MINISTERE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE.

MOULOUD MAMMERI UNIVERSITY TIZI-OUZOU
FACULTY OF LETTERS & LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

جامعة مولود معمري-تيزي وزو
كلية الآداب واللغات
قسم الانجليزية

POLYCOPIE

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SEMESTRE 1

Intitulé du COURS

Classical and Neo-classical Literature: Greek and Medieval

Presented by: Dr. Arezki KHELIFA

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Intitulé du Master : Littérature et Approches Interdisciplinaires
Unité d'enseignement: Fondamentale
Intitulé de la matière : Classical and Neo-classical Literature: Greek and Medieval

Introduction

The semester syllabus below is displayed in a chronological order, starting with Aeschylus and finishing with Aristophanes. The first lecture consists of explaining **Aeschylus**'s art by referring to his remaining works. His initiative in performative and aesthetic creativity was to be emulated and enriched by **Sophocles**. And always from a chronological perspective, readings and discussions of **Euripides**'s and **Aristophanes**'s plays will follow during this same semester. The reason for arranging this module's program in a chronological pattern rather than any other is that it is intended to indicate some very significant aesthetic changes in the historical development of Greek Tragedy as art.

As for the way all of these masterpieces will be read and commented, it is relevant to make reference to **Aristotle's aesthetic characteristics about Greek tragedy** in order to make students re-explore the Greek myths and assimilate the inextricable links between the selected plays and the aesthetic principles of Greek tragedy as defined by Aristotle. Some of these principles, as explained in the first lecture/lesson, will constitute a core point to this module's teaching over the whole semester. Other appeals to modern philosophical perspectives might also be made for the purpose of signaling effective influence of Greek tragedy upon modern literature

Objectifs de l'enseignement:

-Connaissances plus approfondies de la tragédie Grecque et de la pensée fondatrice de la puissance philosophique du monde occidental aujourd'hui.

-Explication et commentaire des tragédies des auteurs les plus représentatifs de l'art dramatique antique (un texte de chacun de ces auteurs va être analysé selon les principes esthétiques de l'art de la tragédie tel qu'expliqué par Aristote).

Contenu de la matière:

1. **-Aristotle:** ***-The Poetics***
2. ***-Plato*** ***-Platonic Dialogues***
3. **-Aeschylus**: a.Agamemnon
   b. Choephoroe
   c.TheEuminedes
4. **-Sophocles:** a. Oedipus, King of Thebes
   b. Antigone
   c. Oedipus at Colonos
   d. Electra
5. **Euripides:**
   a. Electra
   b. Medea
   c. Iphigenia in Tauris
   d. Hippolytus
6. **Aristophanes:**
   a. The Clouds
   b. The Birds
   c. The Frogs

Mode d'évaluation:

- Concernant l'évaluation continue, l'étudiant devra rédiger des essaies hebdomadaires sur des pièces étudiées en classe. Aussi, parfois l'étudiant fera des exposés sur des sujets au préalable distribués sur la tragédie grecque. Des passages peuvent aussi être appris par cœur et récités pour la salle.
- Concernant l'examen de fin de semestre, l'étudiant aura le choix entre répondre à une question bien précise dans le but de rédiger un essai littéraire ou analyser une tragédie ou une comédie dans le but de rédiger un essai

Références:

-Murray G, Bickley, Rogers**, Fifteen Greek Plays**. Oxford University Press, 1943.
-Kitto, H.D.F, ***Greek Tragedy : A Literary Study***. Muthuen L.T.D, London, 1939.
-Jones, John, ***On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy***. Chatto and Windus, London, 1962.
-Sheppard, J.T, ***Greek Tragedy***. M.A University Press of Cambridge, 1911
-Heath, Malcolm, **The Poetics of Greek Tragedy**. Stanford University Press, California, 1987
-Butcher S.H, **Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art**. McMillan and Co, London and N.Y, 1895
- Hammond N.G.L, **Aristotle Poetics**. Museum Tusculanum Press, Copenhagen, 2001.
-Crivelli, Paolo, **Aristotle on Truth**, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<u>One [Part One]</u>: Aristotle's *Poetics*

Aim: Introduce students to Greek Tragedy and Drama. Teacher will attempt to facilitate and guide students toward observing every literary contribution of Greek Tragedy to modern literature and thought. This course proposes students to learn the artistic forms and principles of Greek tragedy as defined by Aristotle for the purpose of depicting them in all the plays they will read in both semesters.

Course/Lesson Plan:

1- Definition of Tragedy;

2- Structural and Artistic Elements of a Greek/Aristotelian Tragedy:

a- Plot;

b- Characters [Moral ethos and intellect];

c- Pity and Fear [Catharsis];

d- Diction.

1- Definition:

It is an artistic imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and constitutes a whole. It is made through embellished language and perfectly arranged plot to arouse emotions of pity and fear.

2- Structural and Artistic Elements of a Greek/Aristotelian Tragedy:

1- <u>Plot</u>:
-is an imitation;

-must be complete and form a whole [beginning, middle and end] of an adequate magnitude [size];

-have a single issue;

-must be ordered in such a way to avoid dislocation and disorganization by eliminating pointless details and revealing only permanent and essential ones];

-its passage should be from happiness to misery;

-it can be divided into **two categories** [uninvolved action and involved action]:

-a-uninvolved action: its incidents follow one another in a single movement and its change of fortune comes without reversal and discovery. [Causality effect];

-b-involved action: it is one whose change of fortune comes by reversal and discovery;

-Reversal: it is alteration from one state of life to its opposite;

-Discovery: it is transition from ignorance to knowledge made through: tokens, marks, natural turn of events, memory and remembrance and or the process of reasoning;

-Pathos: a cruel and devastative physical incident can help to construct a good plot;

-Hamartia [tragic flaw]: misfortune must come through hero's error.

2-Characters [Moral ethos and intellect]:

- Be good but also capable of doing a cruel action ;
- Have full mental ability for reasoning [intellect] ;
- Conform to the type of social status he belongs to ;
- Be consistent along the play without logical contradictions ;
- Must make a mistake [moral/intellectual].

3-Pity and Fear [Catharsis]: It can be aroused by:

-Dreadful costumes, ghosts, furies and wretched appearances;

-Two related persons by blood and marriage being involved in horrible action;

-A person ignoring the unpleasant nature of his/her action and only to discover late its link to that previous victim;

-A person/hero discovering the victim's identity without no ability to avoid catastrophe.

4-Diction:

-Greek poet uses ordinary and rare words;

-Show proficiency of metaphor in order to attain linguistic distinction and artistic insights and enjoyments.

1-Definition of Tragedy:

In *Poetics,* Aristotle begins by explaining the artistic imitation of what he calls the tragic poet. He assumes that tragedy is like a statue which is imitated by words and characters (or agents). The poet is inclined to represent the agents as better than most human beings are. Other elements as plot, diction, and music contribute to the effect of the whole – the delight and satisfaction felt by the spectator/reader. (Murray, Rogers and Cooper, 1943: 728) The artistic representation is then different in tragedy, comedy or epic poetry. Generally, Aristotle discusses all the literary devices of poetry, including those related to tragedy, epic poetry, and comedy but what is of paramount interest to this course is his particular explanation of the tragedy. Thus, a poet/playwright, for him, is one who has an imitative faculty and a power of constructing plots.

Aristotle defines it as, *an artistic imitation of an action that is serious, complete in itself, andof an adequate magnitude; so much for the object that is imitated. As to medium, the imitation is produced in language embellished in more than one way; one kind of embellishment being introduced in one part, and an other in the play. And as to the function of the whole, it is to arouse our emotions of pity and fear, and by arousing topurge them away."* (Ibid: 736)

2- Structural and Artistic Elements of a Greek/Aristotelian Tragedy:

a- Plot

Though Aristotle holds that all the six elements were absolutely necessary for the Greek tragedy, he operates a kind of classification from the most central to the surface element as follows: plot, moral ethos, intellect, diction, melody, and spectacle. Therefore, most important of all the six is the plot or action. As tragedy is in essence an **imitation**, plot is very essential

for it because it stresses on the happiness and misery of men whose actual deeds make them be either. In order to cause the catharsis (pity and fear), the incidents in a tragedy are ordered in such a way as to constitute the major aesthetic purpose of the play. Second, the moral ethos of the character is carefully worked out, fitting the action of the tragedy. It should reveal the moral choices of the agents in assuming or in avoiding an action. The **intellect** (dianoia) comes third in importance; it is the character's faculty of reasoning, of understanding objectively and of expressing what is suitable in a given context.

From chapter seven to chapter ten of the *Poetics*, Aristotle reconsiders again the plot in order to produce the ideal dramatic effect. Samuel Henry Butcher confirms that the central thought of Aristotle's art is *"an expression of the universal element in human life."* (Butcher, 1895: 140) To obtain this dramatic effect, the poet must eliminate all what is pointless and particular, and reveal only permanent and essential features. (Ibid: 280) Aristotle insists on saying that tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete in itself, forming a **whole of adequate magnitude**. By a whole, he means a story which has a beginning, middle, and an end. Moreover, a well constructed play must have size and order. In the eighth chapter, he explains that the unity of a plot is located in the fact that its incidents must reflect a union ofthe reactions among the different characters. Its incidents must be ordered in a way that does not allow removing any of them to avoid any dislocation or disorganization of the whole.

In the ninth chapter, Aristotle draws the difference between a poet and an historian. He says that a poet must not be interested in relating particular events but must display and represent what might happen in a given situation. And in the tenth chapter, he sets the actions in a plot into two categories. The first action is called **uninvolved action.** It is an action whose incidents follow one another in a single continuous movement. Its change of fortune comes without **reversal (*peripetia)*** and without a **discovery *(anagnorisis).*** Whereas an

involved action is one in which the change of fortune is due to reversal, or discovery, or to both.

A reversal *(peripetia)* of situation is an alteration from one state of affairs into its precise opposite in some part of the plot. It often constitutes the turning-point of a tragedy. *(Ibid: 376)* **Discovery *(anagnorisis)***which is a transition from ignorance to knowledge may give rise toboth pity and fear. It is **at its best** when it is attended by a **reversal of fortune**. **Learningsomeone's identity** and **recognizing him/her** through desire are stated as being among thepossibilities of discovery. In addition to these two parts of the plot, Aristotle has pointed to***pathos,***a physical incident of a cruel and devastative kind. All of reversal, discovery, andpathos help to make the ideal plot, which brings an entire degree of tragic effect and artisticenjoyment in drama. To Aristotle, **the best form of plot** must deal with persons who are neither exceptionally good nor just, and not be concerned with persons whose misfortune originates from depravity and vice. Misfortune must come through ***hamartia,* a tragic mistake**. To be perfectly tragic, a plot must not have a **single issue**; and the passage of fortune should be from happiness to misery.

In chapter sixteen, Aristotle also states several types of discovery. Those discoveries which are introduced arbitrarily, or by means of tokens and marks are less artistic than those which come through a natural turn of the events. Some are made through memory and remembrance and others through the process of reasoning. The most excellent are those growing out of the natural evolvement of the action in the tragedy. And those revealed by the process of reasoning follow in importance.

b- Characters [Moral ethos and intellect]:

The first element of the six constitutive ones that are important for the completion of an artistic drama is everything appertaining to the appearance of the characters like the costumes, scenery, and the stage properties (spectacle/opsis). Next, he lists a set of other devices as the

composition of Music/Melos, the composition of words/lexis, the Moral Character/Ethos of the agents, and the Intellect/Dianoia, or reasoning and arguing which determine whether the characters fail or succeed. Finally, the fable or Plot/Muthos combines into a coherent whole the incidents of the imitated action.

Moving to the moral dispositions of the characters in chapter fifteen, he lists four artistic and aesthetic criteria which the poet must aim at. First, characters must be good, but also fully capable of making a harsh and cruel action. Second, they must conform to the type of social status they belong to. Third, they must be true to life; they should express themselves naturally. Fourth, they must be consistent and not contain logical contradictions all along their presence in the play.

c- Pity and Fear [Catharsis]:

In chapter fourteenth of the *Poetics,* Aristotle discusses the ways a poet proceeds when producing the effect of fear and pity. Such effect can be produced by means that belong to stage performance like dreadful costumes, masks, ghosts, furies, and wretched appearances. However, the structure and the incidents in the play remains the mark of a higher poet. As for the sources of tragic catharsis, Aristotle considers that when friends or persons related to each other by blood or marriage are involved in some horrible action, pity is aroused. The deed of horror should be done by *"a person aware of what he is doing to another one who knows theidentity of the doer" (Ibid: 488-90).* It can also be done by a person who ignores the unpleasant nature of what he is doing, who afterwards discovers its own link to that previous victim. Finally, the murder can be executed by someone who has meditated it to another of whom he may discover the identity in time not to prevent the catastrophe. Of all these discovries, Aristotle chooses the last one.

d- Diction:

As for language, the poet can use current and ordinary words to be mean and clear; he must also use rare ones, metaphors, and long statements so as to attain majesty and distinction. So, a poet should operate an admixture of these two styles. But most important of all, showing proficiency of metaphor is typical to measure a playwright's genius, for metaphor involves insights into resemblances between objects that are superficially unlike.

Lecture/Lesson Two: Platonic Dialogues

Aim: Make students acknowledge Plato's works in order to capture the life, and state of thought of the Greek people at the time when Aeschylus's, Sophocles's, Euripides's and Aristophanes' plays were written.

Course/Lesson Plan:

1- Historical/Literary Background;

2- Characteristics of Plato's Dialogues.

1-Historical/Literary Background:

-Leisure time enjoyed by a large number of Athenians at public places [Gymnasium, market place or a house of a rich];

-The groups meeting to discuss local events and political developments were mainly male;

-A habit of conversation appeared to be fruitful to literature and philosophy [Sophists developed the art of disputation and the technique of persuasion];

-Mime, the writing of **Socratic conversations**, Homer's ***Iliad*** and **Odyssey** and the **plays by most of Greek playwrights** formed the literary background to **Plato's artistic and philosophic works**.

2- Characteristics of Plato's Dialogues:

- Casual, conversational, colloquial and simple language;
- Socratic dialogues are more fictional and unhistorical;

- Insistence on the importance of the individual;
- Stress on sovereignty of reason and intellect;
- Socratic thought was concerned with moral life;
- Socratic/Platonic dialogues use indirect narration and direct dialogue;
- Underline importance of unity of form content and thought;
- Socratic conversations aimed at making others think for themselves

Observation: Students may connect some of these characteristics with some of Aristotle's aesthetic principles like persuasion, thought, and the focus on the tragic hero's personal destiny.

3- Practice [TD]:

a- Write a short essay in which you explain the way in which Socrates could exert great influence on Greek morality.

b- Referring to Plato's dialogues, write a short essay to show their modernist aspects.

c- List the different artistic elements of Aristotle's theory about trazgedy.

Assigned Readings for Next (Two) Session (s):

Assignment One: Read *Agamemnon*by Aeschylus.

Book: *Greek Literature for the Modern Reader*. H. C. Baldry. Cambridge University Press, 1951

The motives for the preference, no doubt, are various. One reader studies **Plato** for his thought, still important in a world for which the topical arguments of the ancient politician or advocate have no significance. Another is **attracted by the personality of Socrates**, central figure in most of the dialogues. Another appreciates Plato **as a great literary artist**. But one reason why his works remain vivid and alive is that **they recreate** for us **the living environment** from which they arose. In modern literature the dialogue is a dead form... Modern attempts to imitate it seem artificial, lifeless, stilted--characteristics which have

infected some translations of Plato himself. But Plato's works were living products of the society of their day. Like the drama, like oratory, they had their roots in an aspect of the social life of the democratic city-state -- a background which must be studied before either their form or their content can be fully understood. (257)

Key feature of this **background** is the leisure which (thanks to the growing slave population) was enjoyed by at any rate a large number of the citizens of ancient Athens: leisure not whiled away by mechanical devices for entertainment such as the machine age has given us, nor devoted to sport organized on anything like the modern scale, nor passed in the bosom of the family, but spent in places where men of the well-to-do class came together: the gymnasium or the drinking-party, the market-place or one of the houses of the rich. The groups which met amid such surroundings were exclusively male... discussing …the local happenings and political developments of the time. But amid the intellectual atmosphere of the close of the fifth century other less personal and more general themes were sure to be discussed, with a strong bias towards theory and away from practical life.

Out of this environment arose **a habit of conversation** which could be a fruitful source of both literature and philosophy, but it had little to contribute to either as long as it remained casual and unformed. Discussion was made deliberate and given shape by the Sophists, who found the majority of their pupils among those who had most leisure for these pastimes. ..The Sophists developed the art of disputation, of question and answer, along the same destructive lines, exploiting every possibility of verbal trickery to embellish their display of mental gymnastics. Yet this new and fascinating game (as many of their pupils must have seen it) was not the Sophists' main method. Their primary concern was rhetoric, not discussion: the technique of persuasion, -(p.258)-not the technique of argument. In the midst of conversation they were likely to plunge into a lengthy speech. The greatest exponent of the art of question and answer was one who sharply contrasted it with rhetoric--Socrates, who more than any

other Athenian embodied in his own habits and personality this aspect of the life of the democratic city-state.

Socrates is a shadowy figure, and on many points about him there can be no certainty. But there is little doubt that among all the personalities of democratic Athens he went furthest in applying the searchlight of the new rational ways of thought to the assumptions and prejudices of his fellow citizens.... By some he was revered, especially the younger generation of the aristocracy; by many others he was regarded with a suspicion and hostility, partly political, which culminated in his trial and execution in 399 B.C. **Talking--and making others talk**--was his life-work. Many people classed him with the Sophists, and as a product of the same mental atmosphere he did to some extent bear the same stamp. It seems likely that his talk also was usually destructive. His practice was to take a hypothesis put forward by his companion--a suggested definition, for example, of courage or piety or friendship--and expose its inadequacy...His object was **a search for truth**, rather –(p.259)-than either persuasion or display. Where rhetoric tried to gloss over ignorance, his aim was to expose it. Socrates was informal where the Sophists were elaborate. His **colloquial simplicity** was the opposite of their **rhetorical striving after persuasive effect**.

The habit of discussion which the Sophists and Socrates thus developed has left its mark in many places on the literature of the time. Again and again in the **plays ofEuripides** or **Aristophanes** one catches an echo of such theoretical disputations. ..But it was the influence of Socrates, who himself wrote nothing, that brought the dialogue fully into being as a branch of literature. After Socrates' death, and especially after an attack on him published by the Sophist Polycrates sometime after 392 B.C., not only Plato and Xenophon but many others among his admirers rallied to his defence. Polycrates' onslaught took the form of a version of the speech for the prosecution at the trial. Plato and Xenophon produced versions of Socrates' own address to the judges, but the favorite way of paying a tribute to his memory was a prose

portrait of the Master talking as was his custom when alive. We are informed--probably not always –(p.260)-correctly--of numerous such 'Socratic conversations' composed by as many as twelve authors…All that has survived from this mass of Socratic literature is the complete output of Plato.

One of those problems has caused enough controversy to become known as *the* 'Socratic problem'. How realistic are the pictures of Socrates in the surviving literature? How far can they be relied on as historically correct? Without a solution to this puzzle we know little or nothing of one of the most important figures in human history. Primarily of course it is a question for the student of philosophy, but literary considerations can throw more light on the answer than is often supposed.

Aristotle in his***Poetics*** sees the 'Socratic conversation' as a form of prose drama, a branch of the same species as the 'mime'; and all drama, whether in prose or verse, he classes with 'poetry' as concerned with 'a kind of thing that might be', as opposed to 'history', which 'describes the thing that has been'. The content of the **'Socratic conversation'**, in short, is not fact but **fiction**, though realistic fiction. Modern sentiment demands an attempt at historical accuracy in representing the talk of anyone recently –(p.261)-alive…and some modern commentators insist that the same principle must have applied to the ancient dialogue. But the evidence indicates no such feeling among the Greeks. Not only Aristophanes gives free rein to his prejudices and his imagination in portraying the personalities of his time, alive or dead. …Ancient writers did not consider such methods improper, but rather hoped to gain by them additional prestige for what they had to say. Of the extant Socratic dialogues themselves some are manifestly unhistorical: Plato *Menexenus,* for example, which puts into Socrates' mouth an account of events after his own death; or Xenophon *Household Management,* a dialogue including Socrates but obviously just as fictional as the same author's *Hiero,* an imaginary conversation early in the fifth century B.C. between the 'tyrant' of Syracuse and the poet

Simonides. Plato's picture of Socrates' manner and interests varies in different works. The natural inference is that Aristotle was right: all dialogues belonged to the sphere of fiction, and were more likely to take their color from the outlook and personality of the author than from the real Socrates himself. There was a growing tendency among fourth century authors to express their own points of view by embodying them in figures from the past. Thucydides had come near to this in his portrait of Pericles. Xenophon put forward his ideas on education in a book on Cyrus, the first king of Persia. Aspasia became the ideal emancipated woman. The Socratic dialogue belonged to the same trend.

The conclusion is a strange paradox. We possess more contemporary evidence about Socrates than about any other of the ancient Greeks--the pictures by Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon, all of whom knew him; yet none of these can be –(p.262)-relied on by the historian. The points on which the different portraits agree--Socrates' appearance, the main events of his life, his love of discussion, his insistence on the importance of the individual and the sovereignty of reason--are probably true to the original. To these must be added the statements of Aristotle, who, writing 'history' and not 'poetry', and obviously distinguishing the historical Socrates from the figure presented in Plato's dialogues, describes him as a thinker concerned only with the moral sphere, in which he used inductive reasoning and sought definitions of general terms. For the rest, the real Socrates must remain an ill-defined figure, taking various shapes from the ideas of those who write about him, just as he did in the decades after his death. The Socratic myth will change with the times. The Socratic problem will never be solved.

Slavery, **leisure**, **the mental atmosphere of Athens**, the **habits of the Sophists and Socrates**, the **mime**, the **writing of 'Socratic conversations'**--all this forms the literary background to Plato. Like the ***Iliad*** and the ***Odyssey***,his dialogues did not spring out of nothingness; but--again like the Homeric masterpieces--they were outstanding in their kind and more than any others deserved to survive. Concentration on Plato as a thinker has often

obscured his greatness as an artist. But an artist he was--and a conscious one. In his earlier years he was a poet, perhaps a writer of dithyrambs and tragedies. Certainly the epigrams of his which now survive are among the best we possess. He applied the same artistry to prose as he displayed so brilliantly in verse. 'You will allow', he makes Socrates say in the *Phaedrus*, 'that every discourse ought to be a living creature, having a body of its own and a head and feet; there should be a middle, beginning, and end, adapted to one another and to the whole.' The –(p.263)- reference here is primarily to speeches, but it could well be extended to Plato's own works. The apparently casual style of the dialogues must not lead to the conclusion that they were composed without attention to literary form.

Plato …experimented with the art which the writers of prose mime had begun. Sometimes he uses **indirect narration** instead of **direct dialogue**, and so gives a far more colorful picture of the scene, the occasion, the personalities involved. Or he introduces other elements besides question and answer--speeches, for example, often parodying the style of the speaker as it was known to those who had heard him in the flesh. Each dialogue is a dramatic sketch of a neatness and subtlety probably far superior to Sophron, vividly bringing before us--as Plato saw them--all the characters among whom Socrates moved: Sophists and politicians, rich merchants and young aristocrats, rhetoricians and poets. In the fifth century, drama had come from **the Theatre of Dionysus**, but the finest dramatic products of the fourth century are the dialogues of Plato. Yet the greatest quality of his works is not their dramatic skill, but something less obvious at first reading--a **unity of form** and **content**, **expression** and **thought**, which results from the common origin of both in the personality of Socrates. This unity can be seen from either point of view. …The aim of the Platonic dialogue at its best is not to expound a system of beliefs, but the aim of Socrates: to **make others think for themselves**. Because of this unity of form and content in his writings the twin aspects of Plato's development--as a literary artist and as a thinker--are inseparably connected.-(p.265)

Lecture Three [Part One]: Aeschylus: Theory and Practice

Aim: After the two first preliminary lectures, teacher expands students' knowledge about the father of Greek tragedy, Aeschylus. Students will be asked to keep in mind Aristotle's tragedy forms and Aeschylus's personal conception of drama in order to depict them in *The Oresteia*, his famous trilogy and develop or formulate analytical statements and explanations of their own.

Course/Lesson Plan:

1- Life and Personality;

2- His Work and Relation to Epic Poetry;

3- Inventions and Conception of Drama;

4- Characters and Sentiments;

5- Language and Style.

1- Life and Personality:

- Born to an old noble family at Eleusis in 525;
- Fought at Marathon in 490 and at Thrace wars by 484;
- Wrote 90 plays of which only 07 are available today;
- Considered as father of Tragedy art's development, of its spectacle's beauty and of its dramatic effect's grandeur;
- Won 13 victories at tragic contests at Athens Dionysus theatre;
- Was proud, high-spirited and imbued with a profound religious sentiment;
- Had great imagination and subtle power of thought and reasoning;
- Was genius in organization;
- Died suddenly at Gela in 456.

2- His Work and Relation to Epic Poetry:

- Derived from Epic Poetry [Series of heroic scenes already treated by Homer];
- Legends borrowed from the Trojan, Thebes and Argos wars;
- Full of religion;
- Remarkable faculty of reasoning and great display of force;
- Capable of grasping wholes without losing sight of details.

- **<u>His plays:</u>**

- *The Suppliants*, whose date is uncertain;
- *The Persians*(472); *TheSeven against Thebes*(467);
- *Prometheus Bound*, a play doubtless somewhat later than the preceding;
- *The Oresteia*(458), including ***Agamemnon, Choëphorœ,*** and ***The Eumenides***.

<u>Notice</u>: *The Oresteia is the last work of Æschylus, and the one that marks the culmination of his art and genius.*

3-Inventions and Conception of Drama:

- Improved masks;

- Dressed actors in sumptuous costume [Kings and queens on chariots on stage with numerous attendants to inspire awe;

- Set dramatic effect forth of some definite work of destiny [Advance toward a single tragic event];

- Had a supernatural and religious vision of life;

- Did not separate causes from life events and human suffering;

- Introduced 2nd actor;

- Created isolated heroes leading action straight to final fall prey to destiny;

- Introduced dialogue;

- Limited time taken by the chorus.

4- Characters and Sentiments:

- Hero's freedom of will being part of his personal nature [an individuality acting according to its wishes];
- Hero carried by a powerful passionate will from the beginning of the ply;
- Hero's will is inflexible, and driven by an irresistible force that has something superhuman in its intensity;
- Hero sees danger, difficulty and horror but never hesitates or restrains [warnings and counsels have no effect on him];
- Hero experiences total abandonment to a single destructive passion.

5- Language and Style:

- Splendid, lyrical, magic, sharp, deep, fresh, bold, brilliant, ample, impressive, intoxicating and combines rhythm with symmetry;
- Scarcity of digressions;
- Terseness of thought; use of metaphors;
- Use of compound words.

6-Practice:

a. Show in the play the instances when Agamemnon, the hero, sees danger, horror and difficulty but never restrain from advancing toward his objective.

b. Learn by heart an excerpt of at least 10 lines, you read it out loudly to the class and explain it.

Book: *A History of Ancient Greek Literature*. Gilbert Murray. D. Appleton, New York, 1897

Chapter: Æschylus, Son of Euphorion, from Eleusis (525-456 B.C.)

Æschylus was by birth an Eupatrid, of the old nobility… We hear that he began writing young; but he was called away from his plays, in 490, to fight at Marathon, where his brother

met a heroic death, and he won his first victory in the middle of the nine years of peace which followed (484). Four years later he joined in the general exodus to the ships and Salamis, leaving the stones of Athens for the barbarians to do their will upon. These were years in which tragedies and big thoughts might shape themselves in men's minds. They were not years for much actual writing and play-acting. In 476 Æschylus seems to have been at the wars in Thrace… From 484 onwards he was probably the chief figure-(p.215)-in Attic letters. His last victory of all was the *Oresteia* (*Agamemnon*, *Choëphoroi*, and *Eumenides*) 458. He was again in Sicily after this -- he was jealous of Sophocles's victory of ten years back! -- and died suddenly at Gela in 456. His plays went in and out of fashion at Athens, and a certain party liked to use him chiefly as a stick for beating Euripides; but a special law was passed after his death for the reproduction of his tragedies, and he had settled into his definite place as a classic before the time of Plato. The celebrated bronze statue of him was made for the stone theatre built by Lycurgus about 330. –(p.216)- Of the ninety plays Æschylus wrote, we possess seven.

The *Oresteia* represents the highest achievement of Æschylus, and probably of all Greek drama. It has all the splendour of language and the lyrical magic of the early plays, the old, almost superhuman grandeur of outline, while it is as sharp and deep in character- drawing, as keenly dramatic, as the finest work of Sophocles. The Cassandra scene in the *Agamemnon***,** where the doomed prophetess, whom none may believe, sees the vision of her own death and the king's, awaiting her in the palace, is simply appalling on the stage, while in private study many a scholar will testify to its eternal freshness. The first play deals with the murder of Agamemnon on his triumphant return from Troy by a wife deeply sinned against and deeply sinning. The *Choëphoroi* ('Libation-Bearers') gives the retribution. Orestes, a child at the time of his father's death, has grown up in exile; he returns secretly to execute the blood-feud on Ægisthus, and, by special command of Apollo, to slay also his mother. –(p.221).

Book: *An Abridged History of Greek Literature*. Alfred Croiset, Maurice Croiset, George F. Heffelbower. Macmillan, 1904

Chapter XI: Æschylus

1. The Personality of Æschylus: his Genius. --At the end of the sixth century, after Thespis and in the time of his immediate successors, tragedy was established as a distinct literary type: it had become a part of literature. But it was still a somewhat humble type. Its latent forces needed development; beauty of spectacle and grandeur of dramatic effect were needed to supply the majesty it lacked, and it wanted philosophy to furnish it with material for reflection. This was the work of Æschylus, and it was so important that he may be considered as the father of this type of literature.

Æschylus, son of Euphorion, was born at Eleusis in 525 or 524 B.C., and belonged to a Eupatrid family. We know only some of the incidents of his life. According to Suidas, he took part in a tragic contest in the 70th Olympiad (500-497). He was at that time between twenty-five and thirty years of age. Then came the great national crisis of the Persian Wars. Æschylus fought as a hoplite at Marathon in 490 with the men of his tribe. He mentions the glorious deed in his epitaph. It is probable that he took an active part in the second Persian War, at Salamis, Platæa, and Artemisium. On these points we have only rare and untrustworthy evidences. As for the heroic deeds attributed to his brothers, Cynægirus and Aminias, it is impossible to-day to discern between legend and history. After the Persian Wars, he seems to have divided his time between Athens and Sicily, whither he was called-(p.183)-by the favor of Hiero, king of Syracuse. Victor for the first time in the contest of 484…. In 468 he competed against the young Sophocles, who, however, obtained the prize. He brought out the *Seven against Thebes* at Athens in 467; and the *Oresteia* (*Agamemnon*, *Choëphoræ*, *Eumenides*) in the same city in 458. The dates of his other plays can be established only approximately. On the whole, his life seems to have been entirely devoted to his art. As poet

and actor, he passed the best part of his life in composing plays which he, or other persons for him, represented at the dramatic contests.

Various accounts, though scarcely credible, were current in antiquity, which attributed his voyage to Sicily either to a sentence of exile passed against him, or to the mortification he felt at seeing his competitors preferred to himself. These accounts, however, are all based on insufficient evidence, and the known facts scarcely permit us to believe them. If Æschylus really had trouble with other citizens, he never ceased to take part in tragic contests at Athens; and the series of his successes continued to the end of his life. The anonymous biographer assigns to him thirteen victories, which represent probably a total of fifty-two prize plays. He belonged by birth and sentiment to the aristocracy, and must have seen with displeasure the progress of the democracy; but the reserve of certain allusions in the *Oresteia*, and the success it obtained, show that he never came into conflict with the majority of the citizens. Hence, after his victory in 458, he returned to Sicily of his own free will, not from mortification. He died at Gela in 457 or 456.

Judging from his works and a few scattered notices, we must think of him as proud, high-spirited, and imbued with a profound religious sentiment. The drama, as he conceived it, is full of religion. His predominant gift was imagination. Few poets have created so many images and new expressions. His imagination tended to grandeur, pomp, and powerful or terrible display of force. It was not highly susceptible of grace, sweetness, or delicacy. It was accompanied by a vigorous and subtle power of thought; a remarkable faculty of reasoning, connecting ideas together, and bringing them into harmony or contrast; and **a true genius** for organization, capable of grasping great wholes without losing sight of the details. Such a man, giving his attention to a kind of literary composition still in its infancy, could not fail to transform it. He had a capacity for bold pictures, and lacked no quality essential for portraying them. (p.184)

2. His Work. His Relations to Epic Poetry. Structure of the Tetralogy. --A comparison of evidences, notwithstanding divergences that can be brought into plausible harmony, leads to the belief that he composed seventy tragedies. Of this great number, we have only seven tragedies, with a catalogue of titles and a rather large number of fragments.

The subjects of all his dramatic compositions excepting the *Persians* seem to have been derived from epic poetry. In trying to reconstruct approximately the lost plays from the titles, fragments, and notices extant, one must build up an ample series of heroic scenes already treated by Homer and the cyclic poets. The great tragic poet gathered together, as he says in the account of Athenæus, "the crumbs that fell from Homer's table." But in so doing, he merely followed the example set by his predecessors from the times of the dithyramb. However, the grandeur of his work and its extent made him more like the epic poets. The legends from which he borrowed most are those of the Trojan War and of Thebes and Argos, which are precisely the ones made most illustrious in epic song.

A certain number of his plays were grouped into tetralogies; that is, they were combined in series of three tragedies (tragic trilogy) and a satyr-drama. ..We have seen that from the time of Æschylus, it was a rule in dramatic contests that every poet competing at the Great Dionysia should bring out one such series. (p.185)

3. The Extant Plays. --The seven extant tragedies, following the chronological order attested for five and most probable for the other two, are these: the *Suppliants*, whose date is uncertain; the *Persians* (472); the *Seven against Thebes* (467); *Prometheus Bound*, a play doubtless somewhat later than the preceding; and the group of the *Oresteia* (458), including the *Agamemnon*, the *Choëphoræ*, and the *Eumenides*.…The *Oresteia* is the last work of Æschylus, and the one that marks the culmination of his art and genius. The three plays of the trilogy treated the murder of Agamemnon. In the first, entitled *Agamemnon*, the king of Mycenæ, returning from Troy, is assassinated by his wife, Clytemnestra, aided by her

paramour Ægisthus. In the second, the *Choëphoræ*, the action of which takes place some ten years later, Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, having grown up in exile, returns to his palace in disguise, reveals himself to his sister Electra, and, to accomplish the bidding of Apollo, avenges his father by killing Ægisthus and his own mother, Clytemnestra. In the third, the *Eumenides*, which immediately follows the *Choëphoræ* in time, Orestes, pursued by the Erinnyes but protected by Apollo, flees from Delphi to Athens. There he is tried by a court, the Areopagus, which on this occasion Athena institutes and presides over. He is acquitted; the Erinnyes, appeased by Athena, become protectresses of Attica under their new name of Eumenides. The three plays demand the employment of three actors in each. Though scarcely equal in force of ideas and-(p.187)-sentiments to the preceding plays, they are superior in dramatic execution. And these are all we have of a truly great series of plays. It is, indeed, very little; and yet one can glean from these fragments the principal characteristics of his art.

4. Inventions of Æschylus. His Conception of Drama. His Religious Sentiment.--Æschylus was engaged from the first in enriching tragedy; for he wished it to have an imposing pomp even in the actual representation. He improved the masks, probably to give them more expression. He dressed his actors in sumptuous costume. He was perhaps the first to have them put on sandals with thick soles, that they might appear taller. If painted scenery was not used, as is probable, till the end of his life or till after his time, yet it is certain that he took pleasure in magnificent spectacles. He loved to astonish the beholder's eyes at the same time that he surprised his mind. Kings and queens appear, making pompous entrées, sometimes on chariots, always in rich costume, and surrounded by a numerous train of attendants. …His drama was always constructed so as, if not to explain these causes, which would often have been to minimize them, at least to make their presence felt and inspire the needful awe. This was probably his chief innovation. (p.188)

Religious sentiment had not been wanting in his predecessors; there was no lyric form entirely devoid of it but what had been rare and scattered, as it were, he gathered together and concentrated into the powerful unity of his dramas, and set it in relief by the force of his genius. Every trilogy, every tragedy, was the dramatic setting forth of some great work of destiny; and, thus conceived, it henceforth awoke men's thoughts as well as their emotions.

A poet above all, and a dramatist, he always sees causes concealed beneath the living forms. He does not separate them from their effects in human suffering and the events of life. He does not realize them in abstract formulas capable of logical union, and of producing, by their combinations, a complete theory of the universe; of all this, on the contrary, he has only an intuition, a profound sentiment. He never seeks even to take away its obscurity. This mysterious obscurity is a necessary element of the supernatural vision which imposed itself on him and with which he made his public acquainted. To show that beyond visible things, there are distant, impressive causes not at once visible; that human action does not have in itself its whole justification nor its whole explanation; that it obeys unconsciously an unknown, higher power; and that, after its excitement and illusions, the human soul often attains ends that it has not sought,--this constitutes his inspiration; this is what he deems the true function of dramatic art. (p.189)

5. Other Inventions of *Æschylus. Growth of the Dramatic Element. Nature of the Action.*--By the introduction of such religious views, he had given tragedy a wholly new character. At the same time, he renewed it in structure by developing the dramatic element. His innovations in this respect may be summed up by saying that he limited the part taken bythe chorus in the action, and introduced the second actor. The two facts had important consequences….Instead of a group, we have henceforth isolated personages, with their own characteristics, leading in the action. Hence our interest centers on certain superior characters that have fallen a prey to destiny.

The drama of Æschylus always advances toward a single event. It permits only slight digressions, and then not many of them, few or no surprises, and no theatrical hits. From the first, one dramatic situation is kept in view. This announces and makes us expect a definite event; the play proceeds toward its goal along a (p.190) -straight, continuous course; then the resolution comes, and ends the action….The new elements are, first, the dialogue, which brings out with admirable emphasis the phases of the principal situation and the emotions of the personages; and secondly, a few great scenic inventions, which, owing to the resources of the theatre, have an imposing effect on the spectator.

6. The Sentiments and the Characters. "Freedom of the Will" Relations of the Personages with one Another.--Dramas thus constructed scarcely lend themselves to the portrayal of a great variety of sentiment. The poet's psychology is simple, like the action of his plays; but, like that action, it is strong and striking. In almost all his tragedies the leading personage is carried along by a powerful, passionate will, which is manifest from the beginning. In general, this does but little reasoning; there is no marked internal deliberation, such as is expressed in monologue or dialogue. The will is part of the personage's nature, brings about his situation, is one of his deepest passions, is really himself, and therefore inflexible…. It resembles irresistible force, and has something superhuman in its intensity and rashness. It is never in conflict with itself. The personages often suffer for too great resolution; they see its danger, difficulties, and horror, but that does not restrain them. One must look carefully to find in them even a slight trace of hesitation. In general, the motives which should make them shrink serve only to excite them more and to inflame their passions.-(p.191)-Warnings and restraining counsels, when received, have no effect. They regard their ideas as inevitable necessities that they can but follow out.

This haughty rigidity, this total abandonment of the soul to a single passion, scarcely permits us to consider that the characters are complete. Yet they are characters in an ideal

sense, since they have individuality. What they have in common is strong, abundant sentiment. Herein the lyric principle shows its persistence in the great dramatic figures. Each one is a profound personality, rich in emotions and passions, sorrows and desires, that overflow in speech, and manifest themselves in prayers, lamentations, protests, proud assertions, or defiance…... But there is no conflict, not even real duality. The higher power is in agreement with their will, their ideas, their passions; it does not oppose nor stifle their personality, but permits this to act without constraint. All the personages, while doing what destiny and the gods have ordained, do also what they wish themselves;-(p.192)-they act after their manner, according to their passions and momentary wishes.

7. The Lyric Passages of Æschylus. His Language.--To these – (p.193)-innovations, there must be added a final one, not the least in importance. It is he, according to the testimony of Aristophanes (*Frogs*, 1. 1004), who really created a tragic style.

This is principally lyric in its origin and in its essential character. Hence it is in lyric passages that it displays its greatest richness. One must remember that these passages have an abundance and magnificence that were nearly lost in later times. They are compositions, sometimes very extensive, in which the poet devotes himself to combinations of rhythm and structures of symmetry in a truly astonishing architecture of strophes. His language is that which lends itself most readily to long developments. Its distinctive traits are boldness, brilliance, amplitude, and dignity. It is full of compound words that strike the ear with their resonant qualities and catch the attention by their profusion of accumulated figures and the terseness of their thought. Though equally subtle and powerful, the style is often obscure when considered in detail; it is so for us, and was so for the Athenians. But complete, precise intelligence is not essential to the effect. This dithyrambic style is like a picture painted large, that must be viewed from a distance. Sung by a chorus and sustained by melody, the strophes run along splendidly. All is grand, mournful, or terrible; great thoughts appear vaguely

beneath numerous splendid metaphors, and enthusiasm creates in abundance new and marvelous expressions. These glowing, majestic strophes were planned to dazzle the multitude and produce in their minds a sort of intoxication.-(p.194)- In general, it remains true that his style is lyric rather than dramatic.

8. The Bequest of Æschylus to Tragedy.--By way of *résumé:Æ*schylus brought drama out of its infancy and made it a literary type to which no other ever became superior or, possibly, even equal. He gave to it a final structure, at least in essentials; and what is better still, he raised it in imagination, sentiment, thought, and style to a height which his predecessors had not thought possible. In the first half of the fifth century it became, owing to him, an established work of art; for it united beauty of spectacle, simplicity and force of conception, power of pathos, and grandeur of sentiment and ideas, with deep interest in problems relating to destiny. Moreover, these merits are not found simply side by side, in his work, but are united, as it were, and condensed. Owing to the concentration that belongs to drama, they obtained a new power from mutually aiding each other. The result is something absolutely new, in which all known forms of composition are fused and improved. The product, therefore, makes a profound impression on its audience. The empire of the drama, which is the great literary fact of the fifth century, owed its creation to *Æ*schylus-195.

Lecture Three [Part Two]: *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus

Aim: The proposed endeavour is to make Students check Aristotle's artistic principles about tragedy in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon.* They will be given opportunity to identify, analyze and interpret the play and signal every kind of its aesthetic relevance. They will be invited to explain how all learned literary knowledge overlaps in this tragedy by Aeschylus.

Course/Lesson Plan:

1- Synopsis;

2- Students' readings, explanations, comparisons and comments.

1- <u>Synopsis:</u>

In *Agamemnon*, the king of Mycenæ, returning from Troy, is assassinated by his wife, Clytemnestra, aided by her husband's ancestral enemy and paramour Ægisthus. She hated him because he offered his daughter Iphigenia to save his fleet at Aulis.

2- Students' Statements:

Students can make reference to Plot and its structure [Hamartia, discovery, reversal,…] ; they can also point at every possible passage that would, for them, incarnate any of the hero's passionate will and religious sentiment. They may be prompted by teacher to re-read their previous notes in order to stimulate their opinions [Refer back to learned knowledge].

3- Practice:

a. Make a List of the main themes in *Agamemnon.*

b. Write a paragraph in which you explain the role of 'the chorus' in *Agamemnon by Aeschylus.*

c. Narrate the story of the *House of Atreus* and say whether it relates to the main theme in the tragedy or not?

Assigned Readings for the (two) next Session (s):

-<u>Assignement One:</u> Read *Choëphorœ*.

<u>-Assignment Two:</u> Read *The Eumenides.*

Observation: Two groups of students may be designated to prepare an exposé about each play wherein they will attempt to find illustrations from the plays and demonstrate the extent to which they have understood Aristotle's principles.

Lecture Four [Part One]: Sophocles and Tragedy

Aim: At first level, students will acquire more knowledge about Sophocles, another major Greek tragedian. Students will be directed to notice the differences between Aeschylus's art and Sophocles's poetry. At second level, students will attempt to designate, explain or show preliminary similarities and artistic links with Aristotle's definition of Tragedy [by considering characters' portrayal, style and themes provided by teacher here below].

Course/Lesson Plan:

1- Life and Personality;

2- His Plays and Drama Innovations;

3- Characterization;

4- Language and Style.

1- Life and Personality:

- Born at Colonus in 496;

- Rich, pious, good-looking, good-tempered, witty and carefully educated;

- Held some functions in public offices [Colleague to Pericles and befriended Herodotus];

- Died in 406.

2- Plays and Drama Innovations:

- 07 Plays: *Antigone, Electra, Ajax, Oedipus the King, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus* and *Trachinioe.*

- Had sympathy to heroic ideal;

- Less abundant imagination but more brilliant and graceful;

- Had a vigorous and clear thought and serious reflection [more natural and more true to life and better combined];

- Themes [borrowed from heroic legends];

- Decoration of scenery;

- Greater interest in action;

- Powerful but more remote gods;

- Man enjoys more freedom in action;

- Written no trilogy;

- Dialogue lengthened considerably;

- Introduced a 3rd actor;

- More complex textual structure with more digressions and surprises;

- Employed wider range of sentiments and a richer fund of moral elements;

3- Characterization:

- Strong heroes, animated by ardent passion and powerful will [pride, uprightness and devotion to an ideal];

- Living personages endowed with emotions of real life;

- Excel in opposing, contrasting characters to one another;

- Constancy in important decisions [They never weaver or reconsider their conduct];

- **The chorus:** its role is limited, expresses the suggestions of the situation (its hopes, fears)

4- Language and Style:

-Concise, bold and with words stronger in the expression of thought and sentiment;

- No great use of compound words;

- Spirited style, natural and clear;

- Harsh, vivid and passionate tone;

- Too perfect composition to be imitated.

5- Practice:

a. Read and analyze the opening speech of king Oedipus to show interconnectedness of his personality features/characteristics with the tragic hero as conceived by Sophocles. [See your notes above]

b. Read this short excerpt and determine to which type of action in plot it would correspond according to Aristotle:

Stranger. From that they fain

Must call thee Oedipus, *'Who-walks-in-pain'*

Oedipus. Who called me so-father or mother?

In God's name, speak!

Stranger. I know not. He should know who brought thee.

Oedipus. So: I was not found by thee. Thou hadst me from another?

Stranger. Aye; to me

One of the shepherds gave the babe, to bear far off.

Observation: The notes below are to be distributed to students for further home reading.

Assigned Readings for the (two) Next Session (s):

-Assignement One: Read *Oedipus, King of Thebes*.

-Assignment Two: Read *Antigone* and Electra.

Observation: Two other groups of students may be designated to prepare an exposé about each play wherein they will attempt to find illustrations from the plays and demonstrate the extent to which they have understood Aristotle's principles.

Book: *A History of Ancient Greek Literature*by Gilbert Murray Publisher: D. Appleton Place of publication: New York, 1897

Sophocles, Son of Sophillos, from Colonus (496-406 B.C.) Sophocles is formed by the legend into a figure of ideal serenity and success. His life lay through the period of his country's highest prosperity. He was too young to suffer much in the flight of 480, and he died just before Athens fell. He was rich, pious, good looking, good-tempered, pleasure-loving, witty, "with such charm of character that he was loved by everybody wherever he went." He held almost the only two sources of income which did not suffer from the war -- the

manufacture of weapons, and the state-paid drama. He won a prodigious number of first prizes -- twenty as against the five of Euripides. The fifteen of Æschylus were gained in times of less competition. He dabbled in public life, and, though destitute of practical ability, was elected to the highest offices of the state. He was always comfortable in Athens, and had no temptation to console himself in foreign courts as his colleagues did. We may add to this that he was an artist of the 'faultless' type, and that he had no great message to worry over. His father was a rich armourer, and a full citizen -- not a 'Metœcus' like Kephalus (P. 337). Sophocles learned music from Lam –(p.232)-pros, and we hear of him at the age of sixteen leading a choir as harper in the thanksgiving for Salamis. –(p.)233- The anecdotes credit him with some family difficulties at the end of his life, apparently owing to his connection with an 'hetaira' named Theôris. His legitimate son Iophon tried to get a warrant for administering the family estate, on the ground of his father's incapacity. Sophocles read to the jury an ode from the *Œdipus at Colônus*, which he was then writing, and was held to have proved thereby his general sanity! The story smacks of the comic stage; and the references to the poet at the time of his death, especially by Aristophanes in the *Frogs*, and Phrynichus, son of Eunomides, in the *Muses*,* preclude the likelihood of any serious trouble having occurred shortly before. He died in 406, a few months after his great colleague Euripides, in whose honour he introduced his last chorus in mourning and without the usual garlands. His tomb lay on the road to Dekeleia, and we hear that he was worshipped as a hero under the name of 'Dexiôn' ('Receiver'), on the curious ground that he had in some sense 'received' the god Asclêpius into his house. –(p.234)

Book:*An Abridged History of Greek Literature* Alfred Croiset, Maurice Croiset, George F. Heffelbower. Macmillan , 1904

1. The Man: his Character and Genius. --There is no contrast and no very profound difference between Sophocles and Æschylus. The latter continued the work of the former. He had essentially the same ideas of things divine and human, the same sympathy with a heroic ideal, the same general conception of drama; yet he modified the work of his predecessor enough to give it a new aspect. Æschylus was an old Athenian of the time of the Persian Wars; Sophocles was a contemporary of Pericles and Phidias.

Born at Colonus, just out of Athens, in 497 or 495, Sophocles, son of Sophillus, belonged to a good family and was carefully educated. From his youth, his beauty, good grace, and musical talent, developed under the instruction of Lampros, made him a general favorite. In 480, at the age of fifteen or seventeen, he was chosen to lead, playing the lyre and singing, a chorus of youths who celebrated the victory at Salamis. His taste for poetry was perhaps early manifest. He was hardly twenty-nine, or possibly not twenty-seven, when he won the prize from Æschylus in the dramatic contest of 468. After that, he never ceased writing for the theatre. He played, it is said, some of his own roles when he was young, but later gave up acting. His success continued for sixty-three years, or until his death. He won twenty victories; and, according to his biographers, never obtained less than the second prize in any contest. No poet was so constantly in the enjoyment of public favor; the taste of Athens found in his works the most complete satisfaction.

The chronology of his plays, unfortunately, is so little known as scarcely to offer well-determined dates from which his literary career can be divided into periods. We are hardly better informed about –(p.196)-his public life. Though devoted almost wholly to his art, he held certain offices…"In public affairs," wrote one of his contemporaries, the poet Ion, "he showed neither aptitude nor unusual activity; he was a good citizen of Athens, and that is all."

This means that, being intelligent and devoted to his country, he was always ready to serve it; but that he had no ambition, and did not enter into politics except when necessary. His private life is equally obscure. Soon after his death, Aristophanes represented him as a happy man, whose peaceful existence had never been disturbed. His gentle, pleasing humor Aristophanes also praised; and his character, which was called exempt from envy. However, his biographers speak of strong passions that disturbed his quiet life; of discord between his sons; and even of a judicial process that some of them brought against him. All these evidences are, however, very untrustworthy…Sophocles, with his affable, amiable character, could not but come into relations of friendship at Athens with some of the prominent men of the time. As strategus, he was the colleague of Pericles. He knew Herodotus, and about 450 addressed to him an elegy, of which we have one verse. We are not informed that he was associated with any of the sophistsor philosophers of the time. His interest was rather in poetry and the incidents of life than in theories or speculative research. In religious belief, he was apparently a follower of tradition--religious without question.

Imagination in his work has not the same ardor and power as in that of Æschylus; its force was more moderate, its abundance more discreet; but it was also more brilliant, luminous, and capable of sweetness and grace. Every human sentiment had an echo in his heart. He easily conceived every form and degree of passion--tender affection, delicate, sublime devotion, remorse, fond remembrances, as well as wrath, hatred, and resentment. **His character** was pliant-197-neither stiff nor harsh, capable of sympathizing with all the aspects of life, and of reproducing them in language. His clear and vigorous reason was equal to the employment of the best logic, always free in dialectic and never arbitrary. He had a charming vivacity, a wide experience of life, and, what is better, a sure and prompt intuition of moral truth, an exquisite appreciation of shades of difference, and a natural delicacy--united to a feeling for grandeur and a liking for the ideal. It is remarkable that these endowments, which

favored creative spontaneity, should be united with the habit of serious reflection. Yet his poetic creations show eminently this double character; nothing is more natural, more free, more true to life, more carefully studied, or better combined. If the essential character of Atticism is ease in the quest for perfection and reserve in the use of force, there is no more truly Attic genius than his.

2. The Work of Sophocles. His Extant Tragedies --The number of plays he composed is not certainly attested, owing to considerable divergence in the accounts. One may estimate it approximately as one hundred and fifteen or one hundred and twenty, partly tragedies, partly satyr-dramas. Besides, he was reputed to have written some elegies, some pæans, and a prose work on the chorus.

The tragic themes he treated do not appear to have been different from those of Æschylus. They were borrowed wholly from heroic legends, particularly from those made popular in epic poetry. A large number of his tragedies developed subjects that were mere portions of the epic cycle adapted for the theatre. The great majority of his plays are represented to-day only by fragments, which generally do not enable us even to determine their structure. **Seven** have been preserved entire.

The three oldest are probably ***Antigone, Electra***, and ***Ajax***. It is impossible to determine certainly their chronological order, or to fix –(p.198)-the date of any one of the three. The subject of the ***Antigone***is the heroic devotion of the maid who is its leading character. She buries her brother Polynices against the command of her uncle Creon, king of Thebes, and pays for the act of piety with her life. The beauty of the play results chiefly from the young heroine's character. Then, too, owing to the clever way in which the action is treated, the poet obtained really dramatic scenes from a very simple subject.

The ***Electra*** is like the *Antigone* in the character of the leading personage and of her role. In both plays, the poet has chosen a young girl and has given the two heroines the same

firmness. The subject is the same as that of the Choëphorœ of Æschylus, the murder of Clytemnestra and Ægisthus by Orestes and his sister to avenge their father. But in again employing the subject, Sophocles virtually renewed it. The leading role belongs no longer to Orestes, but to Electra. The poet aims to interest us principally in the depiction of her sentiments, and this depiction is infinitely more varied than in Æschylus.

The subject of the ***Ajax***is the suicide of the hero of that name, the son of Telamon, a man dear to the Athenians, and the eponymous hero of one of their tribes. Imitation of Homer is here quite noticeable: Ajax recalls Hector.

Oedipus the King, which apparently belongs to the middle of the poet's literary career, must be regarded as his masterpiece. Its –(p.199)-subject is borrowed from an Œdipus of Æschylus now lost; it is the revelation of the involuntary crimes of Œdipus and the terrible punishment he inflicts upon himself.

In the ***Philoctetes***, which was presented in 409, Sophocles treated and renewed a subject already used by Æschylus and Euripides. Odysseus comes to seek Philoctetes, who had been abandoned by the Greeks in the isle of Lemnos ten years before, but was designated by an oracle as the person able to take Troy. Odysseus succeeded finally in taking him away through the supernatural intervention of Heracles.

The Œdipus at Colonus was produced under the direction of his grandson after the poet's death. The subject is the poet's own; he seems to have obtained it from a local legend of his birthplace under the influence of memories of his childhood. It is the death of the aged Œdipus, who finally sees the end of his sorrows in the sacred grove of the Eumenides at Colonus.

The seventh of the existing tragedies of Sophocles, the ***Trachiniæ***, is the most difficult to classify because it is unlike any other. It represents the death of Heracles, brought about

involuntarily by the anxious love of Deianira. This is what remains of the work of Sophocles. Let us try to get an idea, from the seven tragedies, of the nature of his art and genius.

3. Innovations of Sophocles: Prominence of Human Interest; Abandonment of the Organic Trilogy; the Third Actor; Resulting Development of the Action

As for the theatre itself, it is in the time of Sophocles, according to Aristotle, that a decided improvement in the decoration of the scenery took place…Except for this improvement in the scenery, the general arrangement of the spectacle seems to have remained as it was in the time of Æschylus; only it became still more simple, inasmuch as Sophocles rejected the extrinsic means sometimes employed by his predecessor. He never-(p.201)-used either machinery or great scenic effects. The interest centres more and more in the action itself, in the representation of life.

While Sophocles seemed to be following established traditions, he really conceived the representation in a way peculiar to himself. Æschylus considered dramatic subjects chiefly from a religious point of view: it was his function to show prominently divine action in everything; and if he represented human sentiment, it was under an aspect simple, uniform, unchanging in tendency. In Sophocles, the gods, although still the same and equally powerful, are more remote and less prominent. Man is less crushed by them, though they still lead him to fulfill their purposes; and human nature, displayed more freely, offers a larger field of moral action.

This fundamental difference of conception, due evidently to a thorough transformation of religious sentiment in Athenian society, appears in a significant way in the constitution of the drama. Sophocles, according to Suidas, no longer composed organic trilogy, but only free trilogies, or groups of independent plays. Each tragedy, hereafter, was complete and independent. The very moment, in fact, that the principal theme of the drama ceased to be some great divine volition, continuing from generation to generation, there was no longer any

reason for connecting the plays. The representation of a finite purpose did not demand such long developments. Moreover, this transfer of interest implied a search for greater variety. The breaking up of the organic trilogy would only contribute to the desired effect.

Each tragedy, once disconnected from the trilogy as a whole, became somewhat longer; and as the lyric element, at the same time, lost in importance, the dialogue was considerably lengthened. In a way, the introduction of the third actor signalized this change, making it easier to effect and more profitable. The poet had new resources at his disposal, permitting him to give more variety to the action. And, too, the art of composing drama naturally became easier with longer practice. The result was a structure more complex, abounding more in digressions and surprises, a better marked progress of the action, and fuller concealment of the artifices employed.

Though modified, the action still remained very simple, as compared with that of modern drama. Chance interviews count for almost nothing. The action proceeds chiefly from the play of sentiments; that is, in short, from the will of the personages, whether these are in harmony or in conflict. This in itself is a principle of simplicity. It was essentially the principle of Æschylus. But -202-Sophocles employed a wider range of sentiments than Æschylus; the varied play of his mind is apparent in his dramas. Then the action, as he conceives it, has for its primary object that of giving to the personages occasion to appear in interesting situations. Considered in itself as a series of events, it sometimes appears slow or episodic…In the *Electra*, the action, taken up at the beginning with Orestes and his old servant, afterward remains in suspense until the recognition... The action of the *Œdipus the King* approaches still closer to our ideal. That of the Philoctetes and the *Œdipus of Colonus*departs from it again to assume a form that may be called psychological. The other is really the dominant one and characterizes the plays. No doubt he needed, to make a tragedy, either a terrible or a lamentable situation, together with touching incidents; but he tried only in exceptional cases

to make the situation change rapidly, or to multiply the events. What he preferred above all was a rich fund of moral elements, furnished by the setting of the subject, such as contrasts, shades of character, or degrees of intensity of passion, which are not superficial nor accidental, but spring from the **individuality of the characterthat they reveal**.

4. The Personage. Ideal Representation of Character.Limited Variety of Will and Sentiment. Moral Tone of the Plays.--The personages have, therefore, a dramatic life that commands admiration, not only by great, striking impressions, but as material for study, and as increasing constantly in interest with closer observation.

If one considers them as a group, they are remarkable for their variety. Some, especially the protagonists, are strong characters, animated by ardent passion and sustained by a powerful will. But these lofty natures are far from being confused in a single type: one finds among them full-grown men, such as Ajax, King Œdipus, and Philoctetes; old men like the Œdipus who comes to die at Colonus; and young girls such as Antigone or Electra. Each of these creations has its distinctive traits. –(p.203)-…If one passes in review the various characters found in his dramas, and compares the plays in this respect with those of Æschylus, one is surprised at the difference between the two poets. The new tragedy is the very image of life, while the old was merely a sketch. The gift of representing living personages so as to distinguish them by characterizing them with their proper traits is certainly the one most worthy of note in Sophocles.

He excels further in opposing these characters to one another. The delicate art of putting them in harmony or contrast is truly his creation. In Æschylus, this was only elementary; Sophocles applied himself to bringing the art to perfection. Sometimes the opposition is fundamental, between personages whose every idea and passion are in conflict, such as Antigone and Creon, Electra and Clytemnestra, Teucer and Menelaus, or Œdipus and Creon in the *Œdipus at Colonus*…Nevertheless, beneath the extreme variety, there are traits of

resemblance. The trait common to all the characters is a uniform association of truth with proportion and with beauty.

And the characters are endowed with the sentiments of real life. They bear no trace of the conventional or artificial, nothing that arises out of a fashion, nothing due to the theatre. They are literally men like unto ourselves. We say to ourselves, that, if we were in their place, we should have the very same feelings as they. They are truly affecting, since all the emotions and passions of our nature vibrate in their souls and find sincere expression in their language. These emotions and passions doubtless are suited particularly to each one; but, whatever the particular shade or turn, they come from that common source which we find operating in ourselves-- from human nature. His portrayal, we say, is regulated by measure, not meaning that, in his plays, all is in restraint, which would be -204-contrary to the very essence of drama, but that the moderationwhich he imposed on himself instinctively belongs to life itself. He gives to sentiments the strength that nature would in like circumstances give them, but nothing more...He has no affectation of excess, no search for effect at any price…It is the soul that interests him.

It would be an exaggeration to say that he shows all the aspects of the soul. What is ugly in it, he leaves out of sight as distasteful. A sentiment must possess a certain beauty before he undertakes to depict it…Many of his personages are unjust, opinionated, even untruthful; they are no strangers to fear, jealousy, anger, prejudice, or hatred. They have perverse sentiment… The admirable person we know in Antigone is unjust to Ismene, her sister, and treats her harshly. The aged Œdipus, cursing his son, yields to a transport of hatred and resentment... The characters go to excess, because they all have human nature in them, and even excess is part of human nature… But most of them are honest in their sentiments, or even generous. Those of the first order yield always to a certain general nobility. Pride, uprightness, devotion to an ideal, sincerity, self-sacrifice, and a lofty sentiment of duty… what one finds prominent

in his plays -205-his idealism, however, is not rigid or strained. He is one of the great poets of the affections and of human tenderness. In each of his dramas, he sets forth the need of affection at the bottom of the human heart... All the characters keep the texture of their human nature well, despite their transient hardships. They are no more stoic than rhetorical; they are men in the fullest sense of the term.

Like Æschylus, Sophocles probably thought that the first requisite of a truly heroic character was that it should not contradict itself. Constancy in important decisions and great,-(p.206)-characteristic resolutions appeared to him the most indispensable element in the ideals he had conceived. Accordingly, his characters of the first order never waver in their conduct. They continue from beginning to end unmoved either in their purposes or in their decisions, unalterable in their fundamental passion... They fear or hope, grow gentle or bold, pray or curse, restrain themselves or grow exasperated, according to circumstance. But never do they come intoconflict with themselves, seriously doubt their judgments, question themselves anxiously, or reconsider. Struggles of conscience or sorrowful hesitation, which form the dramatic beauty of such characters as Hamlet, will be seen appearing sometimes in Euripides, but nowhere in Sophocles. This seems to be the effect of a conception well thought out which is both æsthetic and moral.

Yet these strong wills are much more human than in Æschylus, not only because they are more varied in tone, but also because they are more permeated with reason. The motives to action are always illuminated by the free, deliberate choice of the principal character, and equally by the contradictions he meets and the discussions in which he participates. Hence the moral tone of the plays is clearer than in Æschylus. True, they often end in showing the futility of human reason…They strive to act with prudence, they regulate their conduct by plausible motives, they act in accordance with apparently decisive principles of conduct, yet hasten to their ruin… So, besides the traditional conception, which still continues, there

appears something new, a human morality, founded on uprightness –(p.207)-of purpose, on reason and conscience, on the immanent beauty of all that is good.

5. The Chorus; its Rôle. The Lyric Passages --The great development of dramatic action which characterized the work of Sophocles necessarily limited still more the importance of the chorus…In none of his dramas, however, does the chorus play the active part which Æschylus gave it in the *Suppliants* and again, toward the end of his life, in the *Eumenides*. Yet it is just as intimately connected with the action. The poet always found some natural sentiment in which the chorus could take a real interest. What he most demanded of it was ready impressions which would permit mobility of treatment. Lofty theological expressions no longer have much place; but from act to act, the chorus expresses frankly and forcibly the feelings of the moment, the suggestions of the situation, its fears, its hopes, sometimes its admiration, or, still more often, a restrained censure of what has seemed too bold. It has, in general, deep sympathy with human weakness, joined with religious apprehension of the jealousy of the gods; and therefore the taste for moderation is more mature. Thus it furnishes the poet an excellent contrast with the temerity and rashness of the protagonist.

Considered as a lyric poet, Sophocles has equally great merit. If he has not the pomp, majesty, or supernatural grandeur of Æschylus, he has a nobility and charm that are never wanting. Brilliant grace, easy movement, force and remarkable plenitude of thought, are at the service of his abundant, yet reserved, imagination. –(p.208)

6. Sophocles as a Writer. His Influence--The deep charm that he exercised over his contemporaries was due evidently to a large array of harmonious qualities manifest in every department of his art, and reflected in his style.

As a writer, he seems to have tried to attain the nobility of Æschylus, though softening and attenuating it to make it more expressive of real life. According to an expression of his preserved by Plutarch (*Progress in Virtue*, c. 7), he was conscious toward the close of his life

of steady improvement in this respect…But in general, the characteristic of his talent as a writer is force associated with ease and grace. His language is concise and bold; it gives words an original meaning without doing them violence, making them stronger in the expression of thought and sentiment. Yet he does not need, like Æschylus, to depart from current usage. Reserved in the use of compound words, he is ever inventive of figures and word-groups. His style is spirited, generally clear in construction, yet terse, almost exempt from formal rhetoric, and closely following the trend of thought. It traces the progress of the thought with readiness; consequently it is free, though orderly. The lyric passages no longer have the slight monotony met with in Æschylus, and are superior in poetic quality to those of Euripides, which sometimes resemble prose too closely. Combining naturalness with dignity, the style is much varied in tone, now harsh, violent, and passionate, now appropriate to the lifelike dialectic of the drama, and now so gentle that it seems to sigh in expressions of sorrow and tenderness. It is preeminently the style of tragedy, as Athens conceived it and loved to have it represented.

His part in the history of Greek tragedy may seem inferior to his genius. The great inventions constituting tragic drama had been already realized and needed only to be perfected. On the other hand, his direct influence on succeeding generations seems to have been less than that of Euripides. This is also due, in part, to his very merits. His tragedy was too harmonious, and its composition too perfect, to be easily imitated; besides, it was still imbued with a form of religion and morality that was to be sensibly modified. Hence he was less imitated than Euripides by the peoples who came under the influence of Hellenism. But it would be a narrow manner of estimating his influence to consider it only from this point of view. The influence of a great poet cannot –(p.209)-be measured simply by the number of imitators he may obtain. It consists chiefly in the ideals which he calls into existence in the hearts of men. Whoever comes near perfection in any type of art thereby makes himself one

of the masters of the human mind; and, if we so judge, it must appear to us that of all the poets of antiquity none has a clearer right to be considered such a master. –(p.210)

Lecture Four [Part Two]: *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles

Aim: The proposed endeavour is to make Students check Aristotle's artistic principles about tragedy in Sophocles's*Oedipus the King.* They will be given opportunity to identify, analyze and interpret the play and signal every kind of its aesthetic relevance to Aristotle's theory about tragedy. They will be invited to explain how all learned literary knowledge coincides entirely in this tragedy by Sophocles

Course/Lesson Plan:

1- Synopsis;

2- Students' comments and explanations.

1- Synopsis: At the beginning, Oedipus sends Creon to the Oracle about the fate of Thebes, the city that is dying. Creon learnt from Apollo that the murderer of Laius is in Thebes and must be driven out to stop the plague. Oedipus has resolved to find this murderer. This is the start of his own tragic downfall.

2-Students' comments and explanations: Students can make reference to the newly introduced aspects of tragedy like extended freedom of man, the remoteness of gods or the complex textual structure. They can also point at every possible passage that would, for them, incarnate the hero's devotion to his ideal. As regards style, students can discuss Sophocles's spirited style, his passioante tone, and the length of the dialogues which are now animated by a third actor. [They will refer back to learned knowledge].

3- Practice:

a. Compare between the roles of Greek Gods in *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus and *Oedipus, King of Thebes* by Sophocles.

b. Identify passages in *Oedipus, King of Thebes* wherein there are tensions between Oedipus, the man, and Tiresias and the oracle, the representatives of the Gods.

Assigned Readings for the (two) next Session (s):

-Assignement One: Read *Antigone*.

-Assignment Two: Read *Electra* and *Ajax.* [The class can be divided into two groups].

Observation: Teacher can ask students to make exposés on the afore-mentioned plays.

Lecture Five [Part One]: The Drama Art of Euripides

Aim: First, students will acquire more knowledge about Euripides, another major Greek tragedian. Second, they will be directed to notice the differences between Aeschylus's, Sophocles's, and Euripides poetic art.Thirdly, students will attempt to designate, explain or show preliminary similarities and artistic links with Aristotle's definition of Tragedy [by considering characters' portrayal, style and themes provided by teacher here below].

Course/Lesson Plan

1- Life and Personality;

2- Drama Innovations and Plays;

3- Characterization;

4- Themes;

5- Style.

1- Life and Personality:

- Was of same generation than Sophocles;

- Born in 480 BC at Salamis;

- Not belonging to Aristocracy nor to Middle Class;

- Received education usual to young Athenians;

- Owed his ntellectual culture to his readings and personal reflection;

- At 25, he competed in the tragic contest;

- Always held aloof public affairs;

- Suffered from family unhappiness.

2- Drama Innovations and Plays:

- Among the 19 preserved Plays are: *Medea* (431); *The Orestes* (408); *Iphigenia at Aulis* (405) and *Electra*.

- **Innovations** [Had not introduced any important feature to tragedy]:

  - Repudiated the influence of Gods in human affairs; they served to facilitate a
  - solution;
  - Expressed his own opinions;
  - Did not conceive any strict development of hero and will in plot (lack of unity);
  - Diversified action by adding incidents;
  - Was delighted by discussions;
  - Used all ingenious combinations like misunderstandings, meeting of unknown
  - persons; revelations of secrets, etc…;

3- Characterization:

- Reader is given few information about characters' moral nature;
- Paints hidden and impulsive forces within man;
- Character does not seem real as in Sophocles's and Aeschylus's art;
- Directs attention to details of real life [He professed 'fact'];
- Attacks faults of women but also portays their virtues;
- Offers many personages that are egoistic; lax; unambitious; wicked, perfidious, harsh and ridiculous;

4-Themes:

- Interest in politics and development of democracy;

- Patriotism and distrust of state;
- Fierce strife between individual interests;
- Less loyalty towards family and friendship;
- Exploration of internal life;
- Revenge and war.

5-Style and Structure:

- Has a gift for pathos and charming imagination;
- Less grand than Aeschylus and less harmonious than Sophocles;
- Infiinite richness of emotions;
- Seeks for violent situations and is rich in suffering and passion;
- Uses arrative prologue to introduce the idea of the opening scenes;
- Employs dues ex machine to close action;
- Language of tragedy brought closer to ordinary life and is spontaneous;
- Uses less brilliant expressions but clearer and have smoothness pleasant to mind and ear;
- Full of turns, windings and suggestive words that affected deeply his audience.

6-Practice:

a- On the basis of what you learnt about characterization in Aeschylus's and Sophocles's arts, explain in a short essay the extent to which Euripides's hero might differ or liken theirs?

b- Knowing characteristics of modern literature, discuss in a short paragraph who of the three tragedians might be more modernist.

- Assigned Readings for the (two) session(s):

Assignment One: Read *Medea*;

Assignment Two:Read *Iphigenia at Aulis.*

Book: *An Abridged History of Greek Literature* by Alfred Croiset, Maurice Croiset, George F. Heffelbower. Macmillan, 1904

Euripides. Complete Evolution of Tragedy

1. Rôle of Euripides. His Life and Character.His Genius. Younger than Sophocles by only fifteen years, Euripides competed with him for more than half a century. He died a year earlier than Sophocles, and so was approximately of the same generation. But, if we judge by their works, there would seem to be a considerable difference of time between them. Sophocles clung respectfully to tradition even in his innovations; Euripides followed it when he could not do otherwise, though all his instincts tended the other way. In religion, philosophy, politics, and art, he was an independent character, whom no hereditary tendencies could fully hold in check. In his hands tragedy was modified even in its essential elements. It lost every trace of the antique which till then it had preserved, and became more and more modern.

Born in 480 at Salamis, he appears to have belonged neither to the aristocracy, like Æschylus, nor to the upper middle class, like Sophocles. We are uninformed as to the rank of his parents. He was probably not of high origin. His ancestors left him no inheritance that could attach him to the past. He probably received the education usual to young Athenians; but everything goes to show that after he had grown to manhood, he completed it for himself. Probably he owed his high intellectual culture to his reading and his personal reflection, possibly also to frequent interviews with certain distinguished men. He is represented as living a meditative life alone; and this, too, is evident in all his works. So it is hardly probable that he had -211- any regular teachers. Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, and Prodicus, who are cited as such, certainly exercised an influence over him; but there is no reason to believe that it took the form of oral transmission of doctrines. He made one of the first great collections of books

of which there is any record. It is through books that most of the ideas of the day must have reached him.

He hesitated, it is said, over the choice of his career. We read, in the anonymous *Life*, that he first wished to be an athlete, then a painter. There is, however, nothing certain about the matter. He seems to have made his appearance at the theatre early. In 455, at the age of twenty-five, he was given permission to compete in the tragic contest with a trilogy that included the *Daughters of Pelias*; but he obtained only the third prize. From 455 until his death, in 406, he seldom failed to compete. The leading dates of his dramatic career are marked by the *Alcestis* (438), the *Medea* (431), the *Hippolytus Crowned* (428), the *Troades* (415), the *Helena* (412), the *Orestes* (408), the *Iphigenia* at *Aulis* and the *Bacchæ*, which were represented in 405, a year after his death. His success was mediocre at first. His first victory was in 440; he won only four others in the thirty-four years that followed. This proves that his works at first astonished the Athenian public and gained favor but slowly. He did not become thoroughly popular and master of public opinion till after his death. Owing to a taste for study, a disdain of honors, or some other motive, he constantly held aloof from public affairs. His private life, it is said, was troubled by domestic unhappiness. At an advanced age, he retired from Athens to live with the Magnetes.

Inconstant and impressionable by nature, endowed with instincts and faculties sometimes in contradiction, Euripides has a character more difficult to summarize than that of Æschylus or Sophocles. A ready, even slightly feminine sensibility, full sympathy with all natural affection, the simplest, tenderest gift of pathos, and withal a charming imagination, full of grace, sweetness, and fancy--these are the poet's essential gifts. But poetry alone was far from en –(p.212)-grossing his attention. He had an extreme curiosity of mind, which led him to touch on all sorts of questions; everything interested and appealed to him--nature, society, humanity. He loved to interrogate himself and others about the most diverse problems.

Independent and easily influenced, traditional answers rarely satisfied him; but ingenious views and systems apparently allured him. His intelligence was ready, penetrating, hardy, even hasty, prompt to raise doubts and see the weak side of things. It is doubtful whether he had enough vigor or firmness to form a doctrine of his ideas or, in any event, to adhere to such a doctrine. He was rather a thinker than a philosopher, rather an investigator than a dogmatist. His incessant mental activity sometimes took the form of mere sport. This is a hindrance to a poet. His work at times temporarily lost in seriousness and sincerity. He had a liking for paradox, for brilliant, but useless, dissertation, for unnecessary wit. But when his finesse and clear insight were brought to bear on the obscure recesses of the human heart, they showed him to be singularly well informed. In short, though less grand than Æschylus, and less harmonious than Sophocles, he atoned in part for his inferiority by the variety of his merits, particularly his generosity, the infinite richness of his emotions, and the keenest sense of human weakness.

2. His Activity. The Extant Plays. The number of plays attributed to him, including tragedies and satyr-dramas, varies according to accounts from seventy-five to ninety-two. Only nineteen are preserved. These include a satyr-drama, the *Cyclops*; and one tragedy, the *Rhesus*, which is certainly not his. He composed also some elegiac or lyric poems. Authorities cite particularly a dirge for the Athenians who died in Sicily and a triumphal ode in honor of Alcibiades when he was victor in the Olympic games. We have only a short fragment of each of these two compositions. The remains of his lost tragedies are numerous; many fragments are maxims or short dissertations that have a vivid poetic and moral interest. But they come far short of enabling us either to restore the general -213- structure of the lost plays or even to discern their subjects with certainty. The most important ones come from the tragedies entitled *Æolus*, *Antiope*, *Bellerophon*, *Erechtheus*, *Phaethon*, and *Philoctetes*. In general, he appears to have preferred the secondary to the great events of epic, and to have treated them

very freely. What chiefly determined his choice was the pathos of the subject. He sought for situations as violent as possible, or as rich as possible in passion and suffering. Such are the characteristics of most of the extant plays.

Eight can be referred to definite dates. They are, in chronological order:--

The *Medea* (431) has for its subject the vengeance of Medea, when abandoned by Jason, who wishes to marry the daughter of the king of Corinth. In rage she causes the death of her rival, and then slays her own children. Neophron of Sicyon had already written a play on the same subject; but Euripides succeeded better in painting Medea's sombre fury, her dissimulation, the conflict in her heart, and the savage ecstasy that triumphs there over her maternal affection. Nothing is more beautiful than the monologue preceding the murder.-(p.214)-

The *Orestes* (408) has for its subject the judgment of the parricide Orestes by the people of Argos. Here again the invention of incidents is somewhat romantic. There is brought before us a plot by which Orestes, Electra, and Pylades become masters of the palace and force their adversaries to submit to their conditions. The finest scenes are in the beginning, where we see Orestes sick, and carefully attended by his sister Electra. We are witnesses of his delirium. In the sequel, Euripides almost plays the part of a satiric poet, when he represents, on the one hand, scenes of a trial where the life of the accused is in the hands of the democracy, and the caprice of the people may do what it will; and on the other, the recklessness of political characters, typified by Menelaus.

In the ***Iphigenia at Aulis*** (405), Euripides again treated the legend of the sacrifice of Iphigenia already adopted by Æschylus and Sophocles. He modified only the solution, supposing that the young girl was rescued by Artemis, who put under the sacrificial knife a deer in her stead. In the depiction of sentiment, this is one of his finest tragedies. Iphigenia is brought prominently forward. She moves the spectator deeply by her grace, filial devotion,

simplicity, attachment to life, supplications, and heroism. By her side is Agamemnon, sorrowfully hesitating, true to life even in his weakness; Clytemnestra, defiant, entreating, angry, threatening by turns; and Achilles, -(p.215)-proud, generous, ready to begin a combat, though without hope of success.

The ***Electra*** would appear to belong to a period earlier than that of the Helena. Euripides has taken up the theme of the *Choëphoræ* of Æschylus and the *Electra* of Sophocles, though adding a romantic element. The scene is transferred to the home of a peasant in the country, who is, though in name only, Electra's husband. The poet seems, by his choice of details, to increase deliberately the odious elements already in the legend, as if to condemn the crime more severely by its very horror, though it is committed at the command of the gods.-216- against Eurystheus, their persecutor. Being dominated by a political purpose, the play is wanting in live, deep sentiment.

The ***Iphigenia in Taurica*** must date from the last years of the poet's life. It is one of his best tragedies. Iphigenia, transported to Taurica by Artemis, and there consecrated to her bloody rites by Thoas, the king of the country, is on the point of immolating her brother Orestes, whom an oracle has induced to go to that desert coast. They recognize each other and succeed in escaping together. One admires in the play the adroit conduct of the action and the delicate painting of sentiment.-(p.217)- In addition to its own merit, the drama is of special interest in that it is the only complete specimen we have of this curious literary type.

3. New Conception of Drama: Variety and Pathos-Nature of the Action-Prologues and Solutions.

Euripides does not seem to have introduced any important feature into the material organization of tragedy, nor into the manner of its representation on the stage, as Æschylus and Sophocles had done. In this respect, traditions were fixed when he began his career, and probably he did not try to make changes. Nevertheless, he modified very considerably the

conception of the character of drama; and that, too, perhaps unintentionally, following the natural tendencies of his mind.

Tragedy could not be for him, as for Æschylus, the representation, from a religious point of view, of a great legendary event. He may not have repudiated openly the current ideas as to the influence of the gods in human affairs. Doubtless he often put into the mouths of his personages, in the course of the action, the words of a free thinker, expressive of his own personal opinions. He might even take pains to call up in the mind of the spectators a secret protest against the religious data of the legend. But these he really was obliged to accept; for they were part, so to speak, of the form of composition that he used. It was not in the power of any one to compose, at Athens in the fifth century, a tragedy wholly non-religious and philosophic. So Euripides, even from a religious point of view, followed tradition, except in certain details. But there is a great difference between this forced submission and the hearty enthusiasm of an Æschylus; and it is very clear that, with such a disposition, the poet could not regard with pleasure the decrees of destiny, nor strive to make their power manifest. If the gods were very busy in his theatre--if they intervened as much or more than in any other--it cannot be denied that they were often capricious, or what is worse, insignificant. In many cases they serve only to facilitate the solution; and almost never does a truly religious interest call forth their action.

Nor has he conceived of tragedy, like Sophocles, as the normal development of a will or a character in a definite situation. Such a fashion of treating legendary subjects implies methodical, sustained reflection, pains to secure harmony, the subordination of particular incidents to the general theme; and this was not his nature. It would almost certainly result in sacrificing variety more or less to unity; and variety was one of the things which appealed to him most strongly. –(p.218)-

His drama is, in fact, as varied as possible, considering the small number of actors and the mediocre resources of the Greek theatre. Instead of prolonging a situation, he prefers to modify it with unexpected events, to diversify it with episodes, or to renew it by added incidents. Almost always, when all three use the same legend as a basis, the plays of Æschylus, and still oftener those of Sophocles, are virtually included in his first act. Those of Euripides enlarge and branch out as scene succeeds scene. The variety he seeks allows the employment of many dramatic elements. The chief one is pathos; in general, he seizes, in each situation, only the most affecting moments. From the beginning he confines himself to strong passion or strong suffering; when he has exhausted these, he seeks others. Hence certain of his plays, such as the *Hecuba* or the *Troades*, really contain several subjects. In default of passions or sufferings, he wishes to have discussions permitting him to plead forlorn causes. Discussions seem to delight him. Finally, all ingenious combinations--misunderstandings, meetings between persons each unaware of the other's presence, unexpected incidents, revelations of secrets, recognitions, in a word, the whole list of possible artifices--seem to have held a much more important place in his esteem than in that of his predecessors.

The tragedy thus produced is often quite affecting. It surprises and it captivates. But the vivid impressions it produces conceal but imperfectly, one must admit, the fact that it is biassed and sometimes quite unfair. Aristotle remarked this inherent mixture of merits and defects, when he said in his *Poetics* (c. 13), "Although Euripides composes ill, he is the most tragic of poets."

The structure of his plays, under the influence of the habits and tendencies just noted, presents some peculiarities. One of the most important is the employment of narrative prologues, uttered by an isolated actor before the play itself commences. This is the most rudimentary form of exposition imaginable; it is not found in Sophocles, except in the

Trachiniæ, and never in Æschylus. It is almost regular in Euripides, and answers various purposes, now singly, now in combination. It is a way of giving an introductory idea of the opening scenes. When once the indispensable explanations are given, the poet can proceed at once to the touching elements of the drama; and these preliminary explanations are the more necessary as he treats the legends more freely and complicates the situations more. It is also a means of connecting beforehand episodes somewhat loosely bound together. By announcing them simultaneously to the spectator, he gives them an appearance of unity. Sometimes it is a convenient device to notify the public of a divine action which, -(p.219)-

Though necessary to the subject, the drama itself would not lead one to expect. Another peculiarity, no less curious, is the employment of the *Deus ex machina* to close the play. He has no scruple about using it, though it seems to us rather crude and commonplace, and is never used by Æschylus and almost never by Sophocles. For him it had the advantage of showing consequences of an action which were still concealed in the future, and also of assigning to the gods the part that public opinion demanded--a part that he had not always given them in the drama itself. But above all, he was able thus to close his play in the very crisis of its pathos, since the final calm was produced brusquely under the influence of a supernatural power enforcing its will. Herein is shown again his fondness for the pathetic scene which appealed to him so strongly, rather than for the normal development of sentiments.

4. The Characters-Will and Passion-Realism and Idealism and Contemporary Society in his Plays.

From what has been said, it is evident that one must not demand from him complete and methodical studies of dramatic psychology. There is scarcely an example in all his work of characters who reveal to us in the course of the action all their essential traits. The poet gives us simply a few views of their moral nature. He shows them to us in states of violent though

temporary feeling…But he is simply sketched; and when the decisive crisis comes to reveal to us his soul, he is gone. Young victims like Iphigenia and Polyxena charm us by their grace, dignity, and heroism. But the poet does not give us occasions enough to know them so we can really learn their character. When they go away to death we have scarcely seen them. Medea, almost alone, appears as an exception. Still, it continues true that the poet has not had a definite idea of her character. We are not told whether she still has an involuntary love for Jason, with the furious hatred that she evinces toward him; and we really find difficulty in under –(p.220)-standing how one so forlorn as she can take thought for personal security.

The truth is that Euripides interests us less in well-considered decisions than in instinctive sentiment and passion. What he paints by choice and paints well is the hidden forces that act half unconsciously within us. His great types of amorous women gave offence in the Athenian theatre. Never were the mysterious workings of human nature so boldly unveiled. …A deed of heroism is never anticipated, as in Sophocles, long beforehand; it does not result from fully comprehended principles, from laws imposed by the conscience of the character; but it is done suddenly, when circumstances make it necessary; and sometimes in consequence, the character does not seem as real as might be desired.

These reflections help us to understand the importance given to young persons and to women. A painter by instinct, he was naturally attached rather to impulsive natures than to those in whom, as a rule, moral force is supposed to be predominant. In the delicate representation of ingenuous character, he had no predecessor; nor has he ever been surpassed. His real manner consists in a charming and very affecting mixture of realism and idealism. Notwithstanding tradition, and without fear of disturbing tragic dignity, he ventured to direct attention to the details of real life, which an art more regardful of the majestic would have designedly passed by. Sometimes, indeed, he has chanced to fall into the commonplace. Aristophanes reproached him with seeking to move his public by coarse means, and

displaying before it the material accompaniments of misery and suffering, such as rags, infirmities, and the outward marks of age. The criticism is justified by more than one detail in the extant plays; but it would be quite unjust to exaggerate its importance...-(p.221)-... Euripides attacks especially the faults of women. No one in the theatre has criticised them oftener or more sharply, though it must be acknowledged that he is far from being always right in doing so. His contemporaries attributed to him an implacable hatred of women. They certainly mistook his true sentiments. We have just seen that, though criticising them sharply, he also portrayed their virtues. Furthermore, his satire was not exercised uniquely against them. Like all impressionable natures, he had a keen sense of the wicked and the ridiculous, and did not check the pleasure he took in giving vent to his humor with the means at his disposal. His plays offer, besides great ideal figures, many personages that are egotistic, lax, basely ambitious, harsh, and perfidious. The vices which Sophocles concealed, or covered with an envelope of passion, Euripides frankly displayed; so that those who possess them often profess the fact. A sort of crude frankness is not rare on their part. When they do not themselves avow the passions, other personages bring them to light. There can be no doubt that this is lifelike painting of contemporary society. The development of the democracy, the fierce strife between individual interests, perhaps also the influence of the sophists, had sensibly altered the ancient ideal of aristocratic, traditional dignity. Politicians, orators, demagogues, ambitious persons without honor, had risen in multitudes. Less and less respect was paid to loyalty, the bonds of friendship or family affection, and the delicate shades of certain particularly fragile virtues, such as gratitude. This is just the state of things he brings out in almost all his plays. Thus treated, tragedy often approaches the more serious types of comedy--those which seek less to produce a laugh than to show defects or caprices. And under his influence, such comedy was in the course of the next century to become current in Greece.

5. The Lyric Passages. There is no cause for dwelling on the lyric passages of tragedy thus transformed. The chants of the chorus tended more and more to separate themselves from the action. Probably the poet still tried to attach them by a sensible tie; but it is evident that he shows more artifice than sincerity. These chants do not arise out of the theme of the dialogue; they are not inspired by great emotions which the action has produced; and they no longer seek to disengage, so to speak, the truths of religious and moral philosophy. Very often they are mere fantasies relative to the action. Hence, in general, it must be owned that they lack – (p.222)-Euripides attacks especially the faults of women. No one in the theatre has criticised them oftener or more sharply, though it must be acknowledged that he is far from being always right in doing so. His contemporaries attributed to him an implacable hatred of women. They certainly mistook his true sentiments. We have just seen that, though criticising them sharply, he also portrayed their virtues…His plays offer, besides great ideal figures, many personages that are egotistic, lax, basely ambitious, harsh, and perfidious. The vices which Sophocles concealed, or covered with an envelope of passion, Euripides frankly displayed; so that those who possess them often profess the fact. A sort of crude frankness is not rare on their part. When they do not themselves avow the passions, other personages bring them to light. There can be no doubt that this is lifelike painting of contemporary society. The development of the democracy, the fierce strife between individual interests, perhaps also the influence of the sophists, had sensibly altered the ancient ideal of aristocratic, traditional dignity. Politicians, orators, demagogues, ambitious persons without honor, had risen in multitudes. Less and less respect was paid to loyalty, the bonds of friendship or family affection, and the delicate shades of certain particularly fragile virtues, such as gratitude. This is just the state of things he brings out in almost all his plays. Thus treated, tragedy often approaches the more serious types of comedy--those which seek less to produce a laugh than

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Yet the poet's philosophic turn is seen also here and there in his choral chants. Then he comes in without taking the trouble to disguise his personality and enunciates some of those general thoughts of which he is so fond, and which give his poetry a didactic character. He informs us of his meditations, and of what he has read or observed; and this, coming from the lips of old men or women, whom he uses as his interpreters, only causes surprise. But it does not hinder such passages, considered in themselves, from having a deeply impressive, stately beauty…-(p.223)-

6. The Style of Euripides. An innovator in almost all the elements of drama, Euripides was no less novel in the language that his characters spoke, and the novelty followed the same principles and instincts. His characteristic tendency was to bring the language of tragedy closer to that of ordinary life.

Aristotle praised him (*Rhet.* III, 2) because he gave the public the illusion that he was speaking the language of ordinary society, while really expressing himself in lofty diction. The illusion was produced chiefly by his manner of arranging the elements borrowed from

familiar speech. There are in his works fewer poetic terms mingled with the words of common usage than in Sophocles. *Magisaccedit oratorio generi*, says Quintilian (X, 1, 68). But the difference between him and Sophocles is due less to the choice of words than to the use made of them. If his expressions have not the same plenitude and brilliance, they express more clearly and distinctly the different ideas, presenting them in less studied aspects and so being more intelligible. His style pleases chiefly on account of its naturalness and ease; although spirited and incisive when those qualities are advantageous, it does not savor of preparation. Something familiar, artless, spontaneous, gives it an exquisite charm; and yet this agile, disconnected style is never dry. It pleases the ear as much as the mind. In its simple flow, it has the smoothness which Aristophanes admired and strove to imitate.

It was marvelously well adapted to the needs of repartee, so dear to the Athenians. No one could conduct and prolong like Euripides an exchange of ideas ready, biting, precise, between two speakers replying verse by verse. For condensed discussion or disputation, language must be ready and vigorous, very brief, and very delicate and flexible. There must be no embarrassing hesitations, no heavy, languishing phrases. The expression must always seem new, though the ideas are closely identical; the movement of the sentences must be brusque to break up a tedious argument; or on the contrary, there must be ingenious combinations which suddenly give to the opponent's idea a meaning that is absurd or contrary to his intentions.
When necessary, the language, just now incisive, becomes singularly gentle. It can glide over things that it must not touch. It –(p.224)-has semi-indications, turns and windings, suggestive words, ingenious secondary meanings, and terse expressions of sentiment that suddenly bring tears into one's eyes. It excels no less in the neat turn given to universal truths. Up to the time of Menander, who imitated him, Euripides was the most adroit coiner of maxims that Greece ever saw. In this respect, Quintilian (X, 1, 68) judged him equal to the sages of the sixth century, whose reflections, authentic or not, were gradually developed into a fund of wise,

sententious morality. But between them and him there is great difference. Not only can he enunciate with brevity and skill those general truths whose merit is in mere elegant expression; but almost always, in doing so, he bestows upon them an accent of his own that doubles their value.

The influence of the forensic then in process of development was exercised on his language and even on the invention of certain scenes in his dramas. We have seen how fond he was of making his personages plead in formal speeches. They pleaded so well that masters of the art of expression recommended them as models.[1] In such scenes are displayed the dialectic elements of the poet's language. The transitions are short, the turns are varied and simple, and the style is never subject to monotonous regularity. Generally short, yet not too much so, his sentences have gravity when he needs to emphasize an assertion, lightness for insinuations, and vivacity when urgency of situation needs to be expressed. Here and there, parentheses of two or three words thrown out in passing add life and movement. An accessory idea, a reproach, a recollection, or a regret suddenly arising, mingles with the principal thought and does not disturb it. Thus he employed much realism and but few artifices of rhetoric. If, at times, the latter became too apparent, they were in general used with as much discretion as ease.

The defect of his poetic language is that it does not take on strongly enough the shade of sentiment of his characters. It is not sufficiently aristocratic, in a way, for heroes borrowed from epic legend. It makes them too modern, too much like his Athenian contemporaries, and also, possibly, too much like one another. It is a language more and more capable of expressing universal ideas or sentiments, though thereby ceasing to be sufficiently characteristic of tragedy and of epic manners. This is the reason why an original comic poet like Aristophanes imitated Euripides even in his lifetime; and shows still better why the

language passed as a heritage, without essential modification, to Menander and the poets of the New Comedy. – (p.225)-

7. Completion of the Period of Tragedy. The successive study and comparison of the three great tragic poets of the fifth century has given us a general view of the evolution of tragedy in its essential features. To complete the study, a few words are needed to characterize the other poets who cultivated the type at the same time or later, and to indicate in summary how tragedy finished its career in Greece.

The number of poets who took part in the tragic competitions at Athens, seems, in the course of the fifth century, to have been great. No other type was then so popular as tragedy; no other assured the victors so much glory and profit. It is probable that several of these poets produced meritorious plays. Certain of their plays won prizes over Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. But the extant portions consist only of titles and fragments, which do not make a literary study possible…-(p.226)-…

A certain number of poets seem to have devoted themselves to continuing the tradition of the masters, under the especial influence of Euripides. They confined themselves to a small number of pathetic legends, always the same; and they sought to renew them, not by character painting, which seemed exhausted, but by ingenious recombinations, more carefully studied intrigue, recognitions, unexpected events, and display of the forensic and dialectic then in vogue. Such were, doubtless with individual differences unknown to us: Aphareus, the adopted son of Isocrates; Astydamas the Elder, a descendant of Æschylus, and his son, Astydamas the Younger; Theodectes of Phaselis, a celebrated orator as well as tragic poet; and still others...-(p.227)-

At last, toward the middle of the fourth century, the time of Alexander the Great, tragedy, without ceasing to be in favor, no longer produced original works. It was to be perpetuated in the succeeding period in theatres erected by the successors of Alexander in their new capitals;

but it was no longer renewed. Its influence, assured by the great classic masters, was still great; it spread everywhere the knowledge of the old legends and the relish for dramatic emotions; it was one of the agents in the diffusion of Hellenism, and of all the ideas and sentiments connected with it. It gave rise to Roman tragedy; and much later, after the Middle Ages, it contributed largely to produce the modern classic drama. Yet from the time of Alexander, it may be regarded as exhausted, since it ceased to inspire great poets. The survival of the type, due to the talent of the actors who tried to maintain its vigor, necessarily seemed artificial; and the time was to come, as might have been prophesied, when the public, weary of seeing only the plays that it had seen already, preferred the mute spectacle of pantomime, which recalled the same legends without the fatigue of constant repetition.- (p.228).

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Euripides, Son of Mnesarchides or Mnesarchusy, from Phlya (ca. 480-406 B.C.)

We possess eighteen plays from the hand of Euripides, as against seven each from the other two tragedians; and we have more material for knowledge about him than about any other Greek poet, yet he remains, perhaps, the most problematic figure in ancient literature. He was essentially representative of his age, yet apparently in hostility to it; almost a failure on the stage -- he won only four[1] first prizes in fifty years of production -- yet far the most celebrated poet in Greece. His contemporary public denounced him as dull, because he tortured them with personal problems; as malignant, because he made them see truths they wished not to see; as blasphemous and foul-minded, because he made demands on their religious and spiritual natures which they could neither satisfy nor overlook. They did not know whether he was too wildly imaginative or too realistic, too romantic or too prosaic, too childishly simple or too philosophical -- Aristophanes says he was all these things at once. They only knew that

he made them angry and that they could not help listening to him. Doubtless they realised that he had little sense of humour and made a good butt; -(p.250)-and perhaps, on the other hand, they felt that he really was what they called him in mockery, 'wise.'

The tradition, so gentle to Sophocles, raves against Euripides. "He was a morose cynic, privately vicious for all his severe exterior." "He did not write his plays; they were done by his slaves and casual acquaintances." "His father was a fraudulent bankrupt; his mother a greengroceress, and her greens bad. His wife was called Choirilê ('Sow'), and acted up to her name; he divorced her, and his second wife was no better." It delights in passages between the two tragedians in which the poverty-stricken misanthrope is crushed by the good Sophocles, who took to his cups and their bearers like a man, and did not profess to be better than his neighbors'. But a few of these stories can be disproved ….-(p.251)-

The poet lived, so Philochorus says, on his own estate at Salamis, and worked in a cave facing the sea, which was shown to tourists down to Pliny's time. He avoided society and public life -- as much, that is, as an Athenian of that day could avoid them….For the rest, he was the first Greek who collected a library, the writer and thinker, not the man of affairs…-(p.252)-

The plays from this time on, all through the last agony of the war, are written in fever, and throw a strong though distorting light on the character of the man behind them. His innermost impulses betray themselves at the expense of his art, and he seems to be bent on lacerating his own ideals. Patriotism, for instance, had always been a strong feeling in Euripides….Another motive which was always present in him, and now becomes predominant, is a certain mistrust of the state and all its ways -- the doctrine explicitly preached to the present generation by Tolstoi. The curse of life is its political and social complication. The free individual may do great wrongs, but he has a heart somewhere; it is only the servant of his country, the tool of the 'compact majority,' who cannot afford one. …-(p.253)-

Another note which marks the last years of the war is a tendency to dwell on the extreme possibilities of revenge. It was an old theme of Euripides -- the *Medea* had taught it in 431 -- but he now saw all about him instances of the rule that by wronging people beyond a certain point you make them into devils…Another deepening sentiment in Euripides is his aversion to the old tales that call themselves heroic. His *Electra* was enough to degrade for ever the blood-feud of the Atridæ. Read after it what any other poet says on the subject, Sophocles or Æschylus or Homer, and the conviction forces itself upon you: "It was not like this; it was just what Euripides says it was. And a δολοφονία, a 'craft-murder,' is not a beautiful thing after all."

It is at this last period of his life at Athens that we really have in some part the Euripides of the legend -- the man at variance with his kind, utterly sceptical, but opposed to most of the philosophers, contemptuous of the rich, furious against the extreme democracy, -254- commanding attention by sheer force of brain-power. He was baited incessantly by a rabble of comic writers, and of course by the great pack of the orthodox and the vulgar. He was beaten. He died about eighteen months after reaching Macedon; but the peace and comfort of his new surroundings had already left their mark upon his work. There is a singular freshness and beauty in the two plays, *Bacchæ* and *Iphigenîa in Aulis*, which he left unfinished at his death; and the former at any rate has traces of Macedonian scenery (565 ff.). Of the *Archelaus*,* which he wrote in his host's honour, but few fragments survive… (p.255)

<u>Lecture Five [Part Two]</u>: *Medea* by Euripides

Aim: Students will check whether Aristotle's artistic principles apply to the tragedy of *Medea.* They will be given opportunity to analyze and interpret the play and signal every kind of its aesthetic relevance to Aristotle's definition about tragedy. They will attempt to explain

how all learned literary knowledge may or may not be verified for differences between Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides tragic arts.

Lecture/Lesson Plan:

1- Synopsis;

2- Students' comments and explanations.

1- Synopsis: Medea and her husband Jason exiled to Corinth, the city of King Creon. Because of desiring to advance his station, Jason falls in love with Glauce, Creon's daughter. Medea is emotionally crushed and, to complete her revenge, she plans to kill Creon, Glauce, and her two children. At the end of this tragedy, Jason is left annihilated while Medea flees on a chariot pulled by dragons her grand-father, the Sun-God, has offered.

2-Students' comments and explanations: Students will possibly make reference to the lack of unity, lot of pathos and incidents, the employment of deus ex machina, and to the great emotional effect provoked by Euripides. On another side, they may observe the closeness of his language to the famaliar one spoken by his contemporaries. In sum, they can refer to the differences between Euripides'art and that of his predecessors. [They will refer back to learned knowledge to depict every relevance in this play to Aristotle's theory].

3-Practice:

a- Compare between Clytemnestra's and Medea's revenges?

b- Read the exodus below and say what is the lesson learnt at the end of this tragedy:

Chorus. Great treasure halls hath Zeus in heaven
From whence to strange dooms be given,
Past hope or fear,
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man thought:
So hath it fallen here.

Assigned Readings for the (two) session(s):

Assignment One: Read *Iphigenia at Aulis.*

Lecture Six: Aristophanes and Comedy

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Lecture/Lesson Plan

1- Before Aristophanes;

2- Life and Plays;

3- His General Literary, Political and Social Tendencies ;

4- Characterization and Themes;

5- Style and Structure.

1- Before Aristophanes:

- Comedy was developing beside tragedy out of the Dionysiac festivals ;
- Phallic chants celebrated fecundity and intoxication mingling comedy with songs and discnnecting scenes of mirth, jest and sport ;
- Comedy dealt with heroic subjects, mimes, ordinary life and every social issue ;
- Some of predecessors: Epicharmus, Cratinus, Pherekrates, Pytine, and Crates.

2- Life and Plays:

- His personality is not well-known ;
- Born around 450 BC ;
- Wrote his first play very young ;
- Was a moralist and sharp critic ;
- At his death, Plato is said to have composed his epitaph, « The Graces, seeking a temple which should not perish, chose the soul of Aristophanes. » ;

- Plays: The Knights, The Clouds, The Wasps, The Birds and The Frogs.

3- His General Literary, Political and Social Tendencies:

- Showed constant inclination toward the past ;
- Defended religion againstatheism ;
- Naturally comic and rich in fancy ;
- Contrasts enjoyment of peace to the suffering effects of war ;
- Uses buffoonery to adhere in reality ;
- Not bound to cumbersome and ungrateful exactitude (harmonius structure) ;
- Called for exaggeration ; did not content only with ridicule.

4- Characterization and Themes:

- Characters are villagers, peasants, statesmen and Kings ;
- Themes: Peasant's passion for personal tranquility, love of economy, politics, democracy, religion, baseness of demagogy, war and contemporary social life.

5- Style and Structure:

- Excelled in using breif expressions, chants and dialogue to convey his messages ;
- Comedies are set in villages and dealt with ordinary life ;
- Language employed is spontaneous, flexible, brilliant and easy ;
- Texts full of sincerity and vivacity of impression ;
- Emotion accompanies laughter ;
- Reproduce lively turns, delicacy and variety of the conversation art of contemporary Athenians ;
- Dialogue is full of life and movement.

6- Practice:

a- Write a short paragraph in which you explain what the comedy is according to Aristotle?

b- Say what is the difference in characterization between tragedy and comedy?

Assigned Readings for the (two) session(s):

Assignment One: Read *The Clouds;*

Assignment Two: Read *The Birds.*

Observation:Students will be given the notes here-below to read at home. They are also expected to provide abnalyticalfeed back about the two plays above during the two next sessions.

Before Aristophanes

Ancient comedy, a development from the mumming of the vintage and harvest feasts, took artistic form in the two great centres of commercial and popular life, Syracuse and Athens. The Sicilian comedy seems to have come first. EPICHARMUS is said to have flourished in 486. He was a native of Cos, who migrated first to Sicilian Megara, and then to Syracuse. His remains are singularly scanty compared with his reputation, and it is hard to form a clear idea of him. He was a comedywriter and a philosopher, apparently of Pythagorean type. His comedies are partly burlesques of heroic subjects, like th*Cyclops,*[*] *Busîris,*[*] *Promâtheus,*[*] resembling the satyric dramas of Athens, and such comedies as the *Odyssês*[*] and *Chirônes*[*] of Cratinus. Others, like the *Rustic*[*] and the *Sight-Seers,*[*] were mimes, representing scenes from ordinary life. In this field he had a rival, SOPHRON, who wrote 'Feminine Mimes' and "Masculine Mimes,' and has left us such titles as the *Tunny-Fisher,*[*] the *Messenger,*[*] the *Seamstresses,*[*] the *Mother-in-Law.*[*] A third style of composition followed by Epicharmus was semi-philosophical, like the discussion between 'Logos' and 'Logîna,' Male and Female Reason, or whatever the words mean. And he wrote –(p.275)- one strictly philosophical poem, *On Nature.*[*] We hear that the comedies were rapid and bustling; but, of course, the remnants that have survived owe their life merely to some literary quality, whether pithiness of thought or grammatical oddity. His description of a parasite -- the thing existed in his time,

though not the word -- is excellent.[1] It is interesting to find him using puns of the most undisguised type, as where one speaker describes Zeus as Πέλοτιγ + ᾽ὲρανονὶστιω+ῆν, and the other hears γ + ᾽ὲρανονας γ+1F73ρανον, and supposes that the god fed his guest on a crane. A typical piece of conversation is the following:[2] "A. *After the sacrifice came a feast, and after the feast a drinking-party.* B. *That seems nice.* A. *And after the drinking-party a revel, after the revel a swinery, after the swinery a summons, after the summons a condemnation, and after the condemnation fetters and stocks and a fine.*" The other side of the man is represented by his philosophical sayings: *"Mind hath sight and Mind hath hearing; all things else are deaf and blind"; "Character is destiny to man";* or, one of the most frequently-quoted lines of antiquity, *"Be sober, and remember to disbelieve: these are the sinews of the mind."* The metre of Epicharmus is curiously loose; it suggests the style of a hundred years later, but his verbose and unfinished diction marks the early craftsman. He often reminds one of Lucilius and Plautus.

The Attic comedy was developed on different lines, and, from about 460 B.C. onwards, followed in the steps of tragedy. The ground-form seems to be a twofold division, with the 'parabasis' between. First comes a 276-general explanation of the supposed situation and the meaning of the disguises; then the 'parabasis,' the 'coming-forward' of the whole choir as the author's representative, to speak in his name about current topics of interest; then a loose string of farcical scenes, illustrating, in no particular order or method, the situation as reached in the first part. The end is a 'cômos' or revel, in which the performers go off rejoicing. For instance, in our earliest surviving comedy, the *Acharnians* of Aristophanes, the first part, which has become genuinely dramatic by this time, explains how the hero contrives to make a private peace with the Peloponnesians; then comes the 'parabasis'; then a series of disconnected scenes showing the fun that he and his family have, and the unhappy plight of all the people about them.

Of the oldest comic writers -- Chionides, Ecphantides, Magnes -- we know little. The first important name is CRATîNUS, who carried on against Pericles -- *"the squillheaded God Almighty," "the child of Cronos and Doubledealing"* -- the same sort of war which was waged by Aristophanes against Cleon. Critics considered him incomparable in force, but too bitter. Aristophanes often refers to him: he was *"like a mountain-torrent, sweeping down houses and trees and people who stood in his way."* He was an initiated Orphic, who had eaten the flesh of the bull Bacchus,[1] and also a devotee of Bacchus in the modern sense. In the *Knights* (424 B.C.) his younger rival alluded to him pityingly as a fine fellow quite ruined by drink. The reference roused the old toper. Next year he brought out the *Pytîne*[*] ('Wine-Flask'), a kind of outspoken satire on himself, in which his wife Comedy –(p.277)-redeems him from the clutches of the designing Pytine. He won the first prize, and Aristophanes was last on the list. But a wreck he was after all, and was dead by 421. One of his actors -- he employed three -- was Crates, who wrote with some success, and has the distinction of having first produced drunken men on the stage.

PHEREKRATES, who won his first victory in 437, was a praiseworthy but tiresome writer, to judge by his very numerous fragments. He had better plots than his contemporaries, and approached the manner of the later comedy. He treats social subjects, such as the impudence of slaves and the ways of 'hetairai'; he has a violent attack on Timotheus and the new style of music. He also shows signs of the tendency which is so strong in Aristophanes, to make plays about imaginary regions of bliss; in his *Miners,*[*] for instance, a golden age is found going on somewhere deep in or under the earth, and in his *Ant-Men*[*] there was probably something similar. We only know of one political drama by him -- an attack on Alcibiades.

EUPOLIS is the most highly praised of the contemporaries of Aristophanes. His characteristic was χ+1F71ρις, 'charm' or 'grace,' as contrasted with the force and bitterness of Cratînus, and the mixture of the two in Aristophanes. These three formed the canon of comic writers in

Alexandria. It is said that the death of Eupolis in battle at the Hellespont was the occasion of exemption from military service being granted to professional poets. His political tendencies were so far similar to those of Aristophanes that the two collaborated in the most savage piece of comedy extant, the *Knights*, and accused one another of plagiarism afterwards. That play was directed against Cleon. In the *Marikâs*[*]-(p.278)-Eupolis wrote against Hyperbolus; in the *Dêmoi*[*] he spoke well of Pericles as an orator (frag. 94), but this was after his death and probably did not mean much. In reviling Cleon it was well to praise Pericles, just as in reviling Hyperbolus it was well to praise Cleon. Comedy was an ultra-democratic institution, as the Old Oligarch remarked, yet all the comic writers have an aristocratic bias. This is partly because their province was satire, not praise: if they were satisfied with the course of politics, they wrote about something else which they were not satisfied with. Partly, perhaps, it is that they shared the bias of the men of culture. But Eupolis was more liberal than Aristophanes. Aristophanes does not seem ever to have violently attacked rich people.[1]Eupolis wrote his *Flatterers*[*] against 'Money-bag Callias' and his train, and his *Baptai*[*] (or *Dippers*[*]) against Alcibiades. The latter piece represented one of those mystical and enthusiastic worships which were so prominent at the time, that of a goddess named Cotytto. Baptism was one of the rites; and so was secrecy, unfortunately for the reputation of those concerned. The Greek layman attributed the worst possible motives to any one who made a secret of his religious observances or prayed in a low voice.

PHRYNICHUS, son of Eunomides, who won his first prize in 429, and PLATO, of whom we know no piece certainly earlier than 405, bridge the transition to the comedy of manners, which arose in the fourth century. The *Solitary*[*] of Phrynichus is an instance of a piece which was a failure because it was produced some twenty years before the public were ready for it. We have no purely political play from Phrynichus; -(p.279)-

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Beginnings of Comedy

1. First Forms of Comedy: The Phallic Chants and the Dionysiac Comos-The So-called Doric and Megarian Comedy: Susarion, Myllus, and Meson.[1]--While tragedy was thus accomplishing its evolution, the other great form of drama, comedy, was developing beside it, somewhat under its influence, and following, through various phases, a destiny no less complex.

Like tragedy, Greek comedy was developed out of the Dionysiac festivals, and remained intimately connected with them throughout the classic period. According to some important testimony in Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 5), it had its origin in the *phallic* chants. These were sung by a rustic procession which bore across the fields an emblem of fecundity. An affirmation from such an authority cannot be put in question: but one may remark that Aristotle, in thus expressing himself, has not wished to describe all the details of the things he witnessed; and that the brevity of his statement, if it be taken literally, would make them appear more simple than they were. In the beginning, the festivals took place in the Attic demes on dates not everywhere the same. Later, when dramatic competitions were –(p.229)-regularly held, comedy was assigned more specially to the Lenæa, the city festival celebrated at the close of winter. This is an arrangement whose origin and antiquity are obscure.

At all events, the object of the rustic processions was to celebrate mirthfully the power of the god who gave the wine. Like the dithyramb, they demanded the presence of a soloist *(ὸέάρχω)* and of a chorus. The soloist celebrated the god, the joy of the day, the good wine; and doubtless, too, he mingled with his hymns, which were more or less improvised, countless jests and turns of fancy; the chorus replied in refrains, mingled with cries and appeals to the god. In the absence of regular form, there might be occasion for raillery or

buffoonery, perhaps even for snatches of dialogue. At any rate, judging from the formal testimony of Aristotle, this was the first and most essential element of primitive comedy.

But the chants formed part of a series of noisy celebrations, from which they could not be separated except by abstraction. They constituted together the *comos*; and it is precisely from this title that the word "comedy" was formed. To celebrate the *comos(κωάειν)* meant not only to go through the fields in procession, but also to banquet, and after the banquet, to go into the streets in joyous bands, that danced, bandied and disputed with one another, improvised taunts, and perhaps mimicked some one whom they considered ridiculous. Such a festival, celebrated in intoxication, was really a comedy, informal as yet, and rather disorganized, but singularly animated. It needed only discipline to produce works of artistic merit.

To these primitive elements must perhaps be added the procession of wains *(πομπεία)*, spoken of in certain ancient accounts. What is probably meant is the going and coming of the vine-dressers when they took their casks to the city. The usage appears to have given rise to a joyful carnival comparable to the primitive *Return from the Courtille*. There were challenges, sportive mockery, and well-meant billingsgate; coarse language, bacchic songs, cries, and disputes; and all was accompanied with bursts of laughter. This could suggest to nascent comedy many an invention whose nature to-day it is difficult to determine. However, we need not follow the development of each one, since chance and caprice must have played an important part. The only thing possible is to give a general idea without pretending even to apparent exactness--for exactness would alter the reality.

These ancient usages are attested for Attica. They must have been in vogue at the same time through all the regions of Greece where the vine was cultivated. It has been thought that, in certain –(p.230)-Doric countries, comedy had been produced ever since the sixth century under more regular forms.[1] But what we discern there scarcely differs from what has been described. In Laconia, various kinds of dances and mimic representations are cited in which

men called *dicelistes* took part. But the mimicry was rather like pantomime than like comedy in the strict sense. At Sicyon, bands of *phallophores* are mentioned, who indulged in various buffooneries. This must have closely resembled, in the beginning at least, the Attic improvisations to Dionysus. We are not, however, in possession of definite dates.

But at Megara, after the sixth century, something like an attempt at organized comedy may be discerned. Aristotle speaks of the influence exercised by the rise of the democracy over the new literary production, and of the warm reception which its representatives found in the villages of the district. These statements refer, in a general way, to the sixth century; and we have no reason for calling them in question. The difficulty lies in defining just what this comedy was. It certainly was satiric, since it owed its rise to the growth of public liberty; but probably it had no great literary merit, as it did not succeed in gaining admission to the cities. We may suppose that it consisted chiefly of short, mirthful scenes, mingled with songs more or less resembling those played spontaneously in the Dionysiac festivals. These disconnected scenes, as a type, must have been more like our parades at fairs than like real comedy.

It is this Megarian farce which, according to a tradition rather uncertain and doubtful, was brought to Attica by Susarion about 570. After him, Myllus and Mæson, poets still more obscure, are said to have cultivated it with success in the time of Pisistratus and his sons. These statements are really insufficiently confirmed; and it is only in the beginning of the next century, after the time of the Persian Wars, that Attic comedy really made its appearance in literary history.

2. Sicilian Comedy. Epicharmus --But comedy had been organized some years earlier in another part of the Greek world, namely, Sicily. It is there that we must study its real origin.

The beginnings of the Sicilian comedy are even more obscure than those of the Attic type. We may believe, however, that there was –(p.231)-no great difference between them. There, too, it was probably from the joyful festivities of Dionysus that the future literary type arose. And

one may at least suspect, if not assert, that certain special -influences favored its development there more than elsewhere. The Sicilian people were fond of jest and sport; they had a natural relish for mimicry and expressive gesture; they liked to mimic or parody everything that excited their spirit of merriment. It seems that iambic poetry among them was particularly successful. In a fragment of Epicharmus appears the name of a certain Aristoxenus, otherwise unknown, who probably won some local fame for success in this type of composition. In any case, one can scarcely doubt that the mime, which is an amusing imitation of certain scenes of daily life, was popular there. Indeed, we shall soon see that it became literary. Before being admitted as literature, it must have been produced spontaneously, by improvisation, in social reunions, public houses, and market-places. The mime is really the basis of Sicilian comedy. It is not impossible that this race of improvisers, clever in imitating serious things for its own amusement, took pleasure in parodying even mythological scenes that had been rendered familiar by epic or lyric poems. However this may be, the representation of ordinary manners, as the principal component, with mythological parody and intentional satire, as accessories, are the elements from which Sicilian comedy was formed.

It had two noteworthy representatives, Epicharmus and Phormis (or Phormus); but the latter's works, for some reason, seem to have disappeared with him, while the former's were long extant and are still fairly well known from fragments and notices. Hence it is with Epicharmus alone that we must be occupied at present.

Born probably at Cos, between 520 and 500, he went, when very young, to Megara Hyblæa in Sicily. He seems to have established himself early at Syracuse, where, says Suidas, he brought out plays as early as 486. Soon becoming famous, he enjoyed the favor of the tyrants Gelo and Hiero. After the latter's death, in 468, he disappears from sight. A biographer assures us that he lived to the age of ninety. He wrote about forty comedies.

Epicharmus is one of the great names in Greek literature. Plato considered him the most eminent representative of light poetry, as Homer was of serious.[1] According to the express statement of Aristotle, his great innovation was that he gave to comedy plot, or intrigue.[2] Till then, notwithstanding some futile attempts to do this, it was composed of short, isolated scenes or disconnected burlesques. He was the first to succeed in making the public accept an –(p.232)-action analogous to that of tragedy--the regular development of a given situation, through a certain number of phases, to its resolution.

This action, as far as we can judge from such titles of his plays as are known, was now borrowed from myth, now created by the poet in imitation of the incidents of contemporary life. In the first case, comedy was an adventure, heroic or divine, turned into sport; in the second, it was a representation more or less occupied with the manners of the time. It is quite possible that the first of the two forms served as a model for the second. Myths had furnished the Athenian and Sicyonian tragedy and satyr-drama with themes for more than a century. In a way, Epicharmus needed only to change into buffoonery what was otherwise represented in seriousness; and, as the adventures of the gods were, on the whole, commonplace enough, often resembling those of mortal men, the task of transforming this mythological comedy into the comedy of real life was almost reduced to the changing of the names.

The extant fragments and titles do not enable us to get a precise idea of the manner in which Epicharmus developed a comic theme. At the very most, a word of Horace leads us to believe that his plays, in general, were remarkable for animation and movement, like those of the Latin poet Plautus, who imitated him (*Plautus ad exemplar SiculiproperareEpicharmi, Ep.* II, 1, 58). From this, one may suppose that they were still somewhat like elementary comedy, of which they were a transformation. The scenes were short, the plot not complicated, the digressions realistic but not numerous; and the action proceeded in rapid

course directly to its resolution. Yet this, we must admit, is only a conjecture, and a vague one. Unfortunately, we have not the means of rendering it more precise.

Fantasy, observation, and reflection seem to have had almost equal importance in the invention of his details and in the creation of his characters. His *Marriage of Hebe* contained long descriptions of a miraculous fishing expedition of Poseidon and of an Olympic banquet. There were in it amusing enumerations of names, and of kinds of fish and mollusks. But we can discern in it the work of a man of shrewd observation, a mirthful poet who took delight in comic effects. Four verses of his *Busiris*represent *Heracles* as about to satisfy his giant appetite; some narrator has transcribed it thus: "Only to see him eat is enough to make one die of fear. A dull rumble issues from the depth of his gullet; his jaws crash; his molars grind with a frightful dry sound; his canines gnash horribly; his nostrils snort; his ears move up and down." Clear, strong vision of details is combined in these verses with a fantastic excess that becomes brutal. –(p.233)- The writer had a sense of what would amuse the throng; we shall see elsewhere that he had as well a fine moral intuition.

Some extant passages of his really show that he could draw character. He was the first to represent those types of common humanity which have always so fully occupied comic drama, and he did it well. One of his most interesting fragments, taken from a play entitled *Hope*, is the monologue of a parasite, who does honor to his grossness with the cynicism of a buffoon; and yet, beneath the light effrontery, unprincipled squalor is displayed in all its crudeness:--"I dine with any one who wishes me: enough that he invites me; and even sometimes with those who do not wish me; really the invitation is superfluous. At table, I am full of wit, I make everybody laugh, I praise the man who gives the dinner. If any one attempts to contradict him, I assume his defence, I do, and take upon myself the quarrel. When I have eaten and drunk well, I go away. No slave, lantern in hand, attends me. I pass along, not without false steps--along through the dark--all alone. And if by chance I meet an

officer, I consider it a great favor of the gods, that he does not beat me unmercifully, but rests content with giving me a fair cudgelling. When at length I arrive home black and blue, I lie down on the hard earth; and for a time, I cannot sleep, until at last the good effect of the fine wine makes itself felt upon my spirits."

If some happy chance had preserved for us the *Peasant*, the *Pillage*, and the *Megarian Woman*, we should have in them frank pictures, in which some of the most interesting specimens of the Greek people of Sicily would be brought before us. The costumes of the people, their life, their motion, their familiar intercourse, would be no less vividly portrayed than their character. To describe the appearance and the reality--to seize at a glance the characteristic trait of the disposition or the dress, and to develop it with an amusing sense of the ridiculous is the great gift of true comic poets, and certainly that of Epicharmus.

Such comedies were full of philosophy, since they were full of truth. But the ancient notices represent Epicharmus as a philosopher in the strict sense of the word. Diogenes Laertius gave him a place in his *Lives of the Philosophers*, classing him as a Pythagorean. And in so doing Diogenes clearly followed a tradition, confirmed to some extent by a goodly number of extant fragments. Yet it would probably be an exaggeration to attribute to the comedies of Epicharmus a very clearly marked tendency to Pythagoreanism. It is hard to see how a light, popular composition should have been used in setting forth abstract doctrines; and if by impossibility the miracle had been realized, no doubt his didactic comedies would –(p.234)- have produced, as such, a greater stir in the world than they did. Epicharmus was, indeed, a reflective genius, writing under the influence of contemporary philosophy. He studied it for his own pleasure, and so must have made frequent allusion to it in his plays. Thus he could be really a philosopher in comedy, as Euripides, a little later, was in tragedy. Such was the reputation he acquired while still alive; and this gave rise after his death to Pythagorean treatises composed under his name, which, owing to the current opinion, could be attributed

to him without much implausibility. He revealed to Greece the true nature of comedy. He was the model for the great Attic poets; and when Plato put him above them, at the side of Homer, he did so justly, since Epicharmus at least preceded them, even if he did not pass by them on the royal road.

3. Origin of the Sicilian Mime. Sophron and Xenarchus --While we are occupied with Sicily, let us take the opportunity to consider, regardless of chronology, the origins of a type closely akin to comedy, the mime. We have indicated that it was probably spontaneous among the Sicilian people. At any rate, it assumed among them a literary form in the second half of the fifth century.

The man who raised it above obscurity was Sophron. He was a Syracusan, probably of humble origin, who by his art maintained always an intimate connection with the people. According to Suidas, he was contemporary with Euripides. His plays, called mimes, like the popular improvisations whence they are said to have sprung, were divided into two groups, mimes of men *(μι + ῀μοιάνδρεl + ῀οι)* and mimes of women *(μl + ῀μοιγυνικεl + ῀οι)* according as the characters were the one or the other. It seems that the two sexes were never both represented in the same play--which indicates clearly enough that there was no plot. Each mime was probably a mere short dialogue, devoid of real action, between two popular characters. Nothing can give us a more vivid or truer idea of them than the *Syracusan Women* of Theocritus, that amusing, elegant conversation between two mothers in Alexandria. It is expressly stated by a scholiast to have been imitated from a mime of Sophron. There is no dramatic situation, merely some pretext for chatting or disputes: a visit, an interview, a purchase, a festival, a jostling, no matter what; and then a lively, rapid, amusing conversation, in which –(p.235)-every word is a trait of character. It seems made out of nothing, and yet the nothing is substantial and interesting. A few titles still preserved may help to a better conception of the nature of these mimes: the *Tunny-fisher*, the *Old Man*, the *Fisher and the*

Peasant, the *Clothes-mender*, the *Wailers*, the *Sorceresses*, the *Women at the Isthmian Games*, etc. All these plays were in prose, and so were more like reality; but the brief, terse prose, broken into short phrases, had something rhythmic about it which caught the ear. The language was the popular *Doric*, more popular than that of Epicharmus.

Diogenes Laertius reports that Plato delighted in reading Sophron, introduced him at Athens, and imitated him in his dialogues. The alert, witty grace of the Syracusan, notwithstanding the designed commonplaceness of his subjects, must have afforded much delight and suggestion to the master of Attic dialogue.

After Sophron, the same type was cultivated, but with less success, by his son Xenarchus, of whom we know almost nothing. It is probable that the mime, whatever may have been the vicissitudes of its career, never ceased to please. We shall find it again, modified in form, indeed, but still substantially the same, in Herondas and Theocritus, in the Alexandrian period.

4. Rise of Attic Comedy and Comic Contests: Earliest Poets of the Old Comedy: Cratinus --Comedy had received its form in Sicily at the hands of Epicharmus and Phormis when the second Persian War broke out. In Greece proper, and particularly at Athens, it was still in a rudimentary state. It was only after the victories of Salamis and Platæa that Attic comedy was transformed--raised in character to keep pace with the universal uplift of the national mind. One may consider the fifty years from 480 to 430 as the period of productive organization, preparing the way for the masterpieces of Aristophanes.

Unfortunately it is quite impossible to trace the progress of comedy in Sicily. Even Aristotle could not trace it, so few were the notices that had survived concerning the type. Comedy was not willing to be taken seriously. Its buffooneries were laughed at, but no one took the trouble to note just how it progressed from year to year.

An important advance, however, was made in the adoption of a plot or intrigue by which the scenes could be bound together and the play prolonged to a considerable length. This essentially superior type came from Sicily, as Aristotle seems to affirm. But it is –(p.236)- scarcely doubtful that contemporary tragedy also had some influence in the matter. This innovation would imply several others: the use of masks to give each rôle its proper characterization; the establishment of a normal structure, the formal division into parts more or less analogous to those of tragedy; and the decision upon the number of actors. It must all have taken place in this period; for, in the time of Aristophanes, we find comedy fully developed. But the ancients themselves did not know to whom the successive steps of progress were to be attributed.

Early in the period a decisive event occurred--the institution of a contest in comedy. A fragment of an inscription, found mutilated in 1878, enables us to assert that it was before the last victory of Æschylus in 458; the date may be several years earlier. At any rate, comedy had from then on a recognition in the city. It had once seemed unworthy, and won its first successes in the country. "Much time passed," says Aristotle, "before the archon provided a chorus for comedy; till then, the good will of the people gave it all the aid it received." The subvention of the state placed it on the same rank as tragedy, or almost so. Yet sometimes it paid a dear price for its privilege. Again and again the state restrained its liberty. Plutarch tells of a law that prevented members of the Areopagus from writing comic plays. More serious still, one was passed in 440 prohibiting the representation of actions of men of the day. Abrogated in 437, it was reënacted in 416. Nevertheless, on the whole, during the fifth century, the régime of entire liberty prevailed, as we shall see when we come to study the leading poets of the time.

Chionides and Magnes are cited by Aristotle as the two most ancient comic poets at Athens worthy of being named. The first is said to have made his appearance between 480

and 450. There is nothing of his in existence that can be mentioned here. The reputation of Magnes was more brilliant. Aristophanes has given us a summary of his career in the parabasis of the *Knights* (v. 519 ff.): "I know what happened to Magnes, when his hairs became gray. Yet many were the trophies that he won, victorious over his rivals. In vain, attempting to deceive the people, did he speak all sorts of language, in vain did he play the lute, flap his wings, compose in the Lydian mode, disguise himself as a gnawing gall insect, and give his clothing the tinge of frog's hide: he could please no longer. At last, by a misfortune that he had not known in youth, he was driven from the theatre, an old man, because the spirit of his wit had left him." From this passage, plausible titles have been made out for several of his comedies: the Lute-players, the Birds, the Lydians, the Gall Insects, the Frogs. They give some idea of the –(p.237)-variety of his invention. Magnes must have been a man with some imaginative power, to give such forms of soaring fancy to the old Dionysiac satire. As long as he made new inventions, he held the favor of the people; but he lacked force of thought. Men grew weary of his buffooneries when they perceived that these were used again and again, and that nothing new was put in their place.

The great comic poet of the period is Cratinus, who, in his old age, was the rival of Aristophanes. We do not know the date of his birth. His successes were won between 449 and 423. He was an Athenian. Of his life and personality we know almost nothing, except that he was said by his rivals to love luxury, good cheer, and wine. Whether the imputations were true or not, his character was certainly exuberant; he was animated by an ardent, joyous vigor. Aristophanes, in the parabasis of the Knights, playfully compared him to an impetuous torrent: "He rolled along over the flat country, amidst a loud noise of acclamations; and, overturning everything in his way, he carried along pell-mell the oaks, the plane trees, and his uprooted enemies." In a fragment, Cratinus draws a similar picture of himself: "By Apollo! What a flood of words! An ebullition of gushing water! A dozen exits instead of a mouth! A

whole Ilissus in his gullet! What more can I say to describe him? If you do not put a plug in his throat, he will overflow everything with his poetry."[1] With such hyperbolic fantasy, there must go an extraordinary nature. If one may believe Aristophanes, Cratinus, like Magnes, ceased to please the people in his extreme old age. In 424, in the passage of the Knights already cited, the young poet mischievously represented his old rival as a shattered instrument falling to pieces and no longer having any worth. But these are the words of a satirist and competitor. That very year Cratinus won the second prize, and took the first the year after, with a comedy called the Bottle. One is warranted, therefore, in believing that, till the last, he continued in full possession of his powers.

Cratinus is said to have done much to give comedy its form; but we have no evidence on the point in which we can put absolute confidence. His part in morals and politics was that of a bold censor whose frankness was often brutal. " Cratinus, following in the footsteps of Archilochus," says an ancient critic, "was bitter in his invectives." His raillery is not concealed, as in Aristophanes, beneath a grace that subdues the harshness of the censure; but advances very directly, "with unveiled face," as it were, against men of dishonest character.[2] According to another account, this was one of –(p.238)-

Lecture/Lesson Plan: Aristophanes and his Contemporaries

1. Life of Aristophanes, and his Works. The Extant Plays.

2. His GeneralTendencies. His Views: Political, Social, and Literary. His Religion.

3. His Dramatic Invention. His Subjects.His Idea of Dramatic Action.

4. The Characters: their Double Nature, Ideal and Real.

5. His LyricPassages. HisLanguage.

6. Contemporaries of Aristophanes: Eupolis.End of Old Comedy.

1. Life of Aristophanes, and his Works. The Extant Plays -- The work of Aristophanes is fairly well known, but not his personality, except for the declarations that he gave the public

in his parabases. The only events of his life, however, seem to have been the production of his dramas. Hence it is impossible to separate the biography of the poet from the account of his works.

He was born about 450, and his parents were free-born Athenians, possessors of a small estate at Ægina, which they managed as *cleruchs.* Aristophanes was a talented youth. While still very young he brought out, in 427, his first play, now lost, the Banqueters of Heracles (Δαιταλῆσ), which won the second prize.

Already a moralist and a sharp critic of the new tendencies, he followed the fashion of the day in making his plays educational. The next year, in 426, in another play now lost, the Babylonians, with true juvenile audacity,-(p.248)-he attacked the demagogues, and particularly Cleon. This brought on him an exciting lawsuit, from which he appears to have come off victorious. He was, however, neither intimidated nor discouraged. In 425 he presented the *Acharnians,* the oldest of his extant comedies, which, though in competition with Cratinus and Eupolis, raised him to the first rank. In it he represents a sturdy peasant, Dicæopolis, whom the war has forced to leave his estate and take refuge in the city. The good fellow wants peace at any price, and as he is the only one who wants it, he concludes a treaty on his own behalf. The charcoal-burners of Acharnæ, who form the chorus, hasten to attack the traitor; but he succeeds in convincing them that he is right. Then, in a series of joyous scenes, we see him reaping the benefits of peace, buying, selling, and making merry, whereas the others suffer from hunger and the miseries of war. The play is excellent from end to end because of the gayety of its invention, its movement, its surprises, the renewal of its interest, and the poetic hardihood manifest at every instant.

Aristophanes brought out these first plays with the collaboration of a certain Callistratus, who undertook to make ready for the representation and direct it. There is reason to believe, however, that Aristophanes did not conceal his own authorship. It seems reasonable to

interpret thus a rather obscure fact, which he himself attests; namely that, to the end of his life, he was accustomed frequently to employ either this same Callistratus or another man--a certain Philonides.

But in 424 he himself took charge of the representation of the *Knights,* the most violent attack he had made against the demagogue Cleon. Cleon had just won an unexpected victory at Sphacteria. Notwithstanding this, the young poet did not hesitate to turn to ridicule the favor Cleon was enjoying with the people. The Athenians laughed not only at their favorite, but also at themselves; and the play was a success. Under the name of Demos, he personified the people, in whose hands all power was vested; credulous old Demos was being duped by those who flattered him. He disgraced his faithful servants, in whom we recognize Nicias and Demosthenes, and substituted for them a cozening Paphlagonian, who while preying upon him pretends to be devoted to him. The rascal, of course, is Cleon. The disgraced servants attempt to raise a rival to the old man's favorite in the person of the sausage-seller Agoracritus. Impudent, ignorant, brawling, he finally supplants Cleon by the use of the same means that Cleon used. Demos, restored to reason, regains his youth with his senses. The strife of Agoracritus against Cleon forms the subject of the drama. It has not the gayety nor –(p.249)-the rustic grace of the Acharnians, yet atones for this with a satiric and comic force not found so fully in any other play. The Athenian judges assigned it the first prize.

The next year, 423, Aristophanes, again taking up the theme treated in his Babylonians, satirized, in the Clouds, the sophists and the new education.Strepsiades, a humble peasant, laborious and thrifty, has a prodigal son who cannot pay his debts. The father is eager to learn rhetoric, which he regards as the art of eluding his creditors by deceiving the judges. This art is typified in Socrates, who is transformed for the occasion into a charlatan. But Strepsiades is too thick-headed to understand the lesson that he receives; and so he sends his son to study in his place. The son, Phidippides, when educated, mocks at and beats his father--such are the

fruits of this much-lauded education. Strepsiades, converted and furious, sets fire to Socrates's school. The Clouds, who give their name to the play and form its chorus, represent the mazes before which philosophers bow in worship. The play obtained only the third prize. The author, more surprised than discouraged, rewrote it, but does not seem to have presented it again. The second edition is what we possess. The róle of Strepsiadesis excellent, giving the chief value to the drama. That of Socrates is only a gross slander; and though amusing, its injustice is offensive. It shows at least how far contemporary opinion was deceived by appearances in appreciating the great man. If the comedy did not contribute directly to his condemnation twenty-five years after, it would be rash to assert that it did not make ready for it indirectly by the false, odious image it created and kept alive in the public mind.

The Wasps, played in 422, seems to have had a less general aim. Aristophanes in this play derides the mania for lawsuits that had taken possession of the Athenians; but behind the somewhat thin veil, he sees and discloses the policy of the demagogues, who turn the leisure time of the people and the worst elements in its disposition to their own account. It is really still Cleon who is being censured. An old man named Philocleon is madly fond of lawsuits; around him buzzes the chorus of Wasps, representing the old heliasts whose sting is always threatening and who promote and profit by his folly. His son Bdelycleon undertakes to correct him. This difficult undertaking constitutes the real action of the play. Philocleon and his associates are finally converted. After that, the old man, free from the trouble of sitting in court, leads a joyous life. The play is vividly developed, full of spirit and of amusing incidents. It suggested to Racine some of the most successful portions of his Plaideurs. – (p.250)-the rustic grace of the Acharnians, yet atones for this with a satiric and comic force not found so fully in any other play. The Athenian judges assigned it the first prize.

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incidents. It suggested to Racine some of the most successful portions of his Plaideurs. – (p.250)-The Peace, brought out in 421, was later rewritten. We have only the first edition. The subject is the same as that of the Acharnians, but the form is much inferior. The vine-dresser Trygæus, weary of the war, mounts to Olympus on the back of a horned beetle and brings back Peace, whom he induces to dwell in his home, notwithstanding the opposition of certain lunatics. The action is uninteresting, and grows cold beneath the allegory. But the play is full of choice passages, all animate with the poetic charm of the country. Between 424 and 421 appeared also two lost plays, the Laborers and the Merchant Vessels, in which the poet pleaded for the cessation of hostilities.

From 421 to 414 there is a lacuna in the chronological series of his works; but we have no reason to believe that he maintained silence during this period. The years must have been occupied with plays that have not been transmitted to us. The series begins again in 414 with the Amphiaraus, of which, however, nothing is extant; and the Birds, which has been preserved. In this second group of plays the satire is generally less harsh and, above all, less personal.

The Birds is a charming fantasy mingled with satire, but without any marked general purpose. Two Athenians, Pithetærus and Euelpidus, weary of living in a city where the courts are in session from morning to night, go away to find the birds, make an agreement with them, and induce them to build a new city between heaven and earth, called Nephelococcygia. The intriguers down below would fain win admission, but are driven away with clubs. The gods try unsuccessfully to govern the city; negotiations are entered into, and finally Pithetærus assigns himself the kingdom, despite the claims of Zeus. All this is daring invention, as poetic as it is capricious and ingenious. The moral purpose, if there is one, consists chiefly in unmasking certain impostors and charlatans; but the poet seems to aim rather at amusing than at instructing his public.

Two years later, in 411, the Lysistrata was brought out, and also the Thesmophoriazusœ (Θεσμοφοριάζουσαι). In the former, the poet once more pleaded against the war. This time the women demanded peace, or rather forced it by abandoning their husbands. The conspiracy is led by Lysistrata, who gives her name to the comedy. No other of the poet's plays is so bold in plot or incident, yet in no other is the action better managed. The aim of the Thesmophoriazusœ is to turn Euripides into ridicule. By his attacks against women, the tragic poet is supposed to have offended them greatly. To spy out and amuse himself with their discussions, his -251-father-in-law, Mnesilochus, disguised as a woman, slips in among the women of Athens, who are celebrating the festival of Demeter. There he meets with countless dangers, from which his son-in-law, the adroit Euripides, extricates him with great difficulty. The drama is spirited, but Aristophanes has neglected to give a summary of his griefs against Euripides. It is a game in satire rather than a satire proper--a series of skirmishes rather than a regular attack.

This second series was closed by *The Frogs*, one of the most important of Aristophanes's plays. It won the first prize at the Lenæan festival of 405. Here there is represented a formal judicial trial of Euripides and his art. He had just died, a year after Sophocles; the tragic poet Agatho was in Macedon; and Bacchus, patron of the theatre, is represented as anxious about the fate of tragedy. But he has no poet. Impelled by his fears, he decides to go and seek one among the dead. Whom shall he bring? He hesitates between Æschylus and Euripides. A competition takes place; the two rivals mutually attack each other; thus all their art is criticised from the moral as well as the poetic point of view. Euripides is shown to be a sophist who has corrupted tragedy, degraded ideals, troubled men's spirits, and compromised good morality. Bacchus chooses Æschylus and brings him back in triumph to the earth.

The years following were somewhat unfavorable to comedy. The close of the Peloponnesian War had left Athens under a burden. When the democracy was reëstablished,

the city took breath, but public spirit had not the same vigor as before. Comedy underwent a transformation. Though in his youth the poet was the incarnation of exuberant fancy and venturesomeness, he was obliged in his old age to conform to the new régime. This he did with a remarkable accommodation of spirit; yet he produced no masterpieces comparable to those of his earlier years.

In 392, he presented the Ecclesiazusce, an attack against contemporary theories. In this play the women of Athens, led by Praxagora, are represented as having got control of the assembly and having passed a vote establishing the principles of absolute communism. They abolished all rights of property and of the family. The theme of the play is the consequences that ensue. These are vividly portrayed. One no longer finds harsh satire directed against the powers of the day. The poet attacks a scholastic system, a chimera. Does he have specially in view a certain school, for example that of Plato, as has been supposed? He has not told us and we do not know. There is the same tendency in the Plutus, of which the first edition was brought out in 408, and the second, rewritten, in 388. –(p.252)-

The extant version is the second edition. A sturdy fellow, Chremylus, having found the god of riches, a blind god as everybody knows, takes him to the temple of Asclepias, gets him healed, and maintains him in his own home. In consequence a whole group of honest people, his neighbors and himself, become rich and devote themselves to banqueting. Under this guise is given a view of the ever recurring social question; and the intervention of Poverty, in a celebrated scene in which she extols her merits, gives the play a moral tone, that is unfortunately diminished and obscured by the final scene.

This was probably the last comedy that Aristophanes presented in his own name. He is said to have composed also the Cocalus and the Eolosicon, plays that have been lost. At the time they were represented as the works of his son Ararus, for whom he wished thus to win

public favor. The former was, even at this early date, a comedy of intrigue; the latter, a parody.

Aristophanes died soon after this event. His anonymous biographer tells us that Plato composed for him this epitaph, "The Graces, seeking a temple which should not perish, chose the soul of Aristophanes." Besides the eleven plays that we possess and those that we have mentioned, he composed a number of others, of which we have only titles and fragments. The total appears to have been at least forty.

2. His General Tendencies. His Views: Political, Social, and Literary. His Religion--The first question that arises when one tries to appreciate this series of remarkable works is, How far can they be taken seriously? When taken together they suggest the idea of a system of political, social, and literary views from which might be deduced a doctrine. One is tempted to regard Aristophanes as a thinker well able to judge of affairs in his time, whose opinion merits much consideration. Is this really the case? Behind these brilliant invectives are we to look for a clearly defined policy, an established creed, and a criticism resting upon known principles?

If so, then surely Aristophanes would need to be regarded as a devotee of tradition, the resolute enemy of innovation. One would be obliged to suppose that from his youth, before he was twenty, he showed a constant inclination toward the past as against the future; and that, devoted to the ancient ideals which were being abandoned more and more, he did not cease to defend them and attack all that tended to corrupt them. And though in itself this would not appear improbable, yet it seems that one should then be able to deduce from his criticism a number of affirmations that would constitute his –(p.253)-doctrine. But as soon as one seeks these, it is seen to be impossible to formulate them. Aristophanes censures democracy; is he, then, a partisan of aristocratic institutions, and would he institute a current of opinion tending to reëstablish them? There is nothing in his plays that permits us to suppose this. What he

censures is certain men and certain abuses; he lashes and turns to ridicule Cleon, Lamachus, Hyperbolus, Cleophon, and even makes sport of Pericles after his death. He shows how the people are deceived and sometimes wheedled by them. Does he, therefore, think that the state would be better governed by other masters? Really, we do not know. He denounces the impiety of the sophists, the dangerous subtleties of their instruction, the perilous seductions of that rhetoric which obliterates the sense of justice. Would he have wished men to abstain from learning the art of language and to return outright to the old education? or did he mean simply to point out some deplorable excesses while advocating necessary changes? He has not said.

The resolute adversary of Euripides, did he sustain the same relation to all contemporary poetry? It would appear not; for he at least admired the style of the poet whom he derided. As for religion, if he pretended to defend it against the theorists who advocated atheism, this was certainly not because he had a scrupulous respect for the gods. It is well known with what informality he treated them in more than one passage. All this, it must be confessed, does not give us the idea that he was a theologian, nor even a believer. We see, indeed, what he attacked; but when we endeavor to say precisely what he defended, we are at a loss.

May it not be that really he never comprehended himself, and possibly never felt the need of doing so? Let us consider how he was reared. From youth his instincts, which were only the consciousness of his rare powers, carried him toward comedy. His education was obtained while listening to the plays of Cratinus and his contemporaries, meditating upon them, and trying to imitate them. As soon as he began to think for himself, his thought was in a way moulded upon theirs. In trying to imitate their art, he adopted also their spirit, which was inseparable from it--a spirit of satire, opposition, and mockery at extravagance. The processes of the profession were therefore early adapted to the spontaneous trend of his genius, which was then just what it was later; and therefore he never became anxious to search for the true and the ideal. To seize upon the ridiculous and display it before all eyes, that was his calling.

All his insight, natural good sense, and wit were used to disclose this, as was his poetic fancy and talent in exaggerating and –(p.254)-adapting it for the stage. Characters thus formed do not have doctrines; for they are strangers to disinterested research. They have tendencies, whose principal element is the instinct of what their art demands and of what is most fitted to bring out the brilliance of their powers.

Must we say then, on the other hand, that the comedies of Aristophanes lack seriousness? We cannot go so far. When he attacks contemporary statesmen, it is true we cannot accept his testimony, because it is that of a pamphleteer and professional satirist. We have no reason for thinking him juster in this than he was when he portrayed Euripides. But he is just to as great an extent, and this makes his account worth attention. For, in criticising Euripides, if he sees only his defects and exaggerates them beyond all reason, he does evince, by the essential justice of his remarks, undoubted clearsightedness. And this is true of all his censures. That he calumniated Pericles, Cleon, and many others, we do not doubt. But in attributing to them intentions that they did not have and acts that they did not perform, he more than once perceived and brought to light the secret viciousness of their policy, or better, that of all policy which cannot live without public approval, thinks itself justified in flattering public opinion, and in deceiving it for the sake of retaining power. It would be much more unjust on the whole to degrade him to the rank of a simple jester than to raise him to that of a philosopher or political economist. Very keen good sense constituted the moral worth of his dramas; and even if it did not keep him from prejudice and injustice, it caused him to bring constantly to light truths whose particular application may have been doubtful, but whose eventual correctness is beyond dispute.

3. His Dramatic Invention, His Subjects, His Idea of Dramatic Action--To represent these truths in comedy, Aristophanes does not seem to have sensibly modified the procedure of his predecessors. No remarkable innovation is attributed to him either in substance or in form.

What distinguishes him from the other comic poets is not his dramatic method, but his personal qualities. He had, to an eminent degree, force and variety of invention, joined with grace and a discretion peculiarly Attic, which was manifest even in his drollest exaggerations. His invention always has this as its chief merit--that it is of the sort best fitted to express his idea; it has, too, the merit of being naturally comic, and of permitting a rich development of fancy. From this double point of view, each of his subjects is a treasure trove; the more one studies him, the more one admires his propriety, justice, and innate drollery. If he wishes to plead the cause of peace, -(p.255)-though he might have done so in a thousand ways, what a happy idea that of bringing before us a man who has made a treaty quite on his own account and who lives in the enjoyment of peace, while every one around is suffering from the effects of war. The thesis is at once expressed in drama, the statement provided with a vivid and sensible demonstration. How many amusing incidents such a subject offers to the imagination of a poet! To be sure, its improbability is excessive, yet not such as fancy cannot accept. It has a certain reasonableness, as it consists merely in the investment of an isolated person with those rights which in real life, society reserves to itself. The supposition is impossible from the social point of view; but, for all that, it is not absurd in itself. What we have said of the

Acharnians is as applicable to *The Knights*, *The Wasps*, or *The Clouds*, if we consider the essentials of their invention. There is always the same clearness in the definition of the theme, always a situation fitted to give the idea its full value by presenting it under the form best suited to demonstration, and at the same time most pleasing. Everywhere in the buffoonery there is the same adherence to reality. This informs the spectator that he is looking at a scene of contemporary life, and also makes it seem animated.

Even when the poet's imagination seems to soar most freely, in plays that might be regarded as works of pure fancy, like the Birds, analogous remarks are still found applicable.

In the midst of the drama there is an invention which brings out the idea clearly; and though bold, it seems surcharged with good sense. We have here the ideal city, Nephelococcygia, contrasting with the real city Athens, and carefully guarding against all that encumbers the latter. Such an invention defines the theme and creates the whole play.

Consequently, if the subjects of Aristophanes did not differ essentially from those of Cratinus or Eupolis, it is proper to admit that they possessed, in an eminent degree, the qualities necessary to bring the type to its perfection. Moreover, these qualities were found, not only in the preliminary invention and in the theme, but in the development of the drama as well. That was perhaps the principal reason of his superiority.

The art of developing the action in Old Comedy was properly that of putting logic into the incoherence and probability into the fancy. It supposes a rare combination of diverse, and even opposed, qualities. We have seen that Cratinus, with his inexhaustible animation and his soaring flights of fancy, frequently failed in this. Forgetting his proper field, he ran off into pure fancy or satiric digressions. This Aristophanes never did. He was not bound to cumbersome, ungraceful exactitude, or – (p.256)-

Philocleon is the Athenian burgher considered in one of his most interesting aspects. Cleon himself is much less the historic personage of that name than the demagogue who flatters the people that he may become their master; and the Socrates of the *Clouds* is in no respect the teacher of Plato, but the sophist, or in other terms, the retailer of counterfeit knowledge, the master of cunning and cleverness. Hence they all have an ideal character; for these traits are common to a whole class, and not distinguished from the complex reality except in so far as the poet's genius rises above particular details by an abstraction looking to the universal. They depart from reality for yet another reason. This is the demand of comedy itself as it was then conceived; for it was not content with moderate ridicule, but called for droll exaggeration. All the fictitious creatures of the comic poets needed, therefore, to

magnify at least some of their characteristic traits far beyond what was possible in nature. The peasant's passion for his personal tranquillity in Dicæopolis, the love of economy in Strepsiades, the very baseness of the demagogue in Cleon, are thus pushed to excess. The exaggeration in them has something grandiose about it. The poet's imagination designedly seeks an ideal such as one would expect in the Old Comedy.

Nevertheless, this does not prevent his having, if not observation in the strict sense, at least a vivid intuition of reality. It appears that this is one of the matters in which Aristophanes was superior to Cratinus. His typical figures are strongly individualized, and that with a remarkable delicacy of touch. Dicæopolis has a critical, independent spirit. He is fond of good cheer, naturally joyful, and roguish; alert and quick, he is a true peasant of Mount Parnes, gaunt in body, agile, always moving, a man whose words are acted rather than spoken. Strepsiades is older and more morose and dissatisfied; he is credulous and cunning at the same time; inventive, yet incapable of understanding what transcends his experience. He is economical, keenly alive to his interests, and honest at heart, although the pressure of the debts he must pay makes him try dishonest means of escape. As the head of the family, he is both feeble and authoritative. Bdelycleon, Pithetærus, Lysistrata, Praxagora, and Chremylus each have their individual traits. If they had part in a more commonplace action, these would suffice to mark them as wholly like ourselves; and the comedy of exuberant fancy would become the comedy of character, of which it contains the germ. The mad extravagance to which it is devoted prevents this; nevertheless, each of these droll personages is a clearly conceived individual.

This excellent realism of the personages is shown, not only in –(p.258)-their sentiments and manners, but also in the environment in which they live. Aristophanes excelled in giving, by means of brief expressions mingled with the chant or the dialogue, a thousand just and exact descriptive phrases that make his comedy vivid and real. Dicæopolis, leading the

Dionysiac procession around the court in front of his house, presents before our eyes the image of a rustic festival; Strepsiades, turning back his thoughts regretfully to the store of provisions once filling his home, transports us from Athens to the little paternal domain where he grew up to become a man; the laborers of the *Peace* portray for us familiar scenes of village life, reunions where the neighbors assemble, and the peaceful, leisurely conversationwhich they enjoy over their cups. It is from these plays, in fact, that one can obtain the greatest number of delicate, precise indications regarding the life of Athens and Attica during the second half of the fifth century.

5. His Lyric Passage. His Language --In the hands of such a poet, what will the lyric passages be like? He had a vivid imagination, gayety, frolicsomeness, and the most delicate sense of rhythm. These are the dominant qualities of his lyric poetry. His chants seem as if improvised. It is a spontaneous, capricious poetry, brilliant and easy, uniting the most charming simplicity with polished lustre and grandeur. Deep inspiration is rare in the chants; but sincerity and vivacity of impression are everywhere manifest. Satiric couplets abound. The aggressive, light, petulant type of song was as truly Greek as it is French; but in Greece it was more like the popular, Dionysiac iamb, more like a revel, more playful. Aristophanes showed unusual skill in this type of composition. We cannot cite examples here; for personal mockeries almost always need a commentary, and that would make them seem heavy. They are, however, abundant: now a biting allusion, half concealed beneath ingenious allegory, now a series of droll jests, apparently incoherent, but containing fine expressions, puns, and amusing figures. It is easy to see how much these merry snatches of song, with their air of life and appropriateness, must have amused the people. This explains also why they have lost so much of their charm to-day.

The really durable lyric passages are those which manifest the grace of his imagination. Let us note particularly those that show his love of nature. This man, who seems to have lived

only for the city, must have had a sincere, ardent love of the country and its life. Who can read, without the keenest pleasure, the appeal which, in the *Birds*, the hoopoe addresses, across prairies and forests, to the whole winged tribe? Finesse is here united in a charming manner –(p.259)-with free play of invention; a thousand details are found, yet one has finally the sensation of free space, even to the distant horizon:--"Quick, quick, this way, this way, all ye who fly as I do; this way, ye who rove on the husbandman's fertile fields, a multitudinous tribe of barley-eaters, swift-winged, shrill-voiced robbers, gathering seeds on this side and on that; this way, ye who, in the furrow, leaping from clod to clod, utter gently your joyous cry: tio, tio; this way, familiar visitants of the garden, perched on twigs of ivy; and ye, who make your nests in the mountains, who go, marauding, to the wild olive or the arbute tree, come quickly to my call. . . ."

This is nimble, light, leaping; but the general plan of the passage is simple, and the impressions of detail, howsoever distinct, are thoroughly mingled in one concrete general impression.

Nor is dignity lacking, though he aims in general rather to be graceful and amiable. Whenever the subject makes it possible, his imagination sees splendid visions. When the chorus of the Clouds sing behind the scene before showing themselves to Socrates, the poet, in a few words, discloses to us the marvellous spectacle of the world lit by the sun:--

"Everlasting Clouds let us rise high in air and display our soft, wavy vapors. From the bosom of Ocean, our father, from the midst of the resounding waves, let us mount to the lofty, tree-covered summits of the hills. Thence shall we see the sacred earth bearing its fruit, the divine rivers and their noisy waves, and the sea, with its dull murmur. The sun, like an eye ever open in the depths of ether, is shining in all its splendor. Let us throw off the misty vapors that enshroud us and, revealing our immortal forms, look, with infinite power of sight, down on the face of the earth."

Finally, sometimes there is even emotion in this poetry, though it is created to accompany laughter. We cannot cite here the second parabasis of the *Peace*, as it is too long, and loses greatly by being separated from its context. Suffice it to remark how delicious is the laborer's dream, when he sees the war coming to a close and is to return to his field. Beneath the light playfulness, one cannot but recognize the natural relish of the poet for the things he describes. The few passages of the sort that might be cited, however, are quite exceptional. In general, the lyric spirit of Aristophanes lies in the tone of his comedy, and is intimately connected therewith. Its merit lies in the ease of its development and the admirable variety of character it possesses

This is also the merit of the language spoken by his characters. It represents the perfection of Attic familiar speech. Contemporaries thought they could discern in it imitation of Euripides; and even Aristophanes, though a sworn adversary of the great tragic –(p.260)-poet, did not absolutely deny the reproach, or eulogy, of borrowing from him certain graces of style. But the real model of Aristophanes was the conversation of contemporary Athenians. He excelled in reproducing its lively turns, its free movement, its delicacy and variety, and that with a simple elegance which seemed to cost him no effort. Natural, yet piquant, grace was his true merit; and none of his contemporaries seems to have possessed it to the same extent. He could not be better characterized as a writer than by applying to him the pretty verses from one of his fragments, where he says of a certain person, "He speaks the language of the middle class in the city, without the soft affectation of the élite citizens, and without the coarseness of the ignorant."

The comic and dramatic qualities of this language are those chiefly deserving notice. It is remarkably adroit in word-play. In comic dialogue, it does not fear to descend to absurd puns. To our taste, this is a sufficiently small merit, yet perhaps not so for the public taste of the time. There is more reason for praising its invention. It is an invention of words, uncouth

compounds, and effects of every sort, resulting from surprises and comparisons. All this, however, belongs rather to the type of composition than to the poet. His really personal merit is in the vivacity of his diction and the flexibility of the turns. No one could better form a phrase or emphasize a trait, bring together a pleasing accumulation of words, or put them in opposition. It is not enough to say that his dialogue is full of life and movement; every phrase is a characteristic; every word provokes a laugh. Hence his flexible, sparkling style was remarkably well adapted to the situations and the characters. Read in the *Knights* the pleasing scene where the slave, ` Demosthenes, puts the sausage-seller through a preliminary examination to determine that, since he knows nothing, he is fit to become a statesman (v. 150 ff.). The sausage-seller, surprised and yet timid, is quite astonished at what he hears--petty questions, doubts, artless exclamations, rather gestures and play of physiognomy than words. He both does and does not believe. He is there, half-defiant, half-convinced, in the hands of the droll creature who impels him on. The latter, on the contrary, uses clear, short phrases, the air of a master, categorical assertions, and with this, when necessary, the insinuating word that dispels doubt, excites ambition, encourages, or commands. The language thus becomes a means of indicating character; it describes the personage who uses it.

These observations give the idea that one needs to keep in mind about Aristophanes. His art is as clever as his genius; it serves him without controlling him. Both give indication of one of the –(p.261)-most fertile, free, graceful imaginations that can be conceived, associated with the vividest, keenest intelligence and the readiest discernment of the ridiculous.

6. Contemporaries of Aristophanes: Eupolis- End of Old Comedy -- Around Aristophanes were grouped a number of poets who were his rivals. Their works are lost, but were more or less like his own. Almost thirty names might be mentioned; but only three have kept celebrity and deserve more than to be passed in silence. These are Eupolis, Phrynichus, and Plato.

Eupolis, an Athenian, was almost the equal of Aristophanes in genius and reputation. Born not long before 445, he brought out his first play in 429. For nearly twenty years his success was brilliant. He is said to have composed fourteen, or seventeen, comedies; and seven times he won the first prize. In 411 he perished in a shipwreck, while taking part in a military expedition. His most important plays were: the *Goats* (423), in which he opposed the rude, simple manners of rustic goatherds to the soft effeminacy of the élite Athenians; the *Maricas* (420), a violent attack against the demagogue Hyperbolus, Cleon's successor; and the Demes, whose date is uncertain. In this play he called from the depths of Hades several of the great men of Athens to teach the people a lesson. In it were found the celebrated verses on the eloquence of Pericles:-- "He was the ablest of men in speech. When he appeared before the people, his conduct was that of a runner: he took ten paces in advance of other orators and surpassed them all in eloquence. He was, indeed, a swift runner. What is more, he possessed the gift of persuasion. It sat upon his lips. His speech was the essence of charm; and alone among orators, he could leave a sting in the soul of his auditors." Let us mention yet his *Baptæ*, represented probably in 415, in which the audacious poet lashed the votaries of the Thracian goddess Cottyto, and with them Alcibiades, who was then very powerful.

Although Eupolis seems to have had the same beliefs as Aristophanes, they were friendly for only a short time. As early as 420, they quarrelled over some literary matters which it is impossible to-day to elucidate. According to the accounts of ancient critics, Eupolis was endowed with inventive genius, fertile and graceful imagination, and, like Cratinus, was aggressive and biting in attack. Though as intellectual as Aristophanes, he seems to have been less moderate, and so, on the whole, inferior. – (p.262)

Phrynichus is far from being so well known. His dramatic career extends from about 435 to 405. His chief play was the *Misanthrope* (Μονότροπος), with which, in 414, he competed against the Birds of Aristophanes, obtaining only the third prize.

Plato, surnamed the Comic to distinguish him from the philosopher, seems to have been the youngest of this group of poets. He obtained his most brilliant successes during the second part of the Peloponnesian War and in the years that followed. Like Aristophanes, he often attacked contemporary statesmen, notably Cleophon. But the dominant element in his plays was parody. The importance and the lustre which he could give to such composition have caused him to be classed sometimes as a poet of the Middle Comedy.

With these various poets and their contemporaries, the Old Comedy reached its zenith. This was very near its close, at the end of the century. The causes of its swift decline are not well understood. The ancients explained it by a law imposing silence on the chorus through divesting it of the right of satire; it was said, too, that after the war, the impoverished citizens were no longer able to meet the expenses of the various choregia. Neither of the explanations is wholly satisfactory, as they both are limited to a passing state of events. Liberty can be crushed for an instant; but if it had been demanded by public opinion, nothing could have hindered it from springing up afresh at Athens in the fourth century; and as for the impoverishment mentioned, that was neither universal nor longcontinued. Hence the true causes for the transformation must be sought elsewhere. It seems that one might discover three leading causes.

First, the greater sensitiveness of public spirit. At the end of the Peloponnesian War, the democracy had had a rude experience. When it was reëstablished, it became more defiant. The strifes of orators and the multiplicity of public accusations go to prove this. Under such conditions, a direct satire of current politics by the theatre was impossible. It would have set the political parties wrangling on the spot.

In the second place, the type of composition was gradually exhausted. Its fantastic inventions were condemned by their nature to lose their effectiveness. The public probably

began to weary of them when the representations were interrupted by the events of 404. It seemed impossible to return to earlier conditions.

The most important of these causes was probably the gradual transformation of public taste and spirit. It is certain that the fourth century, on the whole, gave preference to fine and delicate reason rather than to the fantasies of the imagination. It was an epoch of – (p.263)- Phrynichus is far from being so well known. His dramatic career extends from about 435 to 405. His chief play was the *Misanthrope* (Μονότροπος), with which, in 414, he competed against the Birds of Aristophanes, obtaining only the third prize –(p.263)-philosophy, moral observation, and dialectic. All in all, moderate qualities predominated over the others. The tendency was directly opposed to that of the Old Comedy. Men lost their liking for its hyperbolas, buffooneries, violence, and coarseness. And we shall see later that the new forms of comic composition were precisely those most agreeable to the new tendency of public opinion. –(p.264)-

Books Listed According to Order of Reference in Lectures/Lessons

- *Fifteen Greek Plays* by Gilbert Murray, Benjamin Bickly Rogers, and Lane Cooper. Oxford University Press, N.Y, 1943;
- Butcher, Samuel Henry. *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art with a Critical Study and a Translation of the Poetics*. London and New York, McMillan and Co, 1895;
-*Greek Literature for the Modern Reader*. H. C. Baldry. *Cambridge University Press, 1951;*
- *A History of Ancient Greek Literature*. Gilbert Murray. D. Appleton, New York, 1897;
- *An Abridged History of Greek Literature*. Alfred Croiset, Maurice Croiset, George F. Heffelbower. Macmillan, 1904.

Samples for Examination:

-Sample 1:

A-Answer/Complete the following: (**10**pts)

1. What is meant by '*peripeteia'*? .....

2. 'Oracle' means: .....

3. What is the main important part of a tragedy? .....

4. Which 'discovery' is preferred by Aristotle? .....

5. The final scene that tells the lesson learned in a tragedy: .....

6. The five parts of a Greek tragedy are:

……/……/……/……../ .....

7. Explain what 'Hubris' is? .....

8. Say whether you would like to be ruled by a leader like Oedipus? If not why?.....

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9. Do Aeschylus and Sophocles portray different tragic heroes or not? Justify .....

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10. Is the role of the 'chorus' the same in *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus King of Thebes*? .....

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B- Analyze the passage below taken from *Oedipus King of Thebes*:

[Collage of an excerpt from the play]

C- What is the lesson learnt from the following 'exodus' in *Oedipus King of Thebes:*

[Collage of the exodus in the play]

-Sample 2:

A-Answer/Complete the following: (**10**pts)

1. What is meant by '*anagnorisis'*? .....

2. 'Oracle' means: .....

3. Is 'plot' the main important part of a tragedy? .....

4. Which 'discovery' is preferred by Aristotle? .....

5. The opening part that introduces the topic of a tragedy is: .....

6. The five parts of a Greek tragedy are:

……/……/……/……../… .....

7. Explain what 'stasimon' is? .....

8. Say whether you would like to be ruled by a leader like Agamemnon? If not why? .....

.....

.....

9. Do Aeschylus and Sophocles portray different tragic heroes or not? Justify .....

.....

.....

10. Describe the role of the 'chorus' *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus King of Thebes*? .....

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B- Analyze the passage below taken from *Oedipus King of Thebes*: (06 pts)

[Collage of an excerpt from the play]

C- What is the lesson learnt from the following 'exodus' in *Agamemnon: (04 pts)*

[Collage of the exodus in the play]