

# **Aristotle's View on Tragedy**

## **Semester II**

### **Unit II**

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Aristotle's chief concern in formulating his theory of tragedy is to determine the effect of tragedy on the spectators. As such, he takes "tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kind of being found in separate parts of the play, in the form of action not of narrative through pity and fear effecting the catharsis which means proper purgation of these emotions". Aristotle calls tragedy an imitation of an action. An imaginative and objective but comprehensive representation of life and puts great emphasis on its appeal to the emotions of the spectators.

Tragedy stirs up the emotions of pity and fear of the spectator and has a psycho-therapeutic effect on them, that is the spectators feel pity for the protagonist of a tragedy who is made to suffer more than he has deserved due to some simple flaw in his character. Out of pity for the imaginary character they identify themselves with him and share his agony and life. Naturally with the sense of fear that they themselves meet with the same fate like the hero in a similar situation. It has a cathartic and a purging effect on them by providing an outlet for their disturbing passions and they come out of

the theatre in Milton's word " in calm of mind, all passion spent". Thus the things which in real life would be merely distressing become in tragedy nobly exhilarating.

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