

## ΣΠΟΥΔΑΙΟΣ AND TELEOLOGY IN THE *POETICS*

GEORGE F. HELD

*University of Missouri*

“Though the Greeks created tragedy, . . . they never developed a theory of the tragic which, reaching beyond the phenomenon of drama, might touch on man’s spiritual attitude towards the world as a whole.”<sup>1</sup> Though the Greeks did develop theories of tragedy, they did not, in Lesky’s opinion, develop any which evinces a “conception of the tragic in the modern, more philosophical sense.”<sup>2</sup> Implicit in these statements is Lesky’s acceptance of Kommerell’s conclusions about Aristotle’s view of tragedy, e.g., that tragedy for Aristotle is just stage tragedy (“die angeführte Tragödie”)<sup>3</sup> and that Aristotle in the *Poetics* (unlike Horace in the *Ars Poetica*) is not concerned to inform poets how they are to conceive (“angreifen”) what they create.<sup>4</sup> Kommerell concludes from the manner in which Aristotle defines tragedy that he does not think of tragedy as a thing in itself; it is merely a basis (“Anlage”) for the production of a particular effect, i.e., catharsis, and, as such, is merely a formless potentiality, which is conceivable only in relation to its effect.<sup>5</sup> The art of the tragedian is, therefore, for Aristotle (to use Kommerell’s own examples) like eyesight rather than the art of building.<sup>6</sup> In both there is a passing from potentiality to actuality, but whereas in the latter this process produces not merely building itself, but concrete individual buildings, in the former what is produced is merely an effect, sight itself. Aristotle, he asserts, has no general aesthetic concept or quality in mind to which he would relate all

<sup>1</sup> Albin Lesky, *Greek Tragedy*, transl. H. A. Frankfort (London 1967) 4. Quotations of Greek texts herein will be taken from the Oxford Classical Texts unless otherwise noted.

I wish to thank the TAPA referee for his helpful criticisms and especially my dissertation directors, D. J. Mastronarde and M. Griffith, for their helpful criticisms and their open-mindedness in allowing me in my dissertation to broach the speculative subject discussed herein.

<sup>2</sup> Lesky (above, note 1) 6.

<sup>3</sup> Max Kommerell, *Lessing und Aristoteles* (Frankfort 1957) 58.

<sup>4</sup> Kommerell (above, note 3) 55.

<sup>5</sup> See Kommerell (above, note 3) 58–60.

<sup>6</sup> Kommerell (above, note 3) 60.

particular examples of tragedy.<sup>7</sup> His approach throughout the *Poetics* is historical and descriptive, his sole purpose "Beobachtetes zu erklären."<sup>8</sup>

Kommerell's and Lesky's conclusions about Aristotle's view of tragedy have gone unchallenged in the scholarly literature; and at least some of them have sufficiently gained acceptance to reappear in the works of other scholars as if established fact. Golden, for example, posits without argument that Aristotle did not distinguish between tragedy and comedy "on the basis of any essential quality of the action itself."<sup>9</sup> This view is also held by Schuetrumpf.<sup>10</sup> Lesky's opinions are also implicitly endorsed by Else, who holds that "Aristotle thought the *pathos* the basic, indispensable 'part' of the tragic plot,"<sup>11</sup> and Jones, who concludes that "what Aristotle finds essentially tragic" is change of fortune.<sup>12</sup> No theory of tragedy which makes *pathos* or change of fortune the only essential element in tragedy can be said to be "philosophical" or to "touch on man's spiritual attitude towards the world as a whole." Yet there is considerable evidence that Kommerell and Lesky have overstated their case—and not merely because the *Poetics* is too informal and provisional a document for the strict-constructionist reading of it in which they indulge.

My subsequent presentation of this evidence falls into two main parts. In the first I discuss Aristotle's definition of comedy. Kommerell and Lesky base their conclusions about Aristotle's modes of thought in regard to art solely upon the manner of his definition of tragedy. They completely ignore his definition of comedy in which Aristotle demonstrates the very modes of thought of which they assert him to be incapable. In the second part I argue that *σπουδαῖος*, *φᾶνλος* and *γελοιός* are for Aristotle teleological terms and that his usage of them in the definitions of tragedy and comedy is evidence that he means to distinguish between tragedy and comedy along teleological lines. Tragedy is an imitation of an action which is significantly well directed toward man's proper end, happiness; comedy is an imitation of an action of the opposite sort. This is not the only distinction which Aristotle would draw between the actions of tragedy and comedy—and for that reason is not nearly as paradoxical as it may seem. It is, moreover, a distinction which is obviously "philosophical" in nature, and just as obviously can apply to actions off as well as on the stage.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Kommerell (above, note 3) 55: "Ebenso ist eine Begründung der Kunst aus der Kunst heraus, also aus einem ästhetischen Wertbegriff, dem Aristoteles ganz fremd" and 133: "ist der Mythos ein solcher überlieferter Zusammenhang des Geschehens nicht in einer ganz bestimmten Qualität."

<sup>8</sup> Kommerell (above, note 3) 54.

<sup>9</sup> L. Golden, "Is Tragedy the 'Imitation of a *Serious Action*'?," *GRBS* 6 (1965) 284.

<sup>10</sup> See Eckart Schuetrumpf, *Die Bedeutung des Wortes ἦθος in der Poetik des Aristoteles*, *Zetemata* 49 (Munich 1970) 63–64 and 78.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: the Argument* (Cambridge, Mass. 1957) 229.

<sup>12</sup> John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (New York 1968) 16.

\* \* \*

Lesky does not tell us whether the Greeks, who created comedy as well as tragedy, ever developed a theory of the comic “which, reaching beyond the phenomenon of drama, might touch on man’s spiritual attitude towards the world as a whole,” but this, it can be shown from the manner of Aristotle’s definition of comedy, he would be wrong to deny. That definition is “less complete than the definition of tragedy at the beginning of the next chapter, but is parallel as far as it goes.”<sup>13</sup> The definition of comedy is indeed parallel to the definition of tragedy but less complete than it in two respects: (1) the elements which belong to both tragedy and comedy primarily as art forms, i.e., completeness, length, type of language, manner of presentation: though mentioned in the definition of tragedy, they are omitted from the definition of comedy; apart from the word *μίμησις*, therefore, there is nothing in the definition of comedy which ties it to “the phenomenon of drama”; and (2) the effect on a spectator. Aristotle does not define comedy in terms of its effect here, and there is no evidence that he did so in the supposed lost second book of the *Poetics*: “If he actually defined comedy in terms of its effect, it is strange that no intelligible, clearly-marked vestige of his definition has come down to us.”<sup>14</sup> But Aristotle’s definition of comedy is also *more* complete than his definition of tragedy in one very important respect: it contains an explicit definition of a universal abstract concept, τὸ γελοῖον, which is “das spezifisch Komische,”<sup>15</sup> the essential quality which belongs to all comedy, stage and otherwise.<sup>16</sup> That τὸ γελοῖον is indeed a universal concept, and not limited in reference to “the phenomenon of drama,” would seem likely from the fact, which no one denies, that Aristotle intends his definition of τὸ γελοῖον as a rebuttal to Plato’s conclusions about its nature in *Philebus* 48A–50B.<sup>17</sup> Plato had argued

<sup>13</sup> G. M. A. Grube, *Aristotle: On Poetry and Style* (New York 1958) 10, note 1.

<sup>14</sup> Lane Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy* (New York 1969) 64.

<sup>15</sup> Johannes Vahlen, *Beitrage zu Aristoteles’ Poetik*, Neudruck bes. v. H. Schöne (Leipzig-Berlin 1914) 16.

<sup>16</sup> Elder Olson, *The Theory of Comedy* (Bloomington, Indiana 1975) 51, asserts that Aristotle’s statement about τὸ γελοῖον, though it “has invariably been treated as a definition,” cannot be one because “Aristotle would never have permitted a definition with a negative differentia, for a negative term is always ambiguous and hence can state the nature of nothing.” Negative differentia notwithstanding, I view Aristotle’s statement as a definition. The reason for the negative differentia is that Aristotle wishes pointedly to deny what Plato asserts: an intrinsic connection between comedy and evil which causes harm.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Edward Poste’s comment on *Phlb.* 49c2 in *The Philebus of Plato* (Oxford 1960) ad loc.: “Aristotle’s definition of the Ridiculous seems to have been suggested by this passage.” Plato in this passage is primarily concerned to demonstrate that some forms of pleasure are mixed with pain, and discusses the nature of comedy only incidentally to this purpose—because the pleasure derived from it, he believes, is of this type. His treatment of the subject, accordingly, is cursory and tendentious, his reasoning and psychology, in my

that the subject matter of comedy (τὰ γελοῖα) is self-ignorance (ἄγνοια) in one's friends (φίλοι) who are weak and without power to do one harm, self-ignorance with regard to the extent of their wealth, beauty and virtue, especially wisdom.<sup>18</sup> And since ignorance is a form of evil, as Plato explicitly points out in the dialogue (49D9: Οὐκοῦν τὴν ἄγνοιαν εἴπομεν ὅτι κακὸν πᾶσιν;) it is a form of evil (κακόν) which he asserts is the subject matter of comedy and the proper object of comic laughter. That Plato's remarks in the *Philebus* are directed at comedy as a universal phenomenon and not merely at stage comedy is obvious from much else in his discussion, but especially from the following words (50B2–3): ἐν τραγωδίαις <καὶ κωμωδίαις>, μὴ τοῖς δράμασι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ τοῦ βίου συμπᾶσῃ τραγωδίᾳ καὶ κωμωδίᾳ. We would naturally expect that Aristotle, in attempting to rebut Plato's conclusions about the nature of comedy, would address the subject on the same level of generality as had Plato himself. That this is what he does do may, moreover, with near certainty be inferred from the fact that his definition of τὸ γελοῖον makes much better sense if taken as directed at the comic on a universal level rather than at the comic merely in the sense of the essence of stage comedy, for the following reason.

Plato, as we have already seen, though he asserts that a form of evil is the object of comic laughter, had nevertheless limited the κακά suitable as objects for comic laughter to just one kind, self-ignorance. But there can be no doubt that every or almost every type of misfortune, evil, or vice may be imitated on the comic stage.<sup>19</sup> Aristotle's words in his definition of comedy (49A31–32: μίμησις φανυλοτέρων, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν) show that he agrees with Plato that it is evil which constitutes the proper subject matter of comedy, but disagrees with him about how this evil should be delimited. He defines it in one sense more narrowly and in another more broadly than does Plato. The object of comic

---

opinion, quite inscrutable. But Else (above, note 11) 187 surely mistakes his meaning when he asserts that for Plato "the laughter of comedy, though pleasurable *qua* laughter, is mixed with the pain that springs from envy (φθόνος). What we enjoy in it is seeing our enemies, but particularly our friends, suffer." On the contrary, Plato explicitly excludes from comedy the pleasure that one derives from observing (and presumably laughing at) the κακά of enemies. Such pleasure is not comic because it is not mixed with pain. It is not because one does not experience the painful emotion φθόνος (envy or malice) in observing the κακά of enemies (49D3–4: Οὐκοῦν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς τῶν ἐχθρῶν κακοῖς οὐτ' ἄδικον οὐτε φθονερόν ἐστι τὸ χαίρειν;). Why one does not experience φθόνος then, why φθόνος should be directed only at friends, why the characters of comedy should be for us φίλοι, are some of the questions which arise from Plato's discussion, but receive no satisfactory answer therein.

<sup>18</sup> *Phlb.* 49D11–E4 provides a summary statement of Plato's conclusions.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Elder Olson, *Tragedy and the Theory of Drama* (Detroit 1961) 51: "You will find deaths, beatings, unhappy love, murder plots, and all such in comedy as well as in tragedy." Else (above, note 11) 189 is wrong to say that comedy "does not involve the comic characters in pain, death, and destruction," though admittedly no deaths at least occur in extant Greek comedy.

imitation is not just forms of self-ignorance or people afflicted with them (*φαυλοτέρων* is probably masculine), but almost all forms of evil and those afflicted with them. The only kind of evil or evil person which he would exclude is the most extreme kind—complete vice or wholly vicious persons. The reason he gives for their exclusion makes clear how he would define the comic more narrowly than Plato. *Τὸ γελοῖον*, he says, consists of that which is faulty or ugly but does not cause pain or harm. For Aristotle, then, evil which causes pain or harm to anyone (not just potentially to oneself, as in Plato's theory) is not comic. But, plainly, it is not only wholly vicious persons and extreme vice which cause pain or harm. Arguably all, and certainly most, forms of vice, faults and ugliness, physical or ethical, cause at least some pain or harm, physical or ethical, either to those who have them or to others. And just as plainly, the misfortunes, evils, and vices of stage comedy are therein represented as causing a good deal of pain or harm to the comic characters. Aristotle's definition of *τὸ γελοῖον*, therefore, if taken as an attempt "Beobachtetes zu erklären," either in the sense of defining the particular essence of stage comedy or its appropriate subject matter, must be deemed a sorry failure,<sup>20</sup> and contradicts the implications of what he himself has said in 49A31–32. To this it may be objected that the evil actions represented in stage comedy only seem to but do not really cause pain or harm. This, however, is true also of actions on the tragic stage. Admittedly, a much greater degree of verisimilitude pertains generally to the actions, and so also to the pain and suffering, of stage tragedy than of stage comedy. But although the difference in verisimilitude between the two genres is relative, not absolute, Aristotle's exclusion from the comic of that which causes pain or harm is stated in absolute, not relative terms. And if he had the suggested idea in mind, he ought to have stated it explicitly, not left it for us to infer.

His definition of *τὸ γελοῖον*, however, makes quite good sense if taken as directed at the comic in a universal, though somewhat refined, sense. "Deaths, beatings, etc." are in real life as well as on the comic stage sometimes objects of laughter, but the theorist is under no obligation to make the comic coextensive with the laughable. Aristotle, as also Plato, did not think it was. His definition is, as it were, a "persuasive

<sup>20</sup> Some might explain Aristotle's exclusion of pain and harm from comedy by arguing that he has in mind not rowdy Old Comedy, but the much more innocuous Middle and New. But this is a lame argument: Middle and New Comedy undoubtedly included incidents involving pain and/or harm, as, for example, Knemon's fall into a well in Menander's *Dyscolus*. And, as Cooper (above, note 14) 18–41 has shown, there is no reason to believe, as some have, that Aristotle discounted the importance of Aristophanes, the leading representative of Old Comedy. It is, therefore, most unlikely that he would not have expected his theory of comedy to apply to Aristophanes' plays as well as those of his successors.

definition":<sup>21</sup> it includes within the comic only what we ought to laugh at, not all at which we sometimes do. Olson on this point, as on many others, has gotten to the bottom of Aristotle's meaning.<sup>22</sup> His distinctions between comic, malevolent, and scornful laughter are implicit in Aristotle's definition of comedy. The things at which the latter two are typically directed he excludes from the comic. His definition of the comic encompasses what takes place on the comic stage, for there nothing *really* painful or harmful occurs, but it is not directed, first and foremost, at the "phenomenon of drama."

Τὸ γελοῖον is frequently translated into English as "the ludicrous," but it is much more appropriately rendered "the comic." "The laughable" would of course be the most literal translation, but is less preferable for several reasons: τὸ γελοῖον, as I have shown, is not in fact, as Aristotle defines it, coextensive with the laughable; "laughable" is not as commonly used in ordinary English as was γελοῖος in Greek; and "the laughable" is simply not the standard critical term in English for expressing the essence of comedy. Aristotle's choice of γελοῖος to refer to the essence of comedy is itself not without significance though in this, of course, he was strongly influenced by Plato's use of the word in the *Philebus*. Another adjective, κωμικός,<sup>23</sup> was also available to him and might have performed this same function, but it normally meant "comic" only in a narrow sense, i.e., "of or relating to stage comedy." As Else remarks, "'Comic' would be a good term but seems to have been still so closely associated with theatrical production in Aristotle's day . . . that it lacked the necessary scope to designate the object of comedy as such."<sup>24</sup> Γελοῖος, however, in common usage already possessed the necessary scope, which κωμικός might have obtained solely with the aid of a definition. Aristotle's preference for γελοῖος over κωμικός to refer to the essence of comedy is, therefore, in itself to some extent indicative of his recognition that comedy as a whole is more universal than stage comedy and of his intention to relate his definition of stage comedy to this broader, more universal phenomenon.

The scope of the Greek adjective τραγικός was significantly greater than that of κωμικός. It frequently meant "of or relating to stage tragedy," but could also mean "solemn" or "exalted," and even on occasion might be used in a sense identical with that of the English "tragic"; Aristotle in fact seems so to use it once in the *Poetics*, when he singles out

<sup>21</sup> "Persuasive definition" is a term which was coined by C. L. Stevenson, "Persuasive Definitions," *Mind* (1938) 331f. Its meaning should be obvious from my own usage of it.

<sup>22</sup> Olson (above, note 19) 161.

<sup>23</sup> Κωμωδικός, of course, was also available to Aristotle, as also τραγωδικός in place of τραγικός, but since these other words are mere cognates of κωμικός and τραγικός and Aristotle never uses either one of them, my discussion will ignore them.

<sup>24</sup> Else (above, note 11) 186.

Euripides as “most tragic” (τραγικώτατος: 53A29) of the tragedians. In any case, there can be no doubt that, if Aristotle had attempted to define the tragic, he would have employed no adjective other than τραγικός to form the articular noun to serve as his *definiendum*. This obviously he has failed to do. He has, however, done, as it were, the next best thing: to include in his definition of tragedy the adjective σπουδαῖος, which in both Aristotle and other writers is frequently an antonym to the key word, γελοῖος, which he had just used to denote the essence of comedy. Σπουδαῖος does not denote *the* essential quality of tragedy, i.e., the tragic, the whole essence of tragedy, but it does denote *an* essential quality of tragedy, i.e., a part of its essence. Σπουδαῖος is not identical in function with γελοῖος which denotes the whole essence of comedy, not just a part, but its inclusion in the definition of tragedy is highly significant. In view of Aristotle’s usage of its antonym to define the essence of comedy, it indicates an attempt by him to distinguish between tragedy and comedy in terms of contrasting, essential qualities. His assertion that the πράξις itself of tragedy ought to be σπουδαία, moreover, would seem to indicate a desire to distinguish between tragedy and comedy in terms of essential qualities *belonging to the actions themselves* of each. At least it does if we understand his definition of comedy to imply that the πράξις of comedy ought to be γελοία. Cooper does so understand it,<sup>25</sup> and it seems only natural to do so. In view of these considerations, Aristotle’s failure to define the tragic does not seem so significant. It may be just an oversight—and perhaps due partly to the knowledge that a definition of τὸ τραγικόν might, without too much ingenuity, be extracted from his definition of τραγωδία:

ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας, δι’ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. (49B24–28)

If we eliminate from his definition of tragedy those elements which belong to tragedy exclusively or primarily as an art form, we are left with two elements which we may be sure Aristotle would have included in a definition of τὸ τραγικόν: (1) the ethical-physical<sup>26</sup> element, τὸ σπουδαῖον; and (2) pathos.<sup>27</sup> The former I infer naturally from the words πράξεως σπουδαίας; the latter from the words ἐλέου καὶ φόβου. So conceived, his definition of the tragic would be explicitly parallel to his definition of the comic, which consists of two similar elements: (1) an

<sup>25</sup> See Cooper (above, note 14) 179.

<sup>26</sup> Σπουδαῖος, like φαῦλος and γελοῖος, can have a physical as well as an ethical sense. Cf. EN 1098A9.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Else’s remark about the importance of *pathos* in Aristotle’s conception of tragedy (see above, page 160).

ethical-physical element, denoted by the words *ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἰσχος*; and (2) a negative element, the absence of pathos, as indicated by the words *ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν*. Whereas the comic for Aristotle is that which is ugly or defective but does not cause pain or harm, the tragic, I surmise, he would define as that which is *σπουδαῖος* but causes or, as may be inferred from *Po.* 53B21 and 54A4–9, at least threatens to cause, pain or harm.

The reader may surmise somewhat differently, but, whether or not he accepts this admittedly quite hypothetical Aristotelian definition of the tragic, it should be clear from the preceding that a strong case can be made against Kommerell's and Lesky's conclusions concerning Aristotle's mode of thought about tragedy and art in the *Poetics*. It should now be evident that Aristotle could conceive of art as possessing a definable essence and as existing in its own right apart from its effect, that he did conceive of comedy in this way and very likely could also have thought of tragedy in the same manner and, lastly, that he did distinguish between tragedy and comedy "on the basis of [an] essential quality of action itself." In what follows, I will no longer be concerned to argue these points, but rather next to establish that *σπουδαῖος* and *γελοῖος* in the *Poetics* are teleological terms.

\* \* \*

*Σπουδαῖος* is employed on three occasions in the *Poetics* in conjunction with the word *μίμησις* or its cognate *μιμέομαι*. No one today doubts that on two of these occasions (48A2 and 49B10), where it is applied to the men imitated in tragedy, *σπουδαῖος* denotes an ethical judgment about them, even if some insist that more than just an ethical judgment is involved.<sup>28</sup> But on the third occasion, in the definition of tragedy (49B24), where it is applied to the action of tragedy itself, scholars have tended to view it rather as an aesthetic term, meaning "serious." They have done so despite their recognition that the term should be used univocally throughout the work.<sup>29</sup> Hardie seems to have been the first to argue that it is so used,<sup>30</sup> and his ideas have been revived by Grube and Golden. All three scholars support their position by citing 49B38–50A2, where Aristotle only a few sentences after the definition of tragedy asserts that actions are of a certain sort on account of the thought and character of those who perform them: *διὰ γὰρ τούτων καὶ τὰς πράξεις εἶναι φάμεν ποιὰς τινας*.<sup>31</sup> Grube also cites

<sup>28</sup> A. Gudeman, *Aristoteles ΠΕΡΙ ΠΟΗΤΙΚΗΣ* (Berlin-Leipzig 1934) 270, held that *σπουδαῖος* in the *Poetics* is always used in an aesthetic sense. It means "tauglich für die Tragödie."

<sup>29</sup> Cf. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (New York 1951) 234–35, and Vahlen (above, note 15) 267–68.

<sup>30</sup> R. P. Hardie, "The *Poetics* of Aristotle," *Mind* 4 (1895) 357.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Hardie (above, note 30) 358, Grube (above, note 13) xxi, and Golden (above, note 9) 284–85.



two other passages just as relevant (48B24–39 and 61A4–10), where Aristotle does seem to distinguish between the literary genres of epic and satire, tragedy and comedy, in terms of the ethical qualities of the actions imitated in them and where σπουδαῖος and γελοῖος are used to denote these essential qualities. In chapter 4 Aristotle observes that throughout historical times there have always been two principal forms of poetry, first epic and satire, and later tragedy and comedy. He concludes that this reflects the two different types of men's characters (48B24–26): διεσπάθῃ δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεία ἦθῃ ἢ ποιήσιν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων. A few lines below he adds (48B34–35): ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητῆς "Ὁμηρος ἦν. Grube comments: "This is, of course, the customary usage of καλός in a moral at least as much as an aesthetic sense, and we are therefore not surprised to find the first type of literature imitating τὰ σπουδαῖα. In this context the word [sc. σπουδαῖος] cannot be emptied of moral implications, however we translate it."<sup>32</sup> It seems a natural inference from all that Aristotle says in this chapter that in his eyes epic and tragedy appropriately imitate things which are ethically good (τὰ σπουδαῖα), and satire and comedy imitate things which are ethically bad (τὰ φαῦλα).

Grube also cites 61A4–9:

Περὶ δὲ τοῦ καλῶς ἢ μὴ καλῶς εἰ εἴρηται τινι ἢ πέπρακται, οὐ μόνον σκεπτόμενον εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ πεπραγμένον ἢ εἰρημένον βλέποντα εἰ σπουδαῖον ἢ φαῦλον, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς τὸν πράττοντα ἢ λέγοντα πρὸς δὴν ἢ ὅτε ἢ ὅτῳ ἢ οὐ ἔνεκεν, οἷον εἰ μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ, ἵνα γένηται, ἢ μείζονος κακοῦ, ἵνα ἀπογένηται.

He comments: "Here, as far as I can see, *all translators take the words* [sc. σπουδαῖον ἢ φαῦλον] *in the sense of morally good or bad*, for nothing else makes sense."<sup>33</sup> All commentators seem to construe the passage as does Grube.

Golden agrees that σπουδαίας in the definition of tragedy is an ethical term, but holds that the word applies to the action of tragedy only "metaphorically": "Since a person's character is stamped on his deeds, σπουδαῖος can be used to describe the actions of one who possesses this quality of character; but when used in this way, it is not an essential quality of the actions but only a metaphorical one, i.e., one transferred from the character of the agent to the actions performed by the agent."<sup>34</sup> But how can actions bear evidence of a certain character if they do not

<sup>32</sup> Grube (above, note 13) xxii–xxiii, note 24.

<sup>33</sup> Grube (above, note 13) xxii–xxiii, note 24 (his emphasis). In fact, Butcher translates both καλῶς ἢ μὴ καλῶς and σπουδαῖον ἢ φαῦλον as "poetically good or bad." This, however, makes nonsense of the passage. The former phrase may be so translated, but not the latter.

<sup>34</sup> Golden (above, note 9) 285.

possess in and of themselves the same qualities as belong to that character? Golden simply ignores the passages cited by Grube where Aristotle does seem to distinguish between genres on the basis of essential qualities of the actions themselves. He also ignores the fact that, though “a person’s character is stamped on his deeds,” his deeds are also stamped on his character: “There can be no doubt . . . that in Aristotle’s ethical theory action and action alone shapes character.”<sup>35</sup> The radical disjunction between action and character implicit in Golden’s view of their relationship in the *Poetics* is foreign to Aristotle’s thought: the emphasis in Aristotle is on the *interrelationship* between the two. Jones, therefore, goes much too far in asserting that “it needs to be said that the plot-character dichotomy is radically false to Aristotle’s understanding of Tragedy, that character, like colour, must be denied even the most primitive autonomy”;<sup>36</sup> but the autonomy which Aristotle grants to action and character in the *Ethics* is not so great as to permit a mere metaphorical relationship between them in the *Poetics*.

Let us consider more closely the passage which, if any, explains the presence of *σπουδαίας* in the definition of tragedy:

ἐπεὶ δὲ πράξεώς ἐστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πατρώντων, οὓς ἀνάγκη ποιούς τινες εἶναι κατὰ τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν (διὰ γὰρ τούτων καὶ τὰς πράξεις εἶναι φάμεν ποιῆς τινος, [πέφυκεν αἷτια δύο τῶν πράξεων εἶναι, διάνοιαν καὶ ἦθος,] καὶ κατὰ ταύτας καὶ τυγχάνουσι καὶ ἀποτυγχάνουσι πάντες). . . . (49B36–50A2)

Aristotle addresses himself specifically to the question of why actions are of a certain quality, and asserts that they are so because of the *ἦθος* and *διάνοια* which cause them. From the proximity of this passage to the definition of tragedy, and the repetition in it of the words *μίμησις* *πράξεως* from that definition as well as the obvious purport of the passage as a whole, I would conclude not only that herein lies the explanation for *σπουδαίας* in the definition of tragedy, but that this passage was specifically intended by Aristotle to provide an explanation for it. As Else says in commenting on this passage:<sup>37</sup>

In short, Aristotle means by *πράξεως* the *πράξεως σπουδαίας* καὶ *τελείας* of the definition: he is thinking, not of all ‘action’, but specifically of the tragic action with its completeness and its seriousness.

. . . The reference to the drama is also implicit in *εἶναι φάμεν* which—certainly not by accident—reappears below (A6).

Else, however, though he has much to say about the passage as a whole, does not specifically conclude, as I think one should, that this passage

<sup>35</sup> Else (above, note 11) 71. Cf. *EN* 1105A26–B12.

<sup>36</sup> Jones (above, note 12) 31.

<sup>37</sup> Else (above, note 11) 241.

affords an explanation for the presence of *σπουδαίας* in the definition of tragedy.

The genuineness of the sentence *πέφυκεν . . . ἦθος* has been widely impugned. Vahlen and Gomperz believe it to be out of place because *καὶ κατὰ ταύτας* ought to follow immediately after *ποιᾶς τινας*.<sup>38</sup> Else agrees, concludes that it is an interpolation,<sup>39</sup> and asserts, moreover, that “it is a crude and misleading paraphrase” of the preceding sentence.<sup>40</sup> In that sentence *διὰ* is constructed with the genitive, not the accusative, and denotes mere instrumentality, not causality. The subsequent sentence, therefore, introduces a somewhat different idea, to which Else objects as follows: “The doctrine is in fact not really Aristotelian. The two causes of action, according to Aristotle (*E.N.* 6.2.1139A31; *De An.* 3.10.433A10–30), are mind or reason (*λόγος*, *διάνοια*, or *νοῦς*; but the *νοῦς* can be mere imagination, *φαντασία*) and desire (*ὄρεξις*). It is true of course that character ends by shaping one’s desires.”<sup>41</sup> Schuetrumpf agrees that *πέφυκεν . . . ἦθος* may be out of place for the reason given by Vahlen and Gomperz, but argues against Else that there is no conflict between this sentence and the preceding one and that its meaning is sufficiently Aristotelian. He points out that *νοῦς*, which Else holds to be one of the causes of action, itself necessarily involves an *ἠθικὴ ἔξις* and in the passage from the *Ethics* cited by Else (1139A31) is in fact replaced by *ἠθικὴ ἔξις* in the very next sentence, so that even this passage shows the involvement of *ἦθος* in causing action. But he also points out that it is clear from other passages in the *Ethics* that it is *προαίρεσις* which for Aristotle is ultimately the cause of action, and holds that *ἦθος* and *διάνοια* are the constituent elements of *προαίρεσις* and in the passage from the *Poetics* function together virtually as does *προαίρεσις* in the *Ethics*.<sup>42</sup>

Häufig, wenn auch mit wechselnden Begriffen, bringt auch sonst Aristoteles zum Ausdruck, dass Charakter und Denken das Handeln bestimmen.<sup>43</sup> Mit diesen beiden Begriffen umschreibt er, wie oben gezeigt wurde, die beiden Bestandteile der *προαίρεσις*. Die *προαίρεσις* ist nach EN<sup>44</sup> die Bewegungsursache der Handlungen.

<sup>38</sup> See Vahlen (above, note 15) 20–21 and Theodor Gomperz, *Zu Aristoteles’ Poetik, Ein Beitrag zur Kritik und Erklärung der Kapitel I–VI* (Vienna 1888) 29–31.

<sup>39</sup> D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle: Poetics* (Oxford 1968) ad loc., also believes the passage to be an interpolation.

<sup>40</sup> Else (above, note 11) 240.

<sup>41</sup> Else (above, note 11) 240, note 70.

<sup>42</sup> Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 84–85.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *EN* 1144A6: ἐπὶ τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖται κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴν ἀρετὴν and *Pol.* 1323B32f. The passages cited in this note and the next are taken directly from Schuetrumpf’s own notes. See Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 84, notes 6 and 7.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *EN* 1138A31: πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις (θεὸν ἢ κίνησις ἀλλ’ οὐχ οὐδένεκα). Cf. also *EN* 1139A33 and *Metaph.* 1065A32.

Schon das passt zur Poetik, wo ja ἦθος und διάνοια gemeinsam als die Ursachen (αἷτια) der Handlungen bezeichnet sind. . . . So ist diese Vorstellung ganz im Einklang mit der Ethik des Aristoteles.

I agree with Schuettrumpf's conclusions about this passage as far as they go, but believe that they do not go far enough, for he fails to see that this passage explains the reason for σπουδαίας in the definition of tragedy. In fact, although he writes a chapter entitled "Die Bedeutung von ἦθος, σπουδαῖος, φαῦλος in der Poetik,"<sup>45</sup> he says nothing at all about σπουδαίας in the definition of tragedy, for which he has been justly criticized by Rees.<sup>46</sup> I infer from this passage that the πρᾶξις of tragedy is σπουδαία not merely because it is performed by characters who are σπουδαῖοι with respect to their ἦθη and διάνοια but because it is a product of and is caused by the σπουδαῖα ἦθη and διάνοια of these characters.<sup>47</sup> The reader may perhaps question whether it is possible to attribute to the ἦθη and διάνοια of the tragic characters the sort of unity which the preceding statement seems to imply they possess. Clearly, their ἦθη and διάνοια are not of a piece, but ultimately there should be no more difficulty in attributing an over-all unity to the ἦθη and διάνοια of these characters than to their actions. If Aristotle's use of the singular πρᾶξις in the definition of tragedy to refer to the various actions which comprise a tragic plot is conceptually intelligible, then this explanation of how this πρᾶξις comes to be σπουδαία is also conceptually intelligible. This explanation of σπουδαίας does not of course entail that the action of tragedy must be good in the sense of actually producing a good result—although that is what happens in some tragedies, e.g., the *Oresteia*, and is generally the rule in epic which is also an imitation of a πρᾶξις σπουδαία. Πράξεως σπουδαίας in the definition of tragedy entails no more, and no less, than that "the action of the play as a whole should be a 'good' one (i.e., it should portray efforts to bring about a 'good' result)."<sup>48</sup> Or, to put it another way, it entails that at least some of the actions of which the plot consists should be σπουδαῖαι in the sense of being a product of the σπουδαῖα ἦθη and διάνοια of the characters. But tragedy is not merely an imitation of actions of or by σπουδαῖοι, for not all actions of or by σπουδαῖοι do in fact emanate from their σπουδαῖα ἦθη and διάνοια. A σπουδαῖος may purposely act out of character: he may, for example, for comic effect, imitate a φαῦλος. Many things which σπουδαῖοι ordinarily do, moreover, are not especially related to their character. Such actions are not what Aristotle has in mind.

<sup>45</sup> Schuettrumpf (above, note 10) 52–63.

<sup>46</sup> B. R. Rees, *CR* 23 (1973) 52.

<sup>47</sup> Of course, not everything that happens in a play is a product of the ἦθη and διάνοια of the characters; some things naturally occur through chance or are caused by natural or supernatural forces.

<sup>48</sup> Humphrey House, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London 1956) 84.

Σπουδαίας at the very least entails that some of the actions performed by the σπουδαῖοι be those characteristic of them, those which identify them as σπουδαῖοι.

The reason for the presence of σπουδαίας in the definition of tragedy I will assume hereafter to be that just given. I have left σπουδαῖος untranslated and will continue to do so since there is no satisfactory English equivalent. In what follows I will be concerned only with its meaning, not its translation. Schuetrumpf holds that σπουδαῖος in the *Poetics* is an ethical term expressing a judgment about those qualities and virtues which belong to ἥθος in the *Ethics*, i.e., moral, not intellectual, qualities and virtues. I believe that on the contrary σπουδαῖος in the *Poetics*, as also frequently in the *Ethics*, expresses a judgment which encompasses the intellectual as well as moral sphere. I will present below the reasons for my opinion. But Schuetrumpf is right to reject the view of Gudeman that σπουδαῖος in the *Poetics* is an aesthetic term,<sup>49</sup> and right also, I believe, to dispute Else's assertion that "Aristotle's antithesis σπουδαῖος-φαῦλος is not merely moral, in any narrow sense of the word. Political, social, and aesthetic elements are in it from the beginning, and it need not surprise us if they emerge more clearly later on."<sup>50</sup> Schuetrumpf holds, on the contrary, that only with the words τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχία (53A10) does Aristotle indicate that the characters should be from the upper class and argues that Aristotle would not have included this statement if his previous statements about the tragic characters had contained a "Feststellung über die äusseren Verhältnisse des Helden."<sup>51</sup> His disagreement with Else on this point has been roundly criticized by Rees.<sup>52</sup> Radical disagreement on this point can perhaps be quelled if scholars will allow a distinction between the denotation and connotation of these words. Σπουδαῖος and φαῦλος, in my opinion, denote, as Schuetrumpf insists, only an ethical judgment about those to whom they are applied; but they may, I would allow, even in the hands of Aristotle, have social, political, and aesthetic connotations as well. That these connotations play much of a role in Aristotle's usage of them in the *Poetics*, however, I do not believe.

It is stated in *Cat.* 10B6–10 that σπουδαῖος is *the* adjective for ἀρετή:

ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ ὀνόματος κειμένου οὐ λέγεται παρωνύμως τὸ κατ' αὐτὴν ποῖον λεγόμενον, οἷον ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς ὁ σπουδαῖος· τῷ γὰρ ἀρετὴν ἔχειν σπουδαῖος λέγεται, ἀλλ' οὐ παρωνύμως ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς.

<sup>49</sup> Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 52–55; cf. above, note 28.

<sup>50</sup> Else (above, note 11) 78.

<sup>51</sup> Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 58.

<sup>52</sup> Rees (above, note 46) 51.

Schuetrumpf is aware of the interrelationship of these words. He quotes this passage from the *Categories* and another to the same effect from the *Magna Moralia* (1181A28: τὸ δὲ σπουδαῖον εἶναί ἐστι τὸ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔχειν)<sup>53</sup> and states without qualification that “σπουδαῖος und φαῦλος waren . . . die ἀρετή und κακία zugehörigen Adjektive.”<sup>54</sup> He seems unaware, however, of the potential conflict between this statement and others by him which restrict the judgment expressed by σπουδαῖος to the moral sphere. If σπουδαῖος is *the* adjective for ἀρετή, one would expect that it would express judgments about any kind of ἀρετή, intellectual as well as moral.

Schuetrumpf's conclusions about how σπουδαῖος is used in the *Poetics* are based on his belief that ἦθος in the *Poetics* has the same meaning as in the *Ethics* where it includes moral but not intellectual qualities<sup>55</sup> and, more particularly, his belief that it has such a meaning in 48A1–5 where the men imitated in tragedy are said to be σπουδαῖοι with respect to their ἦθη.<sup>56</sup> I disagree with him and believe that ἦθος in the *Poetics* generally has the same sense as in *Rh.* 1 and 2 where it includes intellectual as well as moral qualities.<sup>57</sup> In a forthcoming article in *Hermes* I give all the reasons why. Here I will give just one: its usage in 48A1–5. The meanings of ἦθος and σπουδαῖος there are intertwined. ἦθος in that passage should include intellectual qualities because σπουδαῖος there, on the basis of its usage elsewhere in Aristotle, ought to express a judgment which spans the intellectual as well as moral spheres. Though σπουδαῖος is used by Aristotle at least once as a purely moral term,<sup>58</sup> it carries a broader meaning when contrasted explicitly or implicitly with φαῦλος or γελοῖος. This is clear from the discussion of contemplation at the end of the *Ethics* (1175B25–79A33). There σπουδαῖος and its cognates occur at least eleven times,<sup>59</sup> not always in direct application to those who contemplate, but always in ways which imply that they are among the σπουδαῖοι because of their intellectual superiority. To say that the judgment expressed by σπουδαῖος encompasses both moral and intellectual qualities, however, is not to delineate its precise meaning. I submit that σπουδαῖος and its antonyms are for Aristotle, at least when contrasted explicitly or implicitly with each other, teleological terms, i.e., they denote respectively a good and bad

<sup>53</sup> Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 49, note 1.

<sup>54</sup> Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 51.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 52–53.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 47–52.

<sup>57</sup> On the usage of ἦθος in *Rh.* 1 and 2, see Schuetrumpf (above, note 10) 83, note 2.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Rh.* 1378A16 where σπουδαῖος is used together with φρόνιμος to form the moral-intellectual antithesis. Bonitz' *Index Aristotelicus* lists several instances where it is used synonymously with ἐπιεικής.

<sup>59</sup> Σχολῶν (Vermehren) rather than σπουδῶν should probably be read at 1177A19.

relationship between a thing, animate or inanimate, and its proper end (and form). The following passage (EN 1176B35–77A6) from the discussion of contemplation will illustrate the teleological connotations of σπουδαῖος and its cognates:

οὐ δὴ τέλος ἡ ἀνάπαυσις· γίνεται γὰρ ἔνεκα τῆς ἐνεργείας. δοκεῖ δ' ὁ εὐδαιμόνων βίος κατ' ἀρετὴν εἶναι· οὗτος δὲ μετὰ σπουδῆς, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν παιδιᾷ. βελτίω τε λέγομεν τὰ σπουδαῖα τῶν γελοίων καὶ μετὰ παιδιᾶς, καὶ τοῦ βελτίονος ἀεὶ καὶ μορίου καὶ ἀνθρώπου σπουδαιοτέραν τὴν ἐνέργειαν· ἡ δὲ τοῦ βελτίονος κρείττων καὶ εὐδαιμονικώτερα ἡδὴ.

Aristotle posits a direct and proportional relationship between the σπουδῇ (cf. σπουδαιοτέραν) of an activity and the excellence of the part of us which it employs and also between the σπουδῇ of an activity and the happiness which it is capable of producing. Contemplation, he concludes, is the most σπουδαία of activities and the one most productive of happiness because it employs only the best part of us, νοῦς.<sup>60</sup> The happy life is the one that is lived μετὰ σπουδῆς. It is, therefore, only by manifesting σπουδῇ and by engaging in σπουδαῖαι πράξεις and ἐνέργειαι that we can obtain our end, happiness. The teleological connotations of σπουδαῖος and its cognates should be apparent.

Another important passage for illustrating the teleological connotations of σπουδαῖος is 1097A15–98A20. There Aristotle asserts that all men desire the good, i.e., that for which all else is done (1097A18). Happiness, therefore, must be the good, for we choose all else for the sake of it (1097B1–6). Happiness, however, can be obtained only by performing the specific work (ἔργον) proper to man's nature. This work is an activity in accordance with reason and virtue. It is the σπουδαῖος who performs this work well (εἶς). Neither φαῦλος nor γελοῖος is used in the passage, but we may infer from the many passages where these words are used as antonyms to σπουδαῖος that it is the φαῦλοι and γελοῖοι who do not perform man's work well and whose actions, therefore, are not *well* directed at man's end, happiness. This, I submit, is the fundamental distinction between Aristotle's σπουδαῖοι and φαῦλοι, the distinction which is operative in *Po.* 48A1–5.

<sup>60</sup> EN 1177B27–78A9. Aristotle at one point (1178B27–28) even identifies happiness with contemplation; and on this basis he denies that animals can be happy. This identification is most problematic: how can it be reconciled with what else Aristotle says about happiness? This question and the general nature of Aristotle's conception of happiness have been the subject of much recent discussion. See R. Kraut, "Two Conceptions of Happiness," *PhR* 88 (1979) 167–97; W. F. R. Hardie, "Aristotle on the Best Life for a Man," *Philosophy* 54 (1979) 35–50, esp. 36; Klaus Jacobi, "Aristoteles' Einführung des Begriffs 'εὐδαιμονία' im I. Buch der 'Nikomachischen Ethik,'" *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 86 (1979) 300–325; J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on 'Eudaimonia'*, (London 1975); Stephen R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man* (Oxford 1975); John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Boston 1975).

I conclude, therefore, that when Aristotle says that the action of tragedy is *σπουδαία*, he means that it should possess the same qualities which belong to the *σπουδαῖοι*, it should be in accordance with at least some of the virtues, moral and intellectual, possessed by the *σπουδαῖοι*, and it should be to some significant extent well directed at the end proper to man's nature, happiness. We may, therefore, be specific about the "good result" at which efforts in tragedy are to be made (see above, page 170): it is the good result of happiness. As Olson observes, "Tragedy exhibits life as directed to important ends; comedy as either not directed to such ends, or unlikely to achieve them."<sup>61</sup> Once again Olson has gotten to the heart of Aristotle's meaning; but "important ends" may be reduced to one, our final end, happiness. Tragedy imitates an action which is, comedy one which is not, well directed at happiness. Tragedy exhibits to us characters who have, comedy characters who have not, the wherewithal to be happy and who demonstrate this by what they do in the play itself.

Such characters, of course, may fall into misfortune—for a variety of reasons: moral flaws in themselves, honest mistakes, chance, the enmity of the gods, etc. And if they do, they naturally lose whatever happiness they may have. Tragedy, moreover, typically presents them in the very act of falling into misfortune; and Aristotle clearly thought it appropriate for it to do so, as is evident from his discussion of the tragic plot in chapters 13 and 14. My views about his conception of tragedy need to be reconciled with these facts and can be. It should first be noted that happiness for Aristotle is not identical with good fortune. Happiness for him is a technical and prescriptive term. Virtue and knowledge are preconditions for happiness, though not for good fortune. Happiness involves pleasure, but not just any kind, only those pleasures consequent to and consistent with the possession of virtue and knowledge (cf. *EN* 1177A23–B1). However, though happiness and good fortune are not identical, freedom from misfortune is naturally a precondition for happiness. This is a truism which Aristotle nowhere bothers to express, though it is implied in his comment that the man who contemplates is the happiest of men because, among other things, he is the most like the gods and they are most likely to look after someone like themselves (*EN* 1179A23–33). The fact that happiness depends upon freedom from misfortune, coupled with the other facts mentioned above, requires some modification of my statement that tragedy imitates an action well directed at happiness: the tragic action is well directed at happiness only to some extent and in certain respects; to some extent and in certain respects it is poorly so directed. It is well directed in respect to the effects upon it of the *σπουδαία ἥθη* and *διάνοια* of the tragic characters, but it is poorly so directed in respect to the effects upon it of the moral flaws of these same characters, their honest mistakes, chance, angry gods, etc. That

<sup>61</sup> Olson (above, note 16) 35.



it is poorly directed at happiness may seem the more salient fact about it, but for Aristotle it is essential that the tragic action possess both types of direction. This is evident from his definition of tragedy where the words *πράξεως σπουδαίας* explicitly attribute to it the one direction, while the words *ἐλέου καὶ φόβου* implicitly attribute to it the other.

*Εὐδαιμονία*, therefore, falls within the province of tragedy, and outside that of comedy. Interestingly, Aristotle makes a statement to that effect in the *Poetics*, though the text of this statement is somewhat corrupt. I give its text as printed in Else's edition:

ἡ γὰρ τραγωδία μίμησις ἐστὶν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ πράξεως καὶ βίου καὶ εὐδαιμονίας [*καὶ εὐδαιμονία*] καὶ κακοδαιμονία ἐν πράξει ἐστίν] καὶ τὸ τέλος πράξις τίς ἐστίν, οὐ ποιότης. εἰσὶ δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὰ ἡθῆ ποιοί τινες, κατὰ δὲ τὰς πράξεις εὐδαίμονες ἢ τούναντίον. (50A16–19)

The words *καὶ εὐδαιμονίας καὶ κακοδαιμονία ἐν πράξει ἐστίν* are in the Greek manuscripts, but not the Arabic translation. Editors, accordingly, have thought them an interpolation; they are omitted from most modern editions. But as Else, who understands the bracketed words to have been originally a marginal note, comments: "The note is easier to account for if *εὐδαιμονίας* served to touch it off."<sup>62</sup> *Εὐδαιμονίας*, then, is likely to be genuine, and my preceding discussion has provided reasons why it is also appropriate. Of course, it would support my interpretation if the bracketed words were genuine as well. Then, as Else observes, *τὸ τέλος* would refer not to the end of tragedy (i.e., an action, not a quality), but rather to "the goal of life. But the goal of life is happiness, which has already been mentioned, so that the clause is a mere tautology: happiness is in action, and the goal of life (viz., happiness) is an action."<sup>63</sup> I accept Else's conclusions about the passage, but the possibly genuine *εὐδαιμονίας* and the unquestionably genuine *εὐδαίμονες* are sufficient in themselves to support the basic point which I wish to make: that Aristotle considered tragedy to be especially concerned with the attainment and loss of the end proper to man's nature, happiness. As already noted, this happiness is a qualitative concept, and not to be confused with mere good fortune, such as we typically find at the end of comedies.

The action of many a Greek tragedy, of course, is not *σπουδαία* in the sense which I have attached to this word, though that of most might well be described as serious. This fact may seem to support the practicality and intelligibility of interpreting *πράξεως σπουδαίας* in the traditional manner—and indeed it does. But my argument against the traditional interpretation has not been based on the belief that it was unintelligible or impractical, for it is not. It in fact fits the genre as a

<sup>62</sup> Else (above, note 11) 255, note 119.

<sup>63</sup> Else (above, note 11) 255.

whole much better than does my own interpretation. My arguments against it have been based rather on the belief that it is inconsistent with Aristotle's usage of *σπουδαῖος* elsewhere in his corpus. One should keep in mind, however, that, even as traditionally interpreted, Aristotle's definition does not fit the genre as a whole, for the action of some Greek tragedies is not serious at all. Every definition of tragedy which tries to distinguish what is distinctly tragic and which rises above the mere tautology that a tragedy is a play by a tragedian produced on the tragic stage, will necessarily have a somewhat limited applicability and practicality. Aristotle's theory as I interpret it, however, is very practical in one very important respect: it succeeds in distinguishing what makes the most tragic characters most tragic. The term "tragic" can be applied intelligibly to a Creon,<sup>64</sup> a Medea, or a Jason, but the term, as most people use it and understand it, applies much better to an Antigone, an Oedipus, or a Socrates. Why do the latter strike us as more fully tragic than the former? The reason cannot lie in the pathos which they suffer, for some of the latter suffer no more than some of the former. The reason must lie in the *σπουδῇ* which they manifest generally in their actions and especially in those actions which lead directly to their respective catastrophes. The example of Socrates is most noteworthy because his death, in Plato's account of it, involves little or no pathos at all (cf. *Phd.* 117B3–7), and yet strikes many of us as exceedingly tragic. It can do so only because the tragic effect of a catastrophe is in direct proportion not only to the pathos suffered, but also to the *σπουδῇ* manifested by the sufferers. That this should be so is implied in Aristotle's theory as I interpret it. That theory, therefore, as I interpret it, is not impractical, though its practicality is of a different order than as traditionally interpreted. There is, I suppose, the possibility that *σπουδαῖος* in the definition of tragedy is ambiguous, that, consciously or not, Aristotle chose to use it there because it can carry both the teleological connotations which I attribute to it and a more general sense, approximating the English "serious." To hold this possibility to be an actuality is a convenient way of making most sense out of his definition, and my arguments in favor of my own interpretation, as far as I can see, pose no absolute obstacle to the adoption of such a view.

<sup>64</sup> As Karl Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, transl. Hazel and David Harvey (Oxford 1979) 93, observes, Creon's fate in *Antigone* is "empty," Antigone's "full." By my interpretation, Aristotle's definition of tragedy implies that the fate of Antigone is more appropriate for representation in tragedy than that of Creon. That Antigone's actions are *σπουδαῖαι*, Creon's largely *φᾶῦλαι*, should be evident from the fact that hers are in accordance with nature while his are not, as I have shown in "Antigone's Dual Motivation for the Double Burial," *Hermes* 111 (1983) 197–201.