



Encomium in honor of the Macedonian scholar – philologist – Mihail D. Petruševski Ad perpetuam memoriam Mihaelis D. Petruševski

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Before all else: The Macedonian scholar Mihail D. Petruševski, an expert skilled in insightful research of philological and linguistic phenomena, and at the same time a translator of ancient poetry, authenticated Macedonian culture with his translations of the most ancient Homer's epics – the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, translations that are the virtue of every culture in the universal cultural sphere. Equally, translation is not only a cultural accomplishment, but also a proof that translating poetry demonstrates the linguistic power and treasure, powerful tools with which the translator of poetry delves into the depths of millennia-old spirituality in order to incarnate it and offer to it a home. In this sense, through scholarly research of the ancient Homeric language, a language especially rich in linguo-poetic layers, a mythic language that bears a complex mythopoeia embodied in a single poetic idea, in a single dramatic story about communicating among gods, demigods, heroes, both Olympian and chthonian, the philologist Petruševski re-created native epics, and published them embodied in the harmony and rhythm of the Macedonian language, and by doing so, he revealed its archaicness, its primordial creative power, and its sensual and spiritual fullness.

At the same time, owing to his strong scholarly dynamics, Mihail Petruševski directed his philological attention towards the studying of an equally ancient theory of poetry, of course, carefully examining the first studious record in the history of poetology, Aristotle's philosophical study, that is, the study of the fundamental properties of poetic technology - *Περὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς*, or – *On Poetics*, not as *θεία μανία* (Plato), but as art.

Namely, although Aristotle looked at the principles of art in a more general sense, his theoretical emphasis is on the tragic song, the theoretically perfect paradigm – on tragedy: drama, dramaticness, mythopoeia shaped into a mythos, - a fixed and strict systasis of events (acts), an arrangement that enables convincingsness, a form in which mythology is subjected to a single idea, a form in which the atopic in the external reality is transformed into a logical poetic topos.

It is precisely Aristotle's emphasized idea of the dramatic shaping of an arrangement of mythic events that the scholar Petruševski lingers over, and, with his logical mind discerns an „error“ in the strict definition of the philosopher, in the definition of the tragic form.

Namely, the inappropriate, unsuitable phrase in the conclusion of the definition of drama – tragedy, gets recognized by Petruševski's logical and analytical mind, and he removes the illogicality – „purification of emotions – fear and pity“ and inserts a phrase that is in fact the mainstay of the tragic form, - an “architectural armature” on which Aristotle insists throughout his entire poetological study, and it is the conclusion, the principle of every kind of form, and especially the principle of drama – “a composition of events (acts)”. That is to say that drama can fulfill its task – the dramatic events to complete the definition of tragedy with frightful and pitiful events. Petruševski carries out a principle emendation in the text of the definition and publishes it in his translation of the *Poetics – Za poetikata*.¹

This “emendation” is strikingly contained in the treatise on poetic art: “... the mythos (plot) is the imitation of the action, because by mythos (plot, μύθος) I mean the composition of events (σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων) ... even if a man places in a sequence ... words well-shaped with respect to talk and thoughts... he will not achieve the proper function of tragedy ... but this will be achieved by a mythos – a composition of events (acts).” (Arist. *Po.* 1450). Clearly – the composition of events (acts) has the power to create a form out of an idea through events of mimetic actors.

How much drama in scholarly work, what a “substantial pathos”, how much subjective tension and excitement, on the one hand, and how much willpower, persistence, energy and strength of character on the other, how much dramaticness in one's life attitude, entelechy directed, to put it in the language of drama, towards a single dazzling moment, towards a dramatic conflict with other attitudes, tense and substantial, (meaning here the drama that takes place on the stage of science, in the field of theory of art, or more precisely, in the field of poetics that was radically shaken by the scholarly attitude and work of Mihail D. Petruševski.)

It is paradoxical that the fatal “catharsis” re-emerges again in this scholarly drama, only now as “τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων κάθαρσις”, if such an arbitrary paraphrasis could be accepted, because it is suitable for the determination of a scholarly, or even ethical “purification”: not to allow the habits that had been carried out according

¹ Aristotel, *Za poetikata*, translation from Ancient Greek Mihail D. Petruševski, Kultura, Skopje 1990.

to the automatism of human dogmatism to prevent human thought from moving forward, not to allow for such habits to conserve either “truths” or “delusions”, not to disable scholarly research as a unique dynamics of human persistent and unlimited progress.

To use the language of imagery again, this scholarly activity represents a re-incarnation of the “derived” from the “tempus edax” parts of an amazing “organ”²; Aristotle’s “daimonic voice” itself speaks in this sense, certain that “the time that devours” through the centuries would turn into its opposite, into a “time that is an inventor and a collaborator” which will take care that no harm would come to the already created form, because, to use Aristotle’s metaphysical language, form is a transition from disorder into order, from formlessness into form, εἶδος being the active principle and keeping its absolute meaning despite all disadvantages and coincidences in life: “One may suppose then that anybody can carry on and complete in detail a work that has been well laid down in outline and time seems to be a good inventor and collaborator in this; this is how advances in the arts and science have actually come about: since anyone (Aristotle means here “anyone devoted”) can fill in the gaps.”³ Again, in order to be able to win time as an “inventor and collaborator”, apart from “commitment” to science, one also needs a possession of high morality, that is to say, a possession of this “good”, which is inherent to the subject and inseparable from it, ... therefore the one who wishes to follow with success the lectures on good, on right and in general lectures on topics related to social life, must already be formed in moral aspect ... and such man either already has in himself the principles or adopts them easily ... The moral man judges everything rightly and in each case what seems right to him it truly is right.”⁴

Whether it is a matter of moral uprightness and getting familiar with the specific topography in which the necessary, organic places of pro and contra are highlighted, clearly in the sphere of the “necessary” and “probable”, or it is a matter of having a talent that strives towards the creative “to discover by means of the thought, that which is convincing in any subject”, the greatest mistake of the human mind is the desire to bend the thought, to force it into schemes in which ideas turn into sketches *a priori* without movement, without action.

The *Poetics* itself, created with an awareness about the certainty of the knowledge of “good” which has its content and purpose, belongs to the matinal Peripatetic, the sober time of human activity, far from the sorrow of the fading day, far from the “cathartic frenzy” of the night. Written in a strict and even dry language, suitable to its aim and purpose, the *Poetics* is a summa summarum theory of the

² On the fatal history of the Aristotle’s library, see: Aristotel, *Retorika*, translation from Ancient Greek, preface, notes and comments Vesna Tomovska, Makedonska kniga, Skopje, 2002.

³ Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1098a17.

⁴ Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea* IV.4, 1113a.

poetic genre – of tragedy as “completed” and “whole” (unfortunately, this has a literal meaning for ancient, and even later world tragedy), of tragedy “in itself”, a form with its own specific internal order and harmony, εἶδος as κανὼν καὶ μέτρον: out of the hyper-abundant human reality, the craftsman has to build an architecture of the completed and perfected εἶδος using artistic instrumentation in which the most important and primary instrument is μίμησις, to build a harmonic and strict architectonic form with a pinnacle upon which the tragic σημεῖον has to stand out through σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων as a bearer of the message and inventor of thought; deprived of the “σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων”, with its own laws and logic, this poetic architecture remains tangled, untied, messed up and meaningless, like a labyrinth into which one enters without a hope of getting out.

The composition of events (acts) is the basic dramatic construction upon which the mental universe is built, upon which a form filled with ideas is erected.

The composition of events (acts) comprises the unity of the action, the strictest law not only in drama, but also the strictest law of the necessity for the dramatic quality in several other literary genres as well, because the unity of action is that focus created by all pointed, sharpened, radial events whose projection occurs *in flagranti*; tragedy is precisely such a pathetic act whose history lies in a myth with a beginning and an end, or, more precisely, with no beginning or end, outside the tragic myth whose beginning, middle and end are tailored by the σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων, for “... μέγιστον δὲ τούτων ἐστὶν ἢ πραγμάτων σύστασις ... καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μέγιστον τῆς τραγωδίας ἔστιν” (III, VII, 24).

The events seen as a result of the activity of the tragic heroes who carry out their ethical stances, their ethical πάθος, seen as an activity determined in the tragic μῦθος with all its tragic tension, are the goal of tragedy; and together, they are the entelechy of the poetic work with its essence – to be good and to accomplish good. This poetics of tragedy tends towards the discovery of the probable and the necessary for the purpose of realizing humanity in its success or failure.

The tragic myth as a “composition of events (acts)” is the necessary framework within which human practice is depicted through characters who act, and the purpose of art, according to Aristotle, is to make human potentials visible, to realize those potentials which in reality are disabled, muffled or prevented, for poetry is not merely an imitation of existential happenings, but a necessary and probable suggestive depiction of the human world built in the artist’s “fantasy”. In one such finished and strict study of tragedy as tragedy “in itself”, in the sense of it being a special being that realizes the probable and the necessary, and by doing so realizes even more so the artistically “real”, in which the only exceptions are the secondary instructions, the only digressions are those in which Aristotle reminds of the tragic competitions and the success or failure of such competitive participations, and accordingly advises and teaches the greatest mastery for the greatest success.

The effect of the tragic performance is the only digression that Aristotle makes when discussing tragedy as an artistic wholeness, which represents an imitation of a complete, serious, and finished action with its own immanent purpose. In his study with that exact title, “Περὶ ποιητικῆς τέχνης”, it is difficult to justify a phrase τῶν παθημάτων κάθαρσις, which would be a reversal of the theoretical approach with all its possible meanings. In this theory, the transcendence of poetics was present only as the realization of the probable and the necessary in the artistic sublimation, of which Aristotle speaks giving priority to poetry over history as a social science, because poetry reveals the “general” in reality much more than any other skill.

In fact, this lecture by Aristotle on the poetic skill of tragedy is comprehension of this poetic genre as an aesthetic category, although the tragic myth as a kind of complete practice belongs to the sphere of the ethical. That specific practice is outside the cycle of reproduction of everyday elementary human existence, more precisely, that practice is above such a reality. The “substantial pathos” of such a practice is the basis of tragedy, the heroic tendencies are the tragic τὰ πάθη, they tend unrestrainedly towards a realization of the ethical purpose: success is the fulfillment of the purpose, and the tragic ending, on the other hand, is often an appearance of failure, for the sphere of tragedy is, before all, the heroic sphere, and consequently, the other ἔργον ἀνθρώπινον as πρᾶξις κατὰ λόγον – human self-realization.

The tragic world is a world of probabilities and possibilities, not that which accidentally is, was, or accidentally will be, but a poetic reality translated into a specific morphology.

The tragic heroes act by creating that poetic world filled with tragic pathos, objective, most often, pathos, with a passion that is ethically justified, fixed in the consciousness as a metaphysical desire (in Hegel’s words, pathos as sublime suffering). And then, pity and fear inevitably occur, in the composition of pitiful and frightful events (in tragedies they are sung by the chorus, which has that “substantial consciousness”⁵ that deters from catastrophic collisions and contemplates about their way out), pity and fear due to the realization that both the divine and the sublime reshaped into ἦθη, in personae who act, cause collisions and sufferings. Sufferings are accepted as the only way out, they are also a fulfillment, they are the only objectivity of which the tragic hero is aware: “It is the honor of great characters to be guilty” – says Hegel somewhat ecstatically, but correctly, because “... that which decides about human happiness is an action in accordance with beneficence, and vice versa, that which decides about human misery is an action contrary to beneficence ... this constancy as a condition for happiness will be characteristic of the happy man ... He will bear the blows of fate in the most noble manner and “completely in everything as it is suitable”⁶.

⁵ Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1100b10.

⁶ Ibid.

For Aristotle, tragic imitation is a creative content that contains in itself its value, its “good” (εὖ); that “good” expands, spreads, actively radiates, and expresses itself in creative imagination, “... because by watching (people) start to think as if to remind themselves”⁷. “Let us remind ourselves” now that this kind of discourse of Aristotle’s on the effect of a work of art beyond the work of art is rare, and that its ultimate, that is, its only single purpose in the preserved part of the *Poetics* is “the very essence (of tragedy), and we shall speak about the theatre (i.e. about the spectators) on a different occasion”⁸. The “essence itself” was essentially captured by Aristotle, because his statement that “tragedy finally stopped changing when it reached its natural grade of development”⁹, is completely correct, at least as far as Hellenic tragedy is concerned.

In the “very essence” of tragedy Aristotle in no manner and in no place refers to its “κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων”, because in this poetics that imitates “serious and completed action” the personae who act imitate characters and thoughts of people filled and charged with “passions”, who fulfill the most beautiful characteristics of their human nature through action that ultimately aims at fulfilling the goal (when talking about tragedy the word “fulfillment” always comes to the fore) because Aristotle’s entelechy also drags towards it, while the word “purification” or “cleansing” sounds hollow and alien; “... whenever a word seems to involve a contradiction, one should look into how many meanings it might bear in the text...”¹⁰ says Aristotle when speaking about the polyvalency of expression, but at the same time refers to strict examination, because “... people misunderstand some expressions and having themselves given particular meaning they make wrong conclusions and then criticize (the poet) as if he has said whatever they think is contrary to their own belief.”¹¹

Thinking expressed through action, as well as determination and cognition is an ethical imperative for Aristotle: tragedy with its myth as a composition of events (acts) imitates an action of reality with ethical and passionate content performed by personae who act as hyperbolic characters, most often, whose actions lead to catastrophe: “The most important of all (these parts) is the composition of events (acts), for tragedy is an imitation, not of men but of actions and of life, both happy and unhappy, for happiness and unhappiness come under the head of action, and the end is kind of action, and not a quality; because men are of a certain sort according to their characters and according to their actions happy or the opposite.”¹²

⁷ Aristoteles, *Poetica* IV, 1448b15.

⁸ Aristoteles, *Poetica* IV, 1448b15.

⁹ Ibid. IV, 1449a15.

¹⁰ Aristoteles, *Poetica* XXV, 1461a31.

¹¹ Ibid. XXV, 1461b1-2.

¹² Ibid. 1450a.

In order to represent the tragic acts of people with a variety of "such and such" characters, it is absolutely necessary above anything else to have an action that acquires a poetic structure through the composition of the events, because the beautiful is given in a "(certain) size and order".

The beautiful should have the measure of human sight, both sensuous and spiritual; tragedy with the composition of the events creates a sphere suitable for human measure; again, the highest greatness of tragedy is that which represents the probability and the necessity of the events that occur one after the other, or rather one because of the other. The composition of events (acts), that logical assembly, makes the action probable or necessary, that is, it defines it as art, since the mastery of tragic poetry is in the totality, "...parts of the events must be so arranged that if one of them be dislocated or removed, the unity of the whole is destroyed and dislocated ..."¹³ One gets the impression that the philosopher who demands virtues in the sense of μεσότης both from himself and from others, and reproaches the extremes, must have "exaggerated" when laying so much stress on the importance of the "composition", as if some voice foretold him that this most important feature of tragedy, or more precisely, of all, not only artistic literature, but also a property of all art, if the term "event", that is, πρᾶγμα is taken in its broadest meaning, would not survive in its intellectually and stylistically narrowed definition, but would rather be replaced by a strange, and unclear, even for the world's greatest minds later, as well as enigmatic in the bad sense of the word, phrase, with an infinite variety of complex explanations colored by the times, by the epoch, by the mentality, both common and individual.

How could the "pillar" of the theory of tragedy be lost, which the *Poetics* itself makes complete and whole and on which we constantly rely progressing through this short and strict on first sight, but incredibly profound study; even if it has only been a grain in the mosaic of the tragic definition, crumbled by accidental negligence, it could not have been lost, for it is constantly rolling in the mosaic sphere without any danger of falling, forever held within by the gravity of essence. How could someone else's "care" add a piece so unusual and alien, and thus disturb the harmony of the clever and wise work, and also the balance of the world's literary theory later; perhaps, "... because we believe that gods are able to see everything..."¹⁴ and our civilization is also founded upon the authority of the "gods", although this ancient "god" advises: "Therefore, everything that the poet himself speaks or what a clever person can assume must be carefully examined... Accordingly, critical remarks can be divided into five types: 1. in relation to unreality, 2. in relation to improbability, 3. in relation to harmfulness, 4. in relation to contradiction, 5. in relation to the irregularity from the artistic side".¹⁵

¹³ Aristoteles, *Poetica* VIII, 1451a30.

¹⁴ Aristoteles, *Poetica* XV, 1454b5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXV, 1461b20.

“Κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων”, is often used by laymen, but by artists as well. It sounds beautiful and profound, and so they use the phrase with an interpretation that depends on their own affinity and in the context of all of arts, starting with the usual translation “purification of passions”, or less often with “purification of sufferings”, purification of sorrow through tears and compassion, as among some commentators and among “petty bourgeois women” as Hegel puts it, purification of the “lowly passions” (and there are no such passions in tragedy), purification from the “triviality of every-day life”, “escapism into the world of dreams” and many more other nebulous explanations that can often be read, and even more often heard. How to explain, how to justify this inadequate part of such a pure thought, thoughtfully strange, illogical twist that acquires an almost metaphysical meaning, becomes „νόησις νοήσεως“, narcissistically gazing at its own fluid reflection and drowned in itself a long time ago. What is this “tragic catharsis” supposed to mean? Κάθαρσις, says the dictionary, is purification of the impure; is such a word probable for poetry, which, according to Roland Barthes, and poetically expressed, “is at the same time both a dungeon and a protection from the filth, from everything that is not itself?”¹⁶. Κάθαρσις, says the dictionary, is atonement with a sacrifice to the gods; Where does this sacral meaning in a definition of the “sole essence” of tragic poetry come from, in this master class for masters of this mastery: the term τέχνη is the word which follows, “On poetic art”, and not on a sacral act. “Purification of passions (sufferings)” in tragedy itself? But, that would be self-destruction, self-denial, “cleansing” of the poetic basis of the “probable and necessary” suffering through pitiful and frightful events that comprise the composition of tragedy, since passions and sufferings are species for this poetics.

Purification of passions (sufferings) in the audience? What kind of passions? Sentimental? “When it comes to tragedy, writers adhere to the traditional names...” says Aristotle. Is it possible to believe that Hellenic theatre audience could be “sentimentally surprised”, and so would weep and pity, for the time duration of the clepsydra, the “heroes whose lives and destinies were an integral part” of their ethnic consciousness, a recognition of their own identity?

Ethical purification, again, of the audience? But, “... we are not pronounced good or bad, merely by reason of our capacity to be affected ... For affections are neither virtues nor vices because we are not pronounced good or bad according to our affections, but according to our virtues and vices ... the virtues are dispositions ...”¹⁷

Finally, Aristotle has in mind a Hellenic audience, which in a large measure possesses μεσότης as the highest virtue of ζῶον πολιτικόν, a theater that consists of mature, well-mannered, and educated Hellenic men. Even if “Alcibiadeses” were

¹⁶ Bart, R. Književnost, mitologija, semiologija, Beograd 1979, 60.

¹⁷ Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea* V, 1106a.

present, hyperbolic in their virtues as well as in their vices, their hybris is ethically irreparable; they are extremely “consistent in their inconsistency”.

Catharsis as a korybantic *θεραπεία* is even less acceptable; it is absurd to think that tragedy would be performed as a mystery séance or as a psychiatric collective therapy, especially since Aristotle says that now he is going to talk about “the very essence”, and that he would write about the staging and the spectators later, but surely not about a korybantic or therapeutic show for manic or entranced people. And indeed, Aristotle is familiar with the effect of catharsis as a remedy (*ιατρεία*) and mentions it in chapter 17 (1455b15) of the *Poetics* when speaking about the “purification” of Orestes (“how he was captured in a moment of madness and escaped by means of purification”¹⁸), but this illustrative digression has nothing to do with “the very essence” of the definition. Well-versed in medical secrets, and familiar with human psychology as well, this philosopher once again speaks of such a type of catharsis in his “Politics” (Pol. VIII. 7), but he talks about the peculiar power of music to calm overly sensitive, irritable people (this lecture belongs to the discussions about musical education of children, that is, to pedagogical politics). In all of these cases, catharsis can not be a sign, a signification of a poetic genre that is supposed to achieve a poetic effect using the means of poetry, because, “...imitation (of tragedy) is not only of a serious action but also of events that cause fear and pity, and these need to become such by necessity ... for in that way the wondrous would come to be easier than if it happened spontaneously or accidentally...”¹⁹

The frightful, the pitiful, the pathetic and the wonderful reach their culmination through the composition of events (acts). Even the most complex tragedies owe their twists and recognitions to the tragic composition of events (acts), “...for there is indeed a great difference if something happens because of that or after that”²⁰.

“Because of that” the convincingness of the work of art happens and “because of that” is the very *σύστασις* that makes up the artistic uniqueness of tragedy.

The tragic fate, most commonly of people who have been in glory and fortune, is represented through the probability and necessity of the pitiful and frightful events, they happen immediately and are immediately fulfilled with pity and fear because of the realization that even the greatest human feats are often turned into failures because of the passionate striving towards the goal: as if confirming the ethical thought that artistically shaped hyperbole creates tragicness.

In the composition of events (acts) are interknitted emotions of pity and fear, *ἔλεος καὶ φόβος*, whose interpretation, philosophical and literary, create an impossible diversity and confusion; from rejection to confirmation, from pity and apprehension, as petty bourgeoisie urges, love for one’s neighbor (*φιλανθρωπία*),

¹⁸ Petruševski, M. D., ‘Beleški kon tekstot na Aristotelovata Poetika II (gl. XI-XXVI)’, *ŽA* (1962) 12.1, p. 67.

¹⁹ Aristoteles, *Poetica* IX, 1452a1.

²⁰ Aristoteles, *Poetica* X, 1452a20.

to compassion and mercy understood in a Christian manner. Perhaps the most appropriate is Hegel's opinion²¹, who interprets those παθήματα in a "manly" way: pity arises because of the probable and necessary suffering of the tragic hero who, in spite of the mostly ethical justification of his action, and precisely because of the passion, immanent to his character, collides, suffers, perishes, being unable to let go of the set goal without denying himself before he perishes.

Fear, on the other hand, is a moral strength that springs from the very mind, spirit, and soul of the tragic hero, also immanent to them, that at every mistake, subjective or objective, turns against its own source. "All this, ... fear and pity can be aroused by the actual composition of events (acts), which is preferable (and the mark of a better poet)."²²

Aristotle as a subtle observer points precisely to this important feature of poetry, a unity of action which, acting from within, creates the form, a feature to the greatest extent present in the most excellent poets to this day.

This composition of events (acts) is the paramount poetic tension of Athenian drama, which in chamber limitation in mimetic density achieves unsurpassed perfection.

"Κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων" casts dust on the logical conception of the *Poetics*. Namely, the catharsis is an unclear syntagm, because it appears only once as an apparition, and is absent from the reality of Aristotle's text; it is improbable, for, although seemingly real, it is not enabled because it does not refer to the "same subject", nor to the "same thought" of the thinker; it is harmful as a delusion, a kind of σκιαμαχία for all minds afterwards; it is contradictory because of the very phrase "purification" of something that has a purpose to "exert" the very same thing; it is irregular from an artistic point of view because it violates the thought structure, the "composition of events (acts)", the pragmatic composition of the *Poetics*, a theory with a living meaning even for the most modern theories of art.

Appendix

Aristotle's definition of tragedy is also corroborated by Aristotle's teacher – Plato. In his dialogue *Phaedrus*, Plato feigns a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus, a friend of Socrates', lover of rhetorical sermons and writings, and, in the conversation "On good and bad writing", Socrates challenges his friend to define the tragic form. Phaedrus "colloquially" defines precisely exactly Aristotle's definition, mentioning the experienced masters of tragedies – Sophocles and Euripides: - - "They (Sophocles and Euripides) also I fancy, Socrates, would laugh if someone thought that tragedy was anything else than the proper combination of such parts (frightful

²¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics* 3.

²² Aristoteles, *Poetica* XIV, 1453b.

and pitiful events), that are in harmony with each other and constitute the whole at the same time.” (*Phaedrus*, 268d).

This response of Phaedrus is fully complemented by Socrates’ picturesque definition of the artistic form: “... every discourse must be composed like a living being, with a body of its own, so as not to be headless ... but to have middle and end sections, and be written as it is proper for parts in fitting relation to each other and to the whole.” (*Phaedrus*, 264c)

One skeptical statement by Plato about the dangers of reading written form is also interesting. The statement is “skeptical” considering the publication of written form and its interpretation: “Writing, Phaedrus, has something scary, it is very much like painting; for the products of this art stand like living beings, but if you asks them something, they preserve a solemn silence ... And every word, once it is written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, for written word does not know whom to speak to ... ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its parent to help it...” (*Phaedrus*, 275d-e). The “parent’s help” is to be found in the literary zone of hermeneutics. But, the interpretation, even if done by theoreticians, can produce “a false doxa”, that is – a dogma that constantly persists; this happens in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; the “error” is respected for centuries by clever experts, but it also produces doubts, wonders, and aporias...

Thus, it happens that the dogma – “purification of sufferings, passions, feelings (fear and pity)” ... causes uneasiness in poetic theory, in contrast to the obvious striking emphasis in the entire poetological work: the tragic mythos is a mimesis of acting personae who fulfill the formative systasis with frightful and pitiful events...

In this sense, the opinion stands firmly that catharsis is inadequate in Aristotle’s theory of poetics: catharsis has its dignified presence, but in a completely different sphere, in the sphere of ancient mystery. Namely, in almost all of Plato’s dialogues, a cathartic procedure is demanded during the “purification” of a sin, a crime, a defiling word, or a defiling deed. In *Laws* (Νόμοι), for instance, in the conversation between the elders – an Athenian, a Spartan, and a Cretan, a dialogue that takes place on the island of Crete, on the way to a shrine, except for agreeing that Laws are divine, the collocutors also talk about just judiciary, just punishment, and about the purification of criminals before they receive their truly cruel judicial punishments. So, before the judicial punishments are brought, the sinner must endure a mystery ritual.

In spite of a religious state constitution (politeia), in spite of good law in a “healthy state” and a noble society, therapeutic catharsis, the purification of the crime, must be applied. The catharsis releases the soul of the sinner to arrive in Hades and to there pay off for its sins. So, in the just laws, a mystery purification of the soul, defiled while dwelling in a material body, is demanded, to “purify” itself accepting its sin, accepting itself as a victim of its own sins.

Catharsis is a ritual mystery, both mystical and enigmatic!?

Despite the arbitrary usage of the word, in Antiquity it is connected exclusively to cult and ritual (Dionysiac, Apollonian, Persephonean...?), a ritual with a strict mystical topic. It is hard to understand the content and essence of catharsis, especially the content of the ritual, probably in the secrecy of shrines and temples.

In Aristotle's text of the *Poetics* there are only two instances in which catharsis is mentioned. The first one is on the margins of the text; the crime of the tragic person Orestes in Euripides' tragedy *Orestes*: "...ἐν τῷ Ὀρέστη ἡ μανία... καὶ ἡ σωτηρία διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως." Aristotle in his commentary advises on how to set up a convincing dramatic systasis, and then mentions the poet and his dramatic procedure. From this place it is only clear that μανία (madness) is calmed liberating the criminal from mindlessness – through catharsis (διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως).

The second instance in Aristotle's philosophic corpus is a longer discourse dedicated to paideia and pedagogy. Among else, in *Politics* Aristotle recommends catharsis as a remedy for the psychopathic states of manic children: the catharsis is performed with ecstatic music that pulls the sick out of their manic behavior through ecstasy (Πολιτικά VIII, 7).

And indeed, catharsis is related to tragicness, though not to tragic art. It is part of the tragicness of human life, the wrongful, often impure and sinister human life.

Of such a sinister tragicness sings Empedocles of Sicily (Acragas, 5th century), a physiologist, mystic, mantis, prophet, and poet of allegorical and enigmatic odes. Judging by the "remains" of his odes (around a hundred verses have been preserved), Empedocles emerges from the distant "Old Era", "similar to a God", (as he calls himself), arriving in the Peloponnese wearing purple clothes, with golden garlands on his head, reaching as far as the Acropolis, speaking and singing while dwelling in the regions of his "divinity" Sphairos ("Cosmic Ball"), and, in addition to the songs about deified nature, he sings a mystical ode - Καθαρμοί. Judging by the allegory of the hundred verses, purifications are related to Ananke (Fate – Necessity, Inevitability), who passed judgment about nobility, love, and tenderness, or - about evil, atrocity, cruel murders, malice, discord, defilement... The evil implanted in the soul of the criminal torments him for an endlessly long time wondering on his way to Hades, and back into millennial metempsychoses, incarnations in all kinds of flesh, from animal to herbal, vegetable... It appears that this Turning of The Wheel of Ananke and Nemesis, this Wheel of Necessity, might provide purification, by "liberating" the soul to remain in the abyss of Hades.

The majority of ancient thinkers are of the opinion that Empedocles preaches Pythagoreanism, Orphism, the cult of Dionysus Zagreus...? Consumed by such a "divine mania" (θεία μανία; Plato in *Phaedrus*), Empedocles finds his catharsis by leaping into the fiery crater of Etna. Was he counting on his immortality?!

“There is an oracle of Ananke, an ancient, eternal gods' law, sealed fast by broad oaths: if anyone has sinfully polluted his hands with blood and horrible slaughter, or forsworn himself ... then you enchained by grievous wickednesses and sins will not be able to purify your souls of wretched sorrows...” (Καθαρμοί, verse 85). Or: “Will not cease these horrible slaughters? Sees not your thoughtless mind that you are devouring one another!?” (verse 105). This cry of Empedocles' subsides in the advice: “Share with other gods the hearth and the same table and free yourselves from human woes and sufferings.” (verse 115). But, about what kind of “tables” of the gods does the allegorical Empedocles sing in his *Purgatories*? He even speaks of some “Golden age” in which neither Ares nor Kydoimos (Cydoemus, the Horror of Polemos) dwells; where love (philotes and philia) and harmony between all beings rules (see Vergil's Eclogue IV).

So, catharsis is outside the arts, outside the theater which is (in Athens, the center of dramatic poetry), a state, democratic “institution”.

But, the lucid theses of the philosopher are in course of time taken over by new Peripates, new Academies (Callimachus, Neoptolemus, Philodemus...), and all the way to the well-known *Epistula aut De arte poetica liber* by the Roman poet Horace, centuries away from the Hellenic thinkers. In this booklet addressed to known and unknown young poets, written in a narrative rhythm, in dactylic hexameter, in the form of a semiloquium, both in a serious, but also humorous and ironic style (Horace is an excellent ironist!), in a relaxed “conversation”, Horace skillfully announces the principles of Aristotle's poetology. The attention of the Roman poet is directed to the logical principles of the old philosopher, so that the theory of poetics is emphasized in an effort – to create a masterful poetic form. Frenzy (affected frenzy) is ironized in the *Letter*, Democritus' opinion on creative mania is ironized, Plato's θεία μανία is not mentioned, there are no cultic frenzies in a hierarchical ladder (Apollonian, Dionysian, frenzy of the Muses: Plato, *Phaedrus*). Horace's “song” on poetics mainly comes down to *ars scribendi*, - the skill of writing various types of poetry, following the principles of the Alexandrian poetologist – in the following direction: Περὶ τῆς τέχνης, περὶ ποιημάτων, and περὶ τοῦ ποιητοῦ. In *De arte poetica liber* this order is preserved, but the emphasis of the poet is - in every sense, that the poetic work should have a “clear”, “lucid” order (lucidus ordo), and especially – it should have unity of action (simplex et unum), “Unfortunate is the sum of the work (quia ponere totum nesciet. verse 34.) And what is essential, and is emphasized by Aristotle, is the philosophical content of creativity: Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons (verse 309).

Namely, the rational and ironical Roman strikingly advises a “lucid order” of the poetic work, a unity of the fictional *realia* (simplex et unum), and knowledge – what is a whole (totum), correct writing is a principle of understanding...

And, what one basically learns when reading the *Epistle*, apart from technique (art), is that in no place, in the entire poetological discussion, there is no mention of catharsis! It seems like Horace had the authentic work of Aristotle!

Summa summarum

Argumenta praesentis disputationis

- Emendatio Mihaelis D. Petruševski in definitione tragodiae Aristotelis est docta inventio, logica correctio contra obscuram dogmam in totalitate formae artis poeticae.

- Syntagma κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων (ἔλεος καὶ φόβος) in definitione tragica est alienus locus: κάθαρσις (lustratio, purgamentum) est mystica res in rebus divinis...

- In disputatione Aristotelis *De arte poetica* absolute absens mysteria; autem vero Aristoteles disputat de arte (περὶ τέχνης, περὶ ἐμπειρίας ἐμπειρίας εἶδος poeticae).

- Vero autem in corpore Platonico abundat mysteria, divinae res, mystica, sed haec sunt res divinae: in dialoge *Leges* (Νόμοι) saepissime adest lustratio (καθαρομός) hoper mystica poena in scelerem et in vastationem sacrorum.

- Necessesse est dicere syntagma (emendatio) - in tragica εἶδος - σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων esse principium formae poeticae ex toto.