpretation of catharsis, according to which we moderate our vain hopes and pleasures and are less afraid of future adversities realising the fragility of all worldly things, is especially liable to the same criticism. Minturno's assertion that we seek to avoid those vices or passions which lead to the downfall of the tragic protagonists has the same flaw.

Beni's reproach concerning this issue is directed against Maggi who, in his commentary on catharsis, also supports the view that fear induced by tragedy helps us avoid the vices ("vitia") of the protagonists (Maggi 1969: 97). In the context of his interpretation of tragic *hamartia* as error committed through ignorance, he states that tragedy through this kind of *hamartia* makes us more circumspect ("prudentiore*s*", ibid.: 154); however, for Maggi, the idea that fear and pity drive out other harmful emotions is more prominent in his section on catharsis (see below 3.4).

Beni's criticism had already been voiced elsewhere. In his treatise on catharsis, Lorenzo Giacomini had addressed exactly the same problem (Weinberg 1970-74: 3.347-71). His treatise, which ranks among the most interesting documents of the time dealing with catharsis, seems to have met little response with the contemporaries (see Hathaway 1962: 258-9). Still, in the medical interpretation of catharsis, which has become current since Bernays, Giacomini is still widely remembered, whereas Beni and others have sunk into oblivion. Giacomini acutely observes that

> quelle utilità non nascon semplicemente da la vista o da l´udita de le tragiche sciagure, ma dal discorso de l´intelletto, il quale può discorrere e non discorrere e trarne quei giovamenti e non trarne. Onde saranno incerti e stranieri a la tragedia, a cui il suo proprio ufizio conviene assegnare; oltre che ammaestramento e purgazione sono tra sé molto differenti. (Weinberg 1970-74: 3.350)

> [those forms of utility do not arise from just watching or hearing tragic poetry but by an activity of reason; and reason may be active, but it may be inactive as well, and it may draw this profit from tragedy but not necessarily. Therefore, they are alien to tragedy; but we have to attribute to tragedy the task particular to it. Apart from that, there is a major difference between instruction and purgation.]

3.3 Habituation and 'Hardening'

We are left with interpretations which locate purgation in the realm of the emotions proper. In this regard, a very popular theory, which postulates an effect of emotional habituation or hardening and can be already found in Robortello's commentary, has to be considered. On the one hand, by seeing on the stage persons and actions very similar to real persons and actions, we get used to feel pain, fear and pity, so that we become impervious to pain and fear when in real life some misfortune happens to us. On the other, a person who has never grieved some misfortune will feel much more pain, in case he or she has to face some unexpected hardship (Robortello 1968: 53). Beni reprehends Robortello primarily for tacitly shifting from pity to pain ("dolor"). It is not plausible, he remarks, that getting used to sympathizing with others results in feeling less pain at one's own misery (Beni 1624: 169). At best, pity is reduced, but that is not what Aristotle intended.

Habituation leading to a deadening of emotions is also an element we find in Piccolomini's explanation of catharsis. He refers to experiences in times of war or pestilence when people are upset by their fellows' death, yet, while initially suffering, they later cease to feel pity and fear. Piccolomini illustrates this phenomenon by pointing out that by being exposed to calamities frequently enough we end up by the judging ("giudicare") them as not entirely bad. Consequently, Beni criticises again the idea that this effect originates from reason ("ratio", "iudicium") and does not directly result from the emotional experience as such.

The habituation theory lies at the core of Lodovico Castelvetro's reading of Aristotelian catharsis. If spectators in the theatre frequently have to face events arousing pity and fear, their emotions will eventually wear out; thus people become high-spirited instead of abject, confident instead of timid, and severe instead of compassionate. Like Piccolomini, Castelvetro cites the increasing deadening of emotions in times of war or disease, but his argument has a different thrust. He assumes Aristotle to mean that the force of the emotions is weakened by diffusion to many objects, just like wine, which loses its strength when watered down, or like a father of few children, who loves them more than if he had a numerous progeny (Castelvetro 1978-79: 1.161).

However, Castelvetro himself (whose commentary in many ways breaks out of the mainstream) does not regard this theory as very convincing – and generally attaches little value to the concept of catharsis. In his opinion, it must be understood as a retort to Plato, with little bearing on his own theory of poetry (ibid.: 162; 19; 359; 2.367). Castelvetro asserts that poetry is in principle oriented towards pleasure ("diletto"). Catharsis, by contrast, has to be classified as benefit ("utilità") since it is not associated with pleasure. Therefore it can only be taken into account as a by-product – tragedy, in his opinion, purges only accidentally ("per accidente"), that is, the purgative effect does not belong to its essence (ibid.: 2.112; 1.391). In the sphere of pleasure, in turn, which is also the proper sphere of tragedy, we find a familiar concept: the realization that we cannot put our trust in the calm course of events, that is, good old "praemeditatio". The delight we take in this realization, Castelvetro says, is especially great because we learn our lesson by ourselves, instead of being lectured by a teacher, the latter occurrence always implying a confession of our own ignorance and a debt of gratitude towards the teacher. Thus, "praemeditatio" is dissociated from catharsis; what is left is the deadening of emotions.[20] According to Beni, the opinion that affects can be thinned out in the way Castelvetro conceives of is so out of place that he does not even deem it worthy of further discussion.

3.4 Purgation from Vices, not from Emotions

With special regard to Maggi, Beni reveals a further deficiency in some interpretations of catharsis, insofar as they do not conform to Aristotle's phrase "purgation of those/such *emotions*" (my emphasis). While Robortello had assumed a purgation, in the sense of attenuation, of fear and pity themselves, Maggi rejects this reading of catharsis by arguing that fear and especially pity are useful emotions. And since it is logically impossible that means and object of purgation be identical, catharsis has to be understood as a process in which, by means of pity provoked by tragedy, other (harmful) affects are driven out of the soul. Maggi especially cites anger, avarice, and lust ("ira", "avaritia", and "luxuria"):

> Melius est misericordiae et terroris interventu expurgare animum ab ira, qua tot neces fiunt, ab avaritia, quae infinitorum paene malorum est causa, a luxuria, cuius gratia nefandissima scelera saepissime patrantur. His itaque rationibus haudquaquam dubito, Aristotelem nolle Tragoediae finem esse animam humanam a terrore misericordiave expurgare; sed his uti ad alias perturbationes ab animo

[20] The most extreme form of this reading of catharsis, suggested by Giason Denores, is that tragedy served to prepare the citizens of Athens for battle. In Rome, he says, gladiatorial games served the same purpose (Weinberg 1970-74: 3.388-9).

> removendas: ex quarum remotione animus virtutibus exornatur. nam ira, verbi gratia, depulsa, succedit mansuetudo. (Maggi 1969: 98)
>
> [It is better that by intervention of pity and terror the soul is purged from anger resulting in so many deaths, from avarice, the root of nearly infinite evils, from lust responsible for such heinous crimes. For these reasons I have no doubt that Aristotle did not want tragedy to aim at purging our souls from terror or pity; rather it uses pity and fear to remove other perturbations from the soul. And because of this removal the soul becomes adorned with virtues, for when anger, for example, is driven away, gentleness follows.]

The same idea, with more rhetorical splendour, is suggested by Minturno's Vopiscus (Minturno 1970: 63). Beni finds fault with this theory of replacement, too, asserting that in this case the soul is not really purged from pernicious affects, but from vices ("vitia"), for avarice and lust are not affects (Beni 1624: 169). This objection seems a bit feeble, and it appears so not without reason: after Beni's extensive criticism of his predecessors, which is partially quite harsh, we eagerly wait for Beni's own solution to the problem of catharsis. Yet, considering what he actually come to say about it, Horace's line (*Ars* 139) inevitably comes to mind: "The mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse". Indeed, Beni offers Maggi's own reading of catharsis: by stirring fear and pity in a high degree, tragedy expels harmful passions – and also vices! – from the soul. Additionally, it trains us to eschew the mistakes of the tragic heroes (Beni 1624: 172, 174). Of course, Beni is fully aware that this manoeuvre puts him into a weak position, therefore he hastens to dissociate himself from Maggi. For one thing, he complains, Maggi does not expound why he lists not only passions but also vices among the objects of catharsis. Beni himself presents a rather awkward explanation: only immoderate affects, and not moderate ones, not need purgation, as they happen to be vices or lead to vices. Besides, Maggi supposes that catharsis operates on all recipients indiscriminately. But that is not the case, as Beni emphazises. According to him, in the course of time poetry has adapted itself to the social conditions and needs so that different genres of poetry address different sections of society and benefit each of them in a different way. Epic poetry provides good rulers with ideal examples of leadership so as to incite them even more to virtue, tragedy addresses potentates not yet advanced in virtue, and comedy the common people, although everybody can draw profit from all genres to a certain extent (Beni 1624: 172). This orientation towards a particular audience is the reason why, of all emotions, pity and fear should be stirred by tragic poetry:

> Iam facile erit animadvertere, cur dixerit Aristoteles tragicam imitationem per misericoridam et metum (id quod hactenus tantopere torsit interpretes) huiusmodi perpurgari. Tragicis enim infortuniis excitandae sunt in tyranno-

> rum regumque ac potetntum pectore hae duae affectiones maxime, misericordia scilicet et metus, ut hinc affectiones et vitia corrigantur, quibus reges quique caeteris authoritate praestant, laborare solent. (Beni 1624: 172)

> [Now it will be easy to understand why Aristotle says that tragic imitation *by means of pity and fear* – and this is what has haunted interpreters so much – purges perturbations of this kind. For the tragic misfortunes should excite in the hearts of tyrants, kings, and potentates these two emotions, pity and fear, in the highest degree, and in this way emotions and vices which typically befall kings and people of high authority are corrected. (Emphasis added)]

Pity leads them to abandon ferocity, cruelty, avarice, rapacity, irascibility and embrace kindness, gentleness, generosity instead, and to treat their subjects with paternal love. By means of fear and horror they are discouraged from cherishing vain joys, revelling in pleasures, indulging in vices. They will keep a tight rein on lust, ambition and similar perturbations. Thus, pity and fear contribute to their being moderate in office and governing with gentleness. Therefore, when a king sees how another king loses his wealth and power and falls into misery because of arrogance, rapacity, lechery and intemperance ("superbia", "rapacitas", "libido", "intemperantia"), he fears that similar things may happen to him too and resolves to avoid vices of this kind and to curb his passions.

3.5 Medical Catharsis

Beni's catharsis leaves us somewhat baffled since it eventually does not meet his own criteria. Despite his protestations to the contrary, he does not succeed in going beyond Maggi; his assertion that potentates will become more circumspect in their own behaviour by watching tragedies presupposes exactly what he blames in others – that is, the idea that by reasoning you become aware of a general moral maxim (such as "pride comes before a fall").

However, there have indeed been interpretations of catharsis in the secondo Cinquecento which, as Beni requests, describe an emotional process,[21] first and foremost the theory proposed by Giacomini (1586). As Beni, he initially surveys the existing interpretations acknowledging serious shortcomings in all of them. Subsequently, he sets forth some basic principles which have to be taken into account in an adequate account of catharsis. The most important for us concerns the concept of emotion. Although Gia-

[21] Beni himself mentions Guarini, in whose interpretation of catharsis a wrong kind of fear is replaced by a right kind of fear: fear of physical death is superseded by fear of death of the soul (the same applies correspondingly to pity). Beni regards this theory as preposterous (1624: 171).

comini allows for a certain cognitive element in the formation of emotion, he focuses completely on the bodily processes involved. If the bodily substrate, which he also called "mother of the emotions" ("madre degli affetti") (Weinberg 1970-74: 3.357), is disposed in a certain way, the soul will be inclined to certain emotions – or, again, disinclined. It is on this level of physical disposition that catharsis operates, analogously to medical catharsis in the proper sense. There, excessive humours are drawn out of the body by means of a drug that is similar to the humour, i.e. the purgative (ibid.: 354-5). Similarly, in tragic catharsis depressions of the soul are eliminated by the pity and the fear elicited by tragedy. This takes place in the following manner: we fear for the tragic protagonist and pity him or her; and by indulging in these artificially induced emotions and letting them out we are liberated from despondence, depression and other emotions of this kind (ibid.: 362). The tragic emotions of pity and fear are the purgatives which draw similar nocuous emotions out of the soul. Whoever has wept and lamented for a while, is saturated and less disposed to cry and moan, the 'breeding ground' for negative emotions being removed (ibid.: 358-9, 366). Since the soul thus obtains relief, the process is associated with pleasure (ibid.: 363-4).

The restriction of the concept of catharsis to physical release does not mean, however, that Giacomini is willing to ignore other benefits with regard to tragedy. Tragedy, he says, affords multiple pleasures, some resulting directly from poetry, some from external factors. In the first group, Giacomini includes: 1) pleasure in "learning" the plot – this obviously means that we get to know the story; 2) pleasure in "learning" that something we would not have thought possible is happening, which in turn creates wonder ("meraviglia"); 3) pleasure in relating the represented object to reality, for instance, "this man in the picture is Socrates", and 4) delight in poetic form, images, metaphors, verse, dancing, scenery, costumes, and finally in the poet's ingenuity in constructing the plot as well as in similar features. The second group comprises: 1) sympathizing with others, which, being natural, is also pleasurable; 2) recognizing that we have not been hit as hard by fate as others; and 3) realizing that true happiness does not depend on external goods, but consists solely in living a virtuous life (ibid.: 365).

Like Castelvetro, Giacomini confines catharsis to a purely emotional process. In doing this he is, however, more radical than Castelvetro – and he has better arguments. Castelvetro, as we have seen, was after all not really interested in the subject. The mechanism of action of Giacomini's catharsis works on the physiological level of the emotions, and Aristotle has also quite a lot to say about the physiology of affects. Besides, Giacomini refers to the eighth book of the *Politics*, where Aristotle, speaking about musical catharsis, distinguishes between melodies suited for education and those employed for cathartic purposes – a distinction which seems to provide further grist

for the mill of all those who argue for purgation as a primarily bodily mechanism with no ethical relevance. Therefore it is hardly surprising that Giacomini's reading of catharsis, though hardly appreciated in its own times, has gained wide acceptance in modern times. Whether it fully meets the requirements of Aristotle's theory of emotions is, however, still open to debate.

4. Purgation and Instruction, Concrete and Abstract – A Conclusion

If poetry is *mimesis* of human action and if this *mimesis* is to lead us to a certain knowledge of human action, then we should admit that poetry has a specific object: it (re)presents human action in an intensified form. In case of tragedy, it shows how and why a basically good individual utterly fails – or nearly fails – in his pursuits. By focusing on the unfolding of the events and on grasping its causes, the recipient gains a certain kind of knowledge, he 'learns' something.[22] Learning here is obviously neither a simple increase of information, nor the result of reasoning, by which a general lesson is drawn after the curtain has fallen. Rather, it is an immediate perception of the concrete individual case and therefore an empirical knowledge, which cannot be substituted by reading treatises on ethics. "Acting (*praxis*) is about individual cases" is one of Aristotle's fundamental maxims in ethics (ἡ δὲ πρᾶξις περὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, Arist. *EN* 1141b16).

Since this process of concentrating and learning is an activity through which humans realize their distinctive potentials, it is immediately accompanied by pleasure. And since tragedy represents the failure of somebody who are in some respects similar to us and who do not deserve the suffering they experience, in realizing what happens we do feel emotions, and in particular fear and pity. These emotions arise from the very composition of the actions. Staging, poetic language, and music also contribute to the emotional experience, but they play only a subordinate role. Finally, if the plot is skillfully built, tragedy arouses "adequate" emotions. This emotional experience has moral relevance as such, insofar as appropriate emotional responses, as we have seen, are an essential part of a good and happy life. In short, it is a concrete experience in which cognitive and emotional aspects are closely interwoven and which is, if we choose to employ these categories, at the same time "utile" and "dulce".

If what we have maintained so far is correct, in the interpretations of Ar-

[22] This of course only holds true on the assumption that the respective poem meets Aristotle's standards and that the respective recipient is able and willing to get involved and to appreciate it (and does not go to the theatre to parade his new clothes).

istotle's *Poetics* in the Cinquecento we can observe a quite different notion of the moral impact of poetry. Evidence for this is the widely held belief that poetry is moral philosophy in different clothing: it conveys the very same messages, but through different methods. This conviction finds expression in the simile of the physician: philosopher and poet administer the same bitter medicine, but the poet succeeds in sweetening its substrate to such an extent that we swallow the potion without tasting its bitterness. The simile is intended to legitimize and lend authority to poetry, but eventually has fatal consequences. Not only does it disrupt the tie between "utile" and "dulce", but also deprives poetry of its peculiar object. Thus, the qualities specific to poetry are being transferred to the area of form, e.g. verse, elaborate disposition of episodes etc. Imitation becomes a poetical method among others. What remains of the content is the marvellous ("mirabile", "meraviglioso"): by showing us things unheard of, poetry surprises and amazes us. This truly poetic area is at the same time the sphere of pleasure ("diletto"). The main benefit provided by poetry is often conceived of as tranquillity of mind. This belief has an impact on the interpretation of catharsis in various ways: (1) sometimes we are told that by exhibiting deterrent examples, tragedy demonstrates the disastrous consequences resulting from vices and passions. Thus we learn to stay away from these moral dangers. (2) More frequently catharsis is interpreted as an exercise in premeditation of future evils. Watching even the most powerful and fortunate ones suddenly fall into disgrace, we learn equanimity, so that we will not be thrown into turmoil or be overwhelmed by sorrow, if something adverse should befall us. The experience of the impermanence of worldly things conveyed by tragedy shifts our focus on the internal goods. (3) Habituation theory, according to which the affect wears out by being frequently stirred, dispenses with the discursive ingredient which features prominently in premeditation theory. Ultimately, however, it is the same method at visceral level, so to speak: a 'pre-sensation' of future evils. (4) The reading of catharsis which supposes that by arousing fear and pity opposite emotions like anger are cast out of the soul is based on the argument that pity, being not harmful, cannot be the object of purgation. In this theoretical context, "fear" is fear of undue self-confidence, of excessive delight in material things external goods, and generally fear of the vices ("vitia") responsible for the protagonist's downfall – which brings us back to (1).

All these interpretations, together with Giacomini's 'medical catharsis', share an abstraction from the concrete work of art and the individual experience of it. The individual case always triggers the same mechanism, be it on the emotional or on the rational level. In a physiological perspective, catharsis is always an outburst of crying and sobbing that brings about relief, irrespective of the quality of the stimulus: the quality of the object of fear

and pity, that is, of the concrete action of an individual character in a play, fades into the background. With the 'rationalists', the 'moral of the story' always assumes the same shape of abstract maxims, warning us to beware of haughtiness, anger etc., and generally not to trust Fortune and her passing favours. It is hardly surprising that such a curtailment of the complex experience made possible by tragic art will sooner or later be regarded as unsatisfactory and abandoned, leaving in its wake a general resentment against morals in poetry.

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Miraculous Organ: Shakespeare and 'Catharsis'

Abstract

Noting that Aristotle's *Poetics* was not published in England until 1623, this article begins by surveying the traces of cathartic thinking in early modern cultural theory, paying special attention to Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* as the era's most significant expression of that theory. Showing the *Defence* is not a sufficient cause of Shakespearean cathartic thinking, it traces extant ideas of purgation in England's wider literary, Christian and medical traditions, arguing these provided Shakespeare with the purgative basis of his theatre. The article gives special prominence to Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, arguing its theatrical influence was a significant transmitter of purgative ideas to Shakespeare, the drama of the age, and *Hamlet*.

> Therefore it is clear that, just as humours are moved and purged by means of purging medicaments, due to the natural sympathy and convenience that exists between them, thus in the soul pregnant with melancholy, concepts of fear and compassion, by means of [the affects of] pity and fear, alike concepts are moved and purged.
>
> Lorenzo Giacomini, *On the Purgation of Tragedy* (1586)[1]

> What is, then, the purging terror of Tragedy? The terror of the interior [moral] death, which, having been roused in the soul of the listener by means of the image of the things represented, attracts like a magnet – due to the similarity that one fear has with the other – the bad sinful death [the terror of physical death]: thus reason, which is nature, and the beginning of the life of the soul, abhorring it [the sinful affect] as its capital enemy, and being opposed to it, pushes it out, leaving only the good fear of infamy and of interior death, which is the foundation of virtue.
>
> Battista Guarini, *A Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* (1601)[2]

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[1] "Percioche è chiaro che, si come per mezzo di medicamenti purganti per la naturale simpatia e convenienza che hanno co' l'humore da purgarli, si muove e sfoga il detto humore così nel anima gravida di concetti mesti, di timore, e di compassione per mezzo della pietà, e de lo spavento si muovono, e si purgano concetti tali più perfettamente." The translation of the quotation from Giacomini's *De la purgazione de la tragedia* [*On the Purgation of Tragedy*], and the following one from Guarini's *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* [*A Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry*], are from Schneider 2010: 37-8. The translation of the titles of Giacomini's and Guarini's works, though, are mine.

[2] "Quale è dunque il terrore purgante della Tragedia? quel della morte interna, il

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Introduction: the English Cathartic Scene

At first glance, 1623 looks pivotal in the history of dramatic purgation in English theatre. Not only was it the year in which John Heminges and Henry Condell published Shakespeare's First Folio, but it was also in 1623 that Theodore Coulston first published a version of Aristotle's *Poetics* in England. Yet Shakespeare died in 1616 and Coulston's translation, from a version by Lodovico Castelvetro of 1570, was in Latin: available only to the educated, with an impact on theatrical analysis and practice that was slow to take hold.[3] For Shakespearean scholarship the real significance of 1623, then, is its belatedness. No published, English version of Aristotle's *Poetics* existed in England to guide Shakespeare in the writing and shaping of his works. Though Greek versions and Latin and Italian translations were available, they were not so to those with "small Latin and less Greek": the majority of the English populace, perhaps including (if we take Ben Jonson at face value) William Shakespeare.[4] What is certain is that the kind of developed, precisely articulated analyses of purgation from Italy heading up this article are alien to theatrical analysis in Shakespearean England. Far behind Renaissance Italy in this respect, English formulations of tragic affect and effect look crude.[5]

There are better and worse reasons for this. One reason is the English theorists' concern to "beatify our mother tongue", in Sir Philip Sidney's phrase in *The Defence of Poesy*: an activity imagined in competition with other contemporary languages and betraying an English complex of cultural inferiority:

> Truly the English, before any vulgar language I know, is fit for both sorts [of ancient and modern versification]. For the ancient, the Italian is so full of vowels that it must ever be cumbered with elisions; the Dutch so, of the other side, with consonants, that they cannot yield the sweet sliding, fit for a verse; the French in his whole language hath not one word that hath his accent in

quale ecitato nell'animo di chi ascolta, per l'immagine delle cose rappresentate tira, per la similitudine, che l'un timore ha con l'altro, a guisa di calamita, il male affetto peccante. Onde poi la ragione ch'è natura, e principio della vita dell'anima, abhorrendolo, come suo capital nemico, e contrario, lo spinge fuori di se, lasciandovi solo il buon timor della 'nfamia, e della morte interna, fondamento della virtù".

[3] Aristotle 1997: 29, n. 1. Whalley includes key dates of Aristotelean contact with England, observing the first real English translation of the *Poetics* (by Thomas Twining) as from 1789.

[4] For Jonson on Shakespeare in these terms, see Shakespeare 1988: xlv. All quotations from Shakespeare in this article are from this edition.

[5] Dewar-Watson (2004: 4-5) plausibly argues that "mediating sources" brought "the main tenets of the *Poetics*" to Shakespeare, and a fuller version of the argument, but concerning Sidney, is in Lazarus, cited below. The best evidence of a Shakespearean catharsis from Aristotle, though, is "oblique" (ibid.: 5).

> the last syllable saving two, called *antepenultima*; and little more hath the Spanish, and therefore very gracelessly may they use dactyls. The English is subject to none of these defects. (Sidney 1989: 82; 115)

Yet there is not only English cultural anxiety (and promotion) here. Bookending *The Defence of Poesy*, the two, preceding quotations from Sidney show that in 1579, when he began work on the *Defence*, and still in 1595, when it was published, the preoccupations of English cultural theory were to establish the language's literary credentials. Until that basic task was complete, more detailed theoretical questions were largely a sideshow, including the putative theatrical phenomenon of Aristotelian catharsis or developed thinking on how it might work.

Nevertheless, the *Defence* shows Sidney had at least some knowledge of the commentary tradition on the *Poetics*. Very basically, poetry is defined as an art of imitation, "for so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimesis*" (ibid.: 86). More speculatively, while Horace is normally considered the source of Sidney's view that poetry aims to "teach and delight" (ibid.), the claim is part of Sidney's sentence on Aristotelean mimesis and may reflect reading in the Italian Aristotelians: Sidney's emphasis on the unities of time and place in the *Defence* originates in Castelvetro, and another Italian Aristotelian, Antonio Minturno, considered catharsis a matter of "delight and profit"[6] (Halliwell 1992: 415; Greene 2012: 215).

Sidney sees poetry as a subset of – though the ideal tool for – learning, the moral end of which is virtue. As he writes, defending the poets, "For who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught?" (Sidney 1989: 94). Poetry is therefore affective and transforming, but how the transformation occurs is sketchy. The closest Sidney comes to suggesting the transformation is cathartic – or, since that term only enters English dramatic discourse much later, purgative – is when he considers poetry weighing "each syllable of each word by the just proportion according to the dignity of the subject" (ibid.: 87):[7]

> Now therefore it shall not be amiss first to weigh this latter sort of Poetry by his works, and they by his parts, and if in neither of these anatomies he be commendable, I hope we shall obtain a more favourable sentence. This purifying of wit – this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment and enlarging of conceit – which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of. (ibid.: 88)

[6] "[D]ilettare con profitto" (Minturno 1564: 28).

[7] For more on the history of the word 'catharsis', see Rist 2013a: 139.

Various points need emphasis here. First, Sidney treats poetry as a subset of learning, these remarks having no especial bearing on tragedy or drama. Second, learning (and so poetry) presents a purgative "purifying of wit". Third and fourth, broadly as in the passages from Giacomini and Guarini above, this purification is of the soul, which Sidney presents as corrupted by the "clayey" body: the purification is moral. Fifth, it is implicit (though not explicit or defined, as it is by the Italians) that the exterior proportion of the poetry ("each syllable of each word by the just proportion") bears on the act of purification: that there is what, explicitly, Giacomini defined as "sympathy" ("simpatia") between expressive forms and their effects, in which proportioned words are essential for purification.[8] Sixth, there is Sidney's language of "anatomies", which might be dismissed as metaphor if it did not return when Sidney turns directly to the effects of tragedy:

> Tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours; that, with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded. (ibid.: 98).

Like Sidney's passage on learning's purification of wit, this on tragedy needs handling with care. There is nothing directly here on tragedy as a purifier or purgative; tragedy's explicit effects are "admiration and commiseration", though Sidney goes on to say its best examples draw "abundance of tears" (ibid.). While the allusion to houses built on weak foundations, echoing Matthew 7:26, gently universalises as well as moralises the impact of tragedy, moreover, the primary focus of the analysis is tragedy's effect on tyrants. Sidney's analysis of tragedy's effects is both more restricting and more political than Aristotle's in this respect.

Nevertheless, the language of "anatomies" encountered in Sidney's passage on purifying wit continues here in the painful rhetoric of "wounds", as well as in "ulcers . . . covered with tissue" and "humours". The terminology forms part of a metaphorical strand in the *Defence* seeing poetry as a "medicine of cherries" (Sidney 1989: 96). Since, according to early modern physiologies, the humoural properties belonged to humanity, Sidney's analysis of tragedy's "affects", while centring on tyrants, has wider potential. Very broadly, moreover, since Aristotle appropriated "catharsis" from medical terminology, Sidney and Aristotle share some medical understanding of the effects of theatre on persons.[9] As the citation from Giacomini at the open-

[8] For "simpatia", see Schneider 2010: 37.

[9] Cooper (1956: 31) influentially described Aristotelian catharsis as "medico-literary". Sidney's allusion to the "sweet violence of tragedy" (Sidney 1989: 96) seems to develop his metaphor of poetry as a medicine of cherries by suggesting that in tragedy the sweetness

ing of this article implied, sixteenth-century neo-Aristotelians, applying to theatre the humour-theory of the Hippocratic school and Galen, presented tragedy as entailing humoural purgation; so while Sidney's theory of theatre is narrowly political by their standards, it also echoes the purgative theatre of neo-Aristotelians like Giacomini, rather as – in its moral applications – it anticipates the neo-Aristotelianism of Guarini.

Yet suggesting a general distance between the English authors, in Sidney's presentation of the unities of time and place, tyrants as the theatre's principal audience, and also in his strongly-held view that mingling tragedy and comedy is "gross absurdities", there is little consonance between Sidney and Shakespeare.[10] The general distance applies equally to Shakespeare and Sidney's views of catharsis. Where Shakespeare addresses the medically-purgative power of theatre, the claim is far more direct than in Sidney. Symptomatically, regarding distance, the best example is in a comedy:

> Your honour's players, hearing your amendment,
> Are come to play a pleasant comedy,
> For so your doctors hold it very meet,
> Seeing too much sadness hath congealed your blood,
> And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.
> Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
> And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
> Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.
> (*The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, 2, 125-32)

Unlike Sidney's *Defence*, this identifies dramatic (though not tragic) purgation as a medical experience directly. Sidney's *Defence* may be a cause, but it is not a sufficient cause even of this early example of Shakespearean catharsis.[11] Nor is it sufficient to point to versions of the *Poetics* available in the contemporary England, since the *Defence* is the best evidence there is that these texts were culturally significant.[12] To grasp Shakespeare's direct understanding of purgation, we must attend to early modern understandings

of the (medical) cherry turns violent. He offers no explanation for this, though, and does not develop the thought far.

[10] Citation from Sidney 1989: 112. Lazarus (2015: 505) is right, therefore, to be suspicious of the critical assumption that "[a]s Sidney goes, England goes". Although emphatically absurd, the conjunction of tragedy and comedy is, according to Sidney in another passage, at least not "hurtful" (Sidney 1989: 97).

[11] The Oxford editors consider *The Taming of the Shrew* was written before 1594. See Shakespeare 1988: 25.

[12] I discount Ben Jonson since his "first hand knowledge of the Poetics . . . places him in a very small minority in England" (Dewar-Watson 2004: 2). I have observed elsewhere that Jonson's notion of catharsis – such as it was – does not truly resemble Aristotle's (Rist 2013a: 139).

of purgation with equal directness. We may begin by observing that unlike the *Poetics* in England, the roots of that understanding go deep.

From Plato, there is a second, religious idea of purgation on which Aristotle drew when forming his idea of catharsis. It derives from the idea of entering a holy place and refers to purification as a cleansing of guilt.[13] In Christianity, it associates with Christ, who "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14; *King James Version*).[14] In Shakespearean England, these Christian and medical ideas of purgation were inextricable. As Sarah Dewar-Watson observes, this is in part because the "Renaissance habit of syncretism meant that the Aristotlelean notion of *catharsis* became fused, and indeed confused, not only with Christian notions of purgation from sin, but also . . . with medico-therapeutic theory" (2004: 5). Yet since religious and medical dimensions of catharsis are already in Plato and Aristotle and Christian ideas of purification are in St Paul, the fusion, predating the Renaissance, needs definition.

Christian Catharsis

The Defence of Poesy is a syncretic work *par excellence* and Aristotle is one of very many authors it evokes. Much more immediately, it responds to Stephen Gosson's puritan *The School of Abuse* (1579), which Gosson dedicated to Sidney, but which attacked fiction-makers, and so poets and actors, as liars.[15] The immediate context for the *Defence*, then, was English religious, and specifically Christian, conflict over the place of literature in English society. Making the following choice of literary models for nation-building significant, Sidney worried that in arguing poetry was legitimised by the Psalms of David he "profane[d] that holy name":

> So, as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts - indeed stony and beastly people - so among the Romans were Livius Andronicus and Ennius. So in the Italian language the first that made it aspire to be a treasure-house of science were the poets Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. So in our English were Gower and Chaucer, after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent fore-going, others have followed, to beautify our mother tongue, as well in the same kind as in other arts. (Sidney 1989: 82)

[13] Greene 2012: 215. Sidney's view of the purifying power of wit, cited above, would seem indebted to this Platonic view, but the question is beyond our present concern.

[14] Wycliffe's Bible renders "purify unto himself a peculiar people" as "make clean to himself a people acceptable".

[15] The opening attack on poets in Gosson's *School of Abuse* itself underpins its analysis of the (misleading) power of poetry with contemporary medical metaphors.

Each of the authors listed here are authoritative in their civilisation of a "beastly people" through the beautifying of its "mother tongue". Yet the celebration of Petrarch and especially Dante speaks to a particularly Christian (and un-puritan) aesthetic. In the *Canzoniere* and *Divine Comedy*, the poets present a speaker on a literary journey beginning on Good Friday (*Inferno*, Canto 2; *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 3). Their journeys evoke what early moderns, following biblical precedent, understood as the Christian purgation of the Passion. The purgation in Dante's journey is especially prominent, since Book 2 is *Purgatorio*: "dove l'umano spirito si purga" (1, 5) ["where the human spirit purges itself"]; and we will shortly see more such purgation in England (Alighieri 2003: 18).[16] Yet the ostensibly more secular *Canzoniere* sees its speaker fall into despair at the death of his beloved Laura, only for Laura to return to him as a saint. It ends – like the *Paradiso*, Canto 33 – with praise of the Virgin Mary.[17] Suggestively for considerations of the purgative culture of Shakespearean England, the ritual structure of Christ's Passion narrative – purgative death and resurrection – highlights in two of the three Italian authors Sidney champions.

It is argued that choosing Gower and Chaucer alongside Dante and Petrarch is a way of highlighting the Italian authors' centrality in the English literary tradition Sidney would construct.[18] Yet the key point here – as suggested by Emile Mâle and Eamon Duffy among others – is the primacy of Passion narratives in the contemporary culture and mentalities.[19] The scope of the Passion encompassed not just Petrarch and Dante as major Renaissance influences, but also patterns of death, purgation and resurrection infusing English popular culture and visible in literature from the medieval drama to seventeenth-century devotional poetry. Showing the realm of the human as at once of this world and the next, with the dead returning spiritually to direct the living, the living travelling (like Dante) into lands of the dead, and Christianity partaking each day in the death and resurrection of Christ in the ritual performance of the Mass, this primacy implied direct analogies between the health of the body and the health of the soul.[20] To

[16] See especially line 5.

[17] Rist 2014: 72-3, though the observation, here, of Dante's parallel with Petrarch is additional.

[18] When Sidney wants to glorify the poet, his example is Dante. Speaking of the poet, "having *all*, from Dante's heaven to his hell, under the authority of his pen" (Sidney 1989: 93; my emphasis), Sidney certainly had Purgatory – outstanding, here, by omission – in mind. Masden notes that Sidney presents Dante and Petrarch – and indeed Boccaccio – as much for their "religious and philosophical" views as for having been founders of Italian literature and that Sidney presents Chaucer and Gower "in the same way" (Sidney 1989: 125, commentary: 26-9).

[19] Mâle 1986: 83; Duffy 2005: 234-5.

[20] For the human realm in these terms, see Jupp and Gittings 1999. For the Mass as

maintain that health, purgation was essential. This is how William Crashaw explained Christ's Passion ("the precise merits of the death and resurrection of Christ") as a purgative and therefore healthful action in 1610:

> Particularly as the body, so the soul stands in need of three sorts of physic. First, it is necessary that it be purged from the corruption of sin, which else will kill the soul; then, being purged, it is to be restored to life and strength; lastly being so restored, it is requisite that it be preserved in that state unto the end. Answerable unto these there is the threefold kind of physic we receive from Christ; viz. purgative, restorative, and preservative. First, purgative, to purge our souls from corrupt humours and the infectious stain of sin. (Crashaw 1610: A1-A2)[21]

Purgation, here, applies unequivocally to both the body and soul of the early modern person and it is a Christian principle. Elsewhere evoking Christ as the "spiritual Physician", Crashaw implies how deeply ingrained in Christianity his purgative analysis is (ibid.). The image derives from St Augustine's fourth-century image of the *Christus Medicus* or 'Medical Christ':

> To the almighty Physician, no infirmity is incurable . . . The human physician sometimes is deceived and promises health in the human body. Why is he deceived? Because he is treating what he has not made. God, however, made your body, made your soul. He knows how to restore what He has made. (Qtd in Henderson 2006: 113-14)

In speaking of Christ as a "spiritual Physician", Crashaw drew on Augustine's image of Him as an "almighty Physician", as that image had been handed down through millennia, and as Augustine had traditionally inferred it from the Gospels. Though Aristotelian catharsis in England before 1623 was a sideshow, Christian purgation was not.

Christian Catharsis and the Shakespearean Theatre

Crashaw's presentation of Christian personality as essentially and variously purgative might lead one to expect he admired theatre. In fact, he was violently hostile to it, as he made clear:

> The ungodly Plays and Interludes so rife in this nation; what are they but a Bastard of Babylon, a daughter of error and confusion, a hellish device (the devil's own recreation, to mock at holy things) by him delivered to

performance, see Siera 2014: 39. For early modern theatre's debt to religious performance generally, see Dillon 2006: 1-3.

[21] For this and the following early modern textual quotations, I have modernised the spelling.

> the Heathen from them to the Papists, and from them to us? Of this evil and plague, the Church of God in all ages can say, truly and with a good conscience, we would have healed her. (Crashaw 1608: 169)

Testifying to Crashaw's humoural spirituality, it is apposite to note how spiritual and corporeal discourses of healing mingle again in this passage. Yet the predominant topic is the evil of theatre, which is a Catholic inheritance of Pagans crucially mocking "holy things". Given Crashaw's insistence on Christianity as a purgative religion, the subverted holiness includes Christian purgation. Crucially for analysis of Shakespearean or wider English Renaissance theatre, the theatre is an institution rivalling Christianity in its purgative power. That the rivalry is jointly a matter of pagan and Catholic heritage is important. It implies contemporary actions of purgation in the theatre that are outside the Protestant's remit. Following our comments on Dante, the Catholicism (and Paganism) of Purgatory stands out.[22]

Pervasively denounced by early modern Protestants, Purgatory was also widely seen as a place of purgation.[23] Thomas Bell's *Motives: Concerning Romish Faith and Religion* (1593) illustrates both early modern tendencies:[24]

> Thirdly, that sundry having venial sins abide the pains of purgatory, appeareth by Bellarminus his words before alleged, and by Dominicus so to in these words:
> . . . He that shall blaspheme the holy Ghost, shall neither be forgiven in this world, neither in the world to come.
> In which place Gregorious pope of Rome, noted certain light sins to be forgiven in the world to come, by the fire of *purgation*.
> And their Aquinas saith thus.
> . . . For venial sins are *purged* by fire sooner or later, according to their greater or lesser adherence or gravity.
> And for a full accomplishment of this conclusion, Josphus Angles utters the great perplexity of papists, concerning their *purgative* imagination. (Bell 1593: 101; my emphases)

Testifying to the conjunction of Hippocratic and Catholic ideas in sixteenth-century purgation, Purgatory is in turn, here, purgation, a purge and a purgative. Unsurprisingly, in view of Crashaw, this idea of purgation receives far more positive representation in the theatre, where it was central in the rise of revenge tragedy.

[22] I address Virgil and Purgatory below, but for a broader history including Purgatory's classical antecedents see Le Goff 1984.

[23] On the denunciation, see Marshall 2002.

[24] For other examples of these tendencies, see Rist 2013a: 143-8; and Rist 2013b: 123-5.

"Saint Jeronimy!": Purgation From Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Besides offering Shakespeare's most direct evocation of a medically-purgative theatre, as we have seen, *The Taming of the Shrew* opens in homage to Thomas Kyd's hugely-influential tragedy of no later than 1592 (probably of 1586-87) *The Spanish Tragedy*:[25]

> Hostess You will not pay for the glasses you have burst?
> Sly No, not a denier. Go by, Saint Jeronimy! Go to thy cold bed and warm thee.
> (*The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction 1, 6-8)

Here "Jeronimy" refers to *The Spanish Tragedy*'s leading figure, Hieronimo, and the passage recalls a line much-cited in the era: "Hieronimo, beware; go by, go by".[26] Yet as striking as the homage to Kyd is Shakespeare's association of Hieronimo with sanctity. Only semi-satirical, the designation evokes Christian contexts for the tragedy borne out by its initial and framing dramatization of Purgatory.

The play opens in an afterlife largely derived from book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid*: a place of purgation associated by Christian commentators following St Augustine with Purgatory up until (and in less Protestant circles, beyond) the Reformation (Wilson-Okamura 2010: 173-8). The opening scene fills out the Purgatory by showing that a spirit's successful passage through the afterlife depends on its "rites of burial" (1.1.21) – a Catholic claim in sixteenth-century England – and properly burying the dead is thematic thereafter (Rist 2008: 27-44).

Keeping the Ghost of Andrea on stage from start to finish, *The Spanish Tragedy* also consistently maintains its Purgatorial perspective. Yet besides a place on stage, purgation is a transformative experience witnessed in Andrea. In each of their speaking scenes until the last, the isolated interplay of Andrea and Revenge repeats a dramatic pattern. Andrea repeatedly shows confusion with the tide of events while Revenge, his companion, repeatedly demands patience in response. Illustrating the sequence of the pattern in this foundational revenge tragedy to highlight how Purgatory underpins the genre, I quote and comment on each passage in turn. The first passage is as follows:

> Ghost No sooner had she [Proserpine] spoke but we were here,
> I wot not how, in twinkling of an eye.

[25] On this influence, which goes far beyond revenge tragedy, see Semple 2016.

[26] Kyd 2013: 240 (3.12.30). All subsequent quotations from *The Spanish Tragedy* are from this edition.

Revenge Then know, Andrea, that thou art arrived
Where thou shalt see the author of thy death,
Don Balthazar, the Prince of Portugal,
Deprived of life by Bel-imperia.
Here sit we down to see the mystery…
(*The Spanish Tragedy*, 1.1.84-90)

Preceding and introducing the action in Spain, here the Ghost of Andrea shows anguish over where he is and also how he came there. In response, Revenge induces Andrea patiently to await the outcome of the play, giving Andrea his dramatic bearings and assuring him the wait will be worthwhile.

The second passage is similar, but the Ghost's anguish is greater since the dramatic goal he seeks eludes him:

Ghost Come we for this, from depth of underground,
To see him feast that gave me my death's wound?
These pleasant sights are sorrow to my soul.
Nothing but league, and love, and banqueting?
Revenge Be still, Andrea; ere we go from hence,
I'll turn their friendship into fell despite,
Their love to mortal hate, their day to night,
Their hope into despair, their peace to war,
Their joys to pain, their bliss to misery.
(*The Spanish Tragedy*, 1.5.1-9)

The third passage repeats this procedure. The more the dramatic goal eludes Andrea, the greater his anguish is:

Ghost Brought'st thou me hither to increase my pain?
I looked that Balthazar should have been slain;
But 'tis my friend Horatio that is slain,
And they abuse fair Bel-Imperia,
On whom I doted more than all the world.
Revenge Though talkest of harvest when the corn is green.
The end is crown of every work well done.
The sickle comes not till the corn be ripe.
Be still, and ere I lead thee from this place
I'll show thee Balthazar in heavy case.
(*The Spanish Tragedy*, 2.6.1-11)

The final example of the pattern shows Revenge has fallen asleep, to the consternation of Andrea:

Ghost Awake, Revenge, if love, as love hath had
Have yet the power or prevalence in hell!
Hieronimo with Lorenzo is joined in league,
And intercepts our passage to revenge.

Awake, Revenge, or we are woebegone!
REVENGE Thus worldings ground what they have dreamed upon,
Content, thyself, Andrea. Though I sleep
Yet is my mood soliciting their souls…
(*The Spanish Tragedy*, 3.15.12-27)

In every instance in which they speak, then, the confusion of the Ghost is met with the reassurance and plea for patience of Revenge. From their opening moments, Revenge's advice is the same: "Be still" (1.1.5), "Be still" (2.6.10), "Content thyself" (3.15.18).

One effect is to maintain the focus of the audience on the originally-stated, dramatic goal of retribution, as the play winds hither and thither in its "passage through . . . wounds' (1.1.17)". The result is that the Ghost, observing the dramatic action, comes to stand for an English audience yet to accustom itself to revenge tragedy's delays and needing lessons in dramatic patience. For patience receives its reward, as the last scene shows. Indicating the triumph of patience, the Ghost of Andrea is transformed:

GHOST Aye, now my hopes have end in their effects
When blood and sorrow finish my desires:
. . .
Aye, these are spectacles to please my soul
. . .
I'll lead my friend Horatio to those fields . . .
I'll lead fair Isabella . . .
I'll lead my Bel-Imperia . .
I'll lead Horatio . . .
Let me be judge . . .
(*The Spanish Tragedy*, 4.5.1-30)

Indicating a triumph of patience in stark contrast to his former anguish, the Ghost is content: happy with the outcome and, for the first time, keen to take a lead in future events. The implication is that the tragedy, for which he has been both audience and patient, has cured him. The meta-theatrical implication is that audiences, like patients, will leave the theatre in better spirits.[27] A dramatization of Purgatory, itself entailing patient observations of suffering, proves theatrically purgative. While the lengthy cause of purgation is patience, moreover, the immediate cause is what Andrea calls "blood and sorrow". In a tragedy in which, as conventionally in the era, "passions" are both "protestations" and "deep laments" (4.1.4-5), and in which the "sword" is a figure for the cross yet is also the figure for "thy tragedy" (2.1.87-93), the

[27] For the etymological relation of 'patient' to 'passion', see under 'passion' (noun) in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The definition also makes the relation of 'physical suffering and pain' to Christ's Passion overt.

Christianity resounds. Working through contemporary dynamics of death, resurrection and spiritual cure, no-one in sixteenth-century England could have missed Christ's Passion as one purgative basis for *The Spanish Tragedy*.[28] Yet unfortunately for some, the play has a second, purgative basis in Purgatory, constructing a dramatic association between purgation and Purgatory we have seen was deep-rooted.

The roots nourish *Hamlet*. The success of *The Spanish Tragedy* meant there was no need to tell either ghosts or audiences to be patient in Shakespeare's version of a revenge tragedy. Nevertheless, Hamlet's delay requires patience of audiences, and his impatience makes the requirement thematic. Moreover, in *Hamlet* Shakespeare echoes Kyd both in an isolated Ghost seeking onstage audience-response and in the famously pointed allusion to Purgatory. According to the contemporary interchangeability of the terms, Shakespeare calls the Purgatory a "purge":

> I am thy father's spirit,
> Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
> And for the day confined to fast in fires
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
> Are burnt and purged away.
> (*Hamlet*, 1.5.9-13)

According to the various overlaps between life and death observed in this article, purging here equates both with a place of the dead of temporary punishment – Purgatory – and with the living experiences of burning and fasting. Although he refrains from their full expression, moreover, by recalling tales that "[w]ould harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood" (1.5.16), the Ghost anticipates Hamlet's delayed action as a "freeze" both spiritual and physiological. Hamlet's subsequent delay illustrates the freeze, giving the Ghost a pervasively representative agency in the play, which thus also, in homage to Kyd, exists as a purgative as well as Purgatorial expression. As an audience to the Ghost and a respondent to his dramatized narrative, Hamlet, following Andrea and Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*, stands as a cypher for the audience-responses of the play. Thus it is, seemingly, that in seeking to understand Shakespeare's play, swathes of criticism have attended primarily to Hamlet's 'character'.

Yet despite its interest in motive, character criticism has traditionally been secular, largely assuming an incoherence A.C. Bradley made explicit: "although this or that dramatis persona may speak of gods or of God, of

[28] Barber (1988: 153-64) established the Passion in *The Spanish Tragedy* especially in the death of Horatio. Comparing *The Spanish Tragedy* with Corpus Christi plays, Goodland (2016: 175-96) brings out the Passion's far more holistic presence in Kyd's play.

evil spirits or of Satan, of heaven and of hell, and although the poet may show us ghosts from another world, these ideals do not materially influence his representations of life" (1991: 40).[29] Knowing the significance of religion to the theatre, today Shakespearean scholars reject this, but the impact of the transformation on understandings of dramatic characters and their motives bears emphasis.[30] Although their definitions of spirits were overlapping rather than always identical, early modern theorists of physiology as well as religion considered spirits instrumental in human agency, somewhat in the way scientists today consider our actions and personalities as (more or less deterministically) are shaped by our genes.[31] Each discipline assumes human actions and temperaments have causes, but in early modern theories of humours and religion, the causes were deemed spiritual. As Laurentius put it, explaining the physiology of cataracts in his *Treatise of Melancholy* (1599), "the *spirits* and black vapours continually pass by the sinews, veins and arteries, from the brain unto the eye, with causeth it [the eye] to see many shadows and untrue apparitions" (qtd in Rist 2013a: 149; my emphasis). Hamlet and Hieronimo are both melancholic.[32] They are both objects of this early modern, spiritual physiology.

Both plays are at pains to demonstrate this, in the association of Ghosts with action as well as in many, more localised allusions to spiritual agency. Charting the use of the term "spirit" in *Hamlet* is revealing in this respect.[33] In the early stages of the play (1.1.135, 1.1.142, 1.1.52, 1.2.253, 1.4.7, 1.4.21, 1.5.9, 1.5.183, 3.1.600) the word primarily denotes the Ghost or an associated supernatural entity. Yet in several examples from 3.2, where Guildenstern refers to Gertrude "in most great affliction of spirit" (3.2.299), it refers to the material, expressive and affective states of persons, which the actors make visible. The spirits of Hamlet, Fortinbras and, by reference to kingship, the entire "weal" (3.2.14) are described this way, each actor, including all those of the commonweal, thereby dramatizing one or more spirits through his (or today, her) actions. Strikingly, in the last allusion to this action, Hamlet dies and the "potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit" (5.2.305). Here the primary sense of spirituality remains physiological, as it has been in the play's latter stages, but on the cusp of death the play's earlier sense – of a spirit

[29] On the same page, Bradley (erroneously) asserts Elizabethan drama was "almost wholly secular", later arguing *Hamlet* was in this respect exceptional (1991: 166).

[30] See Dillon 2006: 1-3; Jackson and Marotti 2004: 167-90.

[31] On the intense religious and medical overlap, see Parker 2014: 1265-97.

[32] Hamlet's melancholy has been established since the early twentieth century. For the history, see Rist 2008: 18, n. 72. For Hieronimo's passions identified as melancholy, see *The Spanish Tragedy*, 3.12.97.

[33] I shall not trace Kyd's spirituality further in this Shakespearean essay, but for discussion of it, see Rist 2016: 1-20.

that leaves the body – haunts the first. The play's drama of spirits variously merges ghostliness with personhood according to the spiritual physiology of the day. Like the departure of the spirit from his body, therefore, the departure of Hamlet from the play entails purgation.

Ritual and religious qualities of the purgation are in the closing emphasis on mourning and remembrance, as well as in Horatio's prayer that "flights of angels" sing Hamlet "to thy rest" (5.2.313).[34] Grief for the dead is therefore a general component of the purgation. Yet the closing passage of the play has particular terms for this experience for onlookers seeking to know what it is "ye would see" (5.2.315). These include "woe", (5.2. 317), "wonder" (5.2.317), the "dismal" (5.2.321) and varieties of "blood" (5.2.321; 329; 335), the play supplying various images of the experience to an audience linked with "the noblest" (5.2.341). Yet since it accords with the history of purgation in this piece, another feature deserves emphasis. Horatio's closing decision to "speak to the unknowing world / How these things came about" (5.2.333-4) emphasises confessions, which the play has already marked in the "form of prayer" as a "purging of . . . soul[s]" for "offence"(3.3.51; 3.3.85; 3.3.36). Precedents are in Kyd, where Pedringano must "confess, and therein play the priest" (*The Spanish Tragedy*, 3.3.39).[35] They are also in the Ghost's "Unhouseled, dis-appointed, unaneled, / No reck'ning made, but sent to my account / With all my imperfections on my head" (*Hamlet*, 1.5.77-9), alongside which purgation and Purgatory combine, as we have seen. A part of what John Bossy has termed Christianity's "machinery for the regulation and resolution of offences", confession complements Christ's Passion and Purgatory in these plays as the purgation of speech.[36]

Conclusion: The Miraculous Organ

One might expand these observations of dramatic purgation to other tragic or tragically-inflected plays by Shakespeare, but concluding with the paradigm is more useful. In The Mousetrap, *Hamlet* presents a play-within-a-play: an overt and celebrated opportunity for audiences to watch not just a drama, but also an audience's responses to it.[37] According to Hamlet's plan,

[34] For discussion of this mourning and remembrance, see Rist 2008: 73-4.

[35] See Rist 2016: 10-12. For wider examples of confessional theatre in the era, see Faas 1986: 45-6. I disagree with Faas's reading of these events, though, as noted below.

[36] Citation from Bossy 1975: 21. Bossy observes the purgation of confession on the following page.

[37] I here finesse Dewar-Watson's broadly cathartic and confessional reading of the scene (2004: 5).

Claudius responds forcefully, in what Hamlet takes as a confession both of crime and sin. The rationale underpinning the procedure is unusually explicit:

> I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have by the very cunning of the scene
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaimed their malefactions;
> For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ.
> (*Hamlet*, 2.2.591-6)

This explanation of theatrical power brings together the general principals of dramatic purgation on which this article has dwelt. First, theatre has a purgative power. Second, the purgation is of "malefactions", which with connotations of suffering meant both sicknesses and evil-doing.[38] Third, it is confessional. Fourth, entailing connections between the corporeal and the spirit, it strikes "the soul". Fifth, striking the soul produces action in the tongue, entailing further body-soul connections and causality. Sixth, the tongue is therefore a "miraculous organ", combining the ideas from physiology and religion we have observed.

Shakespearean catharsis is rarely so deliberate and it is never as considered as it was in sixteenth-century Italy. Nevertheless, it permeates Shakespearean drama.[39] This is because Shakespearean drama did not need a very analysed view of catharsis to produce purgative effects. Combining physiology with religion, the "miraculous" culture, performative, literary and confessional, into which Shakespeare was born, though ever more restricted in Reformation England, saw largely to those.

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[38] See 'malefaction', definitions 1, with etymology, and definition 2 in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Sickness and suffering, here, are important. Faas (1986: 46), for example, argues that this speech by Hamlet reduces tragic effects to moral ones. But neither suffering nor sickness is (at least overtly) moral, while both are (arguably) universal.

[39] For Shakespeare's use of purgative metaphors to describe social and also personal change in a range of his plays, see Rist 2013b: 130.

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‘Catharsis’. From Lessing’s Moral Purification to Goethe’s Purity of Form

Abstract

The present essay addresses Goethe’s interpretation of ‘catharsis’. Goethe reacted to a moral interpretation of catharsis (propounded by a long line of critics from Brumoy to Lessing) by maintaining that Aristotle understood catharsis as an artistic process only. In his opinion, catharsis was a kind of ultimate effect that, while not acting on the spectators’ morality, certainly affected their satisfaction and contentment and was, in fact, the necessary fulfilment of any well-structured and consistent tragedy. In addition, Goethe conceived the act of writing poetry itself as a cathartic process; this entails that a “purged” work of art is also the outcome of an ideal Classicism. Indeed, the attainment of “pure” poetic forms is the main topic over which Goethe and Schiller debated in their correspondence.

Introduction

Interpreting Aristotle’s *Poetics* in the eighteenth century also entails an investigation of both emotions (“Empfindungen”) and their nature, insofar as the philosopher regarded the arousal of passions (“Leidenschaften”) – pity and fear in particular – as the main aim of tragedy (Alt 1994; Schulz 1998). In chapters 74-83 of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (Alt 1994, 135-50; cf. Chiarini 1956, XLIII-XLVII) Lessing offers a ground-breaking analysis of the inner workings of tragic effects; in particular, he examines the way the spectators sympathize with the hero and are purged by his own passions. In fact, Lessing’s approach to Aristotle hinges on his own ideas on drama and tragedy (Fick 2000: 291): he elicits from the *Poetics* only what may be functional to his analysis of tragedy as a genre and of its effects on the spectators’ emotions and psychology, thus placing himself in open opposition to Corneille in particular. Before Lessing, many theatre theorists and practitioners strove to bring together the contents of tragedy and their resulting emotional effects (cf. Meid 2008). The issues they had to deal with can be summarised as follows: can pity and fear simultaneously affect the spectators? Should the spectators keep aloof from tragic heroes the moment their passions are

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sensed as moral defects? Can aesthetic pleasure turn into a pedagogical tool? Lessing's rejection of rational, abstract teaching as the aim of tragedy leads him to envisage the emotion ("Rührung") provoked by the events onstage as an alternative. Far from discarding Aristotelian tradition as a whole, Lessing renders it modern (Kommerell 1984) by adapting Aristotelian tenets to his own view on tragedy, centring, as we will see, on man's moral improvement (Dreßler 1996). Lessing's psychological and moral paradigm stands as an example for subsequent scholars; Schiller, for instance, drew on it in his *On Tragic Art* (*Ueber die tragische Kunst*, 1792) (Fick 2000, 297). Conversely, Goethe promoted the autonomy of art from morality, thus marking a significant shift from Lessing's paradigm and aesthetics of emotions. Nonetheless, he formulated his interpretation of 'catharsis' only later, after a thorough reading of Aristotle's text.

Goethe: Catharsis as "Reconciliatory Conclusion" ("aussöhnende Abrundung")

In fact, Goethe expounded on the meaning of the word 'catharsis' only in his "Nachlese zur Aristoteles Poetik" ("On Interpreting Aristotle's Poetics"), published in *Ueber Kunst und Altertum* in 1827 (1988a).[1] Focusing on a well-known passage of the *Poetics* which has given much trouble to commentators, Goethe assumes that Aristotle seems to assert that tragedy must purge ("reinigen", ibid.: 342) the spectators' mind of the emotions of pity and fear evoked by the actions and events represented on the stage.[2] Yet, this is what "seems" ("scheint", ibid.) and what critics in fact have accepted. To Goethe, this effect appears both unlikely and unattainable. He clarifies his own position in his translation of Aristotle's passage, where he renders the term *katharsis* as "Ausgleichung", "balancing": after pity and fear have been aroused, their balancing out forms the conclusion ("die Vollendung") of the purpose ("Geschäft") of tragedy (ibid.). Goethe argues that Aristotle meant to discuss the formal structure of tragedy ("Construction des Trauerspiels") and not the delayed effect ("entfernte Wirkung") that a tragedy might have

[1] On the translations and editions of Aristotle's *Poetics* that Goethe owned, see Hans Joachim Schimpf's remarks in Goethe 1988: 714-7, including main bibliographical references. For a clear-cut summary of Goethe's view compared to Schiller's, of its reception prior to Jacob Bernays's pivotal essay, and of his responses in his correspondence with Carl Friedrich Zelter, see Ugolini 2012: 54-8. On the circumstances under which Goethe wrote his *Nachlese* and on its relevance for *Faust II*, cf. Schillemeit 1981.

[2] Whether Goethe did misinterpret Aristotle or – unprecedentedly – did grasp his meaning properly, as Wittkowski has provocatively argued (1987: 113-27), is not relevant in this context.

on the spectator (ibid.). Similarly, he affirms that the philosopher's focus was only on what happened onstage and not what followed the performance, offstage; it follows that, once the emotions aroused by the tragic action have run their course ("Verlauf"), catharsis is accomplished and tragedy has fulfilled its purpose. Thus, Goethe assumes that by catharsis Aristotle meant a "reconciliatory conclusion" ("aussöhnende Abrundung", ibid.), that is to say, a mitigation or the metaphorical restoration of balance which is actually expected of drama as well as of any other poetic work. Hence, the spectators are merely passively involved in the cathartic process, which, like any aesthetic process, is sought, provoked and accomplished by the artist in general and by the playwright in particular.

Ethic and Aesthetic Dimensions

Insofar as the tragedy's content is concerned, Goethe affirms that the final reconciliation is accomplished through some kind of human sacrifice that may be replaced "by a surrogate" ("durch ein Surrogat", ibid.) through divine intervention, as is the case with Abraham's and Agamemnon's immolation of Isaac and Iphigenia, respectively. As the only possible solution, sacrifice establishes the denouement and settles all dramatic conflicts. Goethe adheres to the eighteenth-century tragic tradition that attaches great importance to human sacrifice and clears the gods of any responsibility for this atrocious deed by fostering their intervention to rescue the victim. In eighteenth-century tragedies, in fact, only human beings are accountable for cruel acts because sacrifice is necessary both to the exercise of power and to religion that operates in compliance with it. Myth thus turns into a political metaphor and tragedy is reduced to a sort of pedagogical performance for rulers. Although Goethe hints at this rationalistic handling of tragic myths on stage, his main aim is to provide a definition of tragedy as a genre. As a matter of fact, Goethe continues, Alcestis's return attests the existence of an "intermediary genre" ("Mittelgattung", ibid.), devising for drama a happy conclusion not pivoting on human sacrifice. In comedies, instead, it is usually marriage which brings the action to some sort of conclusion, marking out a crucial, if not definitive, turning point in life. Nobody wants to die and everybody wants to get married: Goethe affirms that this half-facetious maxim illustrates the difference between tragedy and comedy. In Goethe's view, Greek tragedians conceived trilogies with the purpose of achieving catharsis in the very last play; hence, the most powerful example of catharsis is to be found in *Oedipus at Colonus*, where the half-guilty ("halbschuldiger", ibid.) Oedipus is exalted as the guardian spirit of the land and is deemed worthy of worship as well as of sacrificial ceremonies, after enduring numberless

vicissitudes and plunging himself and his family into utter misery. Thus, the hero of a tragedy must be portrayed as neither completely guilty, nor as totally innocent, since in either case catharsis could not be achieved. In the first case, the result would merely point out a failure of court justice; in the second, reconciliation would not be possible since the innocent hero could not bear to be unjustly charged with guilt either by his fellows or by fate. Finally, Goethe rejects an identical use of the word 'catharsis' in Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Politics*. Aristotle referred to different arts in the two cases: in the *Politics,* he reflected on the effects of music, similar to those that Goethe observed when Händel's *Alexanderfest* was played or during dances driving young people into a "Bacchic frenzy" ("bacchischem Wahnsinn", ibid.: 344). In fact, neither music nor other arts can affect one's morality. This effect can be accomplished by philosophy and religion only through a rekindling of one's sense of duty and pity. On the contrary, whenever the arts affect morality, they eventually weaken the spirit, unsettling "what we call the heart" ("was wir das Herz nennen", ibid.: 345). This occurs to young people who are excessively fond of reading novels, plunging into a vague, uncertain mood. According to Goethe, Aristotle addressed the *poiesis* of a tragedy and how it should be conceived in order to be appealing, i.e. pleasing to the eyes and ears. No moral improvement takes place in the spectators; in fact, even if they were accustomed to interior ascesis, that is, even if they were philosophers, once at home, they would see themselves exactly as they were before, with all their virtues and vices.

Brumoy and Catharsis as Homeopathic Process

Although Goethe does not intend to provoke controversy ("kontrovertieren"), he is quite firm in maintaining that he reached his own conclusion, disregarding any other definition of 'catharsis'.[3] First of all, he argues against the widespread moral interpretation of catharsis, authoritatively propounded by Lessing among others. Major interpretations of 'catharsis' prior to those of Goethe are worth mentioning. The pedagogic and moral effect of ancient tragedies had already been investigated by Pierre Brumoy in *A Discourse Upon the Original of Tragedy* (*Discours sur l'origine de la tragédie*), the introductory essay to his monumental *The Greek Theatre* (*Théâtre des Grecs*), first published in 1730 (Brumoy 1730: xxix-xcviii; see de Senarclens 2008). Among the topics it touches on, the *Discourse* offers a detailed analysis of the emotions aroused by tragedy. Brumoy affirms that pity and fear are the most dangerous passions, though they are also the most common; they up-

[3] See Goethe's letter to Zelter of 31 December 1829, in Goethe-Zelter 1833-34: 5.354.

set men, depriving them of the necessary firmness to face life's hardships.[4] Philosophy teaches men how to "purge" ("purger", ibid.: 76) these passions, that is how to preserve what is useful in them while eliminating what may be detrimental. However, art achieves greater success than philosophy in teaching how to 'purge' passions, since it instructs one's reason through the power of poetic images. It is surprising then, Brumoy continues, that poetry succeeds in correcting fear by fear and pity by pity: indeed, the human heart loves its own weaknesses and is healed by the very pleasure it takes in being seduced by passions.[5] That is to say, remedy springs from the evil we love. Thus, in Brumoy's view catharsis is a homeopathic process. On the one hand, the representation of passions helps the spectators become sweeter and more humane; on the other, it teaches them that they must moderate passions in real life. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Brumoy's *Discourse* emerged as a canonical text in Germany; his French translations of ancient texts allowed prominent scholars – from Herder to Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller – to approach Greek tragedies. Moreover, Brumoy attached a moral – or, to put it better, a philosophical – value to aesthetic catharsis for the first time. The fierce opposition of German intellectuals to French classicism and its rigid set of rules borrowed from Aristotle's *Poetics* may seem peculiar, especially if we allow for the fact that they never argued against French scholars' moral interpretation of catharsis. Conversely, they elaborated on it, making it the primary aim of tragedy. In fact, German scholars did not assign a prescriptive value to Aristotle's work. Nonetheless, if the play's structure does really spring naturally from the play itself and is not the result of an *a posteriori* set of precepts, then it follows that to excite passions is essential to 'tragedy' as a literary genre, even though this effect implies ignoring or transgressing all poetic principles. For this reason, as Herder points out, even if the passions he evokes are not different from those aroused by Greek tragedies, and even though these passions are far larger in number, Shakespeare's plays cannot be appreciated in the light of French classicism's Aristotelian criteria.[6]

[4] I am paraphrasing Roul-Rochette's edition of *Théâtre des Grecs* (Brumoy 1826: 1.72ff.).

[5] Brumoy 1826: 74: "Ce qu'il y a de particulier et de surprenant en cette matière, c'est que la poésie corrige la crainte par la crainte, et la pitié par la pitié; chose d'autant plus agréable, que le cœur humain aime ses sentiments et ses faiblesses" ["What appears most particular and surprising in this matter is, that poetry corrects fear by fear, and pity by pity. This circumstance is the more agreeable, because the human heart loves its own sentiments, and its own weaknesses", trans. by Lennox (Brumoy 1759:1.xxxix)].

[6] Herder 1993: esp. 505.

Lessing: Grief, Pity and Moral Education

As stated above, Lessing unprecedentedly inscribed the idea of catharsis within a wider anthropological framework involving human beings well beyond the temporary tragic event of a dramatic performance. The upsetting effect of tragedy on the aesthetic level, as well as its power both to prompt and to mould affections in the human soul are pointed out by Friedrich Nicolai (*Abhandlung vom Trauerspiel*, 1757).[7] In his discussions with Nicolai and Moses Mendelsohn, Lessing connected the objective moment of the reception to the subjective moment of the effect. All passions aroused in the spectator's soul (aesthetic reception) cannot be separated from their catharsis (moral effect), i.e. from their metamorphosis into virtues. 'Pity' and 'fear' are closely linked, insofar as 'fear' is nothing but 'pity' for ourselves. Lessing's observations were influenced by Rousseau; his *Mitleid*, for instance, was modelled on Rousseau's "pitié naturelle".[8] Displaying one's passions is indeed symptomatic of one's own closeness to Nature. Rather than being the outward show of inner weakness – as it may appear to the moderns, to whom courtesy and decency forbid cries and tears, as Lessing ironically wrote in his *Laocoon* –, it reveals one's own humanity. The core of Rousseau's criticism to civilization is that men's detachment from Nature has created a society where artificial human beings and inauthentic passions prevail. Hence, it is necessary to return to Nature and to its authentic passions, that is, to a context in which "pity" (*pitié*) proves to be man's quintessential feature. Thus, as Lessing summed up in a well-known truism, "the most compassionate man is also the best" (see Korzeniewski 2003).[9] Rather than indicating one's own weakness, the exhibition of passions is to be considered as an emblem of nobility of soul. "Decency", the main component of French classical drama, must not determine tragedy. As Denis Diderot wrote in his *Entretiens sur Le Fils naturel* (1760), hearing Sophocles's Philoctetes crying would pierce the audience; not only is Clytemnestra's desperation for Iphigenia dignified, it also provides a broader, truthful account of maternal love. Following Diderot – whose essays on drama he had translated into German – Lessing distinguished an active bourgeois heroism from an inhuman heroism. The former pertains to the Greeks, it never weavers, even when a duty has to be performed, and it exercises no control over both passions and

[7] Nicolai's essay is included in Schulte-Sasse 1972: 11-44.

[8] See Kronauer 1995: 23-45; Schings 1980.

[9] "Der *mitleidigste Mensch* . . . *der beste Mensch* [ist], zu allen gesellschaftlichen Tugenden, zu allen Arten der Großmut der aufgelegteste", Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to Friedrich Nicolai, November 1756 (Lessing 1973: 163) ["*the most compassionate man* . . . [is] *the best man*, the most disposed to all social virtues, to all kinds of magnanimity", qtd in Becker-Cantarino 2005: 167].

the expression of physical suffering; the latter restrains all passions and is a form of destructive aristocratic heroism. The representation of suffering turns into a vehicle for moral education, as is the case with Philoctetes himself and with Heracles in *The Women of Trachis*. The cold, statuesque stoicism of French tragic heroes proves particularly ineffective on the audience, who have to sympathize with the character onstage and the more complete and unresolvable the character's suffering, the stronger is the audience's sympathy. Conversely, the sentimental denouements French tragedies offer are quite different.[10] To Lessing, aesthetic analysis corresponds to a moral agenda: his own view of catharsis as the conversion of passions into virtues stands as a secular response to those interpretations of Aristotle's catharsis as a Christian mortification of passions. This explains why, in chapters 74-83 of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Lessing ascribed a moral value to Aristotle's catharsis, at the same time maintaining the emotional element.[11]

Schiller: Catharsis as Resistance

Together with his view of catharsis, Goethe's *Nachlese* is not to be taken only as a direct response to Lessing and to his French antecedents. Rather, the essay sums up his thirty-year long reflections on drama and on the difference between ancient and modern tragedy, which always cohere with his actual poetic production. Goethe's friendship with Friedrich Schiller proved crucial in developing and refining his reflection. The *Nachlese* can be also read in the light of Schiller's work on Greek tragedy, that was inaugurated in Weimar, while Goethe was in Italy, developed through translations and rewritings, confronted with Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris* – which Schiller reviewed in 1788 – and culminated in his correspondence with Goethe and in the composition of *Braut von Messina* (*Bride of Messina*, 1802).[12] Schiller does not proceed from Aristotle's *Poetics*, which, as we will see, he began studying only in 1797. Like Lessing, he particularly follows Moses Mendelssohn and his theory of mixed sensations: a mixed sensation combines both pleasure and grief and arouses whenever a performance has something pleasant about it as a "determination of the soul", while it is accompanied by disapproval and a feeling of repugnance as a "picture of the object". Whereas Lessing points

[10] Lessing delves into the topic in his *Laocoon* in particular, touching on Sophocles's *Philoctetes*; the stages of the debate on suffering in Sophocles are discussed in Fornaro 2006.

[11] For a concise analysis of Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* chapters, which are not addressed in the present essay, see Fick 2000: 291-3.

[12] See Schwinge 2008: 15-48; Latacz 1997: 235-57.

out the role of 'Mitleid', a mixed sensation of sympathy and fear, Schiller concentrates on 'emotion' ('Rührung') that, like the 'sublime' ('Erhabene'), is a mixed sensation, composed by two elements: grief and pleasure-within-grief. Like his fellow writers, Schiller takes into account the moment of tragic reception, which (as Lessing also assumed) awakens passions through the representation of suffering, leading to an involuntary affection. However, Schiller wonders, why does this vision generate pleasure?[13] This is possible because the representation of passions unleashes the spectators' awareness of being free to choose, i.e. of being endowed with a reason ('Vernuft') that allows them to resist any form of suffering caused by unpredictable forces (either the gods or fate). This is a cathartic process, since resistance to suffering favours the development and the realization of freedom of the soul ('Gemüthfreyheit'). Though not becoming "better" in Lessing's moral sense, men change and become different from what they previously were: that is to say, they become self-aware. We can infer that Schiller regards catharsis not as the 'removal' of passions but as a 'detachment' from them.[14] Passions still act and play their part, and yet, painful as they may be, they do not affect men's inner freedom. On the contrary, since men are aware of being free, they can find pleasure in looking at tragic events and are thus allowed a sort of reconciliation with suffering. Schiller operates a fundamental shift in the conception of catharsis: his case is that tragedy has a sublime effect, insofar as through catharsis itself – that is, through the artificial suffering on stage – men's inner, spiritual resistance to suffering is revealed. Schiller assimilates previous remarks on the pity ('Mitleid') aroused by tragedy; he even deems this moral catharsis as both the prerequisite and the source of pleasure (cf. Meier 1992). However, he amplifies the cathartic effect to include a change involving the human being as a whole, since tragedy exposes "a conceptualization of *resistance* to the suffering, in order to call the inner freedom of the heart to consciousness".[15] This view creates an unbridgeable gap between ancient and modern tragedy; the former, in fact, is realistic, insofar as it assumes fatal suffering as an essential element in human life, whereas the latter allows the pleasure of the awareness of one's own freedom to triumph, and thus generates the sublime. As Schiller wrote in letter 22 of his *Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man*, the spectators' and the auditors' spirit preserves its freedom and is not touched by the passions aroused by tragedy; at the same time, it issues "pure and entire" ("rein und vollkommen") from the magic circle that artists draw. However, this is the effect of what could

[13] Nonetheless, Schiller is not the first to ask this question. See Seidensticker 2005.

[14] See also Pinna 1996: 20-3.

[15] "Vorstellung des Wiederstandes gegen das Leiden, um die innere Gemüthsfreyheit ins Bewußtseyn zu rufen" (Schiller 1962: 195. Trans. by Daniel Platt).

be termed an ideal catharsis: as a matter of fact, the events staged by Greek tragedies prove to be always "afflicting" and "humiliating" for those who think to be self-determined. Thus, in Greek plays there is always a "knot that cannot be unravelled" ("ein unaufgelöster Knoten") by reason, which always longs to transcend necessity and outstrip fate. The chorus alone, giving "calm" to the action through the introduction of an element for reflection, enables the audience to maintain its freedom, that is, to remain untouched (as it should be) by passions and to keep its reason unaffected. The chorus is given the function of "purifying" tragic poetry, while separating reflection from the tragic action and endowing reflection itself with poetical power.[16] Far from rejecting it, Schiller broadens the scope of the cathartic effect that eighteenth-century appropriations of Aristotle's theory sought for: his focus is not on the attainment of a temporary catharsis of passions resulting from emotion and pity, but on the impulse towards a definitive catharsis, that is to say, towards the permanent awareness of one's own moral freedom. This process can be carried out exclusively by modern tragedy and not by Greek plays (Wilm 2010). Schiller's awareness of the unbridgeable gap between the ancients and the moderns, along with his view of Greek tragedy as the specific outcome of a specific age that cannot be reasonably used as a model in modern times, result in a new perception of catharsis that does not comply with Aristotle's interpretation.

Aristotle: the Form and the Rules

A core element of Greek tragedy and of its interpretation in Aristotle's *Poetics* is nonetheless preserved: form. In studying the *Poetics* thoroughly for the first time, Schiller in fact increased his knowledge of the "form" ("Form") of Greek tragedy, as he wrote to Goethe on 5 May 1797 (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.250-2). He complied with this form in creating his *Braut von Messina* between 1802 and 1803, focusing on a simple action, employing few characters and a small number of changes of scene, reducing the time of the action to one night and one day only, and, in particular, relying on the presence

[16] "Der Chor reinigt also das tragische Gedicht, indem er die Reflexion von der Handlung absondert und eben durch diese Absonderung sie selbst mit poetischer Kraft ausrüstet; ebenso, wie der bildende Künstler die gemeine Notdurft der Bekleidung durch eine reiche Draperie in einen Reiz und in eine Schönheit verwandelt" (Schiller 2004: 2.821) ["The chorus thus purifies tragic poetry, while separating reflection from the action, and, by means of this separation, supplies reflection with poetical power, – just as the artist transforms the ordinary necessity of clothing into charm and beauty by means of a rich drapery", trans. by Avezzù, Schiller 2015: 155].

of the chorus that – as in a Greek play– is charged with the main effect ("die Hauptwirkung") of tragedy, as he revealed to Iffland on 24 February 1803 (Schiller 1984: 32.15). On 4 February 1803, Schiller presented his play at a public reading in Weimar; significantly, the following day he wrote to Goethe about its successful reception: "Fear and terror manifested themselves in their full force, and the more tender emotions were evinced in beautiful expressions; the chorus delighted all by its naive motives, and created enthusiasm by its lyrical sublimity".[17] Thus, the aesthetic effect of tragedy – here described in Aristotelian terms – differs from the cathartic effect, whose value is not temporary and which resides in the awareness of one's own freedom and of one's own ability to resist suffering through the use of reason. Still, tragedy's effect depends on its form, thus allowing Aristotle's *Poetics* to maintain its value: Aristotle's analysis of tragedy – conducted on a larger corpus than the one available to the moderns – points out that this genre "is embodied in a permanent form" ("in einer bleibenden Form ruht"). It follows that a tragedy is a closed work of art and, as such, it is subject to a more exhaustive critical and aesthetic analysis, as Schiller added in his letter to Goethe of 5 May 1797 (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.251).

In the same letter, Schiller revealed to have approached the *Poetics* for the first time and affirmed that, far from being a disadvantage, this proved fruitful; as he explained, only when the "fundamental ideas" ("Grundbegriffe", ibid.: 250) are clearly understood, one can read Aristotle with profit. In fact, to Schiller, Aristotle's explanation of the "outward form" ("äußere Form", ibid.: 251) of tragedy does not proceed from and rely on a sterile set of rules – as the French understand it – but it points to the essence ("das Wesen", ibid.: 250) of the work of art. Therefore, Aristotle would have fared better with Shakespeare, who did not adopt any rules or precepts, than with the whole lot of French tragedians. Aristotle's rules proceed from an empiric observation of tragedy; as a consequence, we owe his 'laws' from the lucky accident that, at the time, several works of art realised an idea through the fact ("durch das Factum", ibid.: 251) of their existence. Goethe and Schiller's shared reading of Aristotle's work, together with their conclusions, laid the foundations for Goethe's later remarks on the *Poetics* which pointed to a reassessment of the value of Aristotle's 'rules' as pertaining to the nature of tragedy, discarding previous interpretations that ascribed them to a precise historical stage of the genre's evolution. Rules are valid only insofar as they are not considered as outward, artificial forms but as the expression

[17] "Die Furcht und der Schrecken erwiesen sich in ihrer ganzen Kraft, auch die sanftere Rührung gab sich durch schöne Aeußerungen kund – der Chor erfreute allgemein durch seine naiven Motive und begeisterte durch seinen lyrischen Schwung" (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 2.331). Trans. by Schmitz, Goethe-Schiller 1877-90: 2.442.

of the very idea of the tragic genre. The most difficult issue with which the Goethe-Schiller correspondence confronted was the classification of literary genres according to their nature, origin and function, in contrast with the idea of art as nature's mimesis. In fact, art is nature and, like nature, it sticks to its own internal rules; yet, if one should know how to discover those rules, one should also be able to understand what presides over art. If Aristotle's *Poetics* retains its value as a treaty on the morphology of tragedy, one might hardly come across a definition of catharsis which refers to any other different genre. As early as 1797, Goethe detected this contradiction, though he explicitly dealt with it in the *Nachlese* thirty years later.

The 'Tragic' as an Aesthetic Category

The Goethe-Schiller correspondence is known to have resulted in only one collaborative essay: the clear-cut *On Epic and Dramatic Poetry* (*Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung*, 1797), and it is no coincidence that Goethe published it in the same journal as the *Nachlese* thirty years later, along with passages from the letters (cf. Fornaro 1998). Goethe's responses to these combined efforts towards a definition of tragedy and of other poetic genres also include his well-known adamant refusal to write a tragedy (letter of 9 December 1797; Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.337-9), because merely attempting it would have destroyed him. This claim matches his later assertion that he "was not born to be a tragic poet" ("nicht zum tragischen Dichter geboren"), because his "nature is conciliatory" ("da meine Natur konziliant ist").[18] In Erich Heller's words, "Goethe's genius is in communion with nature"; therefore, "there can be no catharsis for him, only metamorphosis" (Heller 1952: 47).

As a consequence, he explained that the purely tragic incident remained alien to him, since it allowed no reconciliation. Goethe did not bring into question his own ability or possibility to create tragedies; rather, he doubted that the effect his tragedies attained could be the very emancipation of the individual's awareness propounded by Schiller and by German idealists after him (Most 1993; Billings 2014). In Goethe's view, the 'tragic' is an aesthetic category that relates to a dramatic performance, thus following the meaning Aristotle himself attached to the adjective *tragikos*. His main concern is the aesthetic judgment only; any other feature does not match his own nature, which is not 'tragic', as in Schiller's or Schelling's sense. Moreover, the ultimate catharsis Schiller contemplated, involving man as a whole, remains an ideal, and the tragic form Aristotle delineated does reveal that several Greek

[18] Letter to Zelter of 31 October 1831 (Goethe-Zelter 1833-34: 6.328).

plays left no 'knot' unravelled – as Schiller would posit –, implying an artistically effected development that made them a worthy subject for critical analysis.

'Pure Form' and the Detachment from Reality

Goethe's entire correspondence with Schiller, as well as his essay *On Epic and Dramatic Poetry* are concerned with the structure of literary genres, in that they deal with the morphology of all living forms and strive to identify the objective, natural laws that explain the origin and the essence of poetry, while disregarding the subject itself. From his earliest years, Goethe strove after pure form, that is, after what causes a work of art to become coherent, self-contained and perfect. He attempted to define those laws, rules and classifications to which the work of art should adhere in order to attain formal perfection. In opposition to the chaos of contemporary art, to the "barbaric tendencies" ("barbarischen … Tendenzen")[19] of mixing genres, to the aesthetic bewilderment deriving from a misinterpretation of the significance of the creative impulse, Goethe drew an impassable magic circle that contained poetry within its territory and established the absoluteness of form as a bulwark. Hence, his anachronistic classicism that does not dismiss life and its numberless contradictions but assumes to absorb and master it through the creation of a work of art in which all opposition is resolved. The Ancients only have the authority to provide a model for this formal research. Nonetheless, the process leading to a purified work of art – one which is not touched by confusion and by the pathological element, i.e. by "fashion" that attracts the public and directs modern aesthetic enjoyment – is arduous. As one of the audience's favourite genre, drama particularly suffers from corruption on part of the pathological element: the spectators identify with the characters on stage and identification results in a mingling of real life and performance that is consuming for both the audience and the poet.[20] Rejecting all kind of realism, in Goethe's view the poet should aspire to be immune to passions and never blend art with life. Thus, emotional detachment is necessary to handle even those subjects which arouse a "lively pathological interest" ("lebhaftes pathologische Interesse"),[21] like the dramatic ones; as a consequence, the poet should spurn any kind of identification. Only by distancing, that is, by detaching from reality, art might aspire to aesthetic perfection.

[19] See his letter to Schiller of 23 December 1797 (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.344) which includes the essay *On Epic and Dramatic Poetry*.

[20] See Schiller's letter to Goethe of 8 December 1797 (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.336-7).

[21] Goethe's letter to Schiller of 9 December 1797 (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.338).

Catharsis as an Aesthetic Phenomenon

While endorsing a view of catharsis that is fully contained within the making of poetry, in his "Nachlese zu Aristoteles Poetik", Goethe does not dismiss the 'tragic' as a dramatic event: the final sacrifice is tragic, inasmuch as it responds to the general structure of a tragedy and represents a suitable denouement, i.e. one that excites strong emotions through the exhibition of death (in Goethe's words, no one wants to die). In brief, in opposition to his early approaches to Aristotle's text, Goethe does not reject tragedy's power to awaken passions and emotions; however, he implies that the essence of the dramatic form does not reside in this effect, rather in the aesthetic catharsis it stimulates. Aesthetic catharsis is the balance that form imposes between a tragic subject affecting our emotions and the poetic structuring framework of a play (cf. Wilm 2006). A tragedy cannot be judged from its conclusion only but from its entire progress: in order to achieve excellence, the poet has to keep aloof from the play and observe it as an "object" ("... als Objekt aufstellend", Goethe 1827: 345). Hence, the poet has to remove everything subjective and pathological from his research and keep himself at an objective distance which allows him to control form. Taken by itself, tragic conflict would remain unresolvable; on the contrary, within a play – that is, through the distance imposed by the performance – conflict is made relative, though preserving its unique tragic quality. The Ancients function once again as a model since they succeed in rendering "the highest pathos" ("das höchste Pathetische") a pure "aesthetic play" ("ästhetisches Spiel");[22] that is to say, ancient tragic poets are not emotionally involved in what they create. On the other hand, the spectators do not experience any moral improvement once they get back home after the performance, and yet the resolution of the conflict on stage does offer them a sort of relief. This is possible because the aesthetic play, leading to a solution, conveys an impression of conclusiveness and balance, as if everything closed full-circle. After having experienced aesthetic catharsis, the spectators return to their real life and are able to look at it with clearer eyes. Accordingly, as Goethe pointed out in his enthusiastic early essay *Zum Schäkespears Tag* (1771), Shakespeare's plays teach readers to 'see' the world aesthetically. Aesthetic catharsis does not offer redemption but it provides a kind of deliverance which is different from the ideal, philosophical freedom Schiller postulated and which enables the spectators to penetrate and enjoy the world.

[22] Letter to Schiller of 9 December 1797 (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 1.338).

Tragic and Epic Poetry

Goethe's discussion on catharsis embeds a solution to one of the main issues in his poetics, that is, the role art plays in real life and, similarly, the role life plays within art. To Goethe, modern aesthetics is characterized by a tendency towards mingling, which is a form of corruption involving mainly art and nature, but touching the various literary genres as well. This mingling generates confusion, misunderstanding and poetic sterility. The modern poet's main difficulty, as well as the main challenge for classicism, is to overcome the pathological condition that attracts the audience and involves him directly at the same time. From his earliest years, Goethe attempted to grasp the peculiar traits of tragic subjects, sometimes extracting them from epic poetry. However, his *Nausicaa*, conceived as a play after Goethe had lived the *Odyssey* as a living word in Sicily, is a tentative fragment (cf. Fornaro 1994). Similarly, his *Achilleid*, the epic poem built around a tragic subject that he meant as a continuation of the *Iliad*, does not go beyond the first canto. The play does not progress partly because the dialogue takes on a philosophical turn within the epic discourse, and delays the action, almost annihilating it to stasis. Goethe tried to achieve purity of form as he was himself contaminated with life and with art at the same time: like his contemporaries, he was imbued with the cult of Nature and had succumbed to the widespread trend of identifying Shakespeare with nature itself. Conversely, the artist must fight the "surge" of history. If impurity pervades modern poetry, the artist must become immune to it by striving to create a formally perfect (i.e. classic) work of art in which all emotions fade away. Nonetheless, the process is painful even on a physical level, since the "pathological" triumphs in moments of creative and personal crisis; in order to regenerate itself, art has to go through exhausting healing processes just like Wilhelm Meister's life.[23]

Catharsis and *Wilhelm Meister*

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*) stands as a symbolic narrative of the aesthetic process of catharsis which Goethe would later theorize in the *Nachlese* (cf. Zumbusch 2011: 278 ff.). It is well-known that the novel was first conceived as *Wilhelm Meister teatralische Sendung* in 1777.[24] A complete revised version was published as *Wilhelm Meister's*

[23] This has been recently demonstrated by Cornelia Zumbusch (2011), with whose introductory remarks and some analyses I agree in the present essay.

[24] It would be impossible to refer to the complete corpus of critical writings on the novel; Morpurgo Tagliabue 1991 is relevant in the present context for its analysis of *Wilhelm Meister*'s importance for Goethe's aesthetic and personal development.

Apprenticeship in 1796, after Goethe had encountered a series of crucial biographical, emotional and historical events, such as the failure of the Revolution, his correspondence with Schiller and his journey to Italy. Though the Romantic generation acclaimed *Wilhelm Meister* as the epitome of modern novel and a revolutionary text, the novel illustrates Goethe's own detachment from his contemporaries' aesthetics, that is, his own purification, his catharsis, from everything he deemed "diseased", as he explained in his famous definition of "romantic" as an antithesis to "classic". The protagonist progressively abandons the view of art merging with life which has infected aesthetics as a disease. Goethe attaches a symbolical value to the wounds and the sicknesses inflicted to Wilhelm by the contagion; the ensuing healing processes he is subjected to stand for the steps he takes to escape the aesthetic epidemic of his time. The protagonist's diseases and wounds are to be interpreted as caused by a pernicious confusion between art and life; such is his first unconditional love for a woman, the actress Mariane, a feeling which inexorably blends together the naïve protagonist's taste for theatricality with his first erotic interest and makes him vulnerable. The hero is the special victim of the theatre's aesthetic infection, which contaminates him through the contact with the characters he meets, like Philine, for example, or the pretty countess who introduces him to Shakespeare. Each of them establishes a constant exchange between art and life, illusion and reality, that threatens Wilhelm and damages both his very existence and his creative impulse. Clearly, the aesthetic infection bears diseased fruits. This is exemplified by unhappy Aurelie, who, like Ophelia, suffers from an excess of imagination ("Einbildungskraft") and who models her life on Shakespeare's tragedy.[25] If, on the one hand, Aurelie avails herself of her painful experiences to bestow life and naturalness to the characters she brings on stage, on the other, she measures the depth of her own feelings against the dramatic roles she interprets. Aurelie lets art infect her when the "dramatic shadows" ("Schatternbilder")[26] awaken a deep grief in her, as when she talks with Wilhelm about *Hamlet*; besides, she is not able to conceive passions outside a

[25] "Ihre Einbildungskraft ist angesteckt" (Goethe 2005: 247) ["Her imagination is infected", trans. by Blackall, Goethe 1989: 147].

[26] "Wilhelm hatte nicht bemerkt, mit welchem Ausdruck Aurelie die letzten Worte aussprach. Nur auf das Kunstwerk, dessen Zusammenhang und Vollkommenheit gerichtet, ahnete er nicht, daß seine Freundin eine ganz andere Wirkung empfand; nicht, daß ein eigner tiefer Schmerz durch diese dramatischen Schattenbilder in ihr lebhaft erregt ward." (Goethe 2005: 247) ["Wilhelm had not noticed the intensity of expression with which Aurelie was speaking. His attention had been entirely concentrated on the perfect structure ofthe work of art, and he had no idea of the totally different way Aurelie was reacting to the character, or that some deep grief of her own was being awakened by this shadow play", trans. by Blackall, ibid.].

performance. Aurelie's unhappy love is a mere theatrical display; and yet, Wilhelm yields to it and shares the torments of the girl's unhappy, anxious soul. His mind is distracted, his blood excited by a sort of fever.[27] Before Aurelie cuts Wilhelm's hand with a dagger, he has already become her accomplice in passion. The inability to keep art and life separated is thus part of the repertoire of tragic effects. As Wilhelm declares the moment his enthusiasm for the theatre reaches its peak, the effect the actor produces is a form of electric shock which inflames, stirs and stimulates the spectator: briefly, the actor infects the spectator with the feelings he represents on stage.[28] Aurelie and Wilhelm delineate a physiology of the aesthetic contagion from which it is necessary, though painful, to be healed.

Catharsis and Classicism

Similarly, Mignon and the harper personify both the pathological in tragedy and its infectious aesthetics which calls for catharsis. The harper holds himself the victim of an authoritarian and unfathomable fate, like a character in some games involving those very heavenly powers on which his songs focus. In perfect compliance with the classical doctrine of dramatic poetry

[27] "Der entsetzliche, halb natürliche, halb erzwungene Zustand seiner Freundin peinigte ihn nur zu sehr. Er empfand die Foltern der unglücklichen Anspannung mit: sein Gehirn zerrüttete sich, und sein Blut war in einer fieberhaften Bewegung". (Goethe 2005: 279) ["The terrifying, half-natural and half-forced state of this woman tormented him too much for that. He shared the tortures that wracked her unhappy self; his mind was distraught, his feelings in a state of feverish excitement", trans. by Blackall, ibid.].

[28] "Welcher Schauspieler, welcher Schriftsteller, ja welcher Mensch überhaupt würde sich nicht auf dem Gipfel seiner Wünsche sehen, wenn er durch irgendein edles Wort oder eine gute Tat einen so allgemeinen Eindruck hervorbrächte? Welche köstliche Empfindung müßte es sein, wenn man gute, edle, der Menschheit würdige Gefühle ebenso schnell durch einen elektrischen Schlag ausbreiten, ein solches Entzücken unter dem Volke erregen könnte, als diese Leute durch ihre körperliche Geschicklichkeit getan haben; wenn man der Menge das Mitgefühl alles Menschlichen geben, wenn man sie mit der Vorstellung des Glücks und Unglücks, der Weisheit und Torheit, ja des Unsinns und der Albernheit entzünden, erschüttern und ihr stockendes Innere in freie, lebhafte und reine Bewegung setzen könnte!" (Goethe 2005: 106) ["What actor, writer, or indeed what human being would not feel he has reached the summit of his desires when, by some noble word or deed, he produced such a universal impression? What a rich experience it would be to disseminate worthy human feelings so quickly – like electricity – through the ranks of the common people, such as these people did by the display of their bodily skill – to impart a sense of common humanity to the masses, inflame and disturb them with a display of all our pleasures and misfortunes, wisdom and follies, stupidity and idiocy, and release their sullen minds into a state of active, vigorous, unimpeded freedom!", trans. by Blackall, ibid.: 58-9].

and following Schelling's assumption ("schuldlos schuldig werden") (Schelling 1859: 695), the man is the protagonist of a personal tragedy which has caused him, innocent as he was, to become guilty. Mignon, the offspring of his undeliberate incestuous love, stands as a constant reminder of his condition. And Mignon tries to keep Wilhelm away from the theatre, though she herself reveals her peculiar affinity with tragedy. During the revels that follow the premiere, the girl plunges into a wild dance around the table, holding a tambourine in her hand. Her hair loose, her head tilted back, her limbs flung into the air, she becomes like one of those maenads whose wild postures are portrayed on ancient monuments and who amaze the viewer.[29] Here, Mignon explicitly evokes the tragedy's Dionysian origins. After the frenzied dance, Mignon bites Wilhelm's arm, thus symbolically infecting him with the tragic, i.e. with the disease of the passion for the theatre. Hence, catharsis consists in an aesthetic process that aims at making the work of art complete and independent by allowing its detachment from all kinds of emotions and, as a consequence, from life and its vices. Through the aesthetic ideal that the Society of the Tower creates as a bulwark against the aesthetics of contamination molded on Shakespeare, Goethe anticipates his later interpretation of Aristotle. The activities of the Tower, culminating in Mignon's funeral, coincide with the artistic agenda of the *Propylaea* (*Die Propyläen*), pointing out to a withdrawal within the domain of purity and of assuaging moderation. In opposition to the pathological mingling of art and life which infected Goethe, the Hall of the Past turns into a hall of art, purified by its very remoteness from real life. In this symbolic space, as Schiller wrote to Goethe (2 July 1796), Mignon's funeral emerges as a tribute to art's eternal youth, preserved from the corruption of time just like Mignon's own youth (Goethe-Schiller 1881: 133-6). Art, in fact, strives hard to preserve the body against transience and, in doing so, it works a miracle. In contrast to eighteenth-century poetics of nature, art takes the place of nature, it freezes life into an artwork – as Mignon's body is frozen by death – and disrupts

[29] "Mignon ward bis zur Wut lustig, und die Gesellschaft, sosehr sie anfangs über den Scherz gelacht hatte, mußte zuletzt Einhalt tun. Aber wenig half das Zureden, denn nun sprang sie auf und raste, die Schellentrommel in der Hand, um den Tisch herum. Ihre Haare flogen, und indem sie den Kopf zurück und alle ihre Glieder gleichsam in die Luft warf, schien sie einer Mänade ähnlich, deren wilde und beinah unmögliche Stellungen uns auf alten Monumenten noch oft in Erstaunen setzen" (Goethe 2005: 326) ["Mignon was almost frenetically excited and, amusing as this had been in the beginning, it became such that it had to be curbed. But admonishing her seemed to have little effect, for she now began hysterically to rush around the table, tambourine in hand, hair flying, head thrown back and her body flung into the air like one of those maenads whose wild and well-nigh impossible postures still delight us on ancient monuments", trans. by Blackall, ibid.: 197-8].

the pathological bond it has tied with nature. Suspended in eternity, the kind of art that Mignon's everlasting youth symbolizes is not subdued to taste, to fashion or to the spectators' volatile emotions anymore. Once it becomes free and independent from life, art's beauty is revealed in its purest – or, to say it better, purified – form. Thus in Goethe's view, a perfect artistic form is the result of 'catharsis': unlike the infected pathological art, what grows out of catharsis makes man immune to grief. During Mignon's funeral, while a number of children are singing in chorus, the participants suspend their emotions. Their absorption prevents them from grieving; and yet, when the singing has died away, grief overcomes them again, more bitter and biting, and consideration, reflection, curiosity – that is, all feelings and affections that normally upset the spirit – are restored along with it, so that everybody longs to be taken back to the element ("Element") of art.[30] Art's perfection achieves its catharsis as long as it is displayed, just like tragedy accomplishes catharsis during the interval of a performance. Once back to their lives, the participants are also back to themselves and, consequently, forget art. For instance, the choir-boys have to leave Mignon's funeral to return to real life, where they will wait for love. Death and life must be kept apart just like art and real life must be separated. Only by reason of this separation could art serve as a safeguard against life's incidents. Medicine thus stands as a model for art and not only because of its power to transfigure life into eternity – as it happens to Mignon – but also because it can nurture apathy and balance passions. Far from causing suffering, art mitigates it; far form arousing passions, it placates them. However, Mignon must die so that her body could turn into a symbol of art's eternizing power. Hence, at the end of the funeral, the underlying aporia of pure art is explained: art really preserves life only the very moment it discards life.

Life within Art and Real Life

One of the most influential voices in Goethe's criticism has noted that the author's classicism is mournful, a funerary monument erected to glorify the memory of Greek classicism's prominent figures (Mittner 1964: 556). How-

[30] "Der Abbé und Natalie führten den Marchese, Wilhelmen Therese und Lothario hinaus, und erst als der Gesang ihnen völlig verhallte, fielen die Schmerzen, die Betrachtungen, die Gedanken, die Neugierde sie mit aller Gewalt wieder an, und sehnlich wünschten sie sich in jenes Element wieder zurück" (Goethe 2005: 578) ["The Abbé and Natalie walked out with the Marchese; Therese and Lothario followed with Wilhelm. Only when the singing had completely died away, were they once more overcome with sorrow, reflection, consideration and curiosity, and longed to be back in the peace of what they had just left", trans. by Blackall, ibid.: 354].

ever, this monument is clearly a visionary, idealized construction, since the characters it exalts are not real living beings but aesthetic idols. Yet, taking into account Goethe's interpretation of catharsis, this kind of classicism stands as a definite rejection both of death and of funerary and museological archaeology. The validation of a work of art resides in the work of art itself: in addition to Mignon's grave, one might think of the palace Hephaestus builds for the gods "according to the divine measure of the Muses' most sublime song" ("Nach dem göttlichen Maß des herrlichsten Musengesanges", Goethe 1981: 517) in the *Achilleid*. The palace stands uncorrupted by time, perfect, invulnerable to decay; every artwork is gathered there, like Zeus's gold male attendants or Hephaestus's bronze maiden helpers: all of them are lifeless masterpieces, deprived of the Charites' gift which only has the power to bestow breath and light to shallow simulacra. Similar to these figures are Prometheus's dull, beautiful maidens – their creator's pride and joy – in Goethe's dramatic fragment. The artist builds his own fortress within the work of art, so as to protect himself against life's infection. Ultimately, he protects himself from grief. If achieved, aesthetic catharsis solves all tragic conflicts that real life cannot settle. Living in a work of art thus provides a valid alternative to life in the real world; within art, emotions, passions and feeling are elevated, purged and made eternal. However, even those who make art a shelter against life's passions and control emotions through form can attain both purity and immunity; thus, they will be protected from life's tides and surges during their metaphorical sailing against the wind. Once rejected, not only is life properly reintegrated into art, it also infects and galvanizes art. All through his life, the artist has to cope constantly with the logic of art on one side and the logic of life on the other. Instead, everybody who enjoys a work of art is granted his/her share of balance and reconciliation which is temporary and limited to the aesthetic moment, but on which depends the liberty to take a fresh look at the world where everyone must and wants to return.

Conclusion

As early as 1788, in his short essay "Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier und Styl" ("Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner, Style"), Goethe praised 'style' as the highest level art could ever reach (1988c). Touching either tragedy as a genre or life's tragic incidents, the emotional distancing created by style – that is, by formal perfection – removes grief and suffering, while rendering them bearable. Style – and, as a consequence, art's autonomy – offered Goethe the only possible catharsis that his 'epic' nature could conceive. As Friedrich Nietzsche affirmed in a posthumous fragment dated 1878:

> Was Goethe bei H. Kleist empfand, war sein Gefühl des *Tragischen*, von dem er sich abwandte: es war die unheilbare Seite der Natur. Er selbst war conciliant und heilbar. Das Tragische hat mit unheilbaren, die Kom<ödie> mit heilbaren Leiden zu thun. (fr. 29[1], Nietzsche 1988: 513).
>
> [What Goethe perceived in H. Kleist was his feeling for the *tragic*, from which he turned away: it was the incurable side of nature. He was himself was conciliatory and curable. The tragic has to do with incurable, com<edy> with curable suffering. (Nietzsche 2013: 322)]

English translation by Emanuela Zirzotti

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Martin Vöhler*

The Pathological Interpretation of Catharsis

Abstract

When Aristotle characterized the effect of tragedy as catharsis ("purification") of the tragic emotions ("fear and pity"), he set off a discussion which is still ongoing. This essay deals with the transformations of catharsis and the break with tradition which occurred when Jacob Bernays in a philological treatise (1857) rejected the traditional moral concept of catharsis. In its place Bernays put forward "solicitation", i.e. the deliberate excitation and discharge of emotions. The process of catharsis was thus medically interpreted and labelled pathological. This study focuses on Bernays' achievements in redefining the term and the resulting dissolution of its boundaries; no longer limited to the classical fields of poetics and ethics, religion and politics, catharsis is relevant to medicine, psychology, aesthetics and cultural theory.

Jacob Bernays

In his essay *Main Features of Aristotle's Lost Treatise on the effects of tragedy* (1857),[1] the classical philologist Jacob Bernays takes a stance on the catharsis debate which Aristotle had generated with his *Poetics*. Bernays turns to this discussion from the perspective of classical philology. Born in Hamburg in 1824 as the son of a rabbi, Bernays had studied with Friedrich Ritschl, Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker and Christian Brandis, exhibiting early on unusual talent. His prize-winning work on Lucretius was published in 1847, followed by his doctoral thesis on the influence of Heraclitus on Hippocrates' *De diaeta*. Subsequently he was appointed *Privatdozent* in Bonn. As a consequence of his refusal to renounce the Jewish tradition he had been raised in, he never received a full professorship, despite his excellent publications. Two appointments to professorial chairs in Breslau and Heidelberg were rejected by the responsible ministries. Thus, between 1854 and 1866, Bernays taught at the Jewish-Theological Seminar in Breslau where he entered into aca-

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[1] The treatise is quoted according to the facsimile edition by Karlfried Gründer (Bernays 1970). For the English translation I am indebted to Angela Zerbe. All quotations from German-language sources in general are translated by A. Zerbe.

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demic exchange with Theodor Mommsen who lectured at the University of Breslau (1854-58).[2] In 1866, he returned to Bonn where he simultaneously discharged his duties as head librarian as well as those of an associate professor. Among his students were Ingram Bywater and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff.[3]

Bernays's engagement with Aristotelian catharsis dates back to the year 1852.[4] His first results were published in *Ergänzung zu Aristoteles' Poetik*, in which he deals with the effects of comedy (Bernays 1853: 561-96). His comprehensive study of catharsis was initially conceived as a lecture for the *Historisch-Philosophische Gesellschaft* in Breslau, founded by Mommsen. It was published in the first volume of *Abhandlungen der Historisch-Philosophischen Gesellschaft* (Breslau 1858). Additionally, a special edition of this work was published beforehand (Breslau 1857).[5] The treatise sets off a prolonged philological discussion; for the period between the first print until 1928 over one hundred and fifty titles relating to the catharsis question are recorded (Cooper-Gudeman 1928). As Karlfried Gründer points out, "with very few exceptions, most of these relate to the Bernays controversy" (Gründer 1970: VII). At first Bernays gets involved in the debate,[6] but later he allows the "tumult in the scholars' republic" (Gründer 1968: 508-16) to take its course and provides only a slightly improved second edition (1880) of the volume which had long been out of print (Bernays 1968: 1-118).

Bernays gives a new turn to the discussion by postulating that Aristotle had applied a medical interpretation to the process of tragic 'purgation'. In this way Bernays positions himself in opposition to Lessing and Goethe, each of whom presented prominent interpretations of the 'tragedy clause' of Aristotle's *Poetics* (6, 1449b24-28). Lessing had developed his moral interpretation of catharsis in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1768) (Lessing

[2] On Mommsen's stay in Breslau, cf. Rebenich 2002: 98-106; Wickert 1967: 265-94; Wickert 1969: 321-42.

[3] About Bernays's life: Fraenkel 1932; Bach 1974; on scholarly works: Momigliano 1969: 151-73; Glucker-Laks 1996; Bollack 1998; on the treatise on catharsis: Gründer 1968; Gentili 1994: 35-66; Funke 1996: 50-75; Lawrenz 2007; Wilm 2009: 21-50; Ugolini 2012; Porter 2015: 15-41.

[4] Cf. his letter to Heyse dated 16 June 1852 (Bernays 2010: 71).

[5] Thus Bernays wrote to Heyse on 26 February 1857: "On the occasion of a lecture in a professorial circle I have elaborated on my old heresies on tragic catharsis for which, in the meantime, I have found all kinds of new documents. Before the end of the year you will probably read them in print" ("Gelegentlich eines Vortrages in einem Professorenkränzchen habe ich meine alten Ketzereien über die tragische Katharsis ausgearbeitet, zu denen ich inzwischen noch allerlei neue Dokumente gefunden habe. Vor Ablauf des Jahres wirst Du sie wahrscheinlich gedruckt lesen") (Bernays 2010: 149). On the Breslau circle of professors, cf. Bach 1974: 151-3.

[6] Cf. Bernays' 1859 letter to Spengel on the issue (Bernays 1859: 367-77).

1985: 551-80). Goethe, on the other hand, discussed the catharsis question in his *Nachlese zu Aristoteles' Poetik* (1827) (Goethe 1949: 342-5). Dissociating himself from Lessing, he introduced his own translation of the 'tragedy clause' which was in keeping with the premises of the autonomy of art and refrained from any teleology of the work of art. The profound disparity in the two interpretations afforded Bernays the opportunity to re-open the catharsis discussion from the viewpoint of classical philology. He developed a framework in which he attempted to satisfy the demands of Aristotelian scholarship as well as to incorporate the proposals of Lessing and Goethe. Bernays harnesses insights gained from classical studies, the histories of medicine, religion, culture and literature as well as literary scholarship, philosophy and aesthetics in order to achieve a new interpretation of the tragedy clause. What emerges is a complex contribution to scholarship which obtains an overwhelming resonance not only within classical studies but also across academic boundaries. Bernays' thesis of the 'pathologization of catharsis' turns out to be a provocative intellectual concept which proves fruitful and adaptable in the contemporary discourses. In order to better grasp the following polyphonic discussion, I will undertake an exploratory analysis of the argumentation, of the source references, and of the terminology developed by Bernays.

In Agon with Lessing and Goethe

In his preamble Bernays addresses Lessing's and Goethe's interpretations,[7] identifies the shortcomings of their irreconcilable positions, and suggests certain prospects for resolving the catharsis issue. In terms of text strategy, this preamble assures the author of his readers' attention: by announcing that Lessing and Goethe are to be refuted, Bernays creates expectations. He claims interpretative competence in the question which is "familiar to every educated person and unclear to any thinking person" ("die jedem Gebildeten geläufig und keinem Denkenden deutlich sind", Bernays 1970: 138). Avoiding the specific terminology of his own discipline, he translates the passages being discussed and explains their contexts. His essay is written in elegant prose as he vies stylistically with his opponents.

He sets out his approach to the catharsis question in the introduction, explaining that his interpretation is based on the last six words of the tragedy clause and asserting that these key words concerning catharsis had not yet been satisfactorily interpreted. While Lessing had redefined the terms 'pity' and 'fear' and managed to remove many "misunderstandings" ("Missver-

[7] On Lessing's moral theory of catharsis cf. Kommerell 1960; Lawrenz 2007; Martinec 2003; Schings 2012. On Goethe's aesthetic interpretation cf. Boyle 2010: 1072-86.

ständnisse", ibid.: 136), his concept of purgation had proved problematic. By linking this process to Aristotelian ethics, Lessing renders catharsis a "moral function" ("eine moralische Veranstaltung", ibid.) and tragedy a "house of moral correction" ("ein moralisches Correctionshaus", ibid.).

To substantiate his reservations about Lessing's interpretation, Bernays has recourse to the authority of Goethe who had protested against the moralistic functionalization of catharsis in his *Nachlese zu Aristoteles' Poetik* (Goethe 1949: 343). That Goethe had based his interpretation on an unacceptable translation does not make his elaborations useless for Bernays. The agon with Lessing and Goethe augurs well for Bernays. Both had presented exemplary interpretations of Aristotelian catharsis (Lessing a moralistic interpretation, Goethe an aesthetic one). However, both interpretations proved to be inadequate. It seemed that the time for a critical revision had come.

Aristotle's Viewpoint

In the first chapter, Bernays introduces the foundation of his interpretation of catharsis. He quotes from the eighth book of Aristotle's *Politics*, conveying the central passage concerning catharsis in his own translation which added clarifications and key Greek terms in parentheses:

> Wir nehmen die Eintheilung einiger Philosophen an, welche die Lieder scheiden erstlich in solche, die eine stetige sittliche Stimmung (ethische), zweitens in solche, die eine bewegte, zur That angeregte Stimmung (praktische), drittens in solche, die Verzückung bewirken (enthusiastische). Nun soll man aber, nach unserer Ansicht, die Musik nicht bloss zu Einem, sondern zu mehreren nützlichen Zwecken anwenden, erstens als Theil des Jugend-Unterrichts, zweitens zu Katharsis – was Katharsis ist werden wir jetzt nur im Allgemeinen sagen, aber in der Abhandlung über Dichtkunst wieder darauf zurückkommen und bestimmter darüber reden –drittens zur Ergötzung, um sich zu erholen und abzuspannen. So kann man denn alle Harmonien verwenden, aber nicht alle in derselben Weise, sondern als Theil des Jugendunterrichts solche, die eine möglichst stetige, sittliche Stimmung bewirken, dagegen zum Anhören eines musikalischen Vortrags Anderer solche, die eine bewegte, zur That angeregte Stimmung und auch solche, die Verzückung bewirken. Nämlich, der Affect, welcher in einigen Gemüthern heftig auftritt, ist in allen vorhanden, der Unterschied besteht nur in dem Mehr oder Minder, z. B. Mitleid und Furcht (treten in den Mitleidigen und Furchtsamen heftig auf, in geringerem Maasse sind sie aber in allen Menschen vorhanden). Ebenso Verzückung. (In geringerem Maasse sind alle Menschen derselben unterworfen), es giebt aber Leute, die häufigen Anfällen dieser Gemüthsbewegung ausgesetzt sind. Nun sehen wir an den heiligen Liedern, dass wenn dergleichen Verzückte Lieder, die eben das Gemüth berauschen, auf sich wirken las-

sen, sie sich beruhigen, gleichsam als hätten sie ärztliche Cur und Katharsis erfahren (ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως). Dasselbe muss nun folgerecht auch bei den Mitleidigen und Furchtsamen und überhaupt bei Allen stattfinden, die zu einem bestimmten Affecte disponirt sind (ταὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικοὺς καὶ τοὺς ὅλως παθητικούς), bei allen übrigen Menschen aber in so weit etwas von diesen Affecten auf eines Jeden Theil kommt; für Alle muss es irgend eine Katharsis geben und sie unter Lustgefühl erleichtert werden können (πᾶσι γίγνεσθαί τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς). In gleicher Weise nun wie andere Mittel der Katharsis bereiten auch die kathartischen Lieder den Menschen eine unschädliche Freude (χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ). Man muss also die gesetzliche Bestimmung treffen, dass diejenigen, welche die Musik für das Theater ausüben (das ja unschädliche Freude schaffen soll) mit solchen kathartischen Harmonien und Liedern auftreten. Da nun aber das Publicum doppelartig ist (ὁ θεατὴς διττός), ein freies und gebildetes einestheils, anderntheils ein gemeines, aus niedern Handwerkern, Tagelöhnern und dergleichen bestehendes, so muss man auch zur Erholung der Letzteren Aufführungen und Schaugenüsse einrichten. Wie nun die Gemüther dieses Theiles des Publicums aus der naturgemässen Beschaffenheit verschroben sind, so giebt es auch in den Harmonien Absprünge und unter den Liedern eine stürmische und gefärbte Gattung; Jedem gewährt aber das allein Vergnügen, was seiner Natur entspricht; man muss daher den auftretenden Künstlern die Freiheit lassen, vor einem solchen Publicum sich solcherlei Gattung von Musik zu bedienen. (Bernays 1970: 139-40)

[We accept the classification of several philosophers who divide songs into three groups according to the dispositions they induce: firstly a constantly moral (ethical), secondly action-prompting (practical) and thirdly, rapture (enthusiastic) (b35). In our opinion one should not apply music for just one, but rather for several useful purposes: first of all as part of teaching youth, secondly for catharsis – what catharsis is we will now say in general, but return to it in the treatise on poetry (b40) and elaborate in detail – thirdly, for amusement, in order to regenerate and relax (a1). Thus we can use all harmonies, but not in the same way. In teaching youth we use music which produces a consistently moral disposition; on the other hand, when listening to musical performances other modes are to be preferred such as those which animate to action and also those which result in rapture (a5). The affection which appears vigorously in some souls is present in all, the difference being in the intensity. For example, pity and fear (occurring intensely in all compassionate and fearful people, to a lesser extent in other people). The same holds true for rapture (to which all people are subjected to a lesser extent). There are people, however, who frequently become victims of emotional seizures. We may observe in sacred music that when such (a10) persons allow ecstatic songs, which intoxicate the soul, to sink in they become tranquil, as if they had received medical treatment and purgation (ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως). It follows that the same thing must happen with the compas-

> sionate and the fearful, in general to all who have a proclivity for a certain emotion (ταὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικοὺς καὶ τοὺς ὅλως παθητικούς). In all other persons, in as much as they are affected by these emotions, there must be some kind of catharsis (a15) so that they can be relieved by feelings of pleasure (πᾶσι γίγνεσθαί τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς). In the same way that other means bring about catharsis, the cathartic melodies also provide people with a harmless pleasure (χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ). Legal provisions must therefore be laid down which allow those who practice music in the theatre (which should bring about harmless pleasure) to perform cathartic melodies and harmonies. Since, however, the audience is of a dual nature (ὁ θεατὴς διττός), one part free and educated, the other part consisting of vulgar artisans and day labourers, one must ensure that the latter group also enjoys recreation with performances and pleasurable spectacles. Just as it is in the nature of the souls in the latter group to be perverted, so there are corrupted harmonies and melodies which are rough and unnatural. Pleasure, however, can only be experienced by each person according to his nature, and therefore performing artists must be given the freedom to practice this lower form of music before such an audience. (*Politics* 1341b32-1342a28)]

At the beginning of the quoted passage, Aristotle distinguishes between three types of songs which, according to their underlying harmonies, can be used for different purposes. The ethical songs enhance the "moral disposition" ("sittliche Stimmung"), the practical songs promote action while the enthusiastic songs lead to excitement or "ecstasy" ("Verzückung"), as Bernays translates ἐνθουσιασμός (Arist. *Pol.* 1342a7). Accordingly, the respective areas of application of the melodies are: teaching, amusement (with recreation and relaxation) and catharsis. Against the background of this division, Aristotle subsequently elaborates on the concept of catharsis. He begins by saying that in the context of *Politics* he will only speak generally about catharsis but will return to it in the "Treatise on Poetry to treat it in greater detail" (πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον, Arist. *Pol.* 1341b39-40). Bernays proceeds in similar fashion. In the first chapter of his work, he provides, with the aid of the *Politics* passage, a review of the concept of catharsis and its areas of application in order to expand on tragic catharsis in the following chapter on *Poetics* (2).

In his interpretation of the *Politics* passage Bernays begins with Aristotle's reflections on the use of music in the theatre (Arist. *Pol.* 1342a16-28). "Cathartic harmonies and melodies" ("mit solchen kathartischen Harmonien und Liedern", Bernays 1970: 140) should be permitted, especially in the theatre. However, in the general provisions that Aristotle had prefaced his work with, a means has a cathartic effect when it relieves "with a pleasurable sensation" (ἡδονή) and causes a "harmless pleasure" (χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ, 1342a14-16). Bernays calls this effect, which applies to all cathartic effects,

"the hedonic aspect" ("den hedonischen Gesichtspunkt", Bernays 1970: 141) of catharsis. Aristotle sees this possibility of relief through the use of cathartic music in the theatre. However, the theatre public has a dual nature, consisting of free, educated members alongside a group of "vulgar artisans and day labourers" ("ein gemeines, aus niedern Handwerkern, Tagelöhnern und dergleichen bestehendes", ibid.: 140). Due to their laborious tasks and "natural character" ("aus der naturgemässen Beschaffenheit", ibid.), these members of the audience are oppressed and their minds "perverted" (αἱ ψυχαὶ παρεστραμμέναι τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως, Arist. *Pol.* 1342a22-23). Therefore the effects of cathartic music are especially suited to this part of the audience as it contains "corrupted harmonies and rough and unnatural melodies" ("in den Harmonien Absprünge und unter den Liedern eine stürmische und gefärbte Gattung", ibid.: 140) which provide the vulgar audience with particular pleasure (ἡδονή).

Bernays utilizes his comments on music in the theatre to refute the moral concept of catharsis that Lessing had propagated. He builds on the polemics developed in his preamble which he had brought to bear against the theatre concept of the Enlightenment (Bernays 1970: 136). Aristotle, Bernays argues, had not conceived of the Greek theatre as "an institute of moral correction" ("sittliche Besserungsanstalt", ibid.: 140) but rather as a "place of amusement" ("Vergnügungsort", ibid.) for an audience with different levels of education. Bernays decisively rejects Lessing's concept of moral education with recourse to the pleasure that the music of the theatre should provide. However, Bernays qualifies the hedonic aspect. He maintains that Aristotle, in *Politics,* had attributed a "*pathological* aspect" ("*pathologischer* Gesichtspunkt", ibid.: 141) to catharsis.[8]

Bernays defines the "pathological aspect" based on his key elaborations on the cathartic process (Arist. *Pol.* 1342a1-16). According to Aristotle, the unique force of cathartic music lies in its impact on affect (πάθος). Although all humans are receptive to musical stimulation of the soul (ψυχή), their reactions vary. While most listeners react moderately, others are vigorously gripped by emotion (e.g. pity, fear or enthusiasm). When these emotions are vehement and occur frequently as seizures, the listeners can be treated with the application of certain songs, as experience confirms. In this context Aristotle makes reference to the "sacred music" (familiar to his contemporaries). Healing is accomplished in the following manner: "We observe in the sacred songs that when such frenzied persons allow the ecstatic songs which intoxicate the soul to sink in, they become tranquil as if they had experienced

[8] On the objections to Bernays' purgation account in the scholarly literature (Golden 1973/74: 473-9 and 1976: 437-52; Lear 1992: 315-40; Heath 2014: 111-23) cf. Seidensticker and Vöhler 2007: VII-XII.

medical treatment and purgation".[9] "Sacred music" has the effect of arousing a strong excitation; it "intoxicates" and leads to "ecstasy". Subsequently, however, as soon as the listeners with strong emotional proclivities have heard or sung the stimulating songs, they experience a calming effect. In this way the therapeutic circle is completed. Cathartic music purges affection by reinforcing it homeopathically.[10]

While Bernays distinguishes between "phyrgian", "orgiastic" and "corybantic" songs used therapeutically (Bernays 1970: 57-9), he does not elaborate on the cultural background of the songs; he is interested in the cathartic release of affection as their common effect. In view of the extreme manner in which songs process emotions, Bernays calls this type of treatment "the catharsis of enthusiasm" ("Katharsis des Enthusiasmus", ibid. 142).

Aristotle's comparison of "medical treatment to catharsis" to describe the effects of "sacred hymns" (*Pol.* 1342a10-11) is of central importance for his subsequent argumentation. Bernays explores the connection between treatment and catharsis in order to obtain areas of application of catharsis and cathartic measures in the context of Greek life. Two fields lend themselves to this end: cultic and medical catharsis.

Bernays sees little benefit in establishing a connection to cultic ceremony (*lustratio*).[11] In the cultic context catharsis does, in fact, occur as a result of priestly actions when guilt is expiated and the individual experiences the discharge of guilt from his soul. However, the cathartic effects of music on affection "which we are seeking to explain is not clarified" by reference to the cathartic removal of guilt through cultic ceremony, "which itself is in need of explanation" (Bernays 1970: 143). By contrast, the medical interpretation of catharsis is instructive and expedient:

> Dann ist κάθαρσις nur eine besondere Art der allgemeinen und deshalb auch an erster Stelle genannten ἰατρεία; die Verzückten kommen durch orgiastische Lieder zur Ruhe wie Kranke durch ärztliche Behandlung, und zwar nicht durch jede beliebige, sondern durch eine solche Behandlung, welche kathartische, den Krankheitsstoff ausstossende, Mittel anwendet. Nun ist die räthselhafte pathologische *Gemüths*erscheinung in der That verdeutlicht, denn sie wird versinnlicht durch den Vergleich mit pathologischen *körperlichen* Erscheinungen. (Bernays 1970: 143)
>
> [For κάθαρσις is only one specific kind of the general and thus first-mentioned ἰατρεία. The frenzied are calmed by orgiastic songs like patients in

[9] καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς κινήσεως κατοκώχιμοί τινές εἰσιν, ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν ὁρῶμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθισταμένους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως (Arist. *Pol.* 1342a7-11).

[10] On homeopathy in Aristotle cf. Belfiore 1992: 260-90.

[11] The link between musical and cultic catharsis as elaborated by Dionysius Lambinus is rejected by Bernays (1970: 142-3 and n. 7).

> medical treatment, and not just any treatment, but rather a cathartic one which discharges toxic substances. Thus the enigmatic pathological *mental* process is clarified; it is illustrated by the comparison with pathological somatic manifestations.]

In this explanation the comparison between "medical treatment and catharsis" acquires a stringent aspect. The reference to medicine offers a prominent area of cathartic practices and methods (cf. Hoessly 2001). The doctor gives the patient a remedy which stimulates the toxic substances and then eliminates them. The intervention brings "peace" to the patient. The tranquilization contains a hedonic aspect which Aristotle attributes to all cathartic methods. Catharsis is experienced "with relief".
Bernays summarizes the terminological results of his study as follows:

> Katharsis sei: eine von Körperlichem auf Gemüthliches übertragene Bezeichnung für solche Behandlung eines Beklommenen, welche das ihn beklemmende Element nicht zu verwandlen oder zurückzudrängen sucht, sondern es aufregen, hervortreiben und dadurch Erleichterung des Beklommenen bewirken will. (Bernays 1970: 144)
>
> [Catharsis is a term, originally medical which is applied to mental states, and designates the treatment of a distressed person which does not seek to transform or repress the distressful element but rather to stimulate it, drive it forth and in this way bring relief to the sufferer.]

This concluding general definition contains the key aspects of the author's concept. Catharsis, in Bernays' interpretation, is a therapeutic course of "treatment" which is aimed at somatic as well as mental illnesses. The specific area of mental illness is designated by the semantic field of "distress" ("Beklommenheit"). The mentally ill person is referred to as "distressed" ("beklommen") and his illness is expressed as a "distressful element" ("beklemmendes Element"). In order to describe the specific treatment in greater detail the writer has recourse to Greek medicine and its procedure of catharsis. Catharsis in the context of *Politics* should be read as a "medical metaphor" ("medicinische Metapher") (ibid.: 148). The remedy does not aim to "transform" the "distressful element" or repress it by introducing an antidote (antipathic). On the contrary, catharsis therapy focuses on stimulation. This intensifies the toxic emotion in order to "draw it out". The process of stimulation is homeopathically oriented; it addresses pathological elements and relieves them. On the whole, the process has a hedonic character, as it leads to "relief". The ultimate goal of the dynamic process of catharsis from stimulation to discharge is relief.

The New Translation of the Tragedy Clause

In the second chapter, Bernays begins to develop his concept of tragic catharsis. This takes place in three steps. First of all he demonstrates the fundamental significance of *Politics* for the understanding of tragedy. Then, he provides an annotated translation of the catharsis passage from *Poetics*. Finally, he emphasizes the differences to Lessing's approach.

The problem of tragic catharsis is rooted in a lack of clarification. The *Poetics* lacks the announced and expectable elaborations on tragic catharsis in the 'tragedy clause'. While there are concise explanations as well as a definition for all other elements of the tragedy clause, there are no remarks on the conclusion of this clause. To explain this lacuna Bernays introduces the theory of the excerpter who "mercilessly cut out" (Bernays 1970: 146: "unbarmherzig weggeschnitten") parts of Aristotle's passage on catharsis which had originally been "extensive and replete with purely philosophical clarifications" (ibid.: 145: "umfänglich und von rein philosophischen Erörterungen erfüllt waren"). This gives rise to the task of filling the gap and elaborating on the scanty definition of catharsis according to what Aristotle had intended. Bernays' premise is by no means ironclad, but he needs it in order to justify his search for the content of "Aristotle's lost treatise" (ibid.: 149: "in der verlorenen Erläuterung") in the following chapter.

Bernays avails himself of *Politics* as a potential source of commentary for *Poetics*. He sees the former as the only text by Aristotle which provides a reliable basis for "determining the meaning of the main concept" ("Ermittelung des Hauptbegriffs", ibid.: 147), i.e. catharsis. The only way to reconstruct the lost remarks must commence with an analysis of *Politics*. Bernays is remarkably apodictic when he claims that "[a]ll clarifications which are not consonant with the above (p. 144) terminology gleaned from *Politics* have no claim to even be heard, no matter how grammatical or how much in agreement with modern aesthetics they are. For they are only that: grammatical and aesthetical in modern terms, but in no way can they be considered Aristotelian".[12] With this comment on his method, Bernays concedes that there could be alternatives to his explanation of tragic catharsis that would be "grammatically" correct and possibly conform even better to "modern aesthetics". The future controversy about catharsis, which the text would give rise to, is anticipated here. However, he goes on to state his interest and objective, that

[12] "Allen Erklärungen also, welche mit dem oben (S. 144) aus der Politik gewonnenen terminologischen Ergebniss sich nicht reimen lassen, muss, selbst wenn sie noch so streng grammatisch sind und noch so friedlich sich mit moderner Aesthetik vertragen, der Anspruch auch nur auf Gehör aberkannt werden; denn sie sind eben nichts als grammatisch und modern ästhetisch, unmöglich aber können sie richtig, d. h. aristotelisch, sein" (Bernays 1970: 147).

is, to reconstruct *Poetics* in the spirit of Aristotle.

After presenting his methodological premises, Bernays sets forth the following translation of the end of the tragedy clause: "Tragedy brings about the relieving discharge of such affections of the soul [pitying and fearful] by arousing ('Erregung von') pity and fear".[13] In this translation Bernays implements his findings from the analysis of *Politics*. He expressly does not speak in general of the "purification of passions" (like Lessing) but rather gives purification a concrete form, based on the medical model which effects healing by eliminating an ill-making substance. Bernays chooses the pithy term 'discharge' ("Entladung"), a neologism in Aristotelian studies, to designate the effect of tragedy. Thus the term obtains seminal importance in Nietzsche's[14] and Freud's[15] catharsis conceptions. Bernays employs the compound noun ('dis-charge') to refer to an existing, constrictive pressure, which is eliminated with the competent application of a remedy. The liberating moment of this process is marked by "relief", a term Bernays derives from *Politics* where the "hedonic element" of "relief" ("Erleichterung") is designated as constitutive for cathartic processes (Bernays 1970: 140-1). A combination of relief and discharge engenders the term "relieving discharge" with which Bernays characterizes the catharsis effect. Thus "relieving discharge" ("erleichternde Entladung") becomes the central metaphor of his interpretation of catharsis. But what is discharged? According to his translation it is the "affections of the soul" ("Gemüthsaffectionen") which, in itself, is a characteristic coinage meant to signify a "turn towards the habitual and chronic" ("Wendung in das Habituelle und Chronische"), as Bernays remarks in a note (ibid.: 148) which completes his explanations to the translation.

Bernays' concise translation presents a new concept of tragic catharsis. He distinguishes his medical approach from Lessing's moralistic interpretation which had never been seriously questioned[16] until Bernays' thorough revision. In place of "purification" ("Reinigung"), Bernays substitutes "relieving discharge" ("erleichternde Entladung"), and instead of "passions" ("Leidenschaften") he uses "affections of the soul" ("Gemüthsaffectionen"). Instead of "transformation of the passions to practical virtues" ("Verwandlung der Leidenschaften in tugendhafte Fertigkeiten"), which presupposes a

[13] "[D]ie Tragödie bewirkt durch (Erregung von) Mitleid und Furcht die erleichternde Entladung solcher (mitleidigen und furchtsamen) Gemüthsaffectionen" (Bernays 1970: 148).

[14] Cf. Ugolini 2003: 316-42; Därmann 2005: 124-62; Most 2009: 51-62.

[15] Cf. Dalma 1963: 253-69; Treml 1997: 7-32; Bowlby 2009: 43-6, Gödde 2009: 63-91; Gödde and Zirfas 2016: 308-21.

[16] Gherardo Ugolini designates Lessing's interpretation of catharsis in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* as the "dominant hermeneutic model of the nineteenth century" (2000: 337-8).

genitivus objectivus, we have a *genitivus separativus.* Catharsis is no longer seen from a moralistic perspective, nor is it seen emphatically as part of the improvement of humanity (through the theatre). Bernays' alternative concept contains "a pathological aspect" (ibid.: 141: "ein pathologischer Gesichtspunkt") derived from Aristotle's diagnostic perspective (ibid.: 144).

This pathological framework which is so fundamental to Bernays' interpretation is explained in the context of his subsequent critique of Lessing (ibid.: 148-53), which deals in particular with two words of the tragedy clause: 'passions' (παθήματα) and the reference (τοιούτων) to the tragic emotions. In both cases Bernays uses his criticism of Lessing to highlight his alternative model. Unlike Lessing, he demands a clear distinction between πάθος and πάθημα, which he introduces as follows: πάθος is the condition of a πάσχων and refers to the affect which breaks out suddenly and then passes; πάθημα, by contrast, is the condition of a παθητικός and designates the affection which is inherent to the afflicted person and ready to break out at any moment. "To put it more succinctly, πάθος is affect and πάθημα is affection" ("Kürzer gesagt, πάθος ist der Affect und πάθημα ist die Affection", ibid.: 149).[17]

In this sense, not every theatre spectator experiences catharsis, but only someone who has a "deeply-rooted proclivity to a certain affect" ("mit einem festgewurzelten Hange zu einem gewissen Affect"), that is, in tragedy, the pitying and fearful (ἐλεήμων καὶ φοβητικός) and not the compassionate and the fearing (ἐλεῶν καὶ φοβούμενος) may "satisfy his inclination in a 'harmless way'" through catharsis ("durch die Katharsis ein Mittel erhalten soll, seinen Hang in 'unschädlicher' Weise zu befriedigen", ibid.). Bernays finds that this pathological interpretation of the παθήματα results in "the most perfect agreement between the definition and the intimations of *Politics* regarding the actual object of catharsis" ("die vollkommenste Einhelligkeit zwischen der Definition und den Andeutungen in der Politik auch hinsichtlich des eigentlichen Objects der Katharsis", ibid.).

This actual object of catharsis is, as Bernays trenchantly summarized his findings on *Politics*, "a human being who has lost his equilibrium" ("der aus dem Gleichgewicht gebrachte Mensch", ibid.: 145). As examples, Aristotle (*Pol.* 1342a12) had singled out "the pitying" ("der Mitleidige") and "the fearful" ("der Furchtsame"). This is why Bernays sees a fundamental accordance in *Poetics* and *Politics* regarding the individuals who are susceptible to catharsis. Such an individual is, due to a predetermined disposition (a lack of mental equilibrium), in need of a "discharge" ("Entladung") or a "draining of affection" ("Ableitung der Affection", Bernays 1970: 149).

[17] Although Bernays's examples support his distinction, it is not tenable in the context of the corpus of Aristotelian works, cf. Bonitz 1867: 13-55.

After clarifying what an 'emotional disposition' is, Bernays deals with the question of the affects. Linguistically, in his view, Aristotle used τοιούτων in the tragedy clause to refer back to pity and fear. Lessing, however, had translated this term of reference as "these and suchlike" passions. In the spirit of his medical conception of emotion, Bernays reduces the spectrum of emotions allowed by Lessing. As points of reference Bernays singles out pity and fear, not as singular or transitory emotions, but in the lasting form of "affections" of pity and fearfulness.

Having accomplished his aim to combine both conceptions of catharsis (of *Poetics* and *Politics*), Bernays turns to the reconstruction of the passage eliminated by the excerptor.

Conceptions of Catharsis in Late Antiquity

The third chapter deals with catharsis in late antiquity. Three text analyses are presented to demonstrate that the medical conception of catharsis that Aristotle had applied to poetry was well known to the educated public. Furthermore, the selected authors, Iamblichus and Proclus, are shown to have been familiar with further (now lost) passages of *Poetics*, in which the impact of tragedy is discussed. Bernays intends to (1) demonstrate the continuity of a medical interpretation of catharsis for poetry, (2) name authors who had still access to Aristotle's comments in texts which (3) make it possible to gain new aspects for the reconstruction of Aristotle's conceptions.

The first passage is taken from Iamblichus' treatise "Of the mysteries of the Egyptians" (*De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*).[18] In the selected passage (22, 1), Iamblichus explains why phallic images had been set up against demons. Bernays translates the passage as follows:

> Die Kräfte (δυνάμεις) der in uns vorhandenen allgemein menschlichen Affectionen werden, wenn man sie gänzlich zurückdrängen will, nur um so heftiger. Lockt man sie dagegen zu kurzer Aeusserung (εἰς ἐνέργειαν) in richtigem Maasse hervor, so wird ihnen eine maasshaltende Freude (χαίρουσι μετρίως), sie sind gestillt und entladen und beruhigen sich dann auf gutwilligem Wege ohne Gewalt. Deshalb pflegen wir bei Komödie sowohl wie Tragödie durch Anschauen fremder Affecte unsere eigenen Affectionen zu stillen, mässiger zu machen und zu entladen; und ebenso befreien wir uns auch in den Tempeln durch Sehen und Hören gewisser schmutziger Dinge von dem Schaden, den die wirkliche Ausübung derselben mit sich bringen würde. (Bernays 1970: 160)
>
> [The forces (δυνάμεις) of the general human affections which exist in us be-

[18] Bernays quotes Lambinus from the 1678 Oxford edition (Iamblichus 1678).

> come, when one tries to repress them completely, ever more vigorous. In contrast, when they are enticed to come forward in a brief expression (εἰς ἐνέργειαν), in the correct measure, they obtain a moderate joy (χαίρουσι μετρίως), they are quenched and discharged and are calmed in a benevolent way without violence. For this reason we tend, in comedies as well as in tragedies, to satiate our own affections, to moderate them, and to discharge them. In the same way, by watching and hearing lewd things in the temples we protect ourselves from the harm which would be incurred by carrying them out.]

Bernays views this excerpt as an application of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis to the phallic cults. Iamblichus defends the "lewd rites" ("schmutziger Dinge") with arguments taken from Aristotle's poetical theory. The discharge theory, which Aristotle developed to explain psychological processes, is transferred to the field of sexuality ("to sensual desires") ("auf sinnliches Gelüste", ibid.: 160). In this way, however, the underlying Aristotelian model emerges clearly. Bernays designates this as the "solicitation theory" ("Sollicitationstheorie", ibid.: 161), whereby he focuses on the aspect of excitement which Aristotle had developed to explain the psychodynamics of catharsis. The "solicitation theory", used in the context of affections, (παθήματα) is carried over by Iamblichus to sensual desires (ἐπιθυμίαι). Bernays sees evidence of the Aristotelian origin of the theory of "phallic catharsis" ("phallische Katharsis", ibid.: 162) in unmistakably peripatetic phrases of the excerpt (such as δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, χαίρουσι μετρίως). The brevity of the passage is seen as further confirmation of Bernays' belief that the views taken by Iamblichus were generally well known. An absolutely clear proof of the direct reference of the text to the Aristotelian *Poetics* however, is not delivered. His argumentation has an appellative character. Bernays judges the "fertile central thoughts" ("keimkräftige Kerngedanken") worthy only of the "great master" ("ihres grossen Meisters"), i.e. Aristotle, and not of later epigones. Iamblichus had to have had recourse to the "missing explanations of catharsis from our *Poetics*" ("die aus unserer Poetik verschwundenen Erläuterungen über Katharsis", ibid.).[19]

The second testimony that Bernays draws on derives from the lectures of Proclus on Plato's *Republic*. Proclus raises the question as to why Plato had not permitted tragedy and comedy "although they serve as compensation (ἀφοσίωσις) for the affects which cannot be completely eliminated, nor can they be completely satisfied, but require rather a timely excitement (κίνησις)" ("obgleich sie doch zur Abfindung (ἀφοσίωσις) der Affecte dienten, die weder ganz zu beseitigen möglich, noch wiederum völlig zu befriedi-

[19] Bernays implicitly returns to the second chapter of his treatise in which he had made an uncomprehending "excerptor" responsible for the lack of Aristotle's clarifications on catharsis (ibid.: 145-8).

gen gerathen ist, die vielmehr einer rechtzeitigen Anregung (κίνησις) bedürfen", ibid.: 164). Again, it is the aspect of solicitation which Bernays emphasizes. Proclus also has the movement, or rather "excitement" ("Anregung") (κίνησις) of the affects as facilitating the desired relief. For this Proclus uses the term "compensation" ("Abfindung") (ἀφοσίωσις). The proof for his postulate that Proclus was referring directly to Aristotle's *Poetics* Bernays finds in the reproaches (mentioned by Proclus) which Aristotle was said to have expressed against Plato. The fact that Plato is not mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics* is "compelling" ("zwingend") proof for Bernays "that Proclus had before him the lost dispute over catharsis" ("dass Proklos die verlorene Auseinandersetzung über Katharsis vor sich hatte", ibid.: 165). Bernays is convinced that Proclus furnishes in his text "the most outstanding keywords" ("hervorragendsten Stichwörter", ibid.: 167) concerning the controversy over catharsis. He uses both the term "compensation" ("Abfindung") (ἀφοσίωσις) and the seminal metaphor of the "drainage of overflowing dampness" ("Abschöpfung einer überfliessenden Feuchtigkeit") (ἀπέρασις) (ibid.: 168). Bernays, however, devises this metaphor by means of a conjecture (from ἀπέρανσις). In his use of this and other conjectures we find in the excerpts of the third chapter, Bernays shows himself to be a master of text criticism; his proposals are largely taken over by Des Places in his critical edition of Iamblichus (2003).

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Bernays fails here, as well as in the entire third chapter, in his aim to recover the lost building blocks of the Aristotelian theory of catharsis by relying on the later, Neoplatonic texts. His attempt to extract leading concepts and metaphors from Iamblichus and Proclus in order to reconstruct Aristotle's *Poetics* is suggestive but, finally, by no means convincing.

When Bernays, at the end of this chapter (ibid.: 169), returns to Iamblichus's text and finds further evidence of the "drainage" metaphor (again by means of a conjecture), this does not enhance the validity of his contention. Despite the impressive argumentation of the third chapter, the author fails to meet his goal of rediscovering leading terms and metaphors of *Poetics.*

The Historicization of Catharsis

After reconstructing the Aristotelian theory of catharsis from various sources in the previous chapters, Bernays determines its function in the context of Greek life. He derives unexpected support for his argumentation in Aristotle's remark that Euripides was the "most tragic" (τραγικώτατος) poet (*Poetics* 53a29). Bernays uses this assessment as proof of his theory that Aristotle had conceived catharsis as pathological. If Aristotle had designated

Euripides as the "most tragic" poet, he could not possibly have called for a "moral improvement" ("moralische Verbesserung") as Lessing had claimed, or a "direct calming of the passions" ("directe Beruhigung der Leidenschaften") as Goethe had required. On the contrary, his concept aimed at a strong disturbance:

> Vielmehr eine Wollust des Zerreissens und der Zerrissenheit, eine ekstatische Verzweiflung, ein aus allen Tiefen des Verstandes und des Herzens aufstöhnendes Mitleid mit der zusammenbrechenden alten Welt und eine im Schaudern schwelgende Furcht vor dem Eintritt der herannahenden neuen Zeit – diese Stimmungen sind es, welche aus der Persönlichkeit des Euripides in seine Dramen übergehen und nun auch den Zuschauer zu ähnlichen Orgien des Mitleids und der Furcht hinreissen. (Bernays 1970: 173)

> [Rather a lust in ripping things apart and in destruction and ecstatic despair, and, rising from the depths of the mind and the heart, a compassion for the collapse of the old world and a debauched shudder of fear at the approach of the new age – these are the moods which are engendered by the personality of Euripides and which flow into his dramas and sweep the spectator away to similar orgies of pity and fear.]

The tragic sensations are here qualified in three respects. They reach an extreme level of intensity ("ecstatic", "out of the depths of the mind and the heart"), they are formed in an ambivalent manner out of pleasure and unpleasure ("lust in ripping apart", "debauched shudder of fear"), and they refer to the depiction of a tragic transition (from "the collapsing old world" to the "dawning of a new era"). With his elevated pathos and "the soliciting discharging catharsis" (ibid.), Euripides emerges as the "most cathartic" ("der kathartischste") poet. After having placed Euripides on a pedestal as the paradigm of Aristotelian effect conception, Bernays stresses the fundamental commonality of Aristotle and Goethe in their rejection of moral effects. Goethe, according to Bernays, would surely not have had an objection to the Aristotelian concept of an "inherent expediency of tragedy", with which the disturbing effects on the emotions are created (ibid.: 174).

Having gained the 'authorization' of Euripides and Goethe for his conception of catharsis, Bernays turns to the historical conditions of catharsis. He examines the time *before* tragedy, to clarify, on the "genetic path" ("genetischen Wege", ibid.: 175), its significance in Greek life. Again, Bernays relies on Aristotle. As in the preamble, where he stressed Aristotle's "consistently watchful consideration and regard for the somatic" ("eine stets wache Rücksicht und Achtung für das Körperliche", ibid.: 144) in contrast to philosophical idealism, Bernays here also emphasizes the "empirical", anti-idealistic perspective which Bernays shares (in opposition to the theories of tragedy of German idealism). Catharsis, he states, belongs

> in den Bereich der ekstatischen Erscheinungen, welche im orientalischen und griechischen Alterthum um so häufiger vorkamen, je tieferen Reiz ein solches Auf- und Ueberwallen der gesammten Gemüthskräfte auf die lebhafte Erregbarkeit jener Völker üben musste und je nachgiebiger das in seiner Herrschaft noch nicht befestigte Selbstbewusstsein den Menschen zu einer selbstentäusserten Verzückung entliess. Wo aber der Menschengeist sich noch nicht in sich selber eingewohnt hat, da wird das Aussersichsein für heilig und göttlich gehalten; und der öffentliche Cultus nahm daher den orgiastischen Taumel in seinen weihenden Schutz und bestimmte ihm feste Formen der Besänftigung. (Ibid.: 175)
>
> [to the realm of ecstatic behaviour which occurred in Oriental and Greek antiquity all the more frequently, the more deeply such welling up and overflowing of all emotions appealed to the lively excitability of those peoples, and the more easily their as yet not fully fledged self-consciousness yielded to a self-annihilating rapture. Wherever the human spirit is not yet firmly under its own control, being outside oneself is considered sacred and divine; thus public cult placed orgiastic frenzy under its hallowing aegis and determined its fixed forms of assuagement.]

The phenomenon of "ecstatic behaviour" ("ekstatische Erscheinungen"), which can be found in all of the early cultures of antiquity (in Oriental and Greek antiquity), forms the point of departure for the historical development of the concept of catharsis. Bernays' approach is based on the assumption that the people of these early cultures had a particular proclivity ("the lively excitability") to enthusiasm (as "self-annihilating rapture"), in as much as their self-consciousness had not yet adequately developed "control" over itself. The enthusiastic tendency (to be outside oneself) originated in the weakness of self-consciousness. This tendency in Bernays' view was subsumed in "public cult" which took the "orgiastic frenzy" under "its sanctifying aegis" and provided it with ways to achieve relief ("fixed forms of assuagement"). These processes were aimed at calming "motion through motion" and "the clamorous spirit through clamorous songs" (ibid.: 175).

Aristotle, as Bernays argues, had been cognizant of these correlations when he attempted (following the "traces of reality") to comprehend the remarkable success in healing of cultic/musical therapies. Aristotle had interpreted these therapies in analogy to "medical experiences" and in this way had discovered cultic catharsis (which had not been "understood by the masses"). This finding had been presented in *Politics* (in the passage discussed earlier, see first chapter). Bernays reformulates it as follows:

> Wie kathartische Mittel dem Körper dadurch Gesundheit schaffen, dass sie den krankhaften Stoff zur Aeusserung hervordrängen, so wirken die rauschenden Olymposweisen sollicitirend auf das ekstatische Element, welches wider die Fessel des Bewusstseins anschäumt, ohne sie aus eigener Kraft

> sprengen zu können; in unablässigem Wühlen würde es die Grundvesten des Gemüths untergraben, fände es nicht einen Beistand an der Gewalt des Gesanges, von dessen Zuge hingerissen es nun hervorrast, sich der Lust hingiebt, aller Fugen und Bande des Selbst ledig zu sein, um dann jedoch, nachdem diese Lust gebüsst worden, wieder in die Ruhe und Fassung des geregelten Gemüthszustandes sich einzuordnen. In beiden Fällen also, bei der gewöhnlichen somatischen wie bei der ekstatischen Katharsis, wird durch Sollicitation des störenden Stoffes das verlorene Gleichgewicht wiedergewonnen. (Ibid.: 176)
>
> [Just as cathartic remedies make the body healthy by drawing out the ill-making substances, in the same way the frenzied songs of Olympus elicit the ecstatic element which foams up against the chains of consciousness, without being able to break them; such relentless turbulence would undermine the foundations of the mind if it did not find support in the fierceness of the song, in whose trajectory it is now carried away, yielding to the pleasure of freedom from all constraints of the self. When this pleasure has been atoned for, the mind finds its way back to the calm and composure of the settled state of mind. In both instances, in the normal somatic as well as in the ecstatic catharsis, equilibrium is restored through solicitation of the disturbing matter.]

In his preamble, Bernays had introduced the "catharsis of enthusiasm" with the example of the songs of Olympus. He now elucidates the relationship between emotion and consciousness. The binding force of consciousness ("chains") is contrasted with the unbound force of the emotions (as "the ecstatic element"). If the unstable condition of the psychic equilibrium ("calm and composure") is undermined however, or lost, it may be restored with cathartic therapy. For it was "the person who had lost his equilibrium" who had been ordained as the object of catharsis (ibid.: 145). The application of musical means ("the power of song") facilitates the recovery of psychic balance. With the "restoration of lost equilibrium" the function of ecstatic catharsis is fundamentally defined. Bernays adds two "ancillary requirements" (ibid.: 177) of ecstatic catharsis: it is temporary and it occurs "always in conjunction with pleasure" ("stets unter Lustgefühl", ibid.: 176).

Taking into account these three conditions, ecstatic catharsis becomes a general model of psychological therapies. All other types of "mental pathos" ("Gemüthspathos") can be treated according to this model.

> Denn alle Arten von Pathos sind wesentlich ekstatisch; durch sie alle wird der Mensch *ausser sich* gesetzt; und bei der eigentlich so genannten, von Aristoteles und den Griechen unter Enthusiasmos gemeinten Ekstase treten die ekstatischen Erscheinungen nur darum am heftigsten auf, weil hier die Ekstase objectlos ist, sich an. ihrer eigenen Flamme entzündet und nährt. (Ibid.: 176)

> [For all kinds of pathos are essentially ecstatic; through them a person is taken *outside himself*. Regarding the so-called ecstasy by which Aristotle and the Greeks referred to enthusiasm, ecstatic manifestations appear most forcefully only because the ecstasy is without object and ignites and sustains on its own flame.]

The principle postulated here, that is, that all pathos tends to ecstasy, is employed by psychological catharsis therapies, in which pent-up pathos is reinforced, drawn forth and disgorged. Ecstatic catharsis, for Bernays, becomes a basic model ("paradigm", ibid.: 177) of therapy, because in "enthusiasm" maximum excitation is achieved. Enthusiasm is not produced by a specific object (it is "without object"); pathos takes on a life of its own ("most forcefully") in ecstasy. Bernays calls this pure pathos which is not "attached to a certain object" the "Urpathos" (ibid.: 176). According to this finding, Aristotle developed the theory of catharsis by connecting it to the psychology and the ethics of his philosophy. Bernays contends that Aristotle assumes a fundamentally liberal stance on emotions; he does not agree with Plato's "obsession with exterminating all emotions" ("Ausrottungssucht der Affecte"),[20] as observed in Plato's work (ibid.: 201), nor does he approve of the deadly radical cures suggested by the Stoics (ibid.: 177). On the contrary, Aristotle is concerned that the emotions be preserved. In his model of catharsis, the emotions purify themselves through solicitation and thereby become "weapons of virtue".[21] Aristotle reassesses pleasure (ἡδονή) and assigns it an activating role in his concept of catharsis. Pleasure derives its energy from ecstatic turbulence and develops an "interior" dynamic which "expands and bursts the bounds of the personality" ("von innen her die Persönlichkeit erweiternde und sprengende Lust", ibid.: 178), while "relief is achieved in the process of returning from the sudden agitation to the restoration of mental equilibrium" ("wonach sie auf einer plötzlichen Erschütterung und Wiedergewinnung des seelischen Gleichgewichts . . . beruht", ibid.).

After presenting his basic model (which includes therapeutic, ecstatic, and hedonic elements), Bernays deals with tragic catharsis which is distinguished from ecstatic catharsis, in that it refers to specific objects and therefore elicits only specific emotions. Because these emotions exist "in every normal human soul" ("in jedem normalen Menschengemüth") and are liable "to break out at any moment" ("jederzeit zum Ausbruche geneigt"), Bernays designates them as "universal emotions" ("universale Affecte", ibid.: 179). In Greece the development from tragic to ecstatic catharsis can be observed in

[20] Cf. the 'ascetic catharsis' of the Neoplatonists who aimed at an ascetic repression of the "sensual urges" (Bernays 1970: 170).

[21] The quotation from Seneca (*De ira* 1.17) is the object of the elaborate footnote on the "value of emotions" (ibid.: 200-1, note 16).

the cult of Dionysus. Tragic poetry had developed out of the early forms of "rapture"

> welche die ursprünglich bakchantische Ekstase für den inzwischen veränderten socialen Zustand festhielt zugleich und veredelte, indem sie die Stelle des objectlos enthusiastischen Taumels ersetzte durch eine auf ekstatische Erregung universal menschlicher Affecte angelegte Darstellung der Welt-und Menschengeschicke. (Ibid.)
>
> [which secured and refined the originally Bacchantic ecstasy for the changed social conditions by replacing the insensate whirl with a portrayal of the world and human destinies aimed at the ecstatic excitation of universal human emotions.]

Historically, "Bacchantic" catharsis precedes tragic catharsis. The early forms of excitation brought forth a mere maelstrom of enthusiasm. Later forms retain the enthusiasm which they assign to a concrete object (the "portrayal of the world and human destinies") and which appeals only to certain emotions. Fear and compassion were well-known as specifically tragic emotions long before Aristotle's time. They are perceived as a pair and seen in the context of the effects of tragedy.[22] Nevertheless, it is Aristotle who first develops the consequences of this insight for tragic art; not only in his *Poetics* but also in other contexts of his philosophy, pity and fear for him had to be portrayed

> als höchst universale und als ekstatisch hedonische, also einer besonderen Katharsis eben so würdige wie fähige Affecte . . . . Denn da er Selbstgenügen und Selbstgenuss (αὐτάρκεια) für die höchste Vollkommenheit ansieht, die allein Gott besitzt, der Mensch immer nur erstrebt, so musste er vor allen anderen Affecten in dem Mitleid und der Furcht die zwei weitgeöffneten Thore erkennen, durch welche die Aussenwelt auf die menschliche Persönlichkeit eindringt und der unvertilgbare, gegen die ebenmässige Geschlossenheit anstürmende Zug des pathetischen Gemüthselements sich hervorstürzt, um mit gleichempfindenden Menschen zu leiden und vor dem Wirbel der drohend fremden Dinge zu beben. Jedoch nicht diese Erkenntniss für sich, sondern erst ihre Verbindung mit der weiter dringenden, in der Rhetorik entwickelten Einsicht, dass Mitleid und Furcht innerlich verschlungen sind, und man den Andern nur wegen dessen bemitleidet, was man für sich selber fürchtet – erst dies Ineinssehen von Mitleid und Furcht befähigte den Aristoteles die Sollicitationsweise für sie zu finden, welche die wahrhaft kathartische ist und zugleich die innere Oekonomie der Tragödie so aufdeckt, wie es im dreizehnten und vierzehnten Capitel der *Poetik* geschieht. (Ibid.: 180-1)
>
> [as sublimely universal and ecstatic-hedonic and thus worthy and apt emotions for a special catharsis . . . . For, because he considers self-sufficiency and

[22] As evidence Bernays cites Plato's *Phaidros* 268d.

> self-satisfaction (αὐτάρκεια) as the highest form of perfection, possessed only by God and aspired to by mankind, he had to recognize pity and fear more than any other emotions as the two gates through which the outer world penetrates the human personality. Through these doors the indestructible force of the affections bursts forth against the psyche's smooth enclosure to suffer with others who are experiencing the same feelings and to tremble at the chaos of strange and threatening things. This recognition, in conjunction with the even more far-reaching insight developed in *Rhetoric*, that pity and fear are inherently intertwined and that one pities another because of what one fears for oneself, enabled Aristotle to discover the mechanism of solicitation which is the truly cathartic nature and internal economy of tragedy. He elaborates this in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of *Poetics*.]

Bernays believes that Aristotle places catharsis in the service of autarchy. As "universal" affects, pity and fear belong to the basic constitution of human beings; by virtue of their strong connection to the external world, pity and fear pull the individuals away from autarchy to which they aspire but cannot achieve. Thus, the cathartic discharge of the affections offers, from an ethical point of view, a perfect means by which to stabilize autarchy. Yet, Bernays also regards the analysis of fear and pity carried out in *Rhetoric* as one of the most significant prerequisites of the concept of catharsis. The rules from *Poetics* regarding the structure of plot, character constellations, and the "inner economy of tragedy" ("die innere Oekonomie der Tragödie") were essentially linked to the tragic emotions. The "intertwining of pity and fear" becomes for Bernays the key to the concept of tragedy. The rules of the *Poetics* all aimed at preventing that "anything in the plot or the characters dissolve the intertwining bonds of pity and fear".[23]

The interconnection of pity and fear is illustrated in the metaphors of "mirror" and "reflection".[24] Only when the tragic hero "despite all his singularity" retains the characteristics of the "general human character", when he, as Aristotle had stipulated is "similar" (ὁ ὅμοιος) to the spectator, can the latter recognize himself "in the mirror" of the hero (*Poetics* 1453a5). The pity that the spectator feels for the portrayed suffering could, according to Bernays, in this way "throw back the reflection of fear to his inner self", that is, "pity, in association with fear is safeguarded from singularity".[25] Conversely, fear should not rob the audience of its "vital mental freedom". To illustrate

[23] "Die dort gegebenen Regeln zielen alle darauf ab, dass nichts im Gang der Handlung oder im Charakter der Personen jenes Ineinander von Mitleid und Furcht auflöse" (Bernays 1970: 181).

[24] This and the following quotations on pity and fear are from Bernays 1970: 181-2.

[25] ". . . und das Mitleid, welches er für das dargestellte Leid fühlt, den Reflex der Furcht in sein eigenes Innere zurückwerfen könne. Das Mitleid wird also durch seine Verschwisterung mit der Furcht vor Singularität bewahrt" (Bernays 1970: 181).

this, Bernays uses the image of "refraction". Fear should never be "directly" aroused by the "abominable deeds of a moral monster (μιαρός)".[26] The result would not be catharsis, but rather the paralysis of the audience. From the tragic poet, a refraction of fear is expected. Only "in the refraction through personal pity" ("in ihrer Brechung durch das persönliche Mitleid", ibid.: 181) should fear seize the spectator and convey to him an "intimation" of the hero's suffering. When the tragic poet always "keeps tight the bond which connects both emotions by nature, then his work will, by itself, precipitate its cathartic, that is, ecstatic-hedonic excitement".[27]

What exactly does the "ecstatic-hedonic" excitement of tragedy consist of? Both of the tragic emotions, according to Bernays, follow a dynamic trajectory which culminates in ecstasy. Pity leads the spectator "to pass outside himself"; this allows him to "merge with the tragic hero". This ecstatic movement of transcending oneself is accompanied by a feeling of "bliss" that makes the spectator forget the pain over the "pitied naked fact". Fear, on the other hand, loses its "oppressive and painful" effects when it is mediated and refracted through personal pity. Under these conditions

> kann der rein kathartische Vorgang im Gemüth des Zuschauers so erfolgen, dass, nachdem im Mitleid das eigene Selbst zum Selbst der ganzen Menschheit erweitert worden, es sich den furchtbar erhabenen Gesetzen des Alls und ihrer die Menschheit umfassenden unbegreiflichen Macht von Angesicht zu Angesicht gegenüberstelle, und sich von derjenigen Art der Furcht durchdringen lasse, welche als ekstatischer Schauder vor dem All zugleich in höchster und ungetrübter Weise hedonisch ist. (Ibid.: 182)

> [the purely cathartic process in the mind of the spectator can take place so that after the self, in pity, expands to become the self of all mankind, it can come face to face with the terrible, sublime laws of the universe and their all-encompassing, incomprehensible power over all mankind and allow itself to be permeated by that particular form of fear which, as an ecstatic shudder before the universe, is supremely and purely hedonic.]

Bernays attributes a specific dynamics to both emotions. The spectator experiences a dual dissolution of the self which is attended by a dual pleasure. Pity is transformed by self-expansion into "bliss" and fear, in turn, loses its oppressive force and intensifies to become ecstatic "shuddering" in face of the universe.

Bernays' concluding remarks are devoted to defining tragic fear. Pursuing

[26] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452b36. Aristotle speaks abstractly of μιαρόν.

[27] "und wenn er so das Band, welches die bei den Affecte ihrer Natur nach innerlich verknüpft, stets straff angezogen hält, wird sein Werk ihre kathartische, d. h. die ekstatisch-hedonische, Erregung von selbst herbeiführen" (Bernays 1970: 181-2).

his objective of presenting an interpretation of Aristotle, Bernays furnishes evidence for "shuddering" from *Poetics*. At one point in the text, Aristotle replaces the common verb *phobeisthai* with the verb *phrittein*, which does actually bring the physiological aspect of being afraid into view, and is reminiscent of somatic symptoms, such as goose bumps, palpitations, and hair standing on end. However, it is not so much Aristotle and Greek medicine which form the actual point of reference of Bernays' translation, but rather Goethe and modernity. If, in the opening chapters Goethe had served as an authority to refute Lessing's moral interpretation of catharsis, moving towards the end of his treatise, Goethe becomes for Bernays a positive point of reference. He connects Goethe and Aristotle when substituting the expression "relieving discharge" with Goethe's "pleasurable shudder". The model for this is Faust's visit to the Mothers. Ready to experience the "monster", Faust surrenders wholeheartedly to "shuddering": "I seek not my well-being in inactivity, shuddering is the best part of humanity" ("Im Erstarren such' ich nicht mein Heil, Das Schaudern ist der Menschheit bester Theil").[28] The prospect of Goethe's *Faust* opens up a bridge towards modernity. Goethe's conception of the "pleasurable shudder" is placed within the Aristotelian tradition.

Bernays' treatise on catharsis offers links to various disciplines. His concept clarifies the psychological dynamics of the medical process and defines 'affection' and 'distress', 'excitement', 'solicitation', and 'discharge', the condition of being outside oneself, ecstasy and enthusiasm as well as the return to pleasurable relief and the temporary restoration of the unstable mental equilibrium as its constitutive elements. This basic model is applicable in various fields. Bernays distinguishes the early forms of ecstatic, phallic, and Bacchic catharsis from the more sublime form of tragic catharsis, which Aristotle sets in opposition to the "ascetic catharsis" of the Platonists. Lessing's moral interpretation of tragic catharsis is rejected as well as Goethe's aesthetic one. Both fail to grasp the dynamics and effects of cathartic processes as presented by Aristotle.

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[28] Goethe, *Faust* 2.6271-2. (Goethe 1949, 3.193).

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Nietzsche, Tragedy, and the Theory of Catharsis

Abstract

Nietzsche's view of catharsis has attracted some but not a great deal of attention. Part of the reason is that he rarely makes use of the term itself, whether in his *Birth of Tragedy* or elsewhere, and when he does he is rather dismissive, seemingly rejecting out of hand the Aristotelian-inspired theory of tragic catharsis in its ancient or modern (notably, classicizing) forms. Catharsis would appear to be an unrewarding area for understanding Nietzsche. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that *The Birth of Tragedy* appears to foreground Nietzsche's rejection of tragic catharsis in its classical form, and the book is surely very much about catharsis in this sense. As it happens, a closer look at both this work and a handful of later texts on tragedy in Nietzsche's writings suggests that catharsis theory is everywhere on his mind even where the term is not being mentioned, not least of all in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where it is fully operative in the form of pity or co-suffering (Mitleid[en]), identificatory fear and horror (Furcht, Schrecken), and redemptive discharge (Erlösung, Entladung). Nor is his view as clear-cut as his emphatic rejection of Aristotelian catharsis might appear to indicate. His view of catharsis is neither simple nor entirely uniform across his corpus. Nietzsche's understanding of catharsis proves to be much closer to the view he appears to reject, and much closer to classicism's reading of tragedy than one might suppose.

> Rapiebant me spectacula theatrica plena imaginibus miseriarum mearum et fomitibus ignis mei. Quid est, quod ibi homo vult dolere cum spectat luctuosa et tragica, quae tamen pati ipse nollet? Et tamen pati vult ex eis dolorem spectator et dolor ipse est voluptas eius. Quid est nisi miserabilis insania? Nam eo magis eis movetur quisque, quo minus a talibus affectibus sanus est, quamquam, cum ipse patitur, miseria, cum aliis compatitur, misericordia dici solet. . . . Et si calamitates illae hominum vel antiquae vel falsae sic agantur, ut qui spectat non doleat, abscedit inde fastidiens et reprehendens; si autem doleat, manet intentus et gaudens lacrimat.
>
> (Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.2.2)[1]

Nietzsche's view of catharsis has attracted some but not a great deal of attention. Part of the reason is that he rarely makes use of the term itself, whether in his *Birth of Tragedy* (*BT*) or elsewhere, and when he does he is rather dismissive, seemingly rejecting out of hand the Aristotelian-inspired

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[1] "I was captivated by theatrical shows. They were full of representations of my own

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theory of tragic catharsis in its ancient or modern forms. Catharsis would appear to be an unrewarding area for understanding Nietzsche, and perhaps it is. Hence the sober verdict of Silk and Stern: "*BT* is not about *katharsis*" (1981: 415).[2] Nevertheless, it is undeniable that *The Birth of Tragedy* foregrounds Nietzsche's rejection of tragic catharsis in its classical form, and the book is surely very much about catharsis in this sense. As it happens, a closer look at both this work and a handful of later texts on tragedy in Nietzsche's writings suggests that catharsis theory is everywhere on his mind even where the term is not being mentioned. Nor is his view as clear-cut as his emphatic rejection of Aristotelian catharsis might appear to indicate. Indeed, his view of catharsis is neither simple nor entirely uniform across his corpus. A quick examination of the term's occurrences and those of its congeners, "pity and fear", will be an indispensable first step to a reconsideration of Nietzsche's positions both early and late. The remarks that follow are intended to be no more than a preliminary attempt at approaching the question of Nietzsche's views on catharsis in his various writings as well as a contribution to the current scholarly literature on the problem.

Pity, Fear, and Catharsis in Nietzsche's Corpus

The word "catharsis" appears once in *The Birth of Tragedy*, close to the end of the treatise. The passage would seem to say everything one needs to know about Nietzsche's attitude to the concept and the problem of tragic catharsis:

> Noch nie, seit Aristoteles, ist eine Erklärung der tragischen Wirkung gegeben worden, aus der auf künstlerische Zustände, auf eine aesthetische Thätigkeit der Zuhörer geschlossen werden dürfte. Bald soll Mitleid und Furchtsamkeit durch die ernsten Vorgänge zu einer erleichternden Entladung gedrängt werden, bald sollen wir uns bei dem Sieg guter und edler Principien, bei der Aufopferung des Helden im Sinne einer sittlichen Weltbetrachtung erhoben und

miseries and fuelled my fire. Why is it that a person should wish to experience suffering by watching grievous and tragic events which he himself would not wish to endure? Nevertheless he wants to suffer the pain given by being a spectator of these sufferings, and the pain itself is his pleasure. What is this but amazing folly? For the more anyone is moved by these scenes, the less free he is from similar passions. Only, when he himself suffers, it is called misery; when he feels compassion for others, it is called mercy. . . . If the human calamities, whether in ancient histories or fictitious myths, are so presented that the theatre-goer is not caused pain, he walks out of the theatre disgusted and highly critical. But if he feels pain, he stays riveted in his seat enjoying himself" (Augustine 1992: 35-6).

[2] The literature on tragic catharsis in Nietzsche is not sizeable, but it does not dispute this verdict. See most recently Halliwell 2002: 330-3; Därmann 2005; Bartscherer 2007; Most 2009; Ugolini 2012.

> begeistert fühlen; und so gewiss ich glaube, dass für zahlreiche Menschen gerade das und nur das die Wirkung der Tragödie ist, so deutlich ergiebt sich daraus, dass diese alle, sammt ihren interpretirenden Aesthetikern, von der Tragödie als einer höchsten *Kunst* nichts erfahren haben. *(BT* §22, *KSA* 1: 142)

> [Never since Aristotle has an explanation of the tragic effect been offered from which aesthetic states or an aesthetic activity of the listener could be inferred. Now the serious events are supposed to prompt pity and fear to discharge themselves in a way that relieves us; now we are supposed to feel elevated and inspired by the triumph of good and noble principles, at the sacrifice of the hero in the interest of a moral vision of the universe. I am sure that for countless men precisely this, and only this, is the effect of tragedy, but it plainly follows that all these men, together with their interpreting aestheticians, have had no experience of tragedy as a supreme *art*. (Nietzsche 1967: 132)]

Nietzsche's antipathy to a moralizing theory of tragedy, which he takes Aristotle's theory to be, is unmistakable. Evidently Aristotle was on the right track to the extent that he was keen to discover what in tragedy gives rise to "aesthetic states" or "aesthetic activity" in the audience (ibid.), or most generally, its aesthetic "effect" (Nietzsche 1967: 101; "Wirkung", *BT* §16, *KSA* 1: 104). And Nietzsche wants nothing more than to offer an explanation of tragedy that locates its effect not in the realm of morals but squarely in the realm of aesthetics, an ambition that he announces in the opening sentence of his essay: "We shall have gained much for the science of aesthetics, once we perceive . . . " (ibid.: 33).[3] Just what Nietzsche understands by "aesthetics" is another issue, and we will want to revisit this below. The notion that tragedy acts as a purgative that alleviates rather than intensifies one's aesthetic states is repellent to Nietzsche, whose essay from 1870 is designed to offer not merely a rejection of Aristotle but also a replacement to the Aristotelian argument (see Most 2009: 58). In opposing himself to the view that tragedy produces its greatest impact through catharsis, Nietzsche is opposing an entire tradition of tragic criticism that descended from Aristotle's understanding of the genre ("since Aristotle"), not least of all its later exponents from the modern era, whom Nietzsche labels "our aestheticians" (ibid.: 132; "unsere Aesthetiker", *BT* §22, *KSA* 1: 142), though the term is begrudgingly awarded them: it is a label they do not deserve given Nietzsche's revisionary definition of the aesthetic, and because they "never tire of characterizing the struggle of the hero with fate, the triumph of the moral world order, or the purgation of the emotions through tragedy, as the essence of the tragic"

[3] *BT* §1, *KSA* 1: 25: "Wir werden viel für die aesthetische Wissenschaft gewonnen haben, wenn wir . . . zur unmittelbaren Sicherheit der Anschauung gekommen sind".

(ibid.).[4] Catharsis is really no more than a short-hand for this morally redemptive and edifying reading of the tragic.

The penultimate chapter of *The Birth of Tragedy* reinforces this anti-Aristotelian bias without specifically invoking catharsis:

> Worin liegt dann die aesthetische Lust, mit der wir auch jene Bilder an uns vorüberziehen lassen? Ich frage nach der aesthetischen Lust und weiss recht wohl, dass viele dieser Bilder ausserdem mitunter noch eine moralische Ergetzung, etwa unter der Form des Mitleides oder eines sittlichen Triumphes, erzeugen können. Wer die Wirkung des Tragischen aber allein aus diesen moralischen Quellen ableiten wollte, wie es freilich in der Aesthetik nur allzu lange üblich war, der mag nur nicht glauben, etwas für die Kunst damit gethan zu haben: die vor Allem Reinheit in ihrem Bereiche verlangen muss. Für die Erklärung des tragischen Mythus ist es gerade die erste Forderung, die ihm eigenthümliche Lust in der rein aesthetischen Sphäre zu suchen, ohne in das Gebiet des Mitleids, der Furcht, des Sittlich-Erhabenen überzugreifen. Wie kann das Hässliche und das Disharmonische, der Inhalt des tragischen Mythus, eine aesthetische Lust erregen? *(BT* §24, *KSA* 1: 152)

> [In what then lies the aesthetic pleasure with which we let these images [of the suffering hero], too, pass before us? I asked about the aesthetic pleasure, though I know full well that many of these images also produce at times a moral delight, for example, under the form of pity or moral triumph. But those who would derive the effect of the tragic solely from these moral sources – *which, to be sure, has been the custom in aesthetics all too long* – should least of all believe that they have thus accomplished something for art, which above all must demand purity in its sphere. If you would explain the tragic myth, the first requirement is to seek the pleasure that is peculiar to *it in the purely aesthetic sphere*, without transgressing into the region of pity, fear, or the morally sublime. How can the ugly and the disharmonic, the content of the tragic myth, stimulate aesthetic pleasure? (Nietzsche 1967: 140-1; emphasis added)].

Nietzsche never veered from this initial view. His later writings echo these early sentiments, less by adding new thoughts to them than by drawing out further implications of these earlier utterances about catharsis. The traits are predictable and hence easily summed up: the catharsis (purging) of the passions through pity "has a depressive effect" ("es wirkt depressiv"), it involves a "loss of strength" ("Einbusse an Kraft"), an enervation, a form of pessimism, it is Christian, a danger to life ("nothing is more dangerous"), indeed it is a "*negation of life*" ("*Verneinung des Lebens*"), a sign of cultural decline and decadence in the form of a cure for life's travails and as a

[4] *BT* §22, *KSA* 1: 142 "während sie nicht müde werden, den Kampf des Helden mit dem Schicksal, den Sieg der sittlichen Weltordnung oder eine durch die Tragödie bewirkte Entladung von Affecten als das eigentlich Tragische zu charakterisiren".

useful way to discharge harmful pathologies "every once in a while" ("hier und da"), as Aristotle recommended (*The Anti-Christ* 7, Nietzsche 2005: 6-7; *KSA* 6: 172-4). A notebook entry from the same year, entitled *What is Tragic* (*Was ist Tragisch*), again takes Aristotle to task for promoting the two depressive affections, pity and fear, as the goal of tragedy, in place of the life-affirming "intoxication with life" ("Rausch am Leben", 15[10], *KSA* 13: 410) that Nietzsche believes tragedy should produce. The Aristotelian route leads directly to "Christianity, nihilism, . . . physiological decadence" ("Christenthum, Nihilismus, . . . physiologische decadence"): if Aristotle were right, tragedy would be a "symptom of decline" ("ein Symptom des Verfalls"). The same note continues, now under the heading "Aristot[le]": "Aristotle wanted to understand tragedy as a purgative of pity and terror – as a useful discharge of two excessively pent-up diseased affections" ("Aristoteles wollte die Tragödie als Purgativ von Mitleid und Schrecken betrachtet wissen, – als eine nützliche Entladung von zwei unmäßig aufgestauten krankhaften Affekten", ibid.).[5]

Of course, there is a wrinkle in Nietzsche's argument, which takes a strange twist back on itself. Tragedy *was* a symptom of decline. Mapping that decline is the thrust of *The Birth of Tragedy*. And pity and fear (or terror) are in fact for Nietzsche "diseased affections", at least if we follow chapters 22 and 24 of this early text. Is Nietzsche, in 1872 and later in 1888, agreeing with Aristotle's theory of tragedy and the tragic emotions at least to this extent – to the extent that Aristotle's theory of tragedy maps out the psychology of fifth and fourth century Greeks and thus offers a valuable diagnosis of what Nietzsche takes to be tragedy's final decline? This raises the question about the causes of tragedy's decline in the late fifth century, and more importantly about the necessity of that historical event in Nietzsche's mind. Because tragedy dies "by suicide" ("durch Selbstmord") at the hands of Euripides (*BT* §11, Nietzsche 1967: 76;, *KSA* 1: 75), and given the various other indications that tragedy, which is to say the whole of Greek tragic culture that produced the form, died of internal causes and not from external factors,[6] it could be argued that Aristotle's diagnosis was nothing other than objectively correct and true to the facts of his culture, if not to the essential nature of tragedy. This is not to suggest that Nietzsche would agree that tragedy *must* produce a degeneracy of the sort that took place in Athens. Quite the contrary. Greek

[5] Similarly, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 3: 15: "The release of emotions is the greatest attempt at relief, or should I say, at anaesthetizing on the part of the sufferer, his involuntary longed-for narcotic against pain of any kind" ("denn die Affekt-Entladung ist der grösste Erleichterungs- nämlich Betäubungs-Versuch des Leidenden, sein unwillkürlich begehrtes Narcoticum gegen Qual irgend welcher Art", *KSA* 5: 374 = Nietzsche 2006: 93).

[6] See Porter 2000a.

culture, he could hold, *misread* the potentials of tragedy, potentials that remain as valid today as they were when they failed to materialize in the fifth century and later, once catharsis became officially recognized as its *raison d'être.* These potentials include "an overflowing feeling of life and energy where even pain acts as a stimulus" (als eines überströmenden Lebens- und Kraftgefühls, innerhalb dessen selbst der Schmerz noch als Stimulans wirkt), which "gave me the key to the concept of the *tragic* feeling" ("gab mir den Schlüssel zum Begriff des *tragischen* Gefühls") that leads "beyond pity and terror [and permits one] to *be* the eternal joy of becoming *oneself*" ("über Schrecken und Mitleid hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens *selbst zu sein*") (*Twilight of the Idols*, "What I Owe the Ancients", 5, Nietzsche 1990: 228, adapted; *KSA* 6: 160). This is the essence of tragedy, about which it would be wrong to say that it has no room for catharsis, pity, or fear, if it is merely the case that tragedy works through these same things in order to reach beyond them. And as we shall see momentarily, this is precisely the case on Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy.

The problem remains how tragedy could skirt the encumbrances of pity and fear. In *Human, All Too Human* (1878) Nietzsche suggests that there is no real way to do so, and also possibly no need to do so. He again casts into doubt Aristotle's analysis but remains more or less neutral on their value as emotions: "Are fear and pity really discharged by tragedy, as Aristotle has it?" (I, 212, Nietzsche 1996: 98).[7] The two emotions are "not . . . [physiological] needs of definite organs that want to be relieved" ("sind nicht in diesem Sinne Bedürfnisse bestimmter Organe, welche erleichtert werden wollen", ibid.). They are neither morally reprehensible nor pent-up and begging to be discharged. What *is* reprehensible, rather, is Aristotle's view that this is what they are. Rejecting Aristotle's diagnosis, Nietzsche rejects his psychology and rewrites the analysis from a more enlightened perspective. He continues:

> Und auf die Dauer wird selbst jeder Trieb durch Uebung in seiner Befriedigung *gestärkt*, trotz jener periodischen Linderungen. Es wäre möglich, dass Mitleid und Furcht in jedem einzelnen Falle durch die Tragödie gemildert und entladen würden: trotzdem könnten sie im Ganzen durch die tragische Einwirkung überhaupt grösser werden. (*KSA* 2: 173)
>
> [And in the long run a drive is, through practice in satisfying it, *intensified* ("gestärkt": "strengthened"), its periodical alleviation notwithstanding. It is possible that in each individual instance fear and pity are mitigated and discharged: they could nonetheless grow greater as a whole through the tragic effect ("durch die tragische Einwirkung") in general. (Nietzsche 1996: 98)]

[7] *KSA* 2: 173: "Sollten Mitleid und Furcht wirklich, wie Aristoteles will, durch die Tragödie entladen werden?".

And here the argument takes an unexpected turn. In defense of this revised view of the tragic emotions, which have now passed from being of neutral value to seemingly positive in value, Nietzsche calls to the stand Plato, "who could still be right when he says that through tragedy one becomes more fearful and emotional" ("behielte doch Recht, wenn er meint, dass man durch die Tragödie insgesammt ängstlicher und rührseliger werde"), and who believed that tragedy leads to a "degeneration" ("ausarten") in the fiber of the audience and the communities they inhabit thanks to this "ever greater unbridledness and immoderation" ("immer grösserer Maass- und Zügellosigkeit") (ibid., translation slightly adapted). Here, tragedy produces no catharsis in the sense of a moral purgation. On the contrary, tragedy is deemed to be morally harmful owing to the very intensification – the habitual rehearsal, the discharging and recharging – of pity and fear and other emotions that it brings about. Or so Plato felt, correctly diagnosing some of the emotional potentials of tragedy, Nietzsche says, while incorrectly labelling these potentials morally harmful. Aristotle's later analysis of catharsis would respond to Plato, adopting some of his recommendations and rejecting other elements of his verdict – in effect demonstrating that tragic emotions are morally harmless if properly discharged, and to that extent they are beneficial to the psychic and moral health of the tragic spectator. Nietzsche would appear to be in partial agreement with both Plato and Aristotle while contesting aspects of both philosophers' views of the tragic emotions and their value. Pity and fear are for Nietzsche undeniable elements of the tragic experience now, and together they lead to an intensification, not diminishment, of a subject's susceptibility to the emotions generally. Is Nietzsche in favour of pity and fear after all?

Perhaps, then, Nietzsche's thinking about catharsis is less clear-cut than it sometimes is thought to be. In *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche again appears to rule out the relevance of pity and fear for the Greeks: "[O]n the whole they have done everything to counteract the elemental effect of images that arouse fear and pity – *for fear and pity were precisely what they [the Greeks] did not want.* With all due respect to Aristotle . . . " (§80, Nietzsche 2001: 80; adapted; emphasis in original).[8] But if Nietzsche excludes pity and fear, he does so not on the grounds that these emotions are either debilitating or the sign of moral degeneracy, but on more peculiar grounds – namely, that the Greeks were not interested in producing deep ("elemental") emotional effects ("in overwhelming the spectator with emotions");[9] instead

[8] *KSA* 3: 436: "[J]a sie haben überhaupt Alles gethan, um der elementaren Wirkung furcht- und mitleiderweckender Bilder entgegenzuwirken: *sie wollten eben nicht Furcht und Mitleid*, – Aristoteles in Ehren und höchsten Ehren!".

[9] Ibid: "[A]uf Ueberwältigung der Zuschauer durch Affekte".

they were keen on one thing only: "The Athenians went to the theatre *to hear pleasing speech*!".[10] Such is the famous "profound superficiality" of Nietzsche's Greeks, who, he claims, knew how to "stop at the surface, the fold, the skin, to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, and words" ("dazu thut Noth, tapfer bei der Oberfläche, der Falte, der Haut stehen zu bleiben, den Schein anzubeten, an Formen, an Töne, an Worte") and in this way to dwell "in the whole Olympus of appearance" ("an den ganzen Olymp des Scheins) (*The Gay Science*, Preface, §4, Nietzsche 2001: 8; *KSA* 3: 352). Here, the rejection of catharsis and of pity and fear – by the Greeks themselves, not by Nietzsche – is a rejection of emotional intensity of all kinds, virtually a defense mechanism against nature ("a deviation from nature", ibid. §80, Nietzsche 2001: 80; "Abweichung von der Natur", *KSA* 3: 435) and a complete embracement of the niceties of "convention". Catharsis, achieved through the build-up and discharging of pity and fear, threatens to ruffle the smooth and glassy surface of the Hellenic aesthetic experience. This is not an argument against Aristotle. It is a peculiar approach to the Greeks. Is Nietzsche even being serious? In a moment we will see that he is at the very least being *consistent* with himself and with his readings from *The Birth of Tragedy*.

One final text (out of many) will confirm the impression that Nietzsche's approaches to catharsis are not always what they seem to be. The passage is from *Daybreak* (1881), from a section entitled "Tragedy and Music" (Book 3, 172):

> – Männer in einer kriegerischen Grundverfassung des Gemüths, wie zum Beispiel die Griechen in der Zeit des Äschylus, sind *schwer zu rühren*, und wenn das Mitleiden einmal über ihre Härte siegt, so ergreift es sie wie ein Taumel und gleich einer "dämonischen Gewalt", – sie fühlen sich dann unfrei und von einem religiösen Schauder erregt. *Hinterher haben sie ihre Bedenken gegen diesen Zustand*; so lange sie in ihm sind, geniessen sie das Entzücken des Ausser-sich-seins und des Wunderbaren, gemischt mit dem bittersten Wermuth des Leidens: es ist das so recht ein Getränk für Krieger, etwas Seltenes, Gefährliches und Bittersüsses, das Einem nicht leicht zu Theil wird. – An Seelen, die so das Mitleiden empfinden, wendet sich die Tragödie, an harte und kriegerische Seelen, welche man schwer besiegt, *sei es durch Furcht, sei es durch Mitleid*, welchen es aber nütze ist, von Zeit zu Zeit erweicht zu werden: aber was soll die Tragödie Denen, welche den "sympathischen Affectionen" offen stehen wie die Segel den Winden! (*KSA* 3: 152-3)
>
> [Men whose disposition is fundamentally warlike, as for example the Greeks of the age of Aeschylus, are *hard to move*, and when pity does for once overbear their severity it seizes them like a frenzy, and as though a "demonic force"

[10] Ibid.: "Der Athener gieng in's Theater, *um schöne Reden zu hören!*".

> they then feel themselves under constraint and are excited by a shudder of religious awe. *Afterwards they have their doubts about this condition*; but for as long as they are in it they enjoy the delight of the miraculous and of being outside themselves, mixed with the bitterest wormwood of suffering: it is a draught appropriate to warriors, something rare, dangerous and bitter-sweet that does not easily fall to one's lot. It is to souls which experience pity like this that tragedy appeals, to hard and warlike souls which are difficult to conquer, *whether with fear or with pity*, but which find it useful to grow soft from time to time: but of what use is tragedy to those who are as open to the "sympathetic affections" as sails to the winds! (Nietzsche 1997: 104-5)]

Then comes a contrast with a later, gentler age, that of Plato and the philosophers, and a shift in attitudes:

> Als die Athener weicher und empfindsamer geworden waren, zur Zeit Plato's, – ach, wie ferne waren sie noch von der Rührseligkeit unserer Gross- und Kleinstädter! – aber doch klagten schon die Philosophen über die *Schädlichkeit* der Tragödie. (*KSA* 3: 153)
>
> [When the Athenians had grown softer and more sensitive, in the age of Plato – ah, but how far they still were from the emotionality of our urban dwellers! – the philosophers were already complaining of the *harmfulness* of tragedy. (Nietzsche 1997: 105)]

And finally a prospective glance to the imminent future:

> Ein Zeitalter voller Gefahren, wie das eben beginnende, in welchem die Tapferkeit und Männlichkeit im Preise steigen, wird vielleicht allmählich die Seelen wieder so hart machen, dass tragische Dichter ihnen noththun: einstweilen aber waren diese ein Wenig *überflüssig*, – um das mildeste Wort zu gebrauchen. – So kommt vielleicht auch für die Musik noch einmal das bessere Zeitalter (gewiss wird es das *bösere* sein!), dann, wenn die Künstler sich mit ihr an streng persönliche, in sich harte, vom dunklen Ernste eigener Leidenschaft beherrschte Menschen zu wenden haben: aber was soll die Musik diesen heutigen allzubeweglichen, unausgewachsenen, halbpersönlichen, neugierigen und nach Allem lüsternen Seelchen des verschwindenden Zeitalters? (*KSA* 3: 153)
>
> [An age full of danger such as is even now commencing, in which bravery and manliness become more valuable, will perhaps again gradually make souls so hard they will have need of tragic poets: in the meantime, these would be a little *superfluous* to put it as mildly as possible. For music, too, there may perhaps again come a better time (it will certainly be a *more evil* one!) when artists have to make it appeal to men strong in themselves, severe, dominated by the dark seriousness of their own passion: but of what use is music to the little souls of this vanishing age, souls too easily moved, undeveloped, half-selves, inquisitive, lusting after everything! (Nietzsche 1997: 105; emphasis added)]

Here we have what looks like a complete *volte-face* by Nietzsche in his views on the value of pity and fear as tragic emotions. No longer are these emotions decried as morally repugnant, nor are they tolerated as neutral if not in some way beneficial. Instead, pity and fear are the engines of tragic effect, and, as it turns out, of the same sort of effect that Nietzsche appeared to approve in *The Birth of Tragedy* ("the delight of the miraculous and of being outside themselves, mixed with the bitterest wormwood of suffering", *Daybreak,* 3, 172, Nietzsche 1997: 104).[11] And yet the Greeks of the tragic age are being shown by Nietzsche not to seek out these emotional states but to resist them and even, in their aftermath, to be embarrassed by them and to entertain second thoughts and doubts about them. How is all of this to be explained? I believe that Nietzsche has an answer to the problem. But in order to see what this is, we must return to the earlier work on tragedy and his understanding of tragedy's effects.

The Birth of Tragedy Revisited

For a quick précis of Nietzsche's definition of the tragic effect we could do no worse than to consider a passage from *BT* §21:

> Die Tragödie saugt den höchsten Musikorgiasmus in sich hinein, so dass sie geradezu die Musik, bei den Griechen, wie bei uns, zur Vollendung bringt, stellt dann aber den tragischen Mythus und den tragischen Helden daneben, der dann, einem mächtigen Titanen gleich, die ganze dionysische Welt auf seinen Rücken nimmt und uns davon entlastet: während sie andrerseits durch denselben tragischen Mythus, in der Person des tragischen Helden, von dem gierigen Drange nach diesem Dasein zu erlösen weiss . . . Die Tragödie stellt zwischen die universale Geltung ihrer Musik und den dionysisch empfänglichen Zuhörer ein erhabenes Gleichniss, den Mythus, und erweckt bei jenem den Schein, als ob die Musik nur ein höchstes Darstellungsmittel zur Belebung der plastischen Welt des Mythus sei. . . . Der Mythus schützt uns vor der Musik, wie er ihr andrerseits erst die höchste Freiheit giebt. Dafür verleiht die Musik, als Gegengeschenk, dem tragischen Mythus eine so eindringliche und überzeugende metaphysische Bedeutsamkeit, wie sie Wort und Bild, ohne jene einzige Hülfe, nie zu erreichen vermögen; und insbesondere überkommt durch sie den tragischen Zuschauer gerade jenes sichere Vorgefühl einer höchsten Lust, zu der der Weg durch Untergang und Verneinung führt, so dass er zu hören meint, als ob der innerste Abgrund der Dinge zu ihm vernehmlich spräche. (*BT* §21; *KSA* 1: 134)

[11] *KSA* 3: 153: "das Entzücken des Ausser-sich-seins und des Wunderbaren, gemischt mit dem bittersten Wermut des Leidens".

> [Tragedy absorbs the highest ecstasies of music. . . . The tragic hero, placed beside this music, takes the whole Dionysian world upon his back and thus *relieves us of this burden* ("uns davon entlastet") . . . Tragedy knows how to redeem us from the greedy thirst for this existence, and with an admonishing gesture it reminds us of another existence and a higher pleasure [predicated on the destruction, not triumph, of the tragic hero]. . . . Between the universal validity of its music and the listener, receptive in his Dionysian state, tragedy places a sublime parable, the myth, and *deceives* the listener into feeling that the music is merely the highest means to bring life into the vivid world of myth . . . The myth protects us against the music, while on the other hand it alone gives music the highest freedom. In return, music imparts to the tragic myth an intense and *convincing* metaphysical significance that word and image without this singular help could never have attained. And above all, it is through music that the tragic spectator is overcome by an assured premonition of a highest pleasure attained through destruction and negation, so he *feels as if* the innermost abyss of things spoke to him perceptibly (or: "audibly and clearly": "vernehmlich"). (Nietzsche 1967: 125-6; slightly adapted; emphasis added)]

So far so good. The Dionysian "Urgrund" of existence, transmitted through music (the most immediate representation of this metaphysical region) is filtered through the screen of Apolline appearances: art, through its forms, shapes, and myths, gives the spectator access to this subterranean ground while also protecting her from its otherwise destructive power.[12] The expe-

[12] Just to be clear: music is an Apolline phenomenon; it is a representation of the metaphysical Will. This might appear controversial, but it is what Nietzsche says. "Music . . . had been known previously [prior to the emergence of the Dionysian] as an Apolline art, . . . the wave beat of rhythm, whose formative power was developed for the representation of Apolline states" *(BT* §2, Nietzsche 1967: 40); ("Wenn die Musik scheinbar bereits als eine apollinische Kunst bekannt war, sowar sie dies doch nur . . . als Wellenschlag des Rhythmus, dessen bildnerische Kraft zur Darstellung apollinischer Zustände entwickelt wurde") *(BT* §2 = *KSA* 1: 33). One of those states happens to be the Dionysian (see Porter 2000a, *passim*, esp. 151-3 and e.g. 212, n. 27). Music not only represents will, but it also *appears as will* (§6, Nietzsche 1967: 55; "*sie erscheint als Wille*", *KSA* 1: 50), that is, *as* Dionysian. (§6, *KSA* 1: 50 = Nietzsche 1967: 55). Hence, a good part of its aesthetic character and aesthetic effect – its power and capacity for pain – is owing to the way music appears to be what it is not. Its value is that of a mediated (apparent) immediacy. Musical phenomena are appearances that do not seem to be appearances. Apolline appearances properly speaking, that is, of a more obvious stamp, do not present themselves as Dionysian will but rather as appearances pure and simple: they appear *as* appearance (they are "der *Schein des Scheins*", *BT* §4, Nietzsche 1967: 45 = *KSA* 1: 39); they frankly state what they are. Insulated by one further degree from metaphysical reality, they offer themselves up as a protection against the painful perception, or intuition, of that reality (again, see Porter 2000a). That music is on the side of the aesthetic and the Apolline ought to be uncontroversial: music requires form (notes, rhythm, harmony, aural imaging – a Kantian view, cf. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*

rience is vicarious, overwhelming (as the intrusion of the Real can only ever be) yet safe (at stake, after all, is not my existential condition but that of the mythical and now tragic hero). It is aesthetic ("for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*").[13] It is pleasurable and painful ("primordial joy [is] experienced even in pain").[14] It is a form of the sublime, as we shall see in a moment.

But there is one further ingredient to add to the picture, and Nietzsche comes to this a page or so later in the same section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he insists on the absolute necessity of the Apolline principle to the aesthetic experience of tragedy. As "purely Dionysian beings" ("als rein dionysische Wesen") our apprehension of the Urgrund of reality would be too direct and too destructive, nor would it be an aesthetic experience, but only an "unaesthetic" ("unaesthetische") Dionysian experience.[15] A screen is needed to shelter our gaze. "Here the tragic myth and the tragic hero intervene",[16] which is to say the Apolline element, which allows tragedy to have any aesthetic impact at all. The experience is both disruptive and healing at one and the same time: "here the Apolline power erupts to restore the almost shattered individual with the healing balm of blissful illusion".[17] And here one further element intervenes: pity, or if one prefers, co-suffering. "However powerfully pity ("das Mitleiden") affects us, it nevertheless saves us in a way from the primordial suffering ("Urleiden") of the world, just as the symbolic image of the myth saves us from the immediate perception of the highest world. The glorious Apolline illusion makes it appear as if even the tone world confronted us as a sculpted world . . . Thus the Apolline tears

§14). That music appears without appearing to be an appearance is part of the Apolline deception that makes music what it is. (See below on deception). In other words, music's appearances (their "reverberation of" and as "image", *BT* §5, Nietzsche 1967: 50; *KSA* 1: 44) are controlled by the Apolline, in the guise of not being this. "The glorious Apolline illusion makes it appear as if even the tone world confronted us as a sculpted world" (§21, Nietzsche 1967: 28; "Durch jene herrliche apollinische Täuschung dünkt es uns, als ob uns selbst das Tonreich wie eine plastische Welt gegenüberträte", *KSA* 1: 137). All three arts (verbal, musical, plastic/sculptural) align on the same side of the aesthetic equation for Nietzsche.

[13] *BT* §5, Nietzsche 1967: 52; "nur als ästhetisches Phänomen das Dasein der Welt *gerechtfertigt* ist" (*KSA* 1: 17).

[14] *BT* §24, Nietzsche 1967: 141; "mit seiner selbst am Schmerz percipirten Urlust", (*KSA* 1: 152).

[15] *BT* §5, Nietzsche 1967: 52; *KSA* 1: 47. See below.

[16] *BT* §21, Nietzsche 1967: 127; "Hier drängt sich . . . der tragische Mythus und der tragische Held" (*KSA* 1: 136).

[17] Ibid: "Hier bricht jedoch die *apollinische* Kraft, auf Wiederherstellung des fast zersprengten Individuums gerichtet, mit dem Heilbalsam einer wonnevollen Täuschung hervor".

us out of the Dionysian universality and lets us find delight in individuals; it attaches our pity to them ("fesselt . . . unsere Mitleidserregung")".[18]

Here one has to pause. Pity? The concept, about to be castigated by Nietzsche in the next section (quoted above), is here taken fully on board, not as an accessory to the tragic effect, but as its motor. True, Nietzsche's primary concern in his critique of cathartic readings is the sentimentalizing and moralizing spin that they give to the discharge (release, purgation, and refinement) of the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Could it be that Nietzsche accepts the value of these emotions but not their interpretation by Aristotle and his later followers, as was suggested above? The answer is both yes and no. Nietzsche does not exactly endorse the tragic process that he is describing. He is giving it a different kind of valence, if not value, from the one that Aristotle and others in his wake would read into tragedy. In a word, to Aristotle's *moral* defense of catharsis, itself aimed against Plato's indictment of the tragic emotions, Nietzsche opposes a *metaphysical* reading of catharsis, one that he ultimately casts in a critical light.[19] Nevertheless, the constituent emotions of catharsis are central to tragedy even on Nietzsche's complex view of it. Indeed, "breathless pity and fear" *(BT* §12, Nietzsche 1967: 84; "das athemlose Mitleiden und Mitfürchten", *KSA* 1: 86) have been consistently at the heart of his own exposition of tragic effect all along. No tragedy in its pre-Euripidean form can perform its job without the involvement of these two emotions, which is to say the antagonistic involvement of fear (or shuddering terror, "Schaudern") and the identification with the pain at the core of existence ("das Mitleiden" with "Urleid").[20]

[18] *BT* §21, Nietzsche 1967: 128; "So gewaltig auch das Mitleiden in uns hineingreift, in einem gewissen Sinne rettet uns doch das Mitleiden vor dem Urleiden der Welt, wie das Gleichnisbild des Mythus uns vor dem unmittelbaren Anschauen der höchsten Weltidee, . . . Durch jene herrliche apollinische Täuschung dünkt es uns, als ob uns selbst das Tonreich wie eine plastische Welt gegenüberträte. . . . So entreisst uns das Apollinische der dionysischen Allgemeinheit und entzückt uns für die Individuen; an diese fesselt es unsre Mitleidserregung . . . " (*KSA* 1: 136-7).

[19] That Nietzsche treats Greek tragic metaphysics as an illusion – less a transfiguration of reality than a defense *against* reality – is the thesis of Porter (2000a). Briefly, Nietzsche's position is that Dionysian metaphysics is a redemptive illusion that the Greeks never had the courage to expose for what it is. But what is more, the Dionysian is for Nietzsche a component of modern classicism that classicism systematically disavows. Whether ancient Greeks can be isolated from their modern comprehension is a question that Nietzsche's double-edged critique renders into an inescapable problem, and it is one that remains valid for us even today.

[20] This is everywhere in evidence, for instance in §8 (Nietzsche 1967: 61; *KSA* 1: 63), where the chorus share Dionysus' terrifying wisdom and his suffering ("als der mitleidende ist er [sc. Dionysus] zugleich der weise, aus dem Herzen der Welt die Wahrheit verkündende"); or in §22 (Nietzsche 1967: 131 = *KSA* 1: 141): the Greek tragic

Consider how tragedy emerges in the prototypical satyr chorus, which identifies with the primordial unity of being ("das Ur-Eine"). This is the primal scene of the birth of tragedy. It turns on a series of identifications – of a Dionysian reveler who, ecstatic and enraptured, "sees himself as a satyr, *and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god*" (*BT* §8, Nietzsche 1967: 64; emphasis in original),[21] all of this under the auspices of Apolline projection and illusion (appearances). Such is "the *dramatic* proto-phenomenon" ("das *dramatische* Urphänomen"), in which the self is ecstatically pushed outside herself and absorbed into another, "as if one had actually entered into another body, another character" (ibid.: 64).[22] Why the satyr? "The satyr was the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and most intense emotions, the ecstatic reveler, . . . the sympathetic [lit., "co-suffering"] companion ("mitleidender Genosse") in whom the suffering of the god is repeated" (ibid.: 61)[23] and so on. The experience is intensely pleasurable and painful, it is erotic, and it is sublime. "The satyr was something sublime and divine" ("Der Satyr war etwas Erhabenes und Göttliches"), and permitted a vision that could be taken in "with sublime satisfaction" ("in erhabener Befriedigung") (ibid.). The experience – the "phenomenon" – spreads like a contagion, "epidemically" ("epidemisch"), from individual to individual, as each partakes in the same appearances (ibid.). Reality and the effects it emits appear to this primal chorus "in several successive discharges" ("in mehreren aufeinanderfolgenden Entladungen") (ibid.). Pity (in the form of "Mitleid" – call it compassion, co-suffering, or identificatory *pathos*) and fear (the "terrifying wisdom", "die schreckliche Weisheit", or "insight" of the Dionysian and its "effects" (§4, ibid.: 45, trans. adapted; *KSA* 1: 39), which is always an identificatory fear, "Mitfürchten", mediated by the tragic vision), are the "breathless" ("atemlose") drivers in this process, along with the mix of pain and pleasure that they accompany, all brought together under the auspices of Apolline mediation: "with this new vision the drama is complete" *(BT* §8, ibid.: 64).[24]

Nietzsche is preserving the structure of the tragic emotions as these are analyzed by Aristotle, while giving them a new metaphysical and culturally

spectator "shudders at the sufferings ("schaudert vor den Leiden") which will befall the hero" – where the distinction between pity and fear is moot, as is the pleasure ("Lust") that is derived from, or supervenes upon, the experience.

[21] *KSA* 1: 62: "[S]ieht sich der dionysische Schwärmer als Satyr *und als Satyr wiederum schaut er den Gott*".

[22] *KSA* 1: 61: "[A]ls ob man wirklich in einen andern Leib, in einen andern Charakter eingegangen wäre".

[23] *KSA* 1: 58: "[E]s war das Urbild des Menschen, der Ausdruck seiner höchsten und stärksten Regungen, als begeisterter Schwärmer, . . . als mitleidender Genosse, in dem sich das Leiden des Gottes wiederholt".

[24] *KSA* 1: 62: "Mit dieser neuen Vision ist das Drama vollständig".

critical spin, and to be sure a heightened intensity.[25] The mechanism of pity (in the form of co-suffering) and fear (bordering on horror) is complicated, as we've seen. Release is certainly part of the process: there is a release from the self *(BT* §5), a release through and in appearances (§§ 4, 5, 12). "Erlösung" is the operative term in both cases, and it carries a strong sense of redemption.[26] Purgation is probably not the best account of this process, because the feelings of pleasure and pain persist, albeit in a transfigured form, and the emotions that attend to these feelings, pity and fear, are not *per se* morally harmful emotions worthy of expulsion in Nietzsche's account. They are, rather, useful and possibly inevitable ways of producing a contact with the Real that remains brutally overwhelming, but that allows a certain distance and aesthetic delight in the experience. As Nietzsche puts it in *The Gay Science* passage mentioned above, a part not yet quoted, tragedy satisfies in us "a need that we cannot satisfy in reality" ("ein Bedürfniss . . . welches wir aus der Wirklichkeit nicht befriedigen können"): "it delights us now when the tragic hero still finds words, reasons, eloquent gestures, and an altogether radiant spirit where life approaches the abyss and a real human being would usually lose his head and certainly his fine language" (*The Gay Science* §80, Nietzsche 2001: 80).[27] And so, tragedy indulges our fantasies of vicarious reality, a need that satisfies "a metaphysical need" ("metaphys. Bedürfniß").[28]

[25] Horror, or rather terror, is ruled out by Aristotle as a tragic emotion: unlike fear (*phobos*), terror (*to deinon*) drives out pity (*Rhetoric* 3.8, 1386a21-2). Nietzsche's idea of fear is allied with both terror and horror (Schrecken, Grausamkeit, etc.). But Nietzsche may not have seen any significant difference on this score, at least to judge from later evidence, e.g. 15[10], 1888 (*KSA* 13: 410), quoted above: "Aristotle wanted to understand tragedy as a purgative of pity and terror ("Aristoteles wollte die Tragödie als Purgativ von Mitleid und *Schrecken* betrachtet wissen"), though he knew full well that the object of his own idea of tragic fear was differently conceived from anything that Aristotle would have intended.

[26] Kaufmann renders "Erlösung" as "release" in the first case and "redemption" in the latter cases. Note that release from the self is staged as a redemptive fusion with the One, not as a release/redemption in and through appearances. It seems, then, that we can speak of both two kinds of release/redemption: a Dionysian kind and an Apolline kind. These are juxtaposed in §8: "not Apolline redemption through mere appearance, but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being" ("nicht die apollinische Erlösung im Scheine, sondern im Gegenteil das Zerbrechen des Individuums und sein Einswerden mit dem Ursein", *KSA* 1: 62). These are, however, two *styles* of appearance – the first appearing *as* appearance, the second appearing as *non*-appearance.

[27] *KSA* 3: 435: "[E]s entzückt uns jetzt, wenn der tragische Held da noch Worte, Gründe, beredte Gebärden und im Ganzen eine helle Geistigkeit findet, wo das Leben sich den Abgründen nähert, und der wirkliche Mensch meistens den Kopf und gewiss die schöne Sprache verliert".

[28] *Encyclopedia of Philology* (1871, cf. *KGW* 2.3: 416, n. 37; quotation and translation in Porter 2000a: 103). See *The Gay Science* §151 (*KSA* 3: 494). In *BT* this need expresses

It defends us *from* "the elemental of images that arouse fear and compassion – *for pity and fear were precisely what the they [the Greeks] did not want*" (*The Gay Science*, ibid.).[29]

Did not want, yet could not do without. Fear and pity are innate responses to this contact with the Real. They are the filters through which this contact can only ever be had. But they must also vanish in the experience, in a kind of sublimation (if not exactly purging), or else redemption. This is part of the illusion (the "deception") that tragedy brings about, the logic of which runs: I don't have to (really) suffer fear myself so long as someone else can suffer for me on the plane of the imaginary. I need only be absorbed in the *image* of suffering and can "believe" (§§ 7, 16) or rather *make believe* that I am experiencing the true reality of the One. Hence, Nietzsche writes, in such glimpses of imaginary contact, "we are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena now appear *necessary* to us" (§17, Nietzsche 1967: 104; emphasis added).[30] Pain is converted into delight and joy. We take a "metaphysical comfort" ("metaphysischer Trost") in our condition, which gives us the prospect of "the indestructibility and eternity of this [primordial] joy in existence. *In spite of fear and pity*, we are the happy living beings, not as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose creative joy we are united" (§17, ibid.: 105).[31] In other words, the *aesthetic* pleasure we take in the destruction of the tragic hero translates the pain of existence into the reassurance that, when all is said and done, life goes on; it *surges* on, indestructibly and comfortingly. We, after all, are the palpable proof, we who are alive at the end of the play. We survive, as itself in the "metaphysical comfort" ("der metaphysische Trost", §§ 7, 17; *KSA* 1: 21, 22, 109) of the painful ground of reality that is made to appear "as necessary" ("wie nothwendig", §17, *KSA* 1: 109). Note that "reality" here – understood as the abyssal Dionysian metaphysical reality – masks another, more intolerable reality, which is the true source of human pain and anguish (Nietzsche calls it "nausea" and "absurdity" – §7, Nietzsche 1967: 60; *KSA* 1: 57 –, namely the prospect of the world stripped bare of all metaphysical comforts and indeed of all metaphysical constructions *tout court*, which is to say, the human, all-too-human world that, as Nietzsche never ceases to remind us, we ourselves inhabit. Whence, too, the conflicting "doubts" of *Daybreak* 3, §172, quoted earlier. See Porter 2000a.

[29] *KSA* 3: 436: "[U]m der elementaren Wirkung furcht- und mitleiderweckender Bilder entgegenzuwirken: *sie wollten eben nicht Furcht und Mitleid*".

[30] *KSA* 1: 109: "Wir sind wirklich in kurzen Augenblicken das Urwesen selbst und fühlen dessen unbändige Daseinsgier und Daseinslust; der Kampf, die Qual, die Vernichtung der Erscheinungen dünkt uns jetzt wie notwendig".

[31] *KSA* 1: 109-10: "[D]ie Unzerstörbarkeit und Ewigkeit dieser Lust. . . . Trotz Furcht und Mitleid sind wir die Glücklich-Lebendigen, nicht als Individuen, sondern als das *eine* Lebendige, mit dessen Zeugungslust wir verschmolzen sind".

it were, the deluges of pity and fear, which are the controversial source of tragic pleasure, as they always were since Aristotle (if not earlier).[32] Tragedy achieves its effects "in spite of fear and pity" ("trotz Furcht und Mitleid") but also *only through* fear and pity.[33] Without these two affections no tragedy can be properly speaking tragic. Euripides' emblematic failure lies in the fact that he failed to produce these emotions. The fine balance between the Apolline and Dionysian poles was ruined: each became a shriveled representative of its former self. In place of Apolline contemplation, Euripides installed logical, paradoxical thoughts; in place of Dionysian ecstasies, he offered up "fiery *affects*" ("feurige *Affekte*"), which is to say crude naturalistic passions that stood in no relation either to the existentially threatening wisdom of the Silenus or to its sublimation through appearances (§§ 12, 14). The link between the two artistic principles was accordingly ruptured, as was the essential tie to tragic pity and fear. "The Euripidean hero . . . must defend his actions with arguments and counterarguments and in the process often risks the loss of our tragic pity" (§14, ibid.: 81).[34] In this climate of cool optimism, fear and pity were banished. And here tragedy came to an end.

It may sound paradoxical that Nietzsche should place so much emphasis on fear and pity in *The Birth of Tragedy*, indeed that he should develop the whole of his theory of tragedy around these two central notions, only to conclude, in the final chapters, that pity and fear and their catharsis are an Aristotelian and then a modern misdescription of the tragic experience. But this is not in fact what he says. The Aristotelian line on tragedy misdescribes the tragic experience not because it enlists pity and fear in a catharsis of tragic emotions, but *because it misdescribes the nature and function of tragic pity and fear*. This is clearly what Nietzsche means when, in the final section quoted earlier, he restates the fundamental puzzle that tragedy poses as an aesthetic problem: where does aesthetic pleasure lie in a genre that is devoted to the sufferings of a hero? Or, more pointedly, "how can the ugly and the disharmonic, the content of the tragic myth, stimulate aesthetic pleasure?" (§24, ibid.: 140).[35] Against the current, prevailing norm that looks for an an-

[32] The prehistory of Aristotle's theory would take us back to Homer, Sophocles, Gorgias, and Plato but this is not the place to develop this line of inquiry, which has been discussed in the past (Halliwell 1986: 170 with n. 3), but see n. 49 below.

[33] See §21, Nietzsche 1967: 28 quoted earlier: "*However powerfully pity affects us*, it nevertheless saves us in a way from the primordial suffering (*Urleiden*) of the world" (*KSA* 1: 136-7: "So gewaltig auch das Mitleiden in uns hineingreift, in einem gewissen Sinne rettet uns doch das Mitleiden vor dem Urleiden der Welt").

[34] *KSA* 1: 94: " . . . des euripideischen Helden, der durch Grund und Gegengrund seine Handlungen vertheidigen muss und dadurch so oft in Gefahr geräth, unser tragisches Mitleiden einzubüßen".

[35] *KSA* 1: 152:"Wie kann das Hässliche und das Disharmonische, der Inhalt des tragi-

swer in the sphere of morals ("moral delight, for example, under the form of pity or moral triumph", ibid.),[36] Nietzsche insists on locating the proper pleasure of tragedy, "the pleasure that is peculiar to it" (ibid.),[37] in a "purely aesthetic sphere, without transgressing into the region of pity, fear, or the morally sublime" (ibid.: 141).[38]

Nietzsche is contesting an entire suite of concepts, from the aesthetic understood in the most general of terms to its components in the area of tragedy (pity and fear) and finally the sublime. To the extent that any of these suppress or erase "the ugly and the disharmonic" ("das Hässliche und das Disharmonische"), and more generally "the unaesthetic" (the domain of the will, "das an sich Unaesthetische", or "the unaesthetic in itself", §6, ibid.: 52; *KSA* 1: 50), Nietzsche will have nothing to do with them. But simply because he names these elements in the Aristotelian account is hardly an indication that he wishes to eliminate them from his own revised account of tragedy. To an aesthetics that refuses to encompass the unaesthetic ("aesthetic Socratism", "aesthetischen Sokratismus" premised on logic, intelligibility, superficiality, and optimism, §12, ibid.: 83; *KSA* 1, 85), he opposes an aesthetics in which both elements, the aesthetic and the unaesthetic, "are wonderfully mingled with one another" ("wundersam durch einander gemischt") (§ 5, ibid.: 52; *KSA* 1: 47) – albeit now in "a purely aesthetic sphere" ("in der rein ästhetischen Sphäre"). To a conception of pity and fear based on moral sentiments, he opposes pity and fear based on pre-moral identification with a metaphysically potent reality (or its image). To the morally sublime he opposes an amoral sublime. To a cathartic purging of surplus affections he opposes a different kind of release, a redemptive discharging ("Erlösung", "Entladung") of these same affections. To the idea that tragedy exists "for our [moral] betterment and education" (*KSA* 1: 47: "unsrer Besserung und Bildung wegen) he opposes "the immense impact of the image, the concept, the ethical teaching and the sympathetic emotion [with which] the Apolline tears man from his orgiastic self-annihilation"[39] and protects him from its dangers (§21, ibid: 128). The differences from the post-Aristotelian interpretation of tragic catharsis are significant, but also less dramatic than they might at first appear. In a number of respects, Nietzsche's Greeks, for all their flirtation with tragic metaphysics, fit rather neatly into the familiar

schen Mythus, eine aesthetische Lust erregen?".

[36] Ibid.: "[E]ine moralische Ergetzung, etwa unter der Form des Mitleides oder eines sittlichen Triumphes".

[37] Ibid.: "[D]ie ihm eigentümliche Lust".

[38] Ibid.: "[I]n der rein aesthetischen Sphäre . . . ohne in das Gebiet des Mitleids, der Furcht, des Sittlich-Erhabenen überzugreifen".

[39] Ibid. 137: "Mit der ungeheuren Wucht des Bildes, des Begriffs, der ethischen Lehre, der sympathischen Erregung reisst das Apollinische den Menschen aus seiner orgiastischen Selbstvernichtung empor").

classical and classicizing paradigm by which they were grasped in the age of Humboldt and Goethe.[40] Dionysus and the realm he represents are redeemed by Apollo. Indeed, the Dionysian seems to be the *product* of Apollo, which is to say, Apollo's way of redeeming *himself* and the conceptual order that *he* represents:

> Vor allem galt es jene Ekelgedanken über das Entsetzliche und das Absurde des Daseins in Vorstellungen umzuwandeln, mit denen sich leben lässt: diese sind das *Erhabene* als die künstlerische *Bändigung* des Entsetzlichen und das *Lächerliche* als die künstlerische *Entladung* vom Ekel des Absurden. Diese beiden mit einander verflochtenen Elemente werden zu einem Kunstwerk vereint, das den Rausch nachahmt, das mit dem Rausche spielt. (*Die dionysische Weltanschauung*, 1870, §3, *KSA* 1: 567; emphasis added)
>
> [What mattered above all was to transform those repulsive thoughts about the terrible and absurd aspects of existence into representations with which it was possible to live; these representations are the *sublime*, whereby the terrible [viz., the unaesthetic] is *tamed* by artistic means, and the *comical*, whereby disgust at absurdity is *discharged* by artistic means. These two interwoven elements are unified in a work of art which imitates and plays with intoxication.] (*The Dionysiac World View*, Nietzsche 1999: 130; emphasis added)][41]

[40] See *BT* §22 (ibid.: 132): "The pathological discharge, the catharsis of Aristotle, of which philologists are not sure whether it should be included among medical or moral phenomena, recalls a remarkable notion of Goethe's. 'Without a lively pathological interest,' he says, 'I, too, have never yet succeeded in elaborating a tragic situation of any kind, and hence I have rather avoided than sought it. Can it perhaps have been yet another merit of the ancients that the deepest pathos was with them merely aesthetic play, while with us the truth of nature must cooperate in order to produce such a work?' We can now answer this profound final question in the affirmative . . . " (*KSA* 1: 142: "Jene pathologische Entladung, die Katharsis des Aristoteles, von der die Philologen nicht recht wissen, ob sie unter die medicinischen oder die moralischen Phänomene zu rechnen sei, erinnert an eine merkwürdige Ahnung Goethe's. 'Ohne ein lebhaftes pathologisches Interesse', sagt er, 'ist es auch mir niemals gelungen, irgend eine tragische Situation zu bearbeiten, und ich habe sie daher lieber vermieden als aufgesucht. Sollte es wohl auch einer von den Vorzügen der Alten gewesen sein, dass das höchste Pathetische auch nur aesthetisches Spiel bei ihnen gewesen wäre, da bei uns die Naturwahrheit mitwirken muss, um ein solches Werk hervorzubringen?' Diese so tiefsinnige letzte Frage dürfen wir jetzt, nach unseren herrlichen Erfahrungen, bejahen . . . ").

[41] The text is the ancestor to *BT* §7, ibid.: 60: "Here, when the danger to his [i.e., Hamlet's, the "Dionysian man's"] will is greatest, *art* approaches as a saving sorceress, expert at healing. She alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the *sublime*, as the artistic taming of the horrible, and the *comic* as the artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity." (*KSA* 1: 57: "Hier, in dieser höchsten Gefahr des Willens, naht sich, als

Redemption, ethical salvation, the plastic image, aesthetic pleasure, beauty and sublimity[42], all wrung from a catharsis of pity and fear, pain, and suffering, are the hallmarks of Greek tragedy even for Nietzsche. Nietzsche has not overthrown classicism. He has merely redescribed it. Nor is his account terribly original, at least in its most general contours.[43]

Is catharsis an *Apolline* principle, as Silk and Stern suggest?[44] There is much to say in favor of this reading – for starters, the fact that Apollo does control access to the Dionysian, as I pointed out above, and then the evidence of a relevant precedent in a work that Nietzsche surely consulted, Karl Otfried Müller's commentary on the *Eumenides* from 1833[45] – even if their idea stems from a dissatisfaction with Nietzsche's apparent inconsistency. Unhappy with this account, because it leaves out the role of the Dionysian, Silk and Stern find Nietzsche's allegiances "confused" (Silk and Stern

rettende, heilkundige Zauberin, die *Kunst*; sie allein vermag jene Ekelgedanken über das Entsetzliche oder Absurde des Daseins in Vorstellungen umzubiegen, mit denen sich leben lässt: diese sind das *Erhabene* als die künstlerische Bändigung des Entsetzlichen und das *Komische* als die künstlerische Entladung vom Ekel des Absurden").

[42] Readers instinctively identify Apollo with the realm of beauty alone, as *BT* §3 (ibid.: 44; *KSA* 1: 37) might suggest: "the beauty of mere appearance", etc., but in fact sublimity and beauty are mutually imbricated, both in classicism (e.g. "sublime beauty", "erhabene Schönheit" in Winckelmann, *Denkmale der Kunst des Altertums* (1767) §144 in Winckelmann 1825-1829: 7: 211; similarly, Winckelmann 1985 [1755]: 37 and Winckelmann 1972: 149) and for Nietzsche. See *BT* §21, "Thus the Apolline tears us out of the Dionysian universality and lets us find delight in individuals; it attaches our pity to them, and by means of them it satisfies *our sense of beauty which longs for great and sublime forms*" (ibid.: 128; trans. slightly adapted) (*KSA* 1: 137: "So entreisst uns das Apollinische der dionysischen Allgemeinheit und entzückt uns für die Individuen; an diese fesselt es unsre Mitleidserregung, durch diese befriedigt es den nach grossen und erhabenen Formen lechzenden Schönheitssinn").

[43] Nietzsche's proximity to classicism is not well understood. See Porter 2000b, ch.'s 4 and 5 for an initial discussion.

[44] Silk and Stern 1981: 271: "The 'shudders'" experienced by the spectator "can only be Apolline shudders, just as the terror . . . must be Apolline terror. Pity and fear, then, belong to the Apolline, which we had taken to be the sphere of the aesthetic in the Kantian-Schopenhauerian sense of disinterested contemplation".

[45] See n. 12 above. And see Müller 1833: 147: "The real purifier, however, remains . . . Phoebus Apollo, the god of light, who teaches how to overcome the terrors of the dark world and nature through heroic battle or apotropaic rites" ("Der eigentliche Reiniger aber bleibt . . . Phöbos-Apollon, der helle Gott, der die Schrecknisse der dunklen Welt und Natur durch heldenmüthigen Kampf oder averruncirende Gebräuche überwinden lehrt"). Hence, one of his nicknames, *Katharsios*, "the Purifier" or "the cathartic god". Catharsis – whether Apolline or Dionysian (see ibid.: "the Dionysian catharsis"; "die *Dionysische Katharsis*", also ibid., 191-2) – is a leitmotif in Müller's commentary, and an important if not well recognized predecessor to Bernays and to Nietzsche both (Porter 2015: 36).

1981: 271). His allegiances are confusing, but they are not confused. They are, moreover, consistent with his other remarks on catharsis from later on in his career, for instance in *Daybreak*, where, as we saw, the Greeks of the tragic age are shown to be reluctant witnesses to their own susceptibility to cathartic discharge, or in the notes to *We Philologists* from 1875, not quoted above, where cathartic discharge is said to be a necessity and a "Grundgesetz" (a constitutional principle or law) of the Greek nature (5 [147], *KSA* 8: 79). The Greek nature, Nietzsche explains in the same entry, "is not disavowed, it is merely *brought into a state of orderliness* – it is confined to certain cults and days. This is the source of all liberality in antiquity; a controlled discharge of the natural forces was sought out, not their destruction and negation"[46]. This release had to be moderated "lest it kill everything". The entry from 1875 (5 [146]) sums up quite fairly Nietzsche's view of cathartic release among the Greeks. Periodic release was an event that had two sides, both positive and negative, each side moderating but also enhancing the other. Achieving this control was very much an Apolline affair, a matter of balance rather than imbalance, and a delicate one at that. It would be a mistake to assume that the productive forces of the Greeks existed outside of their periodic discharge. Quite the contrary, the regulation of these timed releases produced the energies that were being brought into the Greek world and its culture, causing each new release to be enhanced by the last, in a controlled rhythm of restriction and discharge. Tragic catharsis was merely one aspect of this defining physiognomy of the Greeks. But it was also their most recognizable aspect, at least in the modern era.

The structure of the tragic experience as this was shaped in the wake of Aristotle down into the nineteenth century remains fundamentally recognizable in Nietzsche's revision and adaptation of it, and it is at times disturbingly close to what it would replace. Indeed, the very way in which Nietzsche poses the puzzle of tragedy as an aesthetic problem – the problem of how pain can stimulate aesthetic pleasure – is an inheritance of this tradition. The potency and value of each of the operative terms and concepts have changed and have been assigned new roles in *The Birth of Tragedy*. And yet, for all the changes, we can in no way claim that pity and fear are more potent or more dangerous for Nietzsche than they were for Aristotle. They rage through the spectator, but ultimately leave her relieved and "happy": "In spite of fear and pity, we are the happy living beings . . . " (*BT* §17, Nietzsche 1967: 105).[47] They are, ultimately, *aesthetic* states, and their net effect is one

[46] *KSA* 8: 79: "[W]ird nicht weggeleugnet, sondern nur *eingeordnet*, auf bestimmte Culte und Tage beschränkt. Dies ist die Wurzel aller Freisinnigkeit des Alterthums; man suchte für die Naturkräfte eine mässige Entladung, nicht eine Vernichtung und Verneinung".

[47] *KSA* 1: 109: "Trotz Furcht und Mitleid sind wir die glücklich-Lebendigen".

of pleasure, not pain.[48]

There is much that is in fact conventional and inherited in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In a very real sense Nietzsche is rejoining the ancient line of inquiry into tragedy's complicated relation to the emotions, which perhaps are better included under a broader set of terms, for example "terror" or "shuddering", "painful desire", and "identification" with another's suffering ("co-suffering"), all of which are in play in Aristotle and in Aristotle's predecessors (for example Gorgias).[49] These are "the highest and most intense emotions" that the tragic performance excites, channels, and discharges. "Wonder" is everywhere abundant, as are beauty and sublimity, insofar as we can count these as emotions.[50] Excitement and discharge are the poles between which these various states unfold, and not only for the ancients but also in modern classicism. Naming as they do both the mechanism and the physiology of

[48] A point nicely confirmed by Lacoue-Labarthe 1993: 105.

[49] See Gorgias, *Helen* §9 (*DK* 82B11, 9): ᾗς τοὺς ἀκούοντας εἰσῆλθε καὶ φρίκη περίφοβος καὶ ἔλεος πολύδακρυς καὶ πόθος φιλοπενθής, ἐπ᾽ ἀλλοτρίων τε πραγμάτων καὶ σωμάτων εὐτυχίαις καὶ δυσπραγίαις ἴδιόν τι πάθημα διὰ τῶν λόγων ἔπαθεν ἡ ψυχή. "To its listeners poetry brings a fearful shuddering, a tearful pity, and a grieving desire, while through its words the soul feels its own feelings (lit.: "suffers/experiences a suffering/experience of its own") for good and bad fortune in the affairs and lives of others" (trans. Gagarin and Woodruff 1995: 192). And see Halliwell 2002: 231: "Nietzsche was only too well aware that pity was regarded by the Greeks as central to the experience of tragedy" and ibid., n. 64 (on Gorgias).

[50] *BT* §4, Nietzsche 1967: 45-6: "At the same time, however, we encounter Apollo as the deification of the *principium individuationis* in which alone the eternally attained goal of the primordial unity, its release and redemption through semblance, comes about; with sublime gestures he shows us that the whole world of agony is needed in order to compel the individual to generate the releasing and redemptive vision and then, lost in contemplation of that vision, to sit calmly in his rocking boat in the midst of the sea" (*KSA* 1: 39-40: "Apollo aber tritt uns wiederum als die Vergöttlichung des principii individuationis entgegen, in dem allein das ewig erreichte Ziel des Ur-Einen, seine Erlösung durch den Schein, sich vollzieht: er zeigt uns, mit erhabenen Gebärden, wie die ganze Welt der Qual nöthig ist, damit durch sie der Einzelne zur Erzeugung der erlösenden Vision gedrängt werde und dann, ins Anschauen derselben versunken, ruhig auf seinem schwankenden Kahne, inmitten des Meeres, sitze"); *BT* §20, ibid.: 98: "Tragedy is seated amid this excess of life, in the midst of this superabundance of life, suffering, and delight, *in sublime ecstasy*, listening to a distant, melancholy singing which tells of the Mothers of Being, whose names are delusion, will, woe" (*KSA* 1: 132 "Die Tragödie sitzt inmitten dieses Ueberflusses an Leben, Leid und Lust, in erhabener Entzückung, sie horcht einem fernen schwermüthigen Gesange – er erzählt von den Müttern des Seins, deren Namen lauten: Wahn, Wille, Wehe"). See "the sublime, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means" (*The Dionysiac World View*, §3), quoted above. Note too that sublimity is epicene: it belongs to both Apolline and Dionysian states – because these are ultimately one.

the process, these last two terms, excitement and discharge, could be said to characterize the underlying pathology of the tragic effect ("Wirkung") in its classical and its classicizing forms.[51]

With this last term ("Wirkung"), Nietzsche's theory of tragedy recalls the one predecessor who is most thought to have been the target of that theory, Jacob Bernays, whose essay from 1857, *Outlines of Aristotle's Lost Work on the Effect of Tragedy* (*Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie*) dominated the problem in Classics circles at the time and even into the present. Bernays' implied presence in *The Birth of Tragedy* has been detected in the past based on Nietzsche's use of the term "Entladung" ("discharge"), possibly as a translation of *katharsis*. It's not clear how one might reconstruct Bernays' theory based on this one term, even if we could claim that Nietzsche's displacement of "discharge" is one more example of his revision of a *status quo* position, on a par with the revisions pointed out above.[52] The problem is that Nietzsche is not in fact opposing Bernays' theory. He is absorbing it into his own. (A notebook entry from 1869-70 already suggests as much: "Perhaps starting out from the Aristotelian definition. (Bernays)".[53] This was Bernays' own impression as well, or so it would appear from a letter written by Nietzsche to Rohde in 1872 in which it is said that Bernays was reportedly complaining that Nietzsche had borrowed the gist of his own ideas, having merely "greatly exaggerated" ("stark übertrieben") them.[54]

Proof that Nietzsche is backing and not refuting Bernays is to be found in any number of concepts and terms that are not normally associated with Bernays, though they come right out of his playbook and then find their way into Nietzsche's own discussions of catharsis. Although Bernays is mostly remembered today for his apparent reduction of catharsis to a medical form of purgation of harmful emotions, above all those emotions that are brought to the surface by pity and fear in tragedy, this is not in fact what Bernays' theory is about. He reads catharsis as involving a positive heightening and expansion, and not a removal, let alone normalization, of emotional and psy-

[51] Cf. *BT* §3: "[D]ie höchste Wirkung der apollinischen Cultur" (*KSA* 1: 37); §12: "[D]ie *tragische* Wirkung" (*KSA* 1: 83); §22: "[D]ie Wirkung der Tragödie" (*KSA* 1: 142); etc. See also Nietzsche's remark about Goethe in §22 (*KSA* 1: 142-3), quoted earlier.

[52] Därmann 2005: 127-34 claims that Nietzsche borrowed and radically revised the meaning of Bernays' central term, "Entladung". Cf. Most 2009: 62: "One might even go so far as to maintain that the principle and foundational idea of Nietzsche's book could only have arisen out of Bernays' concept of Entladung and is only intelligible against this background". Further, Ugolini 2012: 94-5.

[53] "Vielleicht von der aristotelischen Definition auszugehn. (Bernays.)". Cf. 3[38], *KSA* 7: 71.

[54] Letter to Erwin Rohde, 7 December, 1872 (*KSB* 4: 97).

chological potentials "that takes in every kind of affection in the soul" (Bernays 1857: 138, 143, 171, 176). To be sure, motional heightening was an element of every major treatment of catharsis from Lessing onward. What sets Bernays' theory apart are two related considerations: first, he understands "discharge" not as a purgation and quieting of emotions, or as the elimination of undesirable quantities of affect, but as a form of excitation ("Sollicitation") and release ("Entladung") of inner states, both physical and psychological, that lie dormant, waiting to be expressed, and which are, moreover, at once admirable and desirable to maintain and even to nurture; secondly, he uncouples catharsis from tragedy so as to arrive at a larger theory of emotional response, one that is not morbidly pathological, but is rather a kind of pathology in the most general sense of the term – in the sense of involving the *pathē*, understood as "predominantly psychological affections" ("vorwiegend psychologische Affectionen", Bernays 1857: 161). The ultimate thrust of Bernays' analysis is thus, surprisingly, psychological, not medical or somatic. An anthropology of the Greeks is invoked to explain the Greeks' susceptibility to *ekstasis*: their Oriental traits, their proneness to excitation ("Erregbarkeit"), their comparative lack of self-control, their cognitive immaturity, which is to say their lack of a firmly formed self-consciousness (ibid.: 175), all of which enabled the Greeks to step outside themselves and to be susceptible to rapturous and ecstatic states of mind ("das Aussersichsein") in a way that is no longer quite possible in the modern world. The fundamental processes remain psychologically valid today;[55] they simply transpire along more domesticated routes – typically secular ones – and hence are no longer taken for "holy and divine" ("für heilig und göttlich") states of mind (ibid.).

Thus, Bernays' theory is less a specific consideration of tragic catharsis than it is a general investigation into the most vital affections known to mankind, all of which derive, he claims, from a universal, primordial affection ("Urpathos") that is built directly into the human capacity for sensation and that resonates with "the lively power of movement in the universe at large" ("Die im Weltall rege Kraft der Bewegung", ibid.: 179).[56] The result of

[55] "Catharsis emerges as a broadly conceived universal, one that is congenial to both ancient and modern poetry" (" . . . eine weitsinnige, mit antiker wie moderner Poesie befreundete Universalität an der Katharsis heraustritt", Bernays 1857: 175).

[56] The phrase is repeated by Yorck von Wartenburg (1866: 22): "[D]en im Weltall regen Kräften der Bewegung anheimgegebenen Menschen". Yorck captures some of the essentials and much of the language of Bernays' theory, which he mostly accepts, and combines these with a view of the orgiastic religious cult of Dionysus, which is only briefly touched on by Bernays (1857: 169, 175, 179), but which would have been of obvious interest to Nietzsche. The connection with Yorck has been well examined. See most recently Agell 2006: 162-70. Nevertheless, Yorck follows the purification line on catharsis ("So ist durch Erregung von Leid und Schrecken eine Reinigung von diesen

this affection is twofold. First, every contact with sensation is ecstatic at its core: "All forms of *pathos* [affection] are essentially ecstatic; in all of them a person is put outside of himself" ("alle Arten von Pathos sind wesentlich ekstatisch; durch sie alle wird der Mensch ausser sich gesetzt", ibid.: 176). Every affection, because it contains an ecstatic element, also contains a hedonic element, however painful the object that elicits it may appear to be (ibid.: 178). There is a pleasure to this return, which Bernays calls an assuagement ("Erleichterung", "Beschwichtigung") of the original and painful disturbance (143, 176). The effects of discharge persist as a feeling of painful – pleasurable release (rather than relief); and there is a pleasure to be found in the very sources of pain. Bernays is at once basing his theory on Aristotle while also elaborating freely on his view of pleasure and pain. Pleasure, Bernays says, "depends upon a sudden disturbance ("eine plötzliche Erschütterung" ["jarring, convulsing"]) and [a] restoration of psychic equilibrium ("Gleichgewicht")" (ibid.: 178), and the process occurs whenever a force within the soul (or mind) "erupts for brief moments in pleasurable shuddering" ("für Augenblicke in lustvolles Schaudern ausbreche", ibid.: 184). The attractions such a theory of sensation would have held for Nietzsche are obvious. But there is a second consequence of Bernays' theory, which would have made it even more irresistible to Nietzsche.

According to Bernays, ecstatic catharsis at the level of sensation brings with it a larger, quasi-religious component. Catharsis brings about a universalization of the self as the self expands ("erweitert") in two distinct ways: first, through *ek-stasis* (by being "placed outside itself", "ausser sich gesetzt", ibid.: 176), and then by an identification with the whole of humanity ("die ganze Menschheit", ibid.: 182). Ecstasy is an "excitation of universal human affections" ("Erregung universal menschlicher Affecte"), which are experienced at the deepest level, that of "the primordial form of the universally human character" ("Urform des allgemein menschlichen Charakters"), which is to say, that of an "Urpathos" (ibid.: 179, 181). In tragedy, this last stage is achieved by reaching out to others through identification *via* pity, and then by "recogniz[ing] [one's] position vis-à-vis the universe" ("sich seine stellung zum All . . . in der blossen Anschauung vergegenwärtigt", ibid.: 184) as the self "stands face to face with the frightfully sublime laws of the universe and its . . . incomprehensible power" ("es sich den furchtbar erhabenen Gesetzen des Alls und ihrer die Menschheit umfassenden unbegreiflichen

Affekten herbeigeführt", 1866: 22 ["In this way, pain and terror are purged through the excitation of these [same] affections"]), which Nietzsche, following Bernays, rejects. True to form, Nietzsche draws freely on a whole host of antecedents in the German tradition, including Karl Otfried Müller (quoted above), in order to produce a uniquely original product of his own.

Macht von Angesicht zu Angesicht gegenüberstelle", ibid.: 182). This vision of the universe, which is in principle available to all forms of cathartic ecstasy, produces not fear (φοβεῖσθαι) but trembling (or shuddering: *Schauder*, ῥρίττειν) and shock (*Erschütterung*), and then releases pleasure ("Lust") (ibid.). In the last analysis, Bernays' theory of *katharsis* is a theory of the ecstatic sublime. It is a theory of the ecstatic powers of life itself, which is to say, a theory that discovers a life-affirming ecstasy in the sublime experience of existence itself. All of this defines what is a truly cathartic experience for Bernays, which for him is neither "moral" nor "medical" (*BT* §22, Nietzsche 1967: 132 = *KSA* I: 142), but is rather at once the physiological, psychological, and metaphysical effect of what it is to be a sensate human creature.[57]

Nietzsche's theory of catharsis is likewise a theory of the sublime that captures everything that Bernays' theory seeks to capture: the ecstasy that is caused by one's being exposed to the mysteries of nature and the universe, the primordial qualities of *pathos* in its "Ur-form", the fear and trembling but also pleasure and release that the experience brings, the healing, life-affirming ingredients of this potential, and finally the culturally specific factors that shape the experience, which, to be sure, is not an everyday experience (any more than it was for Bernays). Rather, is an everyday *potential*, one that we both crave and fear to undergo. Nietzsche once worshipped Bernays as "the most brilliant representative of a philology of the future" ("den glänzendsten Vertreter einer Philologie der Zukunft"), most certainly on the basis of the latter's work on catharsis.[58] *The Birth of Tragedy* pays homage to this judgment, and then moves on from there. Nietzsche has become what Bernays had presaged – a philologist of the future.[59]

Abbreviations

DK Diels, Hermann and Walther Kranz (eds) (1951-2), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin: Weidmann.

KGW Colli, Giorgio and Mazzino Montinari (eds) (1967-), *Friedrich Nietzsche.*

[57] And not a strangely pathological human being. That Bernays' theory is neither medical nor moral is a fact that we can be sure Nietzsche would have recognized, just as some of Bernays's best contemporary readers did. See Porter 2015 for details. The reference in *BT* §22 would in that case be a concession to popular outraged misreadings of Bernays and, additionally, a way of camouflaging his real debt to this great predecessor in classics.

[58] Letter to Paul Deussen, 2 June 1868 (*KSB* 2: 284). For the suggestion, see Porter 2014: 46, n. 10.

[59] Thanks to Gherardo Ugolini for the invitation to contribute to this journal issue and for encouraging comments on this essay.

Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Continued by Volker Gerhardt, Norbert Miller, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter and Karl Pestalozzi, Berlin: De Gruyter.

KSA Colli, Giorgio and Mazzino Montinari (eds) [1980] (1988), *Friedrich Nietzsche. Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag / Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

KSB Colli, Giorgio and Mazzino Montinari (eds) (1986), *Friedrich Nietzsche. Sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Studienausgabe*, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag / Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

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Theatrical Catharsis and Its Therapeutic Effect. Catharsis in Vienna at the Turn of the Century

Abstract

Around 1900, catharsis became "one of the most frequently discussed topics amongst scholars and an equally popular conversation topic at the Viennese salons" (Ellenberger 1970: 2.655). The so-called 'Viennese discourse on catharsis' emerged as a reaction to Jacob Bernays's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* in which he interpreted the effects of tragedy as a medical procedure. Another important premise for the diffusion and popularization of the topic in the Danube metropolis was the activism of Theodor Gomperz, who not only spread the position of Jacob Bernays amongst philologists, but also succeeded in stirring the enthusiasm of people working outside the Classics departments. In 1893, for instance, the Viennese physicians Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer presented a therapy that was supposed to cure hysteria. Influenced by Gomperz, and following Bernays's assumptions, Freud and Breuer named their treatment "cathartic method". Searching for novel means of expression and insight, and being particularly interested in the description of affective phenomena, the artists of the 'Wiener Moderne' also adopted catharsis as a theme and discussed Bernays's interpretation and Breuer's and Freud's explanation of it in their writings. This article elucidates the foundations of the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis' and shows how contemporary playwrights reacted to the debate, using the works of Arthur Schnitzler and Hermann Bahr as examples.

Theodor Gomperz and the Discourse on Catharsis in Vienna

> In der Hauptsache hat Bernays tausendmal recht, und seine These steht allen Anfechtungen gegenüber unerschüttert und unerschütterlich fest. . . . Die griechische Formel, welche die Definition des Trauerspiels abschließt, besagt nicht 'Reinigung der Leidenschaften', sondern 'von den Leidenschaften' oder noch genauer 'Ausscheidung der Affekte'; es ist eine dem Bereich der Heilkunst entlehnte, mit einem starken Erdgeschmack behaftete Metapher, welche die das Gemüt erleichternde Entladung der Affekte bezeichnen soll. (Gomperz 1905: 119)

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> [Regarding the main issue, Bernays is a thousand times right, and his argument faces all challenges firmly and unshakably. . . . The Greek formula that concludes the definition of Tragedy does not describe a 'purification of the passions' but 'from the passions' or, even more accurately, the 'expulsion of the passions'; it is a metaphor derived from the art of medicine that is accompanied by a strong earthly taste and describes the kind of discharge of affects that offers relief to the mind.]

This quotation is taken from Theodor Gomperz's obituary on Jacob Bernays, who died in 1881. Gomperz, a well-known classicist who was teaching in Vienna at the time, emphasized in his necrology the medical aspects of Bernays's understanding of catharsis that had caused a heated debate several years before.

Turning away from poetic treatises of the eighteenth century, Bernays had liberated catharsis from its entirely moralistic interpretation, viewing it as a medical procedure instead. In his *Outline of Aristotle's Lost Treatise on the Effect of Tragedy* (*Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie*, 1857) he described it as a physical process that can lead to the discharge of the affects by way of their direct excitation. Referring to Aristotle's *Politics* (cf. Bernays 1968: 10), he compared the medical form of catharsis with the effects of theatre.[1] Bernays proved that Aristotle employs the concept of catharsis metaphorically. He also explained that the term was originally used to describe medical as well as religious purification processes, and that Aristotle was the first to transfer it into the realm of aesthetics (cf. ibid.: 6).

Shortly after Bernays's treatise on catharsis came out, Theodor Gomperz, whose philological works as well as his studies in the field of ancient philosophy had turned him into one of the most famous scholars of his time (cf. Gomperz 1865-66, 1883 1886, 1887, 1996), also began to study Aristotle's *Poetics*. From the winter semester of 1877-78 onwards, he repeatedly made it the central topic of his lectures. Gomperz, who was known not only as a scholar but also as a liberal politician, began to publish several treatises on the *Poetics* which were followed by his own translation of the text in 1897. In his rendition Gomperz used Bernays as a basis to support his own translation of "catharsis" as "discharge" ("Entladung", Gomperz 1897: 11) and interpreted the process (in the sense of the *genitivus separativus*) as a liberation from harmful affections. Thanks to his academic merits and his political

[1] Bernays translates Aristotle's essay on tragedy as follows: "[D]ie Tragödie bewirkt durch [Erregung von] Mitleid und Furcht die erleichternde Entladung solcher [mitleidigen und furchtsamen] Gemüthsaffectionen" (Bernays 1968: 21). ["Through the (excitation of) compassion and fear tragedy causes the relieving discharge of such (compassionate and fearful) affectations of the mind"].

prominence Gomperz was received gladly at Vienna's salons. There he consorted with scholars and public servants as well as artists and thus contributed to the exchange of ideas within the Danube metropolis. His examination of the *Poetics*, including Bernays's medical interpretation of the passage on tragedy, directed the attention of Vienna's society to the question of the effects of tragedy. He became the founder of the "Wiener Katharsis-Diskurs", the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis'.[2]

The assumption that art and science were engaged in an increased "introspection" in turn-of-the-century Vienna has long been a *topos* amongst researchers on the subject. As a reaction to the often invoked "situation of crisis" that took place around 1900 (cf. Schorske 1982; Le Rider 1990) and during which the subject experienced the loss of its autonomy, and also as a general response to the rationalization of the world, art and science were looking for new ways of gaining insight (of the human mind). They found it in the exploration of the affects and their epiphenomena. According to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the Danube Metropolis became the "porta orientis . . . for that secret inner orient, the realm of the unconscious".[3] It is not surprising, therefore, that Vienna's artists and intellectuals were intrigued by the phenomenon described by Gomperz and that they became exceedingly interested in the pleasurable experience of an affect-induced purification of the mind. It is no wonder indeed, that catharsis would become "one of the most frequently discussed topics amongst scholars and an equally popular conversation topic at the Viennese salons" (Ellenberger 1973: 2.665).

This article elucidates the foundations of the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis' and shows how the so-called 'Viennese modernists' reacted to the debate.

Sigmund Freud's and Josef Breuer's 'Cathartic Method'.

In 1880 the psychiatrist Josef Breuer began treating the then twenty-one-year-old Bertha Pappenheim. Under the pseudonym of 'Ms Anna O.' her case would make history (cf. Borch-Jacobsen 1996; Reicheneder 1983; Gödde 2009). As is well known, Bertha Pappenheim needed medical attention after falling ill while taking care of her dying father, especially when her condition worsened after his death. She was suffering from all kinds of mental infirmities (anxiety, hallucinations, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, etc.) as well as severe physical symptoms and was even confined to her bed by paralysis

[2] The term was first introduced by Günther Gödde (2009: 88-91).

[3] "[P]orta orientis . . . für jenen geheimnisvollen inneren Ort das Reich des Unbewussten" (qtd in Worbs 1983: 8).

and contraction of the limbs. Moreover, she was afflicted by a nervous cough as well as occasional dumbness and impaired vision. During her illness she lost the ability to communicate in her mother tongue and spoke and understood English only (cf. Breuer and Freud 1957: 21-5). Josef Breuer diagnosed her with hysteria, as it was common around 1900 (cf. Didi-Huberman 1997).

With his groundbreaking research at the Salpêtrière, a mental asylum in Paris, the physician Jean-Martin Charcot had brought hysteria to public attention. Throughout the 1880s his work was dedicated to describing and systematizing its symptoms. Like most physicians of his time he was convinced that hysteria was a hereditary neurological disease. In 1885 Sigmund Freud visited the Salpêtrière for four months as an intern. But he soon began to look for alternative explanations of hysteria that challenged Charcot's hypothesis as well as his attempts at curing it. Instead of further relying on the allegedly hereditary character of the disease, Freud focused on the patients' medical and personal history, especially on any kind of trauma they might have experienced. When Breuer told him about Bertha Pappenheim he rapidly became interested in the case (cf. Freud 1968: 47). Breuer told his colleague that, during the course of his work with Pappenheim, he had noticed that frequent conversation was able to alleviate her symptoms. In his medical report, Breuer mentions that his patient was actually "calm, cheerful" ("ruhig, heiter") and "completely reasonable" ("völlig vernünftig") as soon as she began to "tell her suffering away" (das Leid "weg[zu]erzählen"), thus "getting rid of all psychological stimuli" ("die psychischen Reize fortschaffen") (Breuer 1978: 348-64). Pappenheim herself called this process "chimney-sweeping" (Breuer and Freud 2007: 50, 280) and named the therapeutic process itself the "talking cure" (ibid.: 30, 31, 38, 40). In the course of this treatment both doctor and patient realized that the hysterical symptoms disappeared "as soon as the event which had given rise to [the hysterical phenomena] was reproduced in her hypnosis".[4] The traumatic event that caused Bertha's illness took place at her father's sick bed. While Bertha was drowsing, she noticed that a black serpent was approaching him. Fearing greatly for her father, she failed to remove the animal because her arm had gone numb on the armrest of the chair. In this moment of great distress she tried to utter a prayer, but all she could remember was a "children's verse in English" ("englische[r] Kindervers", ibid.: 39). The confusion of languages as well as the paralysis and anxiety originated in this instance were complemented by further symptoms caused by other forgotten traumata. Only by way of a systematic recollection and through 'talking away' these events could Bertha be freed from them. However, as Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen has shown

[4] "[S]obald in der Hypnose das Ereignis reproduziert war, welches das Symptom veranlaßt hatte" (Breuer and Freud 2007: 55).

in his impressive study, the alleviation of Bertha's symptoms was only of a short duration, as it took years for her health to become permanently stable again (Borch-Jacobsen 1996). Upon his return to Vienna, Freud began to collaborate with Breuer and to test the latter's newly discovered method on his own patients (cf. Freud 1893: 186). Ultimately he took the leadership in developing a theory that was first published in the 1893 issue of the journal *Neurologisches Zentralblatt* under the title "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication" ("Vorläufige Mitteilung über den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene"). An extended explication of Breuer's and Freud's findings, supplemented with five case studies, was published in 1895 in their *Studies on Hysteria* (*Studien über Hysterie*), where they argued that hysteria was caused by psychological traumata (cf. Breuer and Freud 1957: 3); a clinical case would emerge, they argued, if dramatic life events were not treated with an appropriate affective reaction (cf. ibid.: 8) and when the affects related to those events were instead suppressed (cf. Freud 1893: 193). In their opinion, the trauma would turn into an unconscious yet virulent memory provided that the person in question was, in the moment of affliction, in a "hypnotic state" (Breuer and Freud 1957: 28). The "excitation" ("Erregung") would then be "converted" and subsequently re-emerge as a hysterical symptom (ibid.: 206). This means that the "sum of excitation" ("Erregungssumme", Freud 1894: 63) of the traumatic experience would be "transposed into the body" ("ins Körperliche umgesetzt", ibid.) and the symptom would thus become the symbol of the suppressed injury. If the therapist was able to re-discover, with the help of hypnosis (Breuer and Freud 1957: 3), the 'missing link', i.e. the piece of memory that connected the symptom with the trauma, the unexpressed affect could retroactively be "abreacted" (Freud 1893: 195). In this process it was important that "the physical process which originally took place [was] repeated as vividly as possible; [that it was] brought back to its *status nascendi* and then given verbal utterance".[5] Because "[r]ecollection without affect" ("affektloses Erinnern") almost invariably produces no effect" ("fast immer wirkungslos"). The doctors named their cure the "cathartic method" ("kathartische Methode") (ibid.: XXIX, 108-9 ff.).

Like Gomperz, Breuer and Freud used Bernays's interpretation as a basis for developing their notion of catharsis, which bears strong similarities to the cathartic process of tragedy and ancient cult as it is depicted by classicists (cf. Gödde 2009). According to Freud and Breuer the "trapped affects" ("eingeklemmten Affekte") that they had discovered in their studies on hys-

[5] "[D]er psychische Prozeß, der ursprünglich abgelaufen war, . . . so lebhaft wie möglich wiederholt, *in statum nascendi* gebracht und dann 'ausgesprochen'" (Breuer and Freud 1957: 6).

teria (Freud 1910: 13) have to be discharged by re-awakening the traumatic experience and the "accompanying affect" ("begleitenden Affekt", Breuer and Freud 1957: 6) in order to repeat them "as vividly as possible" ("so lebhaft als möglich", ibid.), and eventually articulate them. This process, in turn, is strongly reminiscent of Bernays's representation of the "treatment of one under trepidation" ("Behandlung eines Beklommenen") and unable to suppress the "element oppressing him" ("ihn beklemmende Element"). This process was supposed to "excite" ("aufregen") and "force out" ("hervortreiben") that element (Bernays 1968: 16). "[B]oth are based on a concept of emotional 'release' through affective discharge", as Sanford Gifford describes the intersections between the two processes (1977: 179); he also adds that both depended on the arousal of affects before the symptoms were alleviated or calmed down (cf. ibid.: 179-80). In accordance with Bernays, Freud and Breuer interpreted catharsis as a process that liberated man from pathological states of mind caused by excessive excitation.[6]

Research on this subject has often speculated as to why Breuer and Freud became interested in catharsis in general and how Bernays's interpretation evolved in particular. Scholars such as Juan Dalma, Henry F. Ellenberger as well as Albrecht Hirschmüller, among others, have tried to explain this with the fact that Freud and Bernays were related (cf. Dalma 2004; Hirschmüller 1978; Ellenberger 1973). However, there is no immediate connection between Breuer's and Freud's interest in the "theory of catharsis [sic]" (Freud 1926: 300) and the fact that the latter's wife, Martha, was a niece of Bernays. There is no proof that Freud was personally acquainted with Bernays or that any direct exchange between them ever occurred. The fact that the two doctors contributed to the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis' might rather be explained by their close connection with Theodor Gomperz, with whom Freud had been in contact ever since he translated a volume of Gomperz's edition of John Stuart Mill's writings (Mill 1880). Breuer, on the other hand, was acquainted with them as their family doctor (cf. Hirschmüller 1978: 51, 179, 208). An elaborate exchange of letters between Josef Breuer and Theodor Gomperz, in which they talk about the limits and the effects of catharsis in theatre and in practical therapy, testifies to the intensity of their relation (cf. Langholf 1990).

On 2 February 1896, a review of *Studies on Hysteria* appeared in the Viennese daily newspaper *Morgen-Presse*. The author was Alfred von Berger, a

[6] The difference between the two approaches is that, in the best case, Breuer's and Freud's patients were permanently released from their suppressed affects, whereas the "psychological catharsis" (Bernays 1968: 65-6), as it was described by Bernays and as it occurred in the context of cult and theatre, could "only effect a temporary appeasement, never a permanent reconciliation" (ibid.).

professor of Aesthetics at the University of Vienna who would later become the director of the famous Burgtheater. He published an emphatic acclamation of Freud's and Breuer's work that was entitled *Chirurgie der Seele* ("Surgery of the Soul"). Nevertheless, Berger stated in a lapidary way that the two doctors had merely put down on paper an "age-old piece of poetic psychology" ("Stück uralter Dichterpsychologie", Berger 1896: 1; Urban 1978: 20). He exemplified his claim with a reference, among others, to Macbeth, who in his days would have been diagnosed with a "safeguard neurosis" ("Abwehrneurose", Berger 1986: 1); furthermore, he mentioned Goethe's description of the cure of Orestes, which, he argued, was nothing less than a successful "cathartic cure" ("Katharsiskur", ibid.). For Berger the attraction of the *Studies* did not consist in their originality, but in the realization that researchers and artists alike were connected in a "communal bond" as they struggled to uncover the "secrets of the human soul" ("Geheimnisse der Menschenseele", ibid.).

However, an analysis of contemporary publications makes it clear that there were significant differences between artists and scientists in the way they viewed this "internal world" and the world of affect in general. Psychoanalysis, being still young at the time, was primarily concerned with the potential dangers of certain mental states (cf. Jensen 2008) and investigated the effects of affect suppression and unsatisfied drives. The Viennese modernists, on the other hand, believed in the heuristic potential of such *états d'âme* ("Seelenstände"), which is why they were quite keen to feel as much as possible (cf. Fliedl 2006; Neymeyr 2007). For this reason, Viennese writers were sceptical about the medical or 'separatist' view of catharsis as it was popular around 1900 and began to develop their own perspective on the matter. Based on the writings of Bernays, Breuer, and Freud they introduced an interpretation of catharsis that promoted a positive view of affect which, using examples from the works of Arthur Schnitzler und Hermann Bahr, will be explicated in the following section.

Therapeutics as Theatre: Schnitzler's *Paracelsus*

Arthur Schnitzler, a trained doctor in his own right, was one of the first writers to turn the medical view of catharsis, especially the 'cathartic method' developed by Breuer and Freud, into a dramatic subject of his work. In *Paracelsus*, a one-act play published in 1898 and first performed in 1899, the famous physician meddles deliberately with the life of the self-confident Cyprian by insinuating that his wife has been unfaithful to him.

The action of the play is set at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Thirteen years after leaving Basel, Paracelsus returns to his home town as a

popular, albeit controversial physician with questionable methods. He draws some attention to himself by hypnotizing sick people on the market place of the town, thus relieving them of their suffering. During one of his public consultations he is discovered by Cyprian, a young armourer who recognizes him as a former rival in the suit of his beloved wife Justina. With much confidence he invites Paracelsus to his home in order to impress him with his standard of living and embarrass him by showing off his wife's devotion. Paracelsus reacts with a provocation: he hypnotizes Justina and makes her believe that she has been unfaithful to Cyprian. Consequently, Cyprian's view of the world begins to falter and when Paracelsus threatens him to never release her from this phantasm, Cyprian begs for mercy. Eventually, Paracelsus frees Justina from the suggestion of the (imaginary) affair. However, during a second hypnosis session he implants the suggestion that, until the end of the day, she can speak nothing but the truth. Awakening from the hypnosis she confesses to every man present that thirteen years before she was in love with Paracelsus. She also tells them that she is now committed to a life with Cyprian and no longer has any feelings for Paracelsus. Following this revelation, the doctor announces that he is going to leave the city. At the same time Cyprian declares that he is healed once and for all from his excessive pride.

In his play, not only does Schnitzler describe the cure of mental illness by means of hypnosis (cf. Ellenberger 1973), as was popular around 1900 especially with regard to hysteria, but he also introduces the basic features of the 'cathartic method' that had been developed as an alternative to hypnosis. Thus Paracelsus asks Justina:

> Scheut Ihr Erinnerung?
> Man kann ihr besser nicht die Schauer nehmen,
> Als wenn man sie zum Leben wieder weckt.
> (Schnitzler 1962: 477)

> [Do you fear your memory? / One cannot better rid you of your fear / Than when one wakes the past to life again. (Schnitzler 1913: 100)]

Justina, on the other hand, turns to her allegedly cuckolded husband, saying: "Let all now be told. 'Tis for the best" (ibid.: 114). In her fine piece on Schnitzler's conception of catharsis, Elsbeth Dangel-Pelloquin states that "Hypnosis", as Schnitzler uses it in this play, is supposed to "suppress emotions and brings to light phantasies" instead, "thereby following its use by Breuer and Freud" (Dangel-Pelloquin forthcoming, cf. Worbs 2009).

Being a member of the "communicative community" ("Kommunikationsgemeinschaft", Mayerhofer and Zand 2000: xii) of the 'Viennese modernists', Schnitzler was involved in the debates that were unfolding at the time. He

knew about the 'discourse on catharsis' as initiated by Gomperz. Thanks to his position as editor of the *Internationale Klinische Rundschau*, an international medical journal, he was aware of the ongoing debate on the treatment of hysteria. Furthermore, as a practicing physician who was specialized in the treatment of mental illnesses, he was familiar with the practice of hypnosis (cf. Schnitzler 1988; Müller-Seidel 1997). In his early play *Anatol* (1893), Schnitzler already introduced a critical perspective on this form of therapy and called into question the efficiency of the treatment as well as the position of power granted to the therapist (Stiles 2004-05, 64ff.). In the aftermath of the publication of Freud's and Breuer's *Preliminary Communication* as well as its review by Berger, Schnitzler had also begun to think about the 'cathartic method'. His ideas regarding this issue are expressed in *Paracelsus*. The play reflects the period's research positions on hysteria and represents precisely "the contemporary psychiatric controversies as well as a paradigm change in the research on hysteria", as Konstanze Fliedl shows in her fundamental study on Schnitzler (Fliedl 1997: 87).

The historical Paracelsus (1493-1551), who served as a model for the protagonist of Schnitzler's play, provoked doctors as well as apothecaries by questioning on their authority with vehemence and by casting doubt on their conception of medicine in general. His unconventional conduct culminated during the time he served as the town physician of Basel, when he publicly burned a textbook of Scholasticism in 1527, a provocation that elicited vehement attacks against his person and compelled him to leave the city (cf. Classen 2010: 1-20).

The counterpart of Paracelsus's character in Schnitzler's play is a town physician named "Doktor Copus". Schnitzler lets Paracelsus emerge as the winner of the argument; at the end of the play Copus is even forced to communicate a job offer from the city council to his opponent, which Paracelsus eventually turns down.

Oliver Pfohlmann recognizes in this setup a literary parallel to the controversy that emerged between Sigmund Freud and Theodor Meynert (cf. Pfohlmann 2006: 130) around 1900. At that time Freud was still a disciple of Charcot and was just about to turn into the representative of a new theory of hysteria. He had therefore already fallen from the grace of the so-called 'Vienna School', where he had received his education. Whereas the Viennese doctors were fixated on the physiological aspects of the disease, Freud attempted, independently of Charcot, to comprehend the phenomenon from a psychological point of view. As a consequence he lost the support of the university's medical school and was compelled to conduct his research on his own (cf. Worbs 1983: 205).

Schnitzler had a detailed knowledge of Freud's position. During his time as an editor of the *Internationale Medizinische Rundschau*, he reviewed

Freud's translations of the writings of Charcot and Bernheim and thereby supported him in his dispute with Vienna's medical school (ibid.: 196), where he had received his own education (Nehring 1977: 183; Stiles 2004-05: 61). As is well known, Freud regarded Schnitzler as a kindred spirit whose writings reflected his own ideas (cf. Freud's letters to Schnitzler: Freud 1955: 95-106, esp. 95-6, letters from 1906 and 1922; cf. Stiles 2004-05; Nehring 1977). In 1899, after a visit to the theatre, Freud writes to a friend: "I was recently quite astonished, as I was watching Schnitzler's *Paracelsus*, as to how much such a poet knows of these things" (Farese 1999: 83).

A closer look at the play makes Freud's praise seem astonishing, because *Paracelsus* is saturated with criticism regarding the doctor's methods; indeed, what Schnitzler accomplishes in *Paracelsus* is much more than the mere transference of psychiatric knowledge into literature. The special appeal of the play lies in the way it problematizes this particular form of knowledge. Even though Schnitzler has Paracelsus emerge victoriously from his dispute with Copus, he abstains from representing him as a shining hero. Instead he reveals the unethical practice of his protagonist. In the case of Justina, for example, the doctor does not actually use hypnosis for the purpose of curing her from hysteria but to the contrary he uses it to cause hysteria in her. He excites fake memories in the girl and pretends to be able to help with its 'abreaction'. Paracelsus' dubiousness is increased by the fact that he suddenly fears to lose control over the game, even though he initiated it himself as a shady master of ceremonies:

> Schlägt mir überm Haupt
> Des eignen Zaubers Schwall mit Hohn zusammen?
> Und wirren sich die Grenzen selbst für mich?
> (Schnitzler 1962: 490)

> [Doth the ironic flood / Of mine own magic close over mine head? / And the dividing limits e'en for me / Run into one another? (Schnitzler 1913: 115)]

A critical reflection on hypnotic suggestion and the 'cathartic method', as constitutive of the play's plot, also occurs at the formal level since Schnitzler devised the hypnosis experiment conducted by Paracelsus as 'play-within-the-play'. Adopting the function of a director, Paracelsus forces Justina into a private theatrical performance to be carried out in front of Cyprian. Schnitzler thereby alludes to the fact that the pre-Freudian therapy of hysteria was often performed in front of an audience, especially by Charcot who regularly exhibited his female patients during his *leçons du mardi*. Through this double construction Schnitzler is not only able to cast a critical look on the methodology of the 'Paris school', but he also calls into question the medical concept of catharsis of the time. Through the content of the 'play-within-the-play',

Paracelsus' promise of a cathartic experience is exposed and revealed to be a lie. Justina's hope to relieve herself of her sinful past fails because the painful memories invoked by the doctor are not actually her own. Cyprian, on the other hand, being the audience of the 'play-within-the-play', cannot escape a certain cathartic experience. Within Schnitzler's comedy, Justina's husband experiences a tragedy. By means of his theatrical production Paracelsus makes him pass through the emotions of fear and compassion. The outcome of this *tour de force* is not a medical form of catharsis but moral purification. Freed from his arrogance Cyprian utters the following epilogue:

> Ich weiß nicht, ob er Gutes wirken wollte,
> Doch war es gut, drum wollen wir ihn loben.
> Ein Sturmwind kam, der hat auf Augenblicke
> Die Tore unsrer Seele aufgerissen,
> Wir haben einen Blick hineingetan…
> Es ist vorbei, die Tore fallen zu. –
> Doch was ich heut gesehn, für alle Zeit
> Soll's mich vor allzu großem Stolze hüten.
> Es war ein Spiel, doch fand ich seinen Sinn; –
> Und weiß, daß ich auf rechtem Wege bin
> (Schnitzler 1962: 498)

> [I know not if he wished benevolence. / Yet was it good, and therefore will we praise him. / A whirlwind came, who for a moment hath / Torn open all the portals of our souls, / And we have looked within us for a while… / 'Tis over, and the portals close again - / Yet what I saw to-day, for future time, / Shall hold me safe from all excess of pride. / It was a play, yet I did find its sense, / And know that I shall keep the right road hence. (Schnitzler 1913: 123-4)]

The catharsis of Cyprian is reminiscent of eighteenth-century aesthetics. Instead of describing the dramatic art as a therapeutic method he represents the theatre as a place of *paideia*. In contrast to other trends of the time, Cyprian's purification experience is pre-Freudian, even pre-Bernaysian: in his case there is no 'abreaction' of suppressed affects, as he experiences a moral purification instead. He emerges from the play as a better person, just like Lessing had demanded (Lessing 1973: 592-6, esp. 595).

What Schnitzler wants to tell us here is that no therapy is necessary in order to be cured. Due to his practical experience as a doctor, Schnitzler, at least in *Paracelsus*, turns out to be a sceptic of therapy and this is why Justina does not experience a medical form of catharsis, because she is free of her former feelings already and does not need to be liberated from them. Without any psychotherapy, free from any fear of social consequences and only compelled by the truth, she reveals that the state of her feelings has changed over the years. She simply states that she does not love Paracelsus

anymore. And by doing so she liberates herself from the role previously assigned to her; she unties herself from Cyprian's proprietary claims and at the same time denies Paracelsus any control over her emotions. And what about Paracelsus himself? He does not require catharsis and consequently does not receive any. He does not suffer from any suppressed affects because he reacts directly to Cyprian's provocation by plotting revenge. As Freud and Breuer write in their *Preliminary Communication*, revenge is an "appropriate reaction" to an emotionally charged event (Breuer and Freud 1957: 8). The immediate 'acting out' prevents the affect involved from becoming pathological. Paracelsus' behaviour might be immoral, but regarding the affective outcome it is flawless. Berger also mentions the positive effects of revenge in his review of the *Preliminary Communication*:

> Die Entladung kann aus verschiedenen Ursachen unterbleiben, die Natur des Traumas kann eine entsprechende Reaktion ausschließen, die socialen Verhältnisse können sie unmöglich machen – wie viel Nervenübel sind wol dadurch in die Welt gekommen, daß unsere öffentliche Ordnung eine ausgiebige persönliche Rache für erlittene Beleidigung in den meisten Fällen verhindert! (Berger 1896: 3)
>
> [For various reasons the (affective) discharge may be unnecessary; the nature of the trauma may exclude a respective reaction, the social conditions could make it impossible – how much mental suffering must have come into the world because, in most cases, our public order prevents the excessive personal revenge of indignations suffered!]

In this respect it is an advantage that Paracelsus is a social outcast who does not feel compelled to adhere to social regulations.

To sum up, we have seen that Schnitzler discusses in his *Paracelsus* the different methods of treating hysteria. Even though he turns against the medical concept of the 'Vienna School', he is just as sceptical of modern forms of therapy. Thus, he problematizes both hypnotic suggestion and the 'cathartic method' through the form and content of his play. Schnitzler's approach is particularly remarkable when it comes to his criticism of the 'cathartic method'. He is is one of the first poets who refers to this modern form of therapy only in order to demonstrate its fallibility, thus committing to a traditional concept of catharsis.

Theatre as Therapy: Bahr's *Dialogue on the Tragic* (*Dialog vom Tragischen*)

Hermann Bahr had an exceptional position amongst artists and creatives in Vienna. Being the self-proclaimed leader of the 'Jung-Wien' ('Young-Vien-

na') group as well as a professed "man of the day-after-tomorrow" ("Mann von Übermorgen", Bahr 2011: 2), he had the ambition to recognize fashionable cultural phenomena before they became acceptable and to overcome them before they could become customary. He acted as a catalyst and multiplier of new ideas. In his writings on cultural theory, as well as in his feuilletons, he accumulated current discoveries from the spheres of art and science. Connecting those ideas to one another, he created new forms of knowledge that shaped the various discourses of his time. Bahr's contribution to the discussion of catharsis was particularly productive.

The self-proclaimed "Herr von Adabei" (Bahr 2011: 2) joined the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis' at a rather late point in time, which was untypical of him. Half a decade after Berger had recommended the 'cathartic method' to the poets, five years after Gomperz's translation of the *Poetics*, and four years after the publication of Schnitzler's *Paracelsus*, Bahr eventually started making notes on catharsis in his sketch books, headed by the words "Credo/Eros" (Bahr 1997: 83-131). There are no reasons to be found for such an astounding delay in one who may have been the 'most modern amongst the modern'.

In his sketch book Bahr first collected his thoughts on the meaning of the purification process and the proper translation of the Aristotelian passage on tragedy. In one of the passages from "Credo/Eros" Bahr compares different translation possibilities and wonders:

> heißt τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν eine Reinigung, die mit diesen Affecten [geschieht], (Lessing)
> oder eine Reinigung = Befreiung von ihnen, (Bernays) ("Entladung" Gomperz)
> oder kann es auch heißen:
> eine Reinigung, Erleichter[un]g der Seele, wie sie mit dem Durchmachen dieser Affecte verbunden ist? (meine Vermutung) Entladung des Zuschauers, wie sie sonst nur durch die Affecte selbst geschieht. (Bahr 1997: 83)

> [does τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν mean that these affects experience a purification (Lessing) or that there is a purification = liberation from them (Bernays) ("discharge" Gomperz) or could it also mean: a purification, liberation of the soul as it is related to the experience of these affects? (my supposition) discharge in the spectator as it otherwise happens only through the affects themselves.]

Like many interpreters of catharsis before him, Bahr is particularly interested in the various translations of the genitive construction τῶν παθημάτων. If one reads it as a *genitivus objectivus*, it means that tragedy purifies the passions themselves. If one interprets it as a *genitivus subjectivus*, it means that the purification happens through the passions. If a third possibility, the *genitivus separativus*, is considered, it means that the spectator is liberated from

his passions. In the passage cited above, not only does Bahr cast doubt on the objective variation preferred by Lessing, but he also questions the possibility of the *separativus*, an interpretation which, based on Gomperz, had become a "dogma" in Vienna (Egger 1883: 3). Instead, he boldly advocates the unpopular third possibility of the *subjectivus*. In the works following the "Credo/Eros" manuscript, he expands this idea and begins to search for a definitive answer to the questions related to catharsis.

The text that best reveals Bahr's interest in catharsis is his *Dialogue on the Tragic* (*Dialog vom Tragischen*), which first came out in July 1903 in the newspaper *Neue deutsche Rundschau* and was later published, along with other articles on the subject, by Fischer Verlag in Berlin. Bahr chose a form of representation that he described as a "form hovering between art and science",[7] namely the dialogic form, which was very popular in the years around 1900 (cf. Sprengel 2004: 727). Under the guidance of a Master, a narrator (Erzähler), a doctor, a young man, an artist, and a grammarian discuss the nature of the tragic and the effects of dramatic art. The first part of the dialogue, which comprises three parts in all, is dedicated to the idea of theatre as a kind of therapy as well as to the related phenomenon of catharsis. Bahr stages his idea about the emergence and history of this concept by having each participant in the discussion represent a specific stage of its reception (e.g. Lessing's moralistic and Bernays's medical interpretations). Then, he moves on to a psychoanalytical reading of catharsis. He writes:

> Die Tragödie will in der Tat nichts anderes, als jene beiden Ärzte tun: sie erinnert ein durch Kultur krankes Volk, woran es nicht erinnert sein will, an seine schlechten Affekte, die es versteckt, an den früheren Menschen der Wildheit, der im gebildeten, den er jetzt spielt, immer noch kauert und knirscht, und reißt ihm die Ketten ab und läßt das Tier los, bis es sich ausgetobt hat und der Mensch, von den schleichenden Dämpfen und Gasen rein und frei, durch Erregung beschwichtigt, bildsam zur Sitte zurückkehren kann. (Bahr 1904: 23-4)
>
> [Tragedy does not want to achieve anything but precisely that which those two doctors do: it reminds a people debilitated by culture of that which it does not want to be reminded of: of those wicked passions that it conceals; of the formerly wild man, who, though playing the educated man now, still crouches and gnashes; and he tears his shackles and releases the animal, until it has let off steam and until man, now freed and purified from those creeping fumes and vapours, appeased by way of excitation, can dutifully return to righteousness.]

Bahr takes catharsis, which had been separated from the question of its poet-

[7] "[Z]wischen Kunst und Wissenschaft schwebende Form" (Bahr 1997: 111).

ic effects by Breuer and Freud, back to the theatre – after identifying the parallels between the 'cathartic method' and Bernays's medical interpretation of catharsis. This is how he builds his argument that theatre is a sanatorium for hysterics, a place where suppressed memories can be re-awakened and repressed affects can be acted out. His way of thinking is splendid, but not original. In 1897 an article by Alfred Berger appeared as a supplement to Theodor Gomperz's translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. It was entitled *Truth and Error in Aristotle's Theory of Catharsis* (*Wahrheit und Irrtum der Katharsistheorie des Aristoteles*, Berger 1991: 128-56). Motivated by his earlier review of the *Studies on Hysteria*, Berger further developed his reflections on the relationship between psychoanalysis and "poetic psychology" ("Dichterpsychologie", Berger 1896: 2), and, seven years before Hermann Bahr, he elaborated a psychotherapeutic conception of tragedy.

Bahr was aware of Berger's work. In notations dating from 1902 he refers specifically to Berger and lists him alongside other commentators of the *Poetics*, namely Lessing, Bernays, and Gomperz (Bahr 1902). In the *Dialogue on the Tragic*, on the other hand, Berger is not mentioned at all. It is impossible to explain why Bahr would obfuscate Berger's contribution to the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis', thus presenting himself as the initiator of a psychoanalytical interpretation of the tragic. This is particularly astounding if one considers that both worked together and were part of the same social circles. It should be mentioned, however, that Bahr's 'silence' is not limited to the case of Berger as it was indeed rather characteristic of the way he handled his sources. It is quite typical of Bahr's work attitude to appropriate the ideas of others without properly delineating the boundaries between his own and other people's thoughts. In the *Dialogue on the Tragic*, for example, not only does Bahr reference the *Studies on Hysteria* explicitly, but he also quotes them several times without identifying Breuer's and Freud's writings as his source (Bahr 1904: 25-7; Breuer and Freud 1957: 8, 211). Breuer and Freud probably forgave the error. At least so it would appear when Breuer writes in the *Studies* that, if a science is advancing swiftly, one cannot always

> vermeiden, daß er eine Menge Gedanken anderer ausspreche und wiederhole, die eben aus dem Individualbesitze in den Gemeinbesitz übergehen. . . . So möge es entschuldigt werden, wenn hier wenige Zitate gebracht werden und zwischen Eigenem und Fremdem nicht streng unterschieden wird. (Breuer and Freud 2007: 203-4)

> [avoid repeating a great quantity of other people's thoughts which are in the act of passing from personal into a general possession. . . . I hope, therefore, that I may be excused if few quotations are found in this discussion and if no strict distinction is made between what is my own and what originates elsewhere. (Breuer and Freud 1957: 186)]

The *Dialogue on the Tragic*, however, is not remarkable because it reiterates the ideas of others, but first and foremost because it develops them and takes them a decisive step further than Freud, Breuer, and Berger. While Bahr's predecessors understood catharsis as a means of curing individual suffering, Bahr construes it as a driving force of phylogenesis. As Konstanze Fliedl states in an article entitled "Aesthetic Masochism" ("Ästhetischer Masochismus"), Bahr thus initiates a "novel turn" ("neue Wendung") (Fliedl forthcoming) within the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis'. By considering the social implications of catharsis he expands the debate, which had previously focused primarily on aesthetics, psychology, and medicine, by adding an anthropological dimension to it.

Large parts of the preliminary studies to the *Dialogue on the Tragic* are already dedicated to catharsis as a regulative principle of society and to the civilizing function of an institutionalized way of discharging affects (cf. Bahr 1997: 101-7). Using Freud's and Breuer's hypotheses as a point of departure, in "Credo/Eros" Bahr develops a "three-part mechanism consisting of instinct suppression, hysteria, and a salutary discharge" (Fliedl forthcoming), which he will later publish in the *Dialogue on the Tragic*. In his preliminary studies he already states that the "whole development of culture" ("alle Bildung von Cultur") is unavoidably accompanied by the "expulsion of nature" ("Austreibung der Natur", Bahr 1997: 104) and that all advances of civilization are based on the suppression of "certain affects" (ibid.: 106). In the *Dialogue on the Tragic* he proceeds to explain at length that society occasionally needs to act out its restrained affects in order to prevent them from becoming harmful (cf. Bahr 1904: 23-4). Tragedy, he argues, was invented for the purpose of controlling precisely this process. Through the feeling of compassion for stage characters, the suppressed affects could be recognized and acted out (cf. ibid.). That way, an uncontrolled ab-reaction of affects through actual deeds would become superfluous, he concludes (cf. ibid.: 25). According to Bahr this development originates in antiquity. The Greeks invented tragedy, he claims, in order to create an institutionalized means of taming socially undesirable drives. Regarding this matter, the *Dialogue* says:

> Die ganze Kultur der Griechen . . . war rings von Hysterie beschlichen und umstellt. Wir sehen sie überall lauern, wir hören sie überall röcheln. . . . Aber da hatte die Nation noch die Kraft, eine Anstalt zu erfinden, die ihr half, ihre Hysterie auf die größte Art, abzureagieren'– die Tragödie. (Bahr 1904: 23).
>
> [The entire culture of the Greeks . . . was surrounded and crept upon by hysteria. We could see it lurking everywhere, we could hear it rattle in every place. . . . But at that time the nation still possessed the power to invent an institution that would help it to 'ab-react' its hysteria in the grandest of ways: tragedy.]

Bahr's remarks on the pathology of the Greeks were mainly inspired by Jacob Burckhardt's *History of Greek Culture* (*Griechische Kulturgeschichte*) (1898-1902) and Erwin Rohde's *Psyche* (1890-94). Both Rohde and Burckhardt are representatives of an anti-classicist reception of antiquity, which had become more and more popular since the mid-nineteenth century and probably had its most prominent advocate in Friedrich Nietzsche. The works of these authors focus on a version of antiquity that they imagine as cruel, irrational, wild, and unrestrained, an antiquity that is struggling with its passions and is therefore fundamentally different from the Hellenistic antiquity that Winckelmann had associated with "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" ("edle Einfalt, stille Größe", Winckelmann 1948: 20). Bahr was particularly impressed by the fourth part of Burckhardt's *History of Greek Culture*, in which the latter talks about the occurrence of a certain decadence that emerged from a repressive culture. He thus informs his readers about the mental state of Greek society and writes about the "morbid state of Athens", the "nervousness" of the Greeks, stating that it was the "infinitely repressed anger and sorrow of the citizen" that "had made him sick and anxious" (Burckhardt 1977: 189). In addition to this Bahr also found a model for the healing power of strong affection of the mind in both Bernays's remarks on Dionysian ecstasy and Rohde's descriptions of corybantism (cf. Rohde 1991: 50).

Contrary to the expectations of the reader the first part of the *Dialogue on the Tragic* ends with a spectacular turn. Based on his conception of cultural evolution according to which society is actually in the process of continual progression, Bahr suggests that, in the course of the advance of civilization, catharsis has reached its limits. Having thought intensely about the effects and functions of a psychoanalytical version of catharsis, even declaring it to be the *nucleus* of culture, he now questions its use for the civilized human being in general.

As Bahr argues, the "new man" ("neue Mensch", Bahr 1904: 10-12, 38), which is modelled according to Nietzsche's "Übermensch" (ibid.: 32), does not need the theatre as a site of purification because he is not plagued by the same passions as his forefathers (ibid.: 31). Man has evolved and strives to achieve an even purer natural state (ibid.: 10-12, 38). He wants to create a "higher being" ("höheres Wesen", ibid.: 32, cf. also Nietzsche 1882-84: 213), an "Übermensch", for whom the difference between good and evil no longer exists, for whom no drive is repulsive, and to whom every vice is tolerable (cf. Bahr 1904: 48-59, Nietzsche 1883-85: 6). For this reason, he argues, theatre has lost its function as an institutionalized site of affective discharge and is henceforth required to take on different tasks (cf. Bahr 1904: 31, 67, 78). These new responsibilities of the theatre are defined in the third part of the *Dialogue*. According to Bahr's opinion, the future goal of theatre would

be to transport the 'new man' to a state of intoxication (cf. ibid.: 73-4, 78). How to achieve such a state of ecstasy could be learned from the actor, he argues, because thanks to his profession the actor was capable of surrendering himself completely (cf. ibid.: 65, 67, 69-70). In the figure of the actor Bahr sees the descendent of the followers of Dionysus, of whom it is said that, as members of an ecstatic cult, they were able to transcend their individuality in order to become one with the external world (ibid.: 68). Bahr's argument in this matter is based on chapter 8 of the *Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche describes the dithyrambic chorus as a "chorus of the transformed". According to Nietzsche, "in the dithyramb a community of unconscious actors stands before us, seeing themselves as transformed" (Nietzsche 2012: 43). It is a community that acts as if "one had truly entered another body, another character" (ibid.). For Nietzsche the condition of such transformation is the "dionysian excitement" (ibid.).

Bahr's strong emphasis on the dissolution of the Ego can be read in relation to Ernst Mach's ideas on subjectivity, which the physicist and philosopher expressed in his *Analysis of Sensations* (*Analyse der Empfindungen*, 1886). According to Mach, the Ego can be reduced to a discontinuous sequence of mental states (qtd in Fliedl 2000: 175), a thought that Bahr summed up in the laconic formula "the ego is beyond salvation" ("das Ich ist unrettbar", Bahr 1904: 101).

Postulating a form of art that denies the autonomy of the Ego can therefore be regarded as a confirmation of the "Unrettbarkeit" of the Ego. What is interesting about this is that Bahr chooses a strategy to cope with the famous turn-of-the-century "crisis of the subject" (cf. Le Rider 1990) that is diametrically opposed to Freud's and Breuer's approach. While the two doctors were anxious to reconstitute the dissociated egos of their patients, Bahr aestheticizes the experience of being transported beyond one's Ego and considers it an appropriate mental state for his period. Bahr thus replaces a separative form of catharsis with the intentional dissolution of the Ego in a state of intoxication and proposes it as the central aesthetic mechanism of a renewed dramatic art. Instead of focusing on the ab-reaction of affects he demands the accumulation of affects in an ecstatic state. In opposition to Bernays (cf. 1968: 65, 8, 16, 66, 69) and Freud (cf. 1895: 393), who both believed that people enjoy the quiet that follows the storm of affects, Bahr is convinced that it is the storm itself that causes pleasure. Bahr's position can be connected to the tradition of Burke, Dubos, and other "theories of violent movements of the mind" (Menninghaus 1999: 52). Descartes was already convinced that the soul found it enjoyable to "feel the movement of the passions within itself" (1970: 309). Similarly, writers such as Dubos and Burke acknowledged that especially negative emotions could agitate the human mind to a considerable degree. Dubos tells of pleasurable chills that can be

experienced while watching gladiators fight (Dubos 1755: 12-25) and Burke mentions the pleasure that can fill the spectator of an execution (Burke 2008: 43-4). Nietzsche describes the stimulating effect of painful passions as well; he believes to have found evidence against the Aristotelian theory of catharsis. However, Nietzsche replaces the element of distance, which in Burke and Dubos is constitutive of aesthetic pleasure, with an immediate proximity to the horrors witnessed during the experience. In *Twilight of the Gods* (*Götterdämmerung*), he writes:

> Die Psychologie des Orgiasmus als eines überströmenden Lebens- und Kraftgefühls, innerhalb dessen selbst der Schmerz noch als Stimulans wirkt, gab mir den Schlüssel zum Begriff des tragischen Gefühls . . . . Nicht um von Schrecken und Mitleid loszukommen, nicht um sich von einem gefährlichen Affekt durch dessen vehemente Entladung zu reinigen — so verstand es Aristoteles — sondern um, über Schrecken und Mitleid hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens selbst zu sein, — jene Lust, die auch noch die Lust am Vernichten in sich schliess. (Nietzsche 1889: 160).
>
> [The psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, within which even pain still has the effect of a stimulus, gave me the key to the concept of tragic feeling. . . . Not in order to be liberated from terror and pity, not in order to purge oneself of a dangerous affect by its vehement discharge — Aristotle understood it that way — but in order to be oneself the eternal joy of becoming, beyond all terror and pity — that joy included even joy in destroying. (Nietzsche 1997: 210)]

Bahr follows Nietzsche in his rejection of a separative catharsis, just as he had used him in orienting his own new conception of man and idea of the actor. It is documented that he knew his works remarkably well (cf. Benne 2002). His *Dialogue on the Tragic* ends accordingly:

> [D]arum meine ich in der Tat, daß seine [des Schauspielers, Anm. D.S.] Kunst der Verwandlung . . . die tragische der Entleerung ablösen und das neue Geschlecht beherrschen wird, das uns erfüllen soll. (Bahr 1904: 78)
>
> [Therefore I hold the opinion that his (the actor's, D.S.) art of transformation . . . will replace the tragic discharge and that it will dominate the new generation that shall fulfil us.]

Although Bahr's last words suggest something else, he did not turn away from catharsis completely. In contrast to Nietzsche, Bahr did not attempt to prove Aristotle wrong (cf. Ugolini 2003: 333). Instead, he tried to re-interpret his cryptic passage on tragedy in the light of Nietzsche's theory of Dionysian pleasure. After finishing the *Dialogue on the Tragic*, Bahr intended to write another dialogue and it is documented that, in the years between 1904 and 1913, he was working on a book entitled *Dialogue on Vice* (*Dialog vom Last-*

er). Even though he never completed the manuscript, the plan for his new work can be reconstructed from journal entries in which he collected ideas for the project (Bahr 2000: 323-62). Lust was supposed to become the central topic of the book – the one particular vice that excited man most, that provided the most intense pleasure and that was therefore subject to especially strong regulations (cf. Eder 1993).

In the *Dialogue on the Tragic* Bahr wanted to overcome the paradigm of classical tragedy without actually leaving the theatre behind. In the *Dialogue on Vice*, on the other hand, he intended to explore the consequences of affective excitation beyond the stage. And thus he planned to represent lust in the figure of a female dancer who calls for the overcoming of instinct suppression and who propagates a more liberal approach to vice, even beyond the limits and regulations of art. Just like the *Dialogue on the Tragic*, the *Dialogue on Vice* describes the progress of civilization as a consequence of instinct suppression and strongly regulated desires. However, in contrast with the earlier text, in which Bahr outlined the utopia of a 'new' man freed from desires, he now presents the modern man as a victim of his tamed drives.

In his preliminary studies Bahr claims that surrendering to one's vices and desires can have the impact of a cure that would liberate society from the restraining effects of civilization and the instinct suppression it depends on (cf. Bahr 2000: 350). He writes that, in the enactment of vice, we

> [werden] durch Leidenschaften reif zum Höchsten . . . [und uns] geschieht . . . nach eben dem zu verlangen, wovor uns ekelt, gerade mit dem, "Göttlichen zum Tier" werden und in seiner wie der eigenen Qual Lust zu fühlen; und wenn wir diesem Entsetzlichen, weil es stärker als unsere Furcht und die Abwehr des Verstandes ist, gehorcht haben, kommt noch ein Widerspruch dazu, nemlich dass wir uns gerade durch dieses Schmutzige, ja mit sauberen Worten Unaussprechliche geläutert und gereinigt fühlen. (ibid.)

> [(become), through our passions, ready to reach the highest form, . . . (and) to desire exactly that which disgusts us in order to turn animal, together with the divine, and to experience the pleasure of our own anguish; and once we have submitted to the abysmal, because it is stronger than our own fear as well as the defences of reason, another contradiction is added, namely that we feel cleansed and purified precisely because of the filthy experience that cannot be put into sanitary words.]

According to Bahr the affective phenomenon at the core of the vice experience can be interpreted as cathartic. In a fundamental central passage of the dialogue, he finds an explanation for a supposition he had already expressed in "Credo/Eros", namely that catharsis is not a liberation from certain affects, but a purifying experience that is caused precisely by those affects. The same assumption is described by those who support the subjective translation

possibility of the Aristotelian passage on tragedy. By describing the state of extreme excitement as a pleasurable purification experience, Bahr continues his reflections on the transformative effect of Dionysian intoxication, which he began in the *Dialogue on the Tragic*. At the same time, he finds an answer to the questions regarding catharsis that already troubled him in the "Credo/ Eros" manuscript.

In 1913 Bahr's notes on the new dialogue stopped and his interpretation of catharsis remained unpublished until his diaries and notebooks came out in 2000. Of all of Bahr's writings on catharsis only the *Dialogue on the Tragic* was actually published in his own time. Nevertheless, his opinions on the matter found their way into the public discourse through the written and spoken exchange with his contemporaries: in 1907 an article entitled *Erotik der Grausamkeit* ("The Eroticism of Cruelty") appeared in the journal *Die Fackel*. In this article the writer Karl Hauer speaks out against a pejorative perspective on the erotic pleasures of cruelty and mentions the themes of instinct suppression as well as a catharsis achieved in the frenzy of affect (Hauer 1907). Many years later echoes of Bahr's work were still perceptible, for instance in the programmatic writings of Hermann Nitsch who described the effect of the "Orgy Mystery Theatre" he had developed as a purifying experience occurring in a state of affective frenzy (cf. Stärk 1987).

In summary, it can be said that the protagonists of the 'Viennese modernism' positioned themselves against the medical or 'separative' view of catharsis as it was common in Vienna around 1900. Even though, as a doctor, Schnitzler acknowledged the work of the authors of the *Studies on Hysteria*, and even defended Freud against the Vienna school, as an artist, he doubted that the 'cathartic method' had a general validity. In *Paracelsus* he describes different ways of regulating and curing strong affections that often go beyond the treatment of pathological mental states but that nonetheless have a purifying effect on the human mind. Bahr, on the other hand, criticizes the way Freud and Breuer pathologize the ecstatic state and the idea that man experiences the liberation from his affects as more pleasurable than the excitation thereof. The scope of his reflections is not limited to the realm of fiction, as is in Schnitzler. His conception of catharsis is expanded by an anthropological dimension and by the utopia of an alternative society. What Bahr's and Schnitzler's criticism of the medical or 'separative' view of catharsis have in common is a generally positive outlook on affect that refuses to pathologize certain states of mind. In Schnitzler, emotions have an educational purpose, whereas in Bahr, they are conceived of as a source of pleasure *per se*. According to the Viennese modernists, then, Bernays is actually not "a thousand times right", as Gomperz claimed in 1905. At this point in time, the authors had already developed their own interpretation of catharsis, thus reacting to the 'Viennese discourse on catharsis'. In an article

on Freud's reaction to Bahr's play *The Other* (*Die Andere*) Konstanze Fliedl describes this reaction quite fittingly as "a covert battle over sovereignty in the various fields of medicine, psychology, and poetry" (Fliedl forthcoming).

English translation by Kathrin Bethke

Abbreviations

GW Freud, Sigmund [1940-52] (1999), *Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet*, ed. by Anna Freud, Marie Bonaparte, Edward Bibring, Willi Hoffer, Ernst Kris, and Otto Isakower, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

KGW Nietzsche, Friedrich (1967), *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Volker Gerhardt, Norbert Miller, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, and Karl Pestalozzi, Berlin: De Gruyter.

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