MIRROR OF PRINCES:

RENÉ GIRARD, ARISTOTLE, AND THE REBIRTH OF TRAGEDY

by

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Abstract

René Girard is a theorist who finds evidence in literature and drama for his anthropological hypothesis of human origin and the role of scapegoating in human affairs. The originary scene of human evolution is described by the generative anthropology of Eric Gans in a way that refines Girard. Generative anthropology also permits an evolutionary model of esthetic form founded on the originary scene that can account for Aristotle’s insights into both esthetic and political affairs.

As a comparison of Girard’s postmodern analysis with the classical analysis of Aristotle’s Poetics suggests, there are constants in esthetic evolution. A fivefold pattern of narrative universals can be abstracted from Aristotle and Girard as a model for tracking evolutionary progress and cultural rebirth.

This model for esthetic history may also be developed to account for political form as evolved in particular cultures and mirrored in their drama (Aeschylus’ Athens and Shakespeare’s England). Girard’s political model is impractically apocalyptic because it demands the end of the allegedly one and only earthly regime (“scapegoating”). But Aristotle’s many mixed regime types in the Politics afford a better evolutionary model for how regime change is mirrored in esthetic form to commemorate real transitions between historical epochs. Such cultural change is initiated by the deliberate “firstness” of statesmanlike prudence.

As generative anthropology suggests, the classical and neoclassical esthetics are distinct eras in the evolution of human experience. This evolution is visible in the transitions commemorated in Aeschylus’ Oresteia and Shakespeare’s Henriad.

In the classical esthetic, the separation of office from person, which establishes a secure basis for territorial loyalty, is signified in Aeschylus’ Oresteia. This is what Athena’s Eumenides
represent in the new context of the Areopagus, as society evolves from Orestes, who represented requisite divine justice in the context of Agamemnon's murder.

In the neoclassical esthetic, the binding of territorial loyalty to the corporate personality of the human sovereign who rules by consent is signified in Shakespeare's *Henriad*. This is what Henry V represents in the new context of Agincourt, as society evolves from Henry IV, who represented requisite human ceremony in the context of Richard II's deposition.
Dedication

B.V.M.

O Sapientia,
quae ex ore Altissimi prodisti,atingens a fine usque ad finem,fortiter suaviter disponensque omnia:veni docendum nos viam prudentiae.

O Wisdom,
which camest out of the mouth of the most High,and reachest from one end to another,mightily and sweetly ordering all things:Come and teach us the way of prudence.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my senior supervisor David C. Mirhady for being both friend and mentor. Thank you to my committee, Anthony J. Podlecki, Ian Angus, and Paul Budra, which has supported and encouraged me in my intellectual endeavours and this work in particular. Thank you also to Robert B. Todd for my early philological training and ongoing support. I am indebted to the scholarship of the following authors, each of whom wrote a book or an article that caused me to change my thoughts on an important issue at some point while I was writing this dissertation: Benedict M. Ashley, John N. Deely, Eric L. Gans, René Girard, Victor Davis Hanson, Donald Kagan, Anthony Kenny, Carnes Lord, Harvey C. Mansfield, Jacques Maritain, Ralph McInerny, Joseph Ratzinger, Anthony Rizzi, James V. Schall, Raymund Schwager, Roger Scruton, Vincent E. Smith, William A. Wallace, and James A. Weisheipl. I am also thankful for stimulating conversations with Pablo Bandera, Andrew Bartlett, Gerald Boersma, Ryan Chace, Pat Gillespie, Tom Hamel, John Horsman, Robert Stackpole, and Richard van Oort.

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Glossary including Abbreviations

Because the technical vocabulary of this dissertation is an idiosyncratic blend of Aristotelian philosophical terminology and of critical literary vocabulary from mimetic theory and generative anthropology, a helpful glossary as a guide to all of these technical terms is supplied below.

1H4  Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 1*

2H4  Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 2*

*Ag*  Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

*anagnōrisis*  recognition or revelation

*anthroposemiosis*  the human use of signs

*character arc*  the *metabasis* of a character as enacted during the course of the dramatic action

*Ch*  Aeschylus, *Choephoroi*

*EE*  Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*

*Eu*  Aeschylus, *Eumenides*

*empiriological*  a tool of science that uses mental constructs to organize sensorial data, especially in order to make predictions

*empiriometric*  the use of the mathematical to explain the physical, as in modern physics

*empirioschematic*  the use of mentally constructed schemata (but not the mathematical) to organize measured and observed sensorial data and thus to explain the physical with the formally physical (especially the sensible), as in chemistry and especially biology

*generative anthropology*  Eric Gans’ modification of Girard’s mimetic theory; locates the origin of culture not in the scapegoating mechanism but rather in language’s act of representation

*generative context*  cultural context influencing and/or reflected in the drama’s production
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>H5</em> Shakespeare, <em>King Henry V</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hamartia</strong></td>
<td>mistake or error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>interpretant</strong></td>
<td>the context in a triadic sign-relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mediator</strong></td>
<td>the person who models one’s mimetic desire for an object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>metabasis</strong></td>
<td>the interpretive content which all drama presupposes; becomes visible in the classical esthetic as the change of fortune associated with a character, the content of the tragedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mimesis</strong></td>
<td>imitation or representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mimetic crisis</strong></td>
<td>a state of undifferentiation caused by mimetic rivalry; requires the reassertion of differentiation by means of the scapegoating mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mimetic desire</strong></td>
<td>desire for something because someone else desires it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mimetic rivalry</strong></td>
<td>conflict over an object, between a mediator and a subject (who claims to be the rival original source of that desire), i.e., a conflict generated by mimetic desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mimetic theory</strong></td>
<td>René Girard’s theory that all human desire is mimetic desire, a theory which leads to the hypothesis that the foundation of all culture is the scapegoating mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NE</strong> Aristotle, <em>Nicomachean Ethics</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ontological</strong></td>
<td>that which has to do with real being, as opposed to the predictive output of the merely empiriological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pathos</strong></td>
<td>suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>peripeteia</strong></td>
<td>reversal of the action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politics</strong> Aristotle, <em>Politics</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R2</strong> Shakespeare, <em>Richard II</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>representamen</strong></td>
<td>the sign-vehicle in the triadic sign relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>scapegoating mechanism</strong></td>
<td>the re-establishment of social differentiation by means of “all against one” violence directed at a scapegoat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
semiosic  pertaining to the action of signs

semiosis  the action of signs, i.e., the building up of a structure of experience through sign relations

semiotics  the knowledge of signs, i.e., reflections upon the role of signs in structuring experience

semiotic  (1) pertaining to the knowledge of the action of signs; or (2) the foundational part of semiotics as a doctrine of signs

significate  the object signified in a triadic sign-relation

ST  Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*
What is the Rebirth of Tragedy?

There are two ways to think about what is “the rebirth of tragedy”. The first is to think of “the rebirth of tragedy” as the recurrence of tragic events, in which violence irrupts into human life yet again. The second is to think of “the rebirth of tragedy” as a renewal of human life, in which a new kind of life arrives, born again from the ashes of an inferno of violence. We despair upon the first type of “rebirth of tragedy,” yet thereupon hope for the regeneration that the second brings.

Tragedy is thus a paradox. “The rebirth of tragedy” is a phrase that describes its twofold nature. “The rebirth of tragedy” can be either the violent rebirth into tragedy or the hopeful rebirth out of tragedy. How these two events – the human ingress into tragic violence, and the egress from tragic violence – are inextricably bound together in all human culture has been the subject of René Girard’s researches. Girard’s bold thesis traces the genesis of human culture to the rebirth of violence. Violence breaks out, and eventually reaches an extreme from which social order is regenerated. Girard sees this as a universal human pattern. Because violent rivalry recurs in every society, the preservation of the social species demands a scapegoat. The scapegoat then becomes the focal point of unanimous violence. The sacrifice of the scapegoat expresses a rebirth of social unanimity. The scapegoat thus marks the birth of religious humanity because, according to Girard’s reading of all archaic religion, it is the scapegoat who becomes worshipped as the first god. The deity is the sacred power that brings to the community the restorative rebirth out of violence into unanimity. Without the scapegoat deity, the community would perish from its rebirth into violence and disunity.¹

Girard’s claim is so radical precisely because he defines the human species as the one species founded on the violent sacred. Hominization occurs in a sudden event — the unanimous persecution of a scapegoat. The ape becomes man when he gets religion, in a unanimous violence that founds the social order by allowing the sudden evolution of a peculiarly human religion that worships the scapegoat as the bringer of peace.²

Not only is this a radical anthropological thesis about human origins and the evolution of cultural institutions, it also implies a radical revaluation of literary texts.³ Texts must be read in light of this anthropological thesis; otherwise they are simply being misread. For literary and dramatic texts are human documents. As such, they are repositories of peculiarly anthropological data. As cultural documents, they contain the universal echoes of the original evolutionary genesis of the human out of the violent sacred. In the beginning, human social order was founded on the original deified scapegoats. But as culture evolves and as the species evolves, the rebirth of tragedy remains necessary for the preservation of the human social order. Even if the scapegoat and sacrifice rituals of archaic religion disappear from ostensible cultural practice, they are still preserved in attenuated form in the cultural products of the human imagination. Tragedy, then, as a dramatic and literary genre, is a special echo of the original “rebirth of tragedy” that inaugurated the human species. It too enacts its rituals of sacrifice and scapegoats. To be sure, they now take place on an imaginary scene rather than in actual practice. But that they recur even in this attenuated form shows their inescapable necessity for the preservation and re-founding of human culture. Humanity must repeat its violent beginning with the perennial renewal of “the rebirth of tragedy.”

I will explore this Girardian thesis about “the rebirth of tragedy” in the present study by turning to what it reveals about the semiotic nature of the human species. I will investigate the

² Girard 1987a: 84-104.
³ This revaluation began in Girard 1966, before his formulation of the anthropological hypothesis.
paradox that is “the rebirth of tragedy” in terms of what Girard’s bold anthropological thesis implies about the evolution of semiosis in political life. Girard first came to formulate his anthropological thesis by reading literary texts in a peculiarly anthropological way that reminded structuralist and poststructuralist semiology that, besides language, there are in fact real victims. His boldest and most vivid readings of texts involve interpretations of Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. The present study turns therefore to a study of the repository of political wisdom in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare, a historically hard-won wisdom that no previous study of the Girardian hypothesis has yet adequately confronted. I will examine the Girardian hypothesis about “the rebirth of tragedy” (its paradoxically violent and restorative nature) by discerning what semiotic light it can shed on Greek tragedy and Shakespeare as anthropological texts that function as a “mirror of princes” for human experience.

Like “the rebirth of tragedy,” the phrase “the mirror of princes” has a twofold nature. In light of the Girardian hypothesis, political drama in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare can be read as a kind of “mirror of princes”: i.e., as a mimetic portrayal of political patterns involving the use of scapegoats to found social order. As Girard argues, Greek tragedy and Shakespeare are each revelatory in their own unique way. They each effect a dramatic contemplation of the scapegoating pattern at work in human affairs. Yet Girard has not fully interpreted Aeschylus’ Oresteia or Shakespeare’s Henriad in light of his hypothesis. That his hypothesis is not yet fully adequate to the task is the argument of this present study. The innovative and radical insights of Girard’s approach deserve to be brought to bear upon these works. Girard has not done so himself in print, but this affords an opportunity for the study here of these works as “the mirror of

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4 Semiosis is “the building up of the structure of experience through sign relations” and semiotics is the interdisciplinary study of the action of signs that bridges nature and culture in this structuring process; for the distinction, see Deely 1994: 121. Cf. Deely 2001: 702 and Deely 2004: 29.
princes" insofar as they mimetically reveal the relations of the scapegoating mechanism to the lives of princes.

But this study will also reveal another side to "the mirror of princes," namely, a philosophical approach to politics that is missing from Girard's hypothesis and from the politically inadequate assessment that, if uncorrected, his hypothesis is doomed to make of these political plays. For although the poets mimetically portray the life of princes in their dramatic "mirror of princes," there is another mirror of the prince besides drama: that of the philosopher. Philosophy mirrors politics insofar as it subjects practical matters to a theoretical account. The contemplation of political things is a philosophical act. The philosopher who thinks of political things is himself a "mirror of princes," that is, subjecting the man of practical action to theoretical account. A prince himself may also be philosophical, that is, contemplative and theoretically inclined. Insofar as the prince, then, reflects on the nobility of his political action, he is a mirror to himself; his own mind is "the mirror of princes".

That the theoretically identifiable prudential judgment of a noble philosopher or prince can also be mirrored in great works of drama is a major thesis of my study. Along with Girard's insightful reading of classical and neoclassical drama as a "mirror of princes" (that is, as a mirror of the political operations of scapegoating), my study aims also to add to his approach by showing how these cultural products carry other political dimensions that have universal significance on the same level as his anthropological hypothesis. My aim is to see at work in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare another kind of "mirror of princes": that is, to see drama as also a semiotic mirror of the self-reflective process of the human race, a process in which the statesman

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9 On semiotics as bridging the disjunction between the theoretical (knowledge of things as "what they are by nature") and practical (knowledge of things as "what they are owing to human thought or action"), see Deely 2001: 606. Semiotics takes up the heritage that philosophy today has abandoned; cf. Deely 1986f: 270.
harbours the potential for a kind of deliberate semiotic action that has an evolutionary impact in historical terms.

Because we do not have direct access to the minds of statesmen past, my study approaches the problem of statesmanship’s contribution to human evolution from the standpoint of an investigation into anthroposemiosis, the interdisciplinary subject of semiotic inquiry into nature and culture. As John Deely has suggested, evolution itself appears to be a name for what can perhaps be more broadly understood as semiosis, the action of signs in the universe. Adopting this suggestion as the ground for my own investigations, I will endeavour to use Girard as a starting point for reconstructing what can be known about the evolutionary action of signs from the origin of humanity to its cultural evolution as recorded in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. This reconstruction is an attempt to establish what can be known about human evolution in terms of semiotic objectivity. That is, since an object is whatever is known by humans (whether it is a mind-independent real thing, or a mental construct with no mind-independent existence, or a blend of both), an investigation into the semiosis of human experience should aim to identify the actions of signs that led to objectively significant transitions in the esthetic and political evolution of the human species. Because these transitions are bound up with a semiotic web that enmeshes both nature and culture, an interdisciplinary approach is required to unravel the historical and esthetic processes by which humans as semiotic animals have evolved.

In Chapters Four and Five, I will assess the Girardian hypothesis of “the rebirth of tragedy” in light of “the mirror of princes” that can be seen in the semiosis of Aeschylus’ Oresteia and Shakespeare’s Henriad. But to get to that point, the theoretical argument of Girard

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12 Cf. Deely 1986f: 264, who cites this term from Joseph Ransdell.
15 Cf. Deely 2005: 261-274.
concerning the anthropological significance of the esthetic conventions in tragedy needs to be set forth in Chapter One. I will assess Girard’s argument by examining it within the wider metaphysical tradition of Latin philosophy’s nascent semiotic investigations, the context in which Girard may be best understood. Besides, Girard is a Christian thinker who professes a Catholic faith. Therefore this will also be my way of undertaking a fair and charitable critique of Girard’s argument, i.e., by attempting to assess him within the great intellectual tradition from which he comes and in which he ultimately finds his home.

The overall approach of my study is to pursue a new assessment of Girard’s work by critiquing it in terms of the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition to which I argue that his thought ultimately invites us, despite his ostensive postmodern orientation. Chapter One therefore compares Aristotle’s *Poetics* with Girard’s esthetic hypotheses and unearths a revealing semiotic correspondence that allows Girard to be oriented within an Aristotelian context. From there, Chapter Two argues for a modification of Girard’s approach to Greek tragedy so that it can more accurately discern the evolution of esthetic form in Greek tragedy. Chapter Three sets forth, from an Aristotelian perspective, the distinction between political form and esthetic form. It is the distinction that will allow the Girardian hypothesis to do full justice to the complex “mirror of princes” in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. By using *esthetic form*, these dramas may indeed reveal anthropological patterns of “scapegoating” but, so I will also argue, they also commemorate *political form* by portraying real cultural achievements that attenuate the injustices of scapegoating.

The argument of my study builds on the careful insights of a school of Girardian thought, the “generative anthropology” approach initiated by Eric Gans, who was Girard’s first Ph.D. student. This school of thought argues that generative anthropology corrects the Girardian thesis.

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about hominization occurring with the original scapegoat, the sudden event of the violent sacred. In the view of generative anthropology, the point of hominization is coincident with the origin of language, when a scapegoat or other object is designated with the first word or sign. The origin of humanity is not then coincident with a necessary outbreak of unanimous violence against a scapegoat to preserve the community. For the significance of the designation is its deferral of violence: it designates something; it does not attack it.

This disagreement between Gans and Girard is central to the attempted semiotic reconstruction of cultural evolution that I offer in this study. Some would say only a pessimist can see nothing but the violent sacred as constitutive of the human. At the dark cultural origin of humanity there is, for the pessimist, only the scapegoat murder, which language could only name after the fact. Some would say the optimist, however, must see the origin of language as constitutive of humanity, for in the invention of language comes the only hope of the species for deferring violence. This deferral is possible with dialogue and with all the other cultural institutions and products made possible by language, even if it is a temporary interlude and an imperfect delay of the scapegoat violence that is still perhaps universally identifiable (along Girardian lines) in every culture.

But that my approach here "sides" with Gans' generative anthropology in its approach to human origins is more than a matter of opposing optimistic or pessimistic temperaments. It is, of course, a theoretical dispute about the most fundamental intellectual questions. For this reason, my study orients itself not simply within a dissenting school of thought ("generative anthropology") that critiques the innovations of Girardian theory. To be sure, I do adopt here

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18 Gans 1985.
19 Gans 1993: 1-44.
21 Girard 1987a: 99-104.
22 Gans 1981b.
23 Generative anthropology does not profess to “oppose” mimetic theory, but only to refine it; the best enunciation of this rapprochement is Gans 1997: 1-36.
Gans’ schema of esthetic history (along with his preference for the French spelling of “aesthetic”) and its refinement of Girardian esthetic analysis.24 But my study also orients itself with certain semiotic insights of the Catholic tradition of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy,25 a tradition that needs to renew its approach to science and to assess the radical theoretical power of Girard’s postmodern hypothesis.26 I will assess the full esthetic and political implications of Girard’s hypothesis in the light of Aristotelian philosophy by using Jacques Maritain’s broad distinction between the empiriological and the ontological,27 in order to situate Girard’s scientific work as the precursor to a more fully developed empirioschematic evolutionary hypothesis of human origin and how it conditions subsequent esthetic and political history. In philosophical terms, I judge Girard ultimately to be a semiotic theorist whose main insights may be integrated into the wider conception of the action of signs in human experience that has been developed by building upon Thomistic metaphysical insights.28

The weak point in Girard’s work, from the standpoint of the Catholic tradition, was identified early on by Hans Urs von Balthasar.29 In short, there seems to be no room for natural theology in Girard’s theory because human consciousness is enslaved to the bad mimesis of the scapegoating mechanism.30 In other words, the dignity and integrity of human reason is compromised because of Girard’s emphasis on the dark origin of consciousness in the evolutionary process controlled by the scapegoating mechanism. Girard’s response to this weakness in his theory has been to emphasize, in the latter phase of his career, the possibility of a

26 To date, the best Catholic theological uses of Girard are Schwager 1987, 1998, 1999. The focus in the present study, however, will be on treating, not the drama of the Gospels, but rather the dramatic violence of Greek tragedy and Shakespeare, in an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical context that is open to the semiotic breakthroughs of postmodernity (see Deely 2001: 161-484).
type of good mimesis. Girard’s solution, however, identifies the source of this good mimesis as divine in origin. The dignity of human reason on its own, therefore, remains compromised, and the best correction of the Girardian hypothesis on this point, from within its own milieu, is the hypothesis of generative anthropology, which sees not only the violent sacred at the origins of human consciousness but also the sudden event of language. In generative anthropology, then, man as the rational animal (the species having logos) can find a place in the mimetic theory ab initio, with all the potential dignity that that possession of language implies. Moreover, generative anthropology helps us to better apply Girard’s insights to the study of the human use of signs, and to advance this type of study (which characterizes postmodernity) by achieving a rigorous anthropology of man as a semiotic animal.

My study is conceived as an argument in favour of the manoeuvre of generative anthropology that finds a place for human reason on the originary scene of human consciousness. It aims to show the necessity of correcting the Girardian hypothesis by means of affirming the semiotic wisdom latent in the traditional Aristotelian definition of man as the rational animal. My study thus takes up the question of man as the political animal as being connected to his powers of reason, that is, the power most notably expressed in language. For if Girard has made an inadequate account of human rationality in its political manifestations, as I shall argue here in Chapters Three through Five, the best way to correct this deficiency and to preserve the insights of mimetic theory is to find the place in mimetic theory for man as a fully rational, political animal. Moreover, the insights of the Catholic tradition on the integrity of human reason and

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33 Gans 1999.
34 Cf. Deely 2005: 261-274.
man’s political dignity ought to be brought to bear upon any assessment of the political implications of Girard’s hypothesis in its religious dimensions.\textsuperscript{36}

Therefore, while I turn mainly to Gans for help in forging a refined esthetic orientation for mimetic theory in Chapters One and Two, I refine a political orientation for mimetic theory in Chapter Three by assessing the political significance of mimetic theory. In this, I point to the Catholic tradition with the researches of Deely, which have allowed me to see mimetic theory in the context of the first postmodern history of philosophy,\textsuperscript{37} and I also draw upon the many writings of Gans on resentment. Although these two thinkers, Gans and Deely, thus provide the contemporary backdrop, scientific and philosophical, against which my researches must be oriented, the original scholarly contribution of my argument in this study is manifest in its innovative exposition of the semiotic structure of cultural evolution from an indispensable Aristotelian perspective. From this perspective, which engages the history of philosophy with the full semiotic sweep of what Aristotle has made possible,\textsuperscript{38} I further refine and enhance the insights of the esthetic and political ramifications of Girard’s mimetic theory. Ultimately, I aim to integrate the Girardian anthropological hypothesis within an Aristotelian political theory that does not, like most Girardians, misinterpret the role of princes and statesmen and denigrate them. Although this sort of Girardian misunderstanding is not as drastic as a wilful distortion of Aristotle on political theory,\textsuperscript{39} it still definitely limits the semiotic contribution that mimetic theory may make to understanding the role of political form in human evolution. Therefore I aim both to explain how the semiosis of human experience is better modelled in generative

\textsuperscript{36} Cf. Schall 1987, 1996, 2001, 2004 on the Catholic tradition as historically providing a place for human reason to think on political things.

\textsuperscript{37} For the positive achievements of postmodernity see Deely 2001: 611-733.

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. Deely 2001: 61-158.

\textsuperscript{39} For a good account of a recent influential distortion of Aristotle, see O’Connor 2002. Cf. Schall 2004: 84-85.
anthropology, and also to situate this better model in the wider tradition of an Aristotelian philosophy that provides the richest cultural orientation for semiotics as a doctrine of signs.41

Before discussing the cultural evolution of form, esthetic and political, in Chapters Two and Three, respectively, my study begins in Chapter One with a comparison of Girard’s method of reading literary texts with Aristotle’s. This comparison will allow Girard’s theory to be oriented within the context of the Aristotelian tradition. That is, before turning to discussing the evolution of esthetic form (Aristotle’s best tragedy, in Chapter Two) and the evolution of political form (Aristotle’s best regime, in Chapter Three), with illustrative examples from Aeschylus and Shakespeare (Chapters Four and Five), I must determine how compatible Girard’s postmodern literary reading is with traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics. The way to determine this is to go to the heart of the theoretical matter: that is, to evaluate Girard’s anthropological hypothesis about the origin of humanity.

It is ultimately Girard’s hypothesis of hominization for which he sees confirmation in all literary texts. In order to evaluate Girard as a scientific thinker, then, I must turn to the question of Aristotelian metaphysics, to determine whether its traditional perspective has any bearing on a postmodern thinker, one who professes to have found a radically new scientific hypothesis concerning the origin of all human thought, including metaphysical thought. Surprisingly, a precise bearing is opened up by a striking semiotic correspondence between Aristotelian and Girardian literary analysis. This semiotic correspondence allows me to approach the anthropological problem of reconstructing the semiotic objectivity of a catharsis in history that is both esthetic and political, i.e., a cathartic human event of real evolutionary significance. I argue beginning in Chapter Three that such a catharsis is the evolutionary shift from one semiotic

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triangle to another, a shift that may be modelled by the empirioschematic fivefold structure which I will abstract from Aristotle and Girard in Chapter One.

I turn now to discuss, in Chapter One, how Girard’s critique of cultural form is a postmodern victimary deconstruction of Aristotle’s analysis of the esthetic form of classical tragedy. As such, it has not overcome metaphysics, insofar as it has not overcome the generative context of postmodern victimary resentments. But its scientific claims nevertheless open up a promising avenue of cultural critique. In order for it to “overcome” the problem of what this scientific approach means in terms of metaphysics, it must, first, be refined into a fully scientific (i.e., empirioschematic) evolutionary hypothesis of the originary scene and, second, this generative hypothesis must be oriented within the context of the ontological causal model of Aristotelian metaphysics.43 I turn now to these two tasks in Chapter One.

43 Cf. Maritain 1995: 145-214 on these two ways of knowing as respectively proper to science and philosophy. A brief summary of the thesis, argued from an historical viewpoint, is found in Maritain 1941: 527-538.
Introduction: The Scapegoat as Protagonist/Content

My first aim is to compare Aristotle’s Poetics and René Girard’s mimetic theory. In this first chapter, I will argue that Girard’s critique of cultural form is a postmodern victimary deconstruction of Aristotle’s analysis of the esthetic form of classical tragedy. In accord with the intellectual preoccupations of postmodernity, Girard is above all, in any scenario, concerned with finding the victim, that is, with giving the cultural critic the tools necessary for identifying the scapegoat as the victim of power. In any text, the ultimate protagonist is the scapegoat. The scapegoat is the real, irreducible content of all cultural forms, whatever those forms may be.

But it is my contention that Girard’s analysis of myth and tragedy is in fact resolvable to the same basic categories of formal analysis as Aristotle. For this reason Girard’s analysis of cultural form has not overcome metaphysics, because Girard’s explanatory framework for decoding the structure of myth and tragedy corresponds with Aristotle’s analysis of the elements of tragedy. Girard’s anthropological hypotheses are therefore also compatible with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition that developed out of Aristotle’s thought. Whether this implication of Girard in metaphysics is a good thing or not is debatable, but I will argue, in concluding this chapter, that Girard’s significance as a thinker stands or falls with the scientific character of his hypothesis. For his empirioschematic hypotheses have developed within the intellectual context formed by the Aristotelian Thomism that gave birth to Western science. My argument, then, is that his hypotheses are a valid outgrowth of that metaphysical tradition, which has produced areas of scientific inquiry that aim to organize experience and explain reality by empiriological tools.

I will demonstrate this by first identifying the empirioschematic nature of Girard’s project, and then turn to discussing the significance of this, in the context of metaphysics, in the last section of this chapter. The empirioschematic arrangement of Girard’s deconstruction of myth, upon which he bases his anthropological hypothesis concerning the origin of the human species, is visible precisely as “empirioschematic” in the way it purports to schematize the universal data of all human experience. Literary and dramatic products are cultural repositories of human experience. Aristotle’s groundbreaking analysis of their form and content in his *Poetics* introduced fundamental terms to schematize fundamental experiences:45 *metabasis* (change of fortune), *pathos* (suffering), *anagnôrisis* (recognition), *peripeteia* (reversal), and *hamartia* (mistake). Girard’s theory can be seen as arguing, not just that all of tragedy, but that all of human experience is reducible to these same elements.

Girard, however, sets himself in explicit opposition to Aristotle. For Girard, Greek tragedy only partially deciphers the violent “tragedy of history,” because, like myth, it still sides with the persecutors against the scapegoat. On this point, Girard is critical of the entire tradition of thought on tragedy that derives from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, indicting “the imperturbable aestheticism of Aristotle and his literary followers as profoundly immoral”,46 because it fails to identify culture’s real victims. But these remarks are manifestly made for polemical purposes, to argue for widening inquiry beyond the merely aesthetic preoccupation with literary forms, widening inquiry to the *cultural* relations of these forms. The literary reception of Aristotle’s *Poetics* has indeed shaped the fundamental concepts and issues in dramatic theory and criticism, and this reception has tended to view the *Poetics* in one of two ways: either as a treatise that affirms the ethical value of dramatic literature, or as essentially formalist and aesthetic in spirit.47

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45 Although his analysis is not thematically pursued in terms of “form” and “content”, nevertheless I will argue that there is textual warrant for understanding his analysis in such proto-semiotic terms.
46 Girard 1987b: 71.
The ethical view is the more traditional one, and the aesthetic view predominantly modern. Can a reader of the Poetics avoid viewing it in one of these ways, i.e. as either predominantly ethical or aesthetic? In particular, when Aristotle discusses the dramatization of violence that occurs in tragedy, is he a moralist or an aesthetician? I argue that, in fact, there is an empirioschematic methodological affinity between Girard and Aristotle. Both ultimately have wider cultural and anthropological interests than mere formal literary analysis. Girard’s polemics against Aristotle are really against the aesthetic receptions of Aristotle’s thought and not Aristotle himself. After all, Girard’s fundamental concept is mimesis, and Aristotle’s study of mimesis in tragic drama is, like Girard’s, oriented towards discerning how form and content in tragedy “mirror” human action (Aristotle’s definition of tragedy identifies it precisely this way: i.e., as mimesis praxeōs). Therefore, Aristotle’s fundamental approach is, like Girard’s, theoretical, and neither strictly ethical nor aesthetic. Admittedly, Aristotle has a moral dimension to his theory (refuting Plato’s moral challenges to poetry) as does Girard (refuting the allegations of the persecutors against the scapegoated victim), but both thinkers are concerned first and foremost with theory (i.e. understanding the human significance of what tragedy is).

At first, Aristotle and Girard seem to have different approaches. Girard’s overriding concern seems to be the scapegoated victim as real content; Aristotle’s overriding concern seems to be with plot and its form as “the soul of tragedy”. But this contrast between the material and the formal is a mere appearance due to Girard’s being a thinker situated in postmodernity, while Aristotle is classically situated. On the contrary, to show the profound connection between Aristotle’s Poetics and Girard’s anthropological and cultural hypotheses is the overarching task of this study, a task I will execute by parsing out the empirioschematic analysis of form and content in Girard and Aristotle.

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49 Poetics 6, 1449b 24.
50 Poetics 6, 1450a 38.
So let me begin by reviewing Girard’s three main hypotheses, discussing them in relation to Aristotle’s scientific explanatory framework (Aristotle’s doctrine of the four causes), and identifying the correspondence between the empirioschematic theories of Aristotle and Girard (in terms of the fivefold empirioschematic schematization mentioned above: metabasis, pathos, anagnôrisis, peripeteia, and hamartia).
Girard and Aristotle

Girard’s Three Main Hypotheses

Eric Gans notes that what Girard has accomplished is a “reinterpretation of the Christian revelation”; Girard has done this in the post-Holocaust era of postmodernity, and his distinctive argument uses “the apocalyptic terms of nascent Christianity” in order to argue: “utopia now or annihilation”. This apology for Christianity is indeed Girard’s ultimate focus in the latter stage of his career. But note that he has reinterpreted Christianity as fundamentally *a siding with the victim*, that is, a comprehensive exposure of the scapegoating mechanism that oppresses victims in all cultural contexts. In other words, he has attempted to make Christianity relevant in terms of the dominant discourse of postmodernity which sides with victims.

But we must disentangle the scientific status of Girard’s mimetic theory from all controversial questions of religion and religious commitments that may call the scientific character of his hypotheses into question. Despite Girard’s willingness to speak as an unabashed advocate for Christianity in the latter phase of his career, nevertheless we ought to evaluate the status of his theoretical achievement in terms of science and metaphysics. We should embrace or dismiss him neither on the basis of religious enthusiasm for Christianity, nor on the basis of distaste for all eschatological prophets heralding imminent utopias. It is best to see his hypothesis about Christianity (viz., that, historically speaking, Christianity has been the engine of any cultural preoccupation of siding with victims, because it unveils the scapegoating mechanism) as a third hypothesis that grew out of the projects of “reinterpretation” earlier in his career in which he focused on first literary and then anthropological themes. That way his claims about Christianity can be seen more accurately not as an off-putting commitment to universalizing

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51 Gans 1997: 166.
52 Girard 2001.
dogmas, but rather as the logical outgrowth of his earlier hypotheses that aimed to make universal scientific claims about literary documents and archaic religious rituals.

The first main hypothesis of Girard's mimetic theory is that of mimetic desire. It was first formulated in an interpretation of key literary texts. Girard first called it "triangular desire" because it focused on the recurring triangular pattern in literature of two protagonists in competition for an object of desire. The insight of mimetic theory is that this quintessentially human form of desire arises from the fact that one of the protagonists takes the other as the model for his desire, a mimesis of desire that leads to conflict: the protagonists become antagonists. Girard's argument is that great literature reveals this universal structure of human desire. That is, desire is mimetic ("imitative") rather than innate. Girard calls it the "romantic lie" that our desires are our own. Great writers, however, deconstruct this lie. In order to write their works, they had to achieve the insight of Girard's first main hypothesis, that humans copy their desires from one another. Insight into this pattern of mimetic desire is insight into how conflict and violence arises in human affairs. Because of mimetic desire, there is potential for conflict and violence when the desiring person competes with the mediator of desire for an object. Insight into all the permutations of such mimetic rivalry is what makes the artist knowledgeable about human affairs, because in coming to this insight he has distanced himself from the web of romantic lies by which one implicates oneself in such rivalries; instead, the artist cathartically mirrors the structure of mimetic rivalry in his artwork, rather than being caught up in the mimetic triangles of desire. In effect, the artist has to undergo a kind of "conversion experience" to arrive at the insight into how mimetic desire works. But note that this is not an explicitly religious process, although it may use religious symbols in its artistic expression; it is rather an esthetic process.

53 Girard 1966.
The artist arrives at anthropological insights that are expressed in esthetic forms. The significance of Girard's claim, then, is that Girard's explicit formulation of the hypothesis of mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry is a scientific insight into literary texts. While novelists and dramatists achieve implicit awareness of mimetic desire and its workings, and thereby are able to mirror its operations in the mimesis of their artworks, Girard has explicitly decoded the structure of mimetic desire and made possible the formulation of literary patterns in terms of cultural significance.

The full cultural significance of this first hypothesis, concerning mimetic desire, becomes clear in Girard's second main hypothesis, concerning the scapegoat mechanism. When mimetic rivalry reaches a point of crisis, the scapegoat mechanism resolves the crisis by means of the sacrifice of a scapegoat. Cultural and social order evolves from unanimous acts of violence against innocent victims. Moreover, the sacred is created by collective violence, because the persecutors of innocent victims justify their actions by mythical misrepresentations of their actions: they reinterpret the peace that their unanimous violence brings as the gift of a deity. The deity is none other than the scapegoat, now mythologized in communal memory. That violence and the sacred are thus inextricably bound together is the cultural nexus that generates, not only the patterns visible in the esthetic mimetic products that mirror human mimetic desire, but the human species itself. Thus the first hypothesis of mimetic desire leads to the second hypothesis about the evolution of the human race: apes first became humans when the sacred was invented. And Girard's universal scientific claim in this hypothesis is that the sacred is born from the violence of the universal pattern of the scapegoat mechanism. Anthropologically, this hypothesis not only aims to explain the origin of humanity in scientific terms, but also the cultural after-effects of the violent origin. For if, in order to preserve the human community, the sacred is spontaneously created by a collective violence that rewards the species with the adaptive

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55 Girard 1977.
advantage of survival of mimetic crises, then this archaic pattern persists in all subsequent forms of human culture, however attenuated. From myth and ritual various esthetic and political forms also evolve. And if Girard’s hypotheses are scientific, then an empirioschematic arrangement of the data of human cultural experience, if they are amenable to Girard’s proposed universalizing arrangement, will corroborate the hypotheses of mimetic rivalry (as being generated from mimetic desire) and the violent sacred (as being generated by the scapegoat mechanism).

The most common objection to these two literary and anthropological hypotheses of Girard is precisely their universalizing organization of all human culture. But the grand interdisciplinary sweep must be understood not as a dogmatic, levelling approach. Girard professes only to offer two “highly plausible” scientific hypotheses about the origin of the human race and the traces of this origin in all of its cultural evolution. He arrived at his theoretical position, not from the standpoint of an ideology that pre-determined it, but by scientific induction:

My beliefs emerged from my work and not my work from pre-existing beliefs. The process was a laborious one and it took me a great deal of time to discover how all the pieces fit together. I had all the ‘right’ ideas at the time, including the fashionable distrust of systematic and even, let us face it, of rigorous thinking, a distrust that was at that time reinforced by the countercultural era. Only with great reluctance did I elaborate the logical framework that has turned me into a target of that very same distrust.

Still, it is undeniable that Girard himself distracts his readers from the scientific ambitions of his first two hypotheses with his third hypothesis about the historical uniqueness of Christianity in exposing the workings of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism. But for our purposes we ought not to be distracted by the question of whether divine intervention in human culture used Christianity to reveal the workings of mimesis and scapegoating in all human culture. Rather, we should follow Gans’ lead in pinpointing the significance of Girard’s use of the language of Christian experience. That is, what is noteworthy about Girard’s later, unashamed focus on

56 Girard 1996: 262.
57 Golsan 1993: 130.
Christianity is that it permits us, not to come to a decision about religious praxis, but rather to see 
Girard’s scientific hypothesis in historical context.

As Gans explains, that historical context is postmodernity, and not even Girard’s 
penchant for playing the eschatological prophet (viz., the one who at last explicitly reveals, by 
promulgating the mimetic theory, the scapegoating secrets at the world’s foundation)\(^{59}\) can 
remove him from his historical context. Seen in historical terms, then, Girard is proposing an 
explanatory scheme suited for his times. As I have mentioned, this involves an overriding concern 
(whether implicit or explicit) with identifying victims who are being threatened or have been 
persecuted by the centres of power.\(^{60}\) This postmodern victimary orientation is one that Girard 
adopts from his historical context and this orientation is what his Christian rhetoric serves. Gans 
is therefore very perceptive in pinpointing the significance of Girard’s theoretical ambitions as 
being a “reinterpretation”,\(^{61}\) and not a revival of Christianity. If Girard’s thought is apocalyptic, 
then, it is above all a scientifc apocalypse, that is, a universally accessible theoretical unveiling of 
how we can (theoretically) use literature to discover and (practically) to avert our violent 
tendencies. “The best literature, in Girard’s view, always opens the possibility of a ‘tragedy of 
history,’ in which the reality of violence is revealed to human society.”\(^{62}\)

In spite of how distracting his idiosyncratic apology for Christianity may seem to some, 
then, we can keep it in perspective by realizing that in his work Girard still keeps his hypotheses 
about human evolution and culture subordinate to the postmodern historical context in which he 
sets them forth. Because his theory is attempting something so radical, he finds himself turning to 
the language of Christianity to express the universal claims of his scientific proposals for the 
empirioschematic organizing of human history. Yet he always keeps this Christian rhetoric “on

\(^{59}\) Girard 1987a.  
\(^{60}\) I am indebted to the many discussions in Gans on this point, e.g., Gans 1993: 207-219; Gans 1997: 168-183.  
\(^{61}\) Gans 1997: 166.  
\(^{62}\) Siebers 1986: 216.
message", that is, in the service of his scientific hypothesis about the role of the victim which we can reconstruct from the evidence in all human cultural narratives. All his talk of the victim should make it clear: for Girard, his investigations are conditioned not so much by a dogmatic Christian ideology as by the postmodern exigencies of the academy in which he arrived at his hypotheses (in the open-minded and inductive spirit of which he testified above).

Having now put this scientific ambition of Girard's hypotheses into perspective as his proper goal, and having laid aside the possible distraction of dogmatic disputes, I still need to assess whether it is possible to arrange the literary data of human experience in an empirioschematic confirmation of Girard's two main hypotheses about mimetic desire and scapegoating. Indeed, Girard's third hypothesis concerning the unique role of Christianity must not distract us from this. Ultimately, I will need to assess this third hypothesis in terms of metaphysics, that is, in terms of how Girard's religious message squares with the Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysical tradition that must be brought to bear on any evaluation of his theological message as purportedly Catholic. But before I approach these metaphysical considerations, I can prepare for the context of this metaphysical assessment by orienting Girard in the Aristotelian context with much more immediate points of contact.

Since, because of his postmodern orientation, Girard eschews talk of metaphysics, we must rigorously compare him with Aristotle in terms of the Poetics. How do Aristotle and Girard read texts? I argue that they both do so anthropologically, that is, with human beings as the real content somehow mirrored in the mimesis of both literary form and content. My thesis is that there is a fundamental fivefold correspondence between Aristotle's reading of tragedy and Girard's reading of myth. But, before outlining this correspondence, I first need to make some remarks about Aristotle's scientific explanatory framework of the four causes.63 That is, I need to establish the fundamental compatibility of the explanatory approach of Girard and Aristotle in

terms of an appeal to the four causes. Girard, with his three main hypotheses, is only implicitly appealing to the four causes of Aristotle. To make this methodological correspondence between the two explicit, I will briefly discuss Girard’s three main hypotheses as resolvable to the four-cause methodology of Aristotle.

**Aristotle’s Four Explanatory Causes**

The four causes are explanatory reference points that reveal both Aristotle and Girard as empirioschematic anthropologists of human semiosis. They are the principles by which one may organize literary data for explanatory purposes beyond the text. Ultimately, the literary analysis of Aristotle and Girard resolves into theoretical insights concerning human constitution and human action. To understand how the *Poetics* unites both Aristotle and Girard in precisely this anthropological endeavour, we need to recognize how Aristotelian method works in terms of the four explanatory causes. Whenever Aristotle gives a definition of something, he aims to explain that thing in terms of as many explanatory factors as possible. In other words, if possible, the best definitions make reference to all four explanatory factors: the four causes.

For example, in his definition of tragedy, Aristotle can be seen to formulate his definition by appealing to all the available explanatory factors concerning *what tragedy is*. The definition may be divided up as in the Peripatetic Press edition of the *Poetics*, which translates the definition of tragedy as:

(1) an imitation of an *action* which is serious and complete and has a [proper] magnitude, (2) [expressed] in speech with forms of enhancements appropriate to each of its parts and used separately, (3) [presented] by performers in a dramatic and not a narrative manner, and (4) ending through pity and fear in a catharsis of such emotions. (*Poetics* 6, 1149b 25-30)

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64 Weisheipl 1958.
65 Smith 1952.
The definition will strike one unfamiliar with Aristotelian methodology as a bit bizarre, but it is quite rigorous in its accounting for all the explanatory factors. The Peripatetic Press commentators make this clearer with the division in their translation, by which they have set forth the conventional division of tragedy's definition into: (1) the formal cause of tragedy, (2) the material causes of tragedy, (3) the agent or efficient cause of tragedy, and (4) the final cause of tragedy. They wish to set forth a rival interpretation, however, by which this fourfold division is re-interpreted in terms of only formal and material causes. Yet I reject this re-interpretation in favour of what they call the "conventional" view. The reason for my rejection is that this retreat into only the formal and material causes makes the Poetics' analysis more purely aesthetic, whereas Girard repudiates the aestheticizing reading of the Poetics. I agree, therefore, with Girard on the need for a cultural poetics to move beyond mere aesthetics. I argue, moreover, that this anthropological and cultural sensitivity is consonant with Aristotle's proper methodology, a methodology which, apart from those who mistake the Poetics as a purely aesthetic exercise in reading form, has been recognized as a "conventional" concern with the explanatory framework of all four causes. Thus, tragedy is not just a formal mimesis of action that organizes the matter of speech and music. In its full cultural significance, it is (1) a formal mimesis of action, (2) materially embodied in speech and music, (3) dramatized by the agency of a poet for enactment by actors, (4) which achieves a purpose beyond aesthetic enjoyment, which Aristotle mysteriously calls catharsis. Girard has interpreted catharsis beyond the merely aesthetic in terms of its social significance, that is, as an attenuated form of the violent sacred, viz., what I have called "the rebirth of tragedy" (a pregnant phrase that paraphrases the twofold nature of Girard's scapegoating hypothesis: the outbreak of violence, and the restoration of social order).

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69 Apostle, Dobbs, and Parslow 1990: 52.
70 In the General Introduction above.
Girard’s scientific ambitions, because they are so profound and far-reaching, are best contextualized in this open Aristotelian framework of the four causes, which extends beyond the mere matter and form of an aesthetic artefact. Girard himself, however, has never reflected on the scientific nature of his work in such explicitly philosophical terms as the four causes. He describes his reading of mythical texts as a deconstructive enterprise that is more scientific than Derrida’s, even though he claims to lack the philosophical acumen to justify, with appeal to the philosophy of science, why this is the case:

In my reading of etiological myths for the past twenty years, I have always focused on the same distortions in our logic that Derrida finds in texts of philosophical origin. I have been aware of all this in a vague way, but I have failed to explore these similarities. Philosophy is just too complicated for me. ... The similarities between mythical and philosophical texts of origin are amazing, but they do not lead me to the same conclusions as Derrida.71

Fortunately, the work of Eric Gans has articulated why Girard’s advance beyond Derrida is a real scientific breakthrough.72 I will return to this point in my discussion of metaphysics at the end of this chapter. But for now the observation to be made is that Girard’s scientific hypotheses require an explicit philosophy of science to clarify the scope of their explanatory ambition.

Let me indicate this by outlining how Girard’s three main hypotheses, which I discussed in the previous section, can be understood as answering the comprehensive causal questions posed by the four causes. These are causal questions, not simply about the cultural production called tragedy, but about the scientifically observable actions of the human species about which tragedy’s own esthetic-mimetic “mirror” engages in cultural self-reflection.

Girard’s first main thesis, concerning mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry, is a scientific explanation of the efficient cause of human desire. That is, the agency of desire is identified as the

mediation of desire by a model modelling desire for an object.\textsuperscript{73} The answer to the question, “What causes desire?” is given thanks to Girard’s triangular reorientation from the desired object to the mediating model, which allows him to reformulate the question as, “Who causes my desire?” In other words, the answer to the question about the cause of desire identifies the agency of the mediating model of desire as the true efficient cause (in contradistinction to the “romantic lie” about the origin of desire being in a desiring subject). Girard’s first main thesis, then, fundamentally reorients scientific analysis of the motive agency of desire. In short, Girard considers it a more mimetic phenomenon than previously thought. And he takes as programmatic Aristotle’s observation in this regard: “man is the most mimetic of all [animals]” (Poetics 4, 1148b 4-9).\textsuperscript{74} Thus, for Girard, the most characteristic human efficient cause is, in a word, \textit{mimesis}.

Girard’s second main thesis, concerning the \textit{scapegoat mechanism}, is actually an answer to two causal questions. The first concerns \textit{violence} and the second concerns the \textit{sacred}. The unanimous violence of the scapegoating mechanism is Girard’s answer to what constitutes the \textit{formal cause} of the human community. That is, humanity comes into being when the evolution of the species secures an adaptive advantage by means of scapegoating. It is the breakthrough moment of hominization when the community rescues itself from self-destruction by instead sacrificing one scapegoat in place of the community. Girard defends this hypothesis by pointing to all the formal indications of scapegoat victims that can be found structuring cultures. The most obvious formal traces can be found in literary and dramatic texts, because in these esthetic works a self-reflective process of formalization of these structures has occurred. Even if the self-reflection is highly distorted, as Girard argues is the constitutive habit of myth, it can nevertheless be formally deconstructed by the critic in order to reveal the formal traces of the cultural victim.

This is because scapegoating, for Girard, is the \textit{formal cause of hominization}; that is, the

\textsuperscript{73} Girard 1966 and Girard 1996: 33-45.
\textsuperscript{74} Girard 1987a: 1.
scapegoat is of originary significance for the human community, because it is the unanimous violence against the scapegoat that first generated the solidarity and survival of the human community.

Girard’s proof for this hypothesis about violence as a formal cause (whose violent traces can be deconstructed in the formal signification that humans make about anything) is found in his interpretation of the sacred in a rigorously scientific and anthropological sense. That is, he sees violent scapegoating as the formal cause of humanity because this formal schematization of all human signification by its very nature points to the final cause of preservation of the species. In other words, the sense of peace brought to the community by the unanimous violence discharged against a scapegoat, is recognized as beneficial to the community and signified as such by attributing deity to the scapegoat. The purpose or final cause of scapegoating, therefore, is to preserve the community from dissolution into violence; but formally, this violent religious action becomes the cause of the specifically human community because it gives the distinctively human form to the cultural structures that characterize our species (religion, myth, ritual, etc.).

Girard’s third main hypothesis requires us to consider, finally, the real human content at the origin. That is, we must identify the material cause at both the origin of the human species and also at the point of origin of any cultural activity of the species. For Girard, as we have seen, this content is always identified as the real human victim, whose oppression is always already constitutive of human culture. But Girard’s radical articulation of his hypothesis in terms of Christian apocalyptic rhetoric has already been seen to be problematic for coming to a full appreciation of the scientific character of his claims. Indeed, it is his postmodern historical situation that conditions the rigorous articulation of his hypothesis as founded on a concern for victims. Properly understood, then, his third hypothesis concerning Christianity is a radical re-interpretation of its apocalyptic rhetoric. This re-interpretation is an uncompromising exhortation
on behalf of the victim. But what if the scapegoated victim is not in fact the material cause of hominization and of all subsequent cultural activity?

A scientific objection to Girard’s hypothesis has been formulated by Gans such that a more minimal hypothesis concerning the material cause of human culture is formulated in terms of “generative anthropology”, that is, in terms of what explanatory factors most minimally account for the generation of humanity and its cultural evolution. Gans refines the scapegoat hypothesis so that the formal cause of humanity is no longer scapegoating violence (as Girard would have it) but rather the deferral of violence. In other words, the corresponding material cause to this form must be understood as, not the body of the victim, but rather the absence of the body of the victim. For Gans, the origin of humanity lies in the origin of language, whereby adaptive advantage is secured by means of an aborted gesture of appropriation, which designates the communal object of desire in the first act of language. This aborted gesture formally creates the community. Its function or final cause is the deferral of violence (viz., the violence that could break out over an object of desire, like an animal food source, and threaten dissolution of the community). Rather than unanimous violence in an all-against-one polarization of the community against the scapegoat, there is a unanimous deferral of violence as the community enjoys the formal act of signification instead. Materially, this means that there is no real “victim” but rather an imaginary one on the scene of imagination, which the invention of language affords for each participant in the originary scene. That is, the material cause at the point of hominization of the community is “immaterial” insofar as it is the distinctively imaginary construction of the community. The community’s unanimous aborted sign conceptualizes that this ostensive gesture which defers violence refers to a real object of desire, that is, where “desirable” is understood as significant only because the gesture signs what can be possessed in the imagination, not simply as a desired food item, but as what the whole community designates as desirable – and therefore as sacred, taboo: not to be appropriated without risk of dissolution of the community.
That Gans’ refinement of the Girardian hypothesis is scientifically an improvement on it is a fundamental argument of my study. In subsequent chapters, I will argue for the greater explanatory power of the Gansian refinement to the Girardian hypotheses, by showing how Gans’ “generative anthropology” better accounts for esthetic and political evolution in human culture. And, even though Gans’ theoretical outlook is methodologically atheistic and materialist, I will suggest at the end of this present chapter how generative anthropology might be reconciled with Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics and thereby even improve the intellectual standing of the Girardian hypotheses within the Christian tradition they purport to vindicate as being the unique engine of history. But for now I can sum up the results of this discussion of Aristotle’s four explanatory factors as indicating the sweep of both Aristotle’s and Girard’s ambitions in anthropological terms. They attempt nothing less than explaining not just tragedy as a cultural product, but the role of tragedy’s mimesis as indicative of the action of the human species itself. Thus, both Aristotle and Girard explain human action, which is visible in the serious (spoudaios) mimesis of tragedy, in the comprehensive terms of (1) its traceable formal structures, (2) its material constitution, (3) its establishment by interactive human agency, and (4) its main species-purpose.75

A full evaluation of the success of this grand project of explanation will conclude my study, and so for now I can only end this section with the above clarification of what such a project of science aims to articulate. But this discussion has opened up the question of what other correspondences exist between these two great anthropologists, Girard and Aristotle. Besides causal explanatory ambition, there is also their empirioschematic analysis of the structure of tragedy’s dramatic action. And so I turn now to spell out the common pattern of

75 Aristotle’s four causes thus account for (1) formal causality, what makes something to be of one kind rather than another, (2) material causality, what that something is made out of, (3) efficient causality, what generated that something, and (4) final causality, what explains that something’s regular development from an initial to a mature state; see Deely 2001: 64-66. This causal analysis lays the groundwork for a later, proper understanding of the action of signs in anthroposemiosis; cf. Deely 1994: 151-182.
empirioschematic analysis in the two, beginning with the five clues Girard finds for deconstructing myth. I will then argue how they correspond as a postmodern victimary articulation of the fivefold pattern in Aristotle’s analysis.

**Girard’s Five Mythic Clues**

Girard has taught his readers to deconstruct the form of mythical texts by resolving them into their culturally constituent event: viz., scapegoating. He has identified five “indirect clues” for deciphering mythical texts, clues that indicate that myth is really the distorted memory of the original persecution of a scapegoat. These five elements can be spotted in mythic texts. They do not all need to be there, but the presence of any one of them is a clue that allows us to reconstruct the originary narrative of persecution.

In outline, the five clues are (in Girard’s own words): (1) “a theme of disorder or undifferentiation”, e.g., a “plague”; (2) “one particular individual stands convicted of some fault”; (3) “preferential signs of victimage”, e.g., “strangers, cripples, outcasts,” etc.; (4) “the violent deed”, i.e., “the ‘culprit’ is killed, expelled, or otherwise eliminated”; and (5) “peace returns; order is (re)generated”. When presented in this sequence, the clues obviously constitute the narrative of the originary event of persecution; that is, they tell the story of the scapegoating event, as Girard has reconstructed it from finding some or all of these clues in any mythic text. As he describes it, this originary narrative lays bare the anthropological purpose of myth and ritual, which is to ward off communal crises of undifferentiation (in which violent mimetic rivalry overwhelms any established degrees or differentiations in social order, which only a deified scapegoat can establish):

Myth is the remembrance of some crisis of Degree, the recollection of which is systematically distorted by the successful scapegoat effect that concludes it. Sacrificial rites are the reenactment of that same sequence; substitute victims are

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76 Girard 1993: 151-152.
77 Girard 1993: 151-152, with my emphases added in italics.
immolated for the purpose of recapturing the pacifying effect of the original victimage, and thus prevent a relapse into the mimetic crisis.\textsuperscript{78}

Therefore every “fictional” narrative, mythic or otherwise, is formally ordered by the cultural memory of this originary constitution of the human race. The foundational act of hominization in the scapegoat event leaves its trace in all narrative differentiations. It is the five “indirect clues” that suggest the original event which founded difference.

The obvious and therefore most common objection to this five-point deconstruction of mythical narrative and its reconstruction of an originary narrative of the human species, is that it\textit{arbitrarily selects} thematic elements and reorders them \textit{out of context} from their number or sequence of occurrence in any given mythical text.\textsuperscript{79} In short, it is alleged that Girard ignores the real data of myth and instead invents a master narrative of persecution to which he clumsily reduces all other narratives, simply in order to find scapegoats as the real human content of all myth. In other words, his theory presupposes what it seeks, so it is no wonder that it should find it everywhere, without exception, as always already constitutive of the human.

Nevertheless this charge of reductionism is too easy. One sign of its injustice is that it fails to explain how such crude “reductionism” has nonetheless produced some startlingly fresh and insightful readings of very familiar texts, most notably those of Greek tragedy and Shakespearean drama.\textsuperscript{80} Still, the novelty and power of his hypotheses is not enough to vindicate their scientific status. Therefore we must seek confirmation that Girard’s five clues are indeed an \textit{empirioschematic} ordering of observational data. And I have already taken the first step towards this by showing how Girard’s explanatory framework seeks answers along the exhaustive lines of the four causal factors of reality, which Aristotle identified in his scientific methodology. As for the schematic ordering of experience visible in his five-point originary narrative, this is no less a

\textsuperscript{78} Girard 1991: 221.
scientific classification of experience than the theory of evolution is. Just as evolution
schematizes the observational data, in order to “reduce” it to its master narrative of natural
selection, so too does Girard account for the cultural evolution of the human race, “reducing” all
of cultural form to these five formal clues. In other words, Girard is merely attempting to explain
how culture can evolve, by means of a rigorous schematization that can most minimally account
for any given cultural manifestation by formally resolving it into its generative constituents. This
is a scientific undertaking, which can be tested simply by applying it to the manifold permutations
of cultural form and seeing whether what is “reduced” is truly resolved into generative
constituents or whether an arbitrary tale of scapegoating is foisted upon the observational data.
The way to see the difference between the two, that is, to see whether we have attained
empirioschematic insight into the generative principles of culture, or whether we are just
rehashing the same old Girardian story, is to resolve the analysis into the evolutionary sweep of
the generative elements. In other words, the proof of the empirioschematic cogency of Girard’s
originary narrative lies not in its “reductive power” (for any good scientific hypothesis aims at
explaining the maximal amount of data with a minimal amount of hypothetical theory); it lies
rather in how its reductive power explains a wide evolutionary array of data taking different
evolutionary forms in different historical epochs. In other words, just as Darwinian evolution
accounts not for how a human being evolved from an amoeba (i.e., in “reducing” man to amoeba)
but rather for how this animal evolved into that animal along the whole sweep of step-by-step
evolutionary events, so too must we evaluate Girardian evolution along the whole sweep of
cultural history.

My study attempts to vindicate Girardian evolution by seeing it in terms of the
evolutionary transition from the classical esthetic (Greek tragedy) to the neoclassical esthetic
(Shakespeare), as I consciously adopt Gans’ modifications of Girard’s hypotheses in order to
account for the esthetic evolution that constitutes historical epochs. But my first main
contribution to allowing science to catch sight of this evolutionary sweep is to pin down a precise
definition of the classical esthetic. And for this I turn to Aristotle’s descriptive account of tragedy
in the Poetics. For it is my contention that his articulation of the classical esthetic, as found in that
treatise’s discussion of metabasis, pathos, anagnórisis, peripeteia, and hamartia, is traceable in
evolutionary terms to Girard’s articulation of the five “indirect clues” of myth. In other words, Girard is giving a postmodern victimary reading of cultural data, whereas Aristotle gave a
similarly anthropological reading of the data of the classical esthetic. But before I confirm the
correspondence between these five elements of Aristotle and Girard, I should first establish that
the elements are indeed five in number, as well as the reason why this is indeed the proper
number for giving a full empirioschematic measure of the data.

One possible objection to this fivefold numbering is that Girard’s most recent statement
about the number of indirect clues found in myth strays from his earlier identification of five
clues. He identifies four, because he now omits discussion of the violence or expulsion restoring
order and ending a plague; instead, he focuses on the scapegoat, dividing “preferential signs of
victimage” into two clues, with identification of a foreigner now a separate
category. This
should not be taken as a recantation or a systematic revision. If anything, it is an incomplete
exegesis, simplified ad hoc, rather than a full systematic statement as found in his earlier efforts.

The reason why the fivefold schematization fits the observational data is that it
corresponds to how both Girard and Aristotle have distinguished form from content in their
literary analysis and, moreover, how Girard in particular has seen what we may call “the form of
the content”, i.e., the cultural form that generates the esthetic form and content of myth or
tragedy. But to exhibit this correspondence I have to set forth my own argument about form and
content, which will ultimately lead us to an understanding of the fivefold schematization as

81 Girard 2004: 10-11.
82 Girard 1986.
revealing a semiotic pattern that models cultural evolution. And so I turn now to begin my argument, by setting forth my interpretation of Aristotle’s fivefold analysis of tragedy and thereby linking it with the fivefold analysis Girard has made of myth, which is, evolutionarily speaking, the precursor to tragedy.

Although Aristotle nowhere highlights the significance of these five elements as being fivefold, I will nevertheless abstract a fivefold proto-semiotic analysis of tragedy from Aristotle. I justify this procedure by noting that, because tragedy retells and re-forms the narratives of myth, reflection on tragedy implicitly if not explicitly includes consideration of such semiosic evolution. Because Girard has argued that there are five elements of myth resolvable to the one originary narrative of disorder, blame, victimimage-signs, violence, and regenerated order (which myth distorts and re-forms), then if both Girard and Aristotle are ultimately to be understood as describing the evolutionary reality of the action of signs in human experience, there must be a correspondence between any fundamental anthropological descriptions of such semiosis. In fact, I maintain that Girard’s analysis of myth is indebted to, if not unconsciously influenced by, the five pioneering ideas (well-known to students of literature) of Aristotle’s analysis of tragedy.

Aristotle’s Fivefold Analysis of Tragedy’s Semiosis

If tragedy is culturally speaking an evolutionary step forward in terms of the cultural self-reflection of the human community, then we should see signs in Aristotle’s reflections on the classical esthetic of how tragic drama evolves beyond the narrative myths of epic poetry. In fact, we find precisely this in the Poetics’ famous account of how tragedy is a more perfect esthetic development of the Greek cultural inheritance of epic poetry. Given Aristotle’s account of the cultural evolution of form, we may test the Girardian hypothesis of an empirioschematic ordering of cultural evolution by seeing whether it clumsily reduces the Aristotelian account into

something of lesser interest, or whether it enhances our understanding of the classical esthetic by means of its clarification of the anthropological, and not merely esthetic, insights of Aristotle.

When Aristotle sets out to define tragedy, he precedes the definition by first reviewing tragedy's material elements (rhythm, language, and harmony),\textsuperscript{84} the object of its formal mimesis (human action),\textsuperscript{85} and the evolution of its efficient causes (from epic poetry to comic and tragic drama).\textsuperscript{86} His definition mentions catharsis as final cause, but without explanation of what that developmental purpose behind tragedy is.\textsuperscript{87} From there, the Poetics goes on to discuss the elements of tragedy suggested by the definition: plot (mythos),\textsuperscript{88} character (ethos),\textsuperscript{89} thought (dianoia),\textsuperscript{90} diction (lexis),\textsuperscript{91} song (melopoia),\textsuperscript{92} and spectacle (opsis).\textsuperscript{93} It concludes with a reflection on the evolution from epic to tragedy.\textsuperscript{94} The thread and order of the discussion is notoriously difficult to follow and the common view is that the Poetics is a pastiche of various Aristotelian literary reflections.\textsuperscript{95}

Nevertheless I want to argue for the presence of an ultimate inner unity behind Aristotle's discussions in which plot and character are intertwined.\textsuperscript{96} For in these discussions what we have is a proto-semiotic attempt to disentangle esthetic form (plot) from content (character). The difficulty with the discussions derives from the fact that tragedy is a mimesis of human action and therefore there is a real human content (which we may designate as the cultural content of the artwork) that is the real basis of the mimesis. This cultural content is a third something to be

\textsuperscript{84} Poetics 1.
\textsuperscript{85} Poetics 2.
\textsuperscript{86} Poetics 3-5.
\textsuperscript{87} Poetics 6.
\textsuperscript{89} Poetics 13, 15.
\textsuperscript{90} Poetics 19.
\textsuperscript{96} Poetics 7-18.
considered in addition to the esthetic form (e.g., plot structures) and esthetic content of the artwork (e.g., fictional characters signified). Girard’s hypothesis about the catharsis of tragedy being related to the role of the violent sacred in the maintenance of social order,\textsuperscript{97} therefore, can help to clarify the relation of cultural form or content to esthetic form and content, because it distinguishes the esthetic function of art that, in evolutionary terms, comes later than earlier cultural rituals. That is, cultural forms like human or animal sacrifice obviously preceded the classical esthetic of Greek tragedy in which these earlier cultural forms are echoed but are nevertheless different in form, being tragic-esthetic rather than mythic-ritual. Thus Girard’s empirioschematic fivefold analysis of human experience suggests, in evolutionary terms, that the evolution of semiosic human self-reflection, however partially self-conscious this may be in early esthetic periods, is implied by any useful schema for organizing real data. In the instance of Greek tragedy, it accounts for the evolutionary shift from epic to tragedy, not by reducing everything to an originary fivefold narrative, but by using the fivefold to differentiate the evolutionary progress from myth to tragedy. As Girard describes it, there is a partial revelation of mimetic desire and its scapegoating tendencies in Greek tragedy, but he qualifies this partial revelation by reserving full revelation for the Christian Gospels.\textsuperscript{98}

In comparing esthetic form and content with cultural form or content,\textsuperscript{99} we can unlock what Aristotle is implicitly recognizing in his analysis of the classical esthetic by making use of Girard’s explicitly postmodern articulation of the same cultural phenomena. If we use Girard’s empirioschematic fivefold analysis, we can find the same fivefold in Aristotle. But this does not correspond precisely to the six elements just discussed (plot, character, thought, diction, song, and spectacle). Instead it corresponds to Aristotle’s more detailed discussions of plot and character in Poetics 7-18. The six elements may be viewed as intrinsic constituents of tragedy, whereas the

\textsuperscript{97} Girard 1977: 290 and Girard 1987b: 150.
\textsuperscript{99} Either cultural form or content must be considered as the third element in any semiotic triangle with esthetic form and content.
five topics that Aristotle goes on to discuss (metabasis, pathos, anagnórisis, peripeteia, and hamartia) instead break through to the extrinsic, i.e., cultural constituents of esthetic form and content in the classical esthetic. They suggest a process of semiosis by which cultural meanings are mirrored and reflected in esthetic evolution.

Girard’s fivefold schematization is able to resolve myth into its constituent semiosic elements more readily because he has the benefit of esthetic hindsight, writing in a time of postmodernity in which he can view myth through the lens of subsequent cultural development. Christian “concern for the victim”, as he likes to put it, allows him to readily resolve the mythical text into the originary narrative. But Aristotle, without the benefit of the hindsight of esthetic history, had to labour his way, from what was intrinsic to the supreme artwork of the classical esthetic (i.e., tragedy), to the extrinsic cultural action of signs that permitted a separation of form from content in the classical esthetic. In Aristotle, this proto-semiotic analysis of form and content occurs during his discussion of plot forms. While he is ostensibly discussing the primacy of mythical plot (mythos) as the prime form of tragedy, he is also wrestling with the interconnections in plot of form and content. With the benefit of Girardian hindsight and its explicit awareness of the victim in cultural structure, I can outline how Girard’s postmodern reading of the fivefold semiosis of myth corresponds to Aristotle’s fivefold discussion of form and content as found in metabasis, pathos, anagnórisis, peripeteia, and hamartia.
Girard’s Cultural Poetics

In the second chapter of this study, I will present an exegesis of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in terms of the issues of form and content. This will allow me to suggest a solution to the problem of what Aristotle’s “best tragedy” might be. But at this point I need to outline how both Girard’s and Aristotle’s analyses are related, in fundamental terms, to the semiotic issues of form and content, i.e., in terms of a common identification of five elements in the semiosis of myth and tragedy.

Mythic Content: A Plague of Disorder (*Metabasis*)

Girard’s originary narrative begins with a plague of disorder in the community. On his hypothesis, this esthetic theme points to a culturally generative origin in the memory of a real communal crisis. That is, mimetic rivalry produced a cultural crisis. Escalating violence resulted from increased communal mimesis that led to a breakdown of order. Literature uses various symbols to represent this breakdown of societal order, but the most vivid one is that of the plague.100 Related to this literary plague, then, is some kind of historical transition to disorder that is the real content on which the literary plague is ultimately based. Therefore I use “plague” as a shorthand expression to refer to this real human content that mimesis presupposes and that shows up, moreover, in the mimesis as any esthetic content involving conflict or crisis.

I argue that this semiotic background is what we must understand Aristotle to be groping towards when he refers, in his discussion of the esthetic content of tragedy, to change or transition (*metabasis*) as tragedy’s subject matter.101 This term *metabasis* has sometimes been translated as “reversal of fortune”, which would be a good translation were it not misleading in the sense that it invites us to confuse *metabasis* with *peripeteia* (reversal). The distinction between the two is founded on the fact that, in his discussion of which myths make the best subject matter as the

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101 See my discussion of *Poetics* 13 in Chapter Two of this study for further details.
content of tragedy, Aristotle recommends the change of fortune (metabasis) of families like Oedipus' or Orestes'. Therefore, although metabasis as content can be either fortunate or unfortunate change, for Aristotle it comes to refer, loosely speaking, to the content that is unfortunate, i.e., a plague of disorder, because that is the subject matter that from the practice of the stage seems to work best. Tragedy has inherited this metabasis content from myth and epic. This subject matter, being what is signified as unfortunate content, still today determines for us what the word "tragedy" signifies in popular speech. For Aristotle, who discusses tragedy in terms of subject matter with both fortunate and unfortunate outcomes, metabasis refers, strictly speaking, to the mythic content which tragedy formally reworks according to its more advanced evolutionary stages of form. Peripeteia is a later formal innovation, whereas metabasis, loosely speaking, is the initially successful subject matter of myths that tell of misfortune change and transition. It is this subject matter which tragedy originally presupposes as the content for the evolution of its later formal reworking.

The term desis ("complication"), like peripeteia, is not used by Aristotle to refer to the content of tragedy, which is why I argue metabasis alone refers to content (unfortunate human content, loosely speaking, but fortunate or unfortunate human content, strictly speaking). That is, desis occurs in the course of Aristotle's discussion of the formal arrangement of plot, a discussion which abstracts from considerations of human beings as content, i.e., their particular fortune or misfortune as content. Instead, Aristotle uses the term desis to describe how tragedy should formally pace the plot which has this human content as its subject matter. I take his term desis to refer to the formal articulation in the plot sequence of the problem of conflict or disorder (and also what this formal sequence presupposes outside the play) and his term lusis to refer to the subsequent formal articulation in the plot sequence of the dramatic resolution of that conflict. In

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102 Poetics 13, 1453a 10-22.
103 Poetics 18, 1455b 25-30.
104 Poetics 13, 1453a 12-16.
105 Poetics 18, 1455b 23-1456a 31.
my opinion, what Aristotle means by “the transition to prosperity or adversity” (metabainei eis eutukhian eis a tukhian), is some key dramatic moment or scene somewhere in the tragedy, preferably near the end of the “middle” second act (which is the main arena in which dramatic mimesis presents its human content of conflict and disorder). In other words, by 

\[ \text{desis} \]

I understand Aristotle to mean the sequential “backstory” that tragedy presupposes for the formal enactment of its most dramatic content (including not only the content presupposed outside the play but also the sequence of events in the “beginning” first act and those in the “middle” second act leading up to the key formal event) and by 

\[ \text{lusis} \]

the “ending” third act of tragedy that must follow from this formal sequencing of the content.

My view is based on a hunch that the difficulties that the text presents for interpreting what Aristotle means by 

\[ \text{desis} \]

and 

\[ \text{lusis} \]

are founded on the fact that these terms each conflate form and content. They each refer to the real blend of form and content as actualized in a poet’s construction of the drama. But the conflation happens deliberately, I would argue, now that Aristotle has left behind the discussion that separated form from content, and proceeds to treat form and content as they work together for the most effective formal sequencing of tragic content for achieving esthetic effect. Aristotle’s discussion of 

\[ \text{desis} \]

and 

\[ \text{lusis} \]

is unsatisfactory, but nevertheless highly suggestive, since it raises the question of how to formally sequence the presentation of the key dramatic event that presents tragedy’s human content.

In any case, I maintain that 

\[ \text{metabasis} \]

alone is what for Aristotle signifies the ultimate content of tragedy. Strictly speaking, this human content can be fortunate or unfortunate, but loosely speaking it is simply unfortunate. The two ways of speaking can be reconciled by thinking of tragedy’s content as \textit{potential} for good or bad fortune that usually \textit{actually} results in

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108 Halliwell 1998: 211 obscures any distinction between form and content by equating 

\[ \text{desis} \]

with 

\[ \text{metabasis}. \]
109 \textit{Poetics} 13-14, as I argue in Chapter Two.
misfortune. This signification in Aristotle is therefore congruent with Girard’s understanding of
disorders like “plague” as the content presupposed by myth’s narrative. Although the plague of
disorder does not have to always occur in human life, Girard observes that it usually does; that is
where myth comes from. For this reason I argue that Aristotle’s term metabasis signifies the same
thing as Girard’s plague. That is, both signify the potential human disorders that narrative
presupposes for its possible stories, while both also signify the actual re-formulations that usually
occur in narrative that occur to tell stories of misfortune. In pointing out this semiotic
correspondence between these two terms of Girard and Aristotle, I am thus attempting to identify
the first of what may be termed “narrative universals” applicable to any empirioschematic
organization of the observational data of human experience.110 The first of these narrative
universals, then, is the human content recognizable as any narrative’s presupposed disorder,
conflict or crisis: Aristotle’s tragic metabasis or Girard’s mythic plague.

Mythic Form (Simple): Violent Expulsion (Pathos)

Tragedy formally reworks this metabasis content of “families that have done or suffered
something terrible” by its formal focus on pathos, the dramatic portrayal of the suffering involved
in such actions. As Aristotle discusses the formal evolution of tragedy, he makes it clear that
pathos is the original form of the metabasis content of tragedy in the course of its historical
development.111 For that reason, he identifies the simple form of tragedy as that of pathos. It is
the sine qua non in the sense that all tragedies must rework the mythic metabasis narrative about
suffering, and the convention that evolved for doing so formally was the focus on human pathos
in dramatic poetry, music, and dance. The metabasis content that arises from the human
community becomes, in tragedy, formally focused on the pathos of one individual.

110 Cf. Deely 1986a: 53-68.
111 Poetics 10-11.
Even if enacted violent acts of suffering were to be absent from a tragedy, this would still not negate Aristotle's identification of pathos as tragedy's simple form. For the evolution of complex form would still take the reworking of myth as its reference point. In other words, the absence of the violent suffering which the myth had recorded would still be a kind of presence in the tragedy's formal reworking of the myth: that is, the audience would be aware of the tragedy's absence of pathos based on their familiarity with myth and with earlier, simple forms of tragic drama. That is, in any semiosic evolution, new formal configurations always presuppose old content.

I will have more to say about this evolution of complex tragic form in the next chapter, when I argue there for the superiority of Gans' hypothesis (about the deferral of violence) to Girard's hypothesis (about violence) when it comes to accounting for the evolution of tragic form as testified to by Aristotle and the literary record. For the moment we need only note that both Aristotle and Girard are agreed on the point that suffering (or other acts of violence like expulsion) is fundamental to tragedy as the simple form of its mythic content. In semiotic terms, the pathos has come to represent the metabasis; the individual violent suffering becomes a sign of the wider plague of disorder. Tragedy's focus on pathos thus becomes a higher stage in cultural evolution, because it highlights the hidden human victim remembered, in however distorted a fashion, in this simple pathos form of tragedy that reworks the mythic metabasis tale of communal disorder by focusing on dramatic individual suffering.

Thus, in seeing this correspondence between Aristotle and Girard, a second narrative universal appears identifiable. Girard's mythic violence, the violent expulsion of a scapegoat, is similar to Aristotle's tragic pathos. Both give a simple form to the esthetic expression in narrative that crystallizes the metabasis content of a human crisis. But whether this simple formal crystallization is of a general violent crisis (metabasis) as a particular form of suffering (pathos) within that crisis of all-against-all, or is of a particular all-against-one violent act (pathos) against
a scapegoat that might conclude the crisis, is not something that can be differentiated without a further progression from simple to complex form. Thus the next narrative universal after the simple form of pathos that my comparison of Aristotle and Girard suggests is the complex form of anagnōrisis, which for Girard is the recognition of signs that mark a potential scapegoat for suffering (pathos).

Mythic Form (Complex I): Signs of Victimage (Anagnōrisis)

What Girard calls “preferential signs of victimage” are those tokens of recognition by which we ourselves may recognize the victims hidden in myth’s texts of persecution. The tellers of mythic tales remember violent acts in various forms. In ritual reenactment, there is always a strange role for arbitrary acts of violence. For example, animal sacrifice is something we can now view in retrospect as an elaborate formal imposition added to the simple content of killing and eating an animal for food. In that form, however, a real cultural function is subsumed under the forms of the ritual’s violence. As Girard remarks, “the violent role that no ritual still faintly aware of its origin can fail to suppress” is relegated to “some expendable third party”. In other words, the sacrificed animal is expendable in the sense that the ritual marks it out for slaughter. The elaborate “comedy of innocence” incorporated into rituals of animal sacrifice make this obvious, a dramatic fiction that ritually determines the animal as willing to die and the sacrificer as innocent of murder.

The expendable victims of myth are identified by Girard as marked out by various features which would make them successful targets for the unanimous polarization of all-against-one scapegoating violence. The scapegoat is marked by various tokens that identify him as an outsider who needs to be expelled or eliminated in order to restore community from the plague of disorder it is suffering. In the myth he can literally be a stranger or outsider (e.g., as with Oedipus

at Thebes) or simply someone whose disabilities mark him out as “other”, i.e., an easy target for arousing violent communal disgust, suspicion, and hostility.

In Aristotle’s analysis of tragedy, he defines anagnōrisis as the change from ignorance to knowledge, e.g., of an enemy as a friend or a friend as an enemy. In other words, this is a complex development in the plot whereby a formal change occurs that must be distinguished from simple pathos (suffering) or the mythic metabasis (change of fortune) being formally portrayed. With anagnōrisis, the plot twists with a formal change, e.g., from friendship between characters to enmity, or vice versa. In this enunciation of the two fundamental social polarities (friend or enemy), we can see that Aristotle’s identification of this complex esthetic form corresponds to the binary cultural polarity of the scapegoat dynamic (us versus them or us versus the victim) which Girard has identified as generative of the myths which tragedy reworks. While recognition scenes were common in epic poetry, as Aristotle discusses in his evaluation of the best recognitions as being generated by the events of the mythos itself, it is only in their dramatic tragic enactment that they come into their own as revelatory of the human actions that mimetic desire generates.

In other words, the more and more complex formal treatments of recognitions in tragedy are an advancement in cultural evolution because such recognition scenes are not simply scapegoat recognition scenes in which a limping scapegoat is marked out for murder. Esthetic form evolves along with culture. The self-reflection of the community meditates, through esthetic form, on the many combinations and complexes of friendship/enmity possible as human action. As society grows more complex, it moves beyond a simple scapegoating of a victim in order to preserve the unity generated by a communal meal, towards a semiosic meditation on what appropriate societal behaviour is in a variety of dramatic scenarios that re-present various societal

\[114\] Poetics 11.
\[115\] Poetics 16, 1455a 16-20.
crises (everything from theft and adultery to murder and cannibalism). Violent and inappropriate action in a more advanced society is deferred by esthetic evolution because, instead of killing scapegoats in real life, imaginative scapegoats are sacrificed on stage to inspire cathartically inferred conclusions: don't try this violence in your own praxis, otherwise you will be recognized, not as a friend of the community, but as an enemy who courts a similarly tragic fate. And of course, as the mythical distortion and communal misrecognition of the generative sources of its own violence has it, it is the fictional gods who will be responsible for your fate, not the community.

Whether Girard’s hypothesis is true or not, it is still clear that dramatic scenes of recognition derive their power from the real cultural issues of love and hate, friendship and enmity, which structure our social intercourse as humans. For such empirioschematic reasons, then, in any analysis of human action, the use of anagnôrisis as a fundamental category for formally identifying changes in human relations that lead to violence and suffering, is required for a complete treatment of the complex of human action. In formal terms, a metabasis takes the form of pathos when we see this pathos in relation to the others in the community of human action and how those other human actors recognize the one suffering a change of fortune (metabasis) as either a friend or enemy. Tragedy’s later focus on anagnôrisis thus becomes a higher stage in cultural evolution, because it highlights the possible forms that recognition of solidarity (anagnôrisis) may or may not take with dramatic individual suffering. These possibilities of formal recognition also imply a further complex development in the pattern of narrative universals: viz., a reflection of the content (metabasis) that is achieved in the narrative on the level of form. On this basis I find, in Aristotle’s presentation, peripeteia as form being distinct from metabasis as content because, as Girard’s schematization also suggests, the recognition (anagnôrisis) of the scapegoat is what leads to the violence (pathos) that will reverse the plague (metabasis).
Mythic Form (Complex II): Reversing (Dis)order (*Peripeteia*)

Tragedy’s storytelling evolves beyond the merely mythical theme of restoration of order that Girard identifies as his fifth “indirect clue”. In tragedy, this restoration of order from the plague of disorder is reworked in tragedy’s formal mimesis of action when the reversal of an action is formally highlighted by a *peripeteia*. Aristotle identified a *peripeteia* as that formal occurrence in the drama when the action changes to its opposite course. But as with *anagnôrasis*, we should not confuse this complex formal development with the change (*metabasis*) of a character’s fortune that is the plot-content. Both *anagnôrasis* and *peripeteia* are changes, but formally they are tragedy’s complex refinement of mythical themes of change from order to disorder. In the case of *anagnôrasis*, we saw above that it is a change from ignorance to knowledge in the sense that communal recognition of scapegoats evolves into recognition of individuals caught in the drama of advanced society’s multifarious variations on mimetic rivalries and violent re-orderings. In the case of *peripeteia*, the same individualizing focus occurs as formal meditation of action progresses into a more complex classical aesthetic. But in addition, as a comparison of Girard’s schematization of myth with Aristotle’s analysis of tragedy suggests to me, the restoration of order becomes thematic in its precariousness. The *metabasis* of any given myth can be formalized as the suffering (*pathos*) involved in any reversal of fortune. But the suffering individuals, and the mimetic web of actions in which they find themselves and their suffering implicated, become revealed with greater formal clarity when *individual courses of action* that are bound up with particular dramatized individuals undergo changes in the course of a complex drama. For example, a character beginning to act for one outcome (killing another character) ends that action by suffering its reversal (being the one killed instead of the one killing).\(^\text{117}\)

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\(^{116}\) *Poetics* 11, 1452a 22.

\(^{117}\) Cf. *Poetics* 11 on Danaus in the *Lynceus*. 

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Thus more complex dramatic scenarios repeat the structure of the originary narrative scene, which had changed from disorder to order thanks to unanimous violence against a scapegoat. But the repetition is not an exact re-enactment. It is more of an evolutionary variant as culture advances from the realm of sacred myth and ritual into secular esthetic variants on the possibilities of social rivalries and violence. The *peripeteia* of Aristotle’s theory is thus best understood in terms of cultural significance as the formal refinement of *metabasis*. On the level of content, *metabasis* can simply be that ancient mythic pattern of change from order to disorder (the sacrificial crisis)\(^{118}\), or from disorder to order (the resolution of the sacrificial crisis by means of the scapegoat mechanism). But on the level of form, this communal content can be formalized in terms of its dramatic significance for individuals. And so, when Danaus’ killing action can reverse to its opposite course in a dramatic *peripeteia*, the audience is invited to return to the communal scene with their individual imaginary perspectives. That is, they can imagine themselves taking the dramatic scapegoat’s place: i.e., just as Danaus had to die to set in motion the audience’s formal contemplation of his *peripeteia*, they too might take the dramatic scapegoat’s place should they in their own lives engage in precarious actions of violence against the social order.

Whether they (or Danaus) deserve to die in any given circumstance of competing human desires is, when considered only in terms of this complex formal element of *peripeteia*, beside the point. For what is formally represented in the mimesis of *peripeteia* is the radical contingency of individual social action. Because of the ever-present danger of violence to the human community, the individual (actor or citizen) is always at the mercy of a change of fortune (*metabasis*), which wider social configurations of violence may inflict on him. *Peripeteia* is thus a formal mirror, for the individual, of potential social order or disorder (*metabasis*), and the formal mirror thematically shows his individual fate in the context of this unpredictable and instable order as

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similarly subject to reversal (*peripeteia*). Narratives of plague for a society become esthetically refined in their consideration of how individual action, and its individual binary possibility (a happy *peripeteia* or an unhappy *peripeteia*), is connected with the communal outcome. Thus we have seen that there is an evolutionary refinement of esthetic self-reflection (from the simple *metabasis* of individual *pathos* refined into the complex dramatizing forms of *anagnôrisis* and *peripeteia*). But I find one more narrative universal suggested by the semiosis of form and content in human experience as analyzed by both Aristotle and Girard.

**Cultural Form-of-the-Content: Crime, Blame, Error (**Hamartia**)**

Formally, what the evolutionary refinement from mythic content to simple tragic form to more complex forms (from *metabasis* and *pathos* to *anagnôrisis* and *peripeteia*) finally makes possible is the consideration of the question of whether a particular *peripeteia* of action is deserved or not. This is the question that cuts right to the issue of cultural crimes, away from purely esthetic considerations; it contextualizes esthetic form and content with the cultural conditions that underpin the audience or critic’s response to the plight of any mimetic-esthetic personage. As such, it is no surprise that Aristotle’s remarks on *hamartia* have generated a great wealth of commentary and interpretation. (Even undergraduates find it easy to use as an excuse for gassing on about what a “tragic flaw” might be.) But the reason that it has been such a lightning rod for reflection on tragedy is that with it Aristotle is sharpening his anthropological focus on the generative cultural questions that give the esthetic its fullest significance.

In terms of form and content, *hamartia* must be understood as neither esthetic content (*metabasis*: the change of fortune of a human protagonist) nor esthetic form (whether as simple *pathos* or as the more complex changes connected with *pathos*, that is, either the polarizing

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119 In terms of the originary scene itself, *peripeteia* is not to be confused with a “reversal” of the all-against-all contagious crisis into the all-against-one violence of scapegoating. It is rather the “reversal” from disorder to order. If conceived in relation to a scapegoat, then this would be the moment in the originary scene when the deification of the scapegoat occurs.

120 Bremer 1969 has one of the best discussions.
change of knowledge about the social order, called *anagnōrisis*, or the reverse-polarity change of one’s standing within the social order relative to one’s own action, called *peripeteia*). Instead, *hamartia* is the cultural form-of-the-content that has generated the simple or complex esthetic unities of form and content. This “form-of-the-content” is, in a word, *resentment*. We call it the “form-of-the-content”, using a term employed by Gans, because it suggests how the esthetic unity of form and content in the artwork is related in generative fashion to the artwork’s cultural context.\(^{121}\) Specifically, tragedy’s esthetic content is a fictional character (e.g., Electra) mimaetically portrayed by means of tragedy’s formal esthetic conventions (i.e., in a dramatic mimesis of action that includes *pathos* and perhaps also *anagnōrisis* and *peripeteia*). But nevertheless this esthetic content, as implicated in the unity of its mimesis with form, is mimaetically modelled on a real life person, or as a fictional composite formed by abstraction of characteristics from various real life persons.

This real-world source is what we can call the generative source of art’s mimesis. Esthetic content is modelled on cultural content; perhaps this Electra reminds us of somebody’s sister. But what Aristotle implicitly discerns and what Girard explicitly discerns when discussing *hamartia*, is how in tragedy’s evolution it came to use *hamartia* to model not just cultural content (e.g., somebody’s sister) but cultural form. Whether or not one has resentful feelings towards a certain sister (e.g., one is or is not in mimetic rivalry with her over some desired object), this formal relation of resentment in the real, cultural world environment can, like cultural content (e.g., somebody’s sister) also be mimetically represented in the esthetic form and content as cultural form (e.g., as sibling rivalry or cooperation). In Girard’s mimetic theory, esthetic form is at its best when it most rigorously mimics, in the imaginary esthetic world, the real relations of mimetic desire and rivalry as found in the cultural world context that has generated the artwork.

\(^{121}\) This also implies that White 1987 has things backwards.
Thus it is highly accurate to speak of this mimesis of resentment as tragedy's "form-of-the-content". In this phrase, the "content" named by it is the esthetic content of the drama (e.g., Electra) and the "form" named by it is whatever the artwork reveals about real cultural forms of resentment. That is, the "form" named by it refers to what is abstracted from actual cultural relations between people (e.g., triangles of mimetic desire and rivalry), no matter what the particular real cultural content may have been from which it was abstracted (e.g., your sister, my sister, or somebody's mother-in-law). In other words, the "cultural content" of tragic mimesis is infinitely varied, just as life is infinitely varied; there is a wealth of possible content from which an artist may abstract tragedy's mimesis. But the possible "cultural forms" that tragedy may use are limited to whatever the forces organizing society are. On Girard's hypotheses, the force threatening society is mimetic desire and its escalating rivalries, but this force also has a self-correcting social mechanism called scapegoating. Therefore, on his reading of tragedy, he moves beyond simply an esthetic focus on tragedy's cast of characters (its esthetic content) and tragedy's conventions (its esthetic forms). Girard resolutely raises the question about cultural form, that is, "Where are the (cultural) patterns of mimetic desire and scapegoating visible in these (esthetic) characters?" In other words, his readings are powerful because they seek the form-of-the-content.\textsuperscript{122} His cultural poetics seeks the generative patterns of culture hidden in the esthetic.\textsuperscript{123}

Resentment is the social force that is the engine of mimetic rivalry. In the mimetic terms of Girard’s hypothesis of mimetic desire, we resent the model who mediates the desire of an object for us when he has become the obstacle to our appropriation of the desired object. To recognize resentment as a culturally productive force, then, is to recognize its role in the escalation of mimetic rivalries. As resentment increases, the danger of violence increases. Either the resentment will be discharged in one's violent action against the mimetic rival, or it will be

\textsuperscript{123} Cf. van Oort 2004: 647-652.
sublimated by the various cultural forms that have evolved to contain it, e.g., by ritual sacrifice or by its esthetic substitutes (viz., the imaginary sacrifices of dramatic protagonists).

The evolution of human society from its more originary forms (which involve sacred myth and ritual enforcing a strict hierarchy of social order) to more developed forms (which involve secular esthetic achievements like epic and tragedy as contributing to the construction of a more free and fluid society) can be traced by formal analysis. This analysis looks at not just esthetic form and content in themselves but in their relation to the generative cultural form of resentment that they are trying to regulate through imaginary sacrificial means. In other words, whether or not we wish to resentfully blame someone (actor or citizen) with an accusation of guilt (and thereby discharge the frustrations incurred from our inability to consummate our every mimetic desire) is the “blame game” problem that hamartia dramatizes.

Again, this identification of hamartia by Aristotle in his fivefold analysis of tragedy is a theoretical attempt to come to terms with the evolution of mimesis from epic to tragedy. If, in earlier myths, protagonists can be depicted as criminals guilty of crimes, in tragic drama this burden of accusation is developed in evolutionary terms as an attenuation of the urge simply to kill a scapegoat to achieve satisfaction. Precisely, it can be developed in the way that Aristotle describes. What he calls the hamartia in tragedy, which achieves tragedy’s proper purpose of pity and fear, is the involuntary error of a character similar to or slightly better than ourselves who meets with pitiable misfortune (metaballon eis ten dustukhian). As involuntary error, hamartia is of great anthropological significance because it marks an evolution of esthetic form from the crime, guilt, and blame associated with communal scapegoating into an esthetic meditation on the undeserved pathos of a particular protagonist. Unlike the scapegoat, whose guilt is certain and whose crime is indisputable, the involuntariness of the error of a tragic protagonist humanizes the

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124 Poetics 13, 1453a 9.
scapegoating urge. Thus the classical esthetic, most notably with its expression of _hamartia_ within its esthetic unities of tragic form and content, is a real cultural achievement and a real evolutionary advance for the human race.

Girard, however, polemically faults Aristotle and the theoretical achievement of his _Poetics_ on this point of _hamartia_. Girard argues that _hamartia_ "conceptualizes the poetic minimization of the crime" attributed to the scapegoat. What Girard means by this is that, instead of exposing the forms of mimetic desire and scapegoating as he himself has done, Aristotle, he says, ought to be faulted for approving of tragedy’s minimization of the crimes previously used in myth to designate victims by means of guilt and blame. As polemic, this remark can be excused, for it allows Girard to get his point across about how myth tells blatant lies when it accuses its scapegoats of ridiculous crimes (e.g., Oedipus is an incestuous parricide). But in terms of an appreciation of the evolution of cultural form, it reveals a lack of sensitivity on Girard’s part to this very evolution as it occurred in the classical esthetic. That is, Girard fails to notice Greek tragedy’s great esthetic achievement: its humanizing vision, e.g., pity and fear for Oedipus the involuntary “incestuous parricide”. And, even worse, _Girard faults Aristotle for approving of tragedy’s humanizing form_: instead of executing scapegoats on trumped up charges, the classical esthetic’s cultural achievement is that with tragedy it _attenuates scapegoating tendencies_.

As representative of tragedy’s cultural form-of-the-content, _hamartia_ shows how the classical esthetic handles the problem of resentment between human beings. Greek tragedy dramatizes scenarios of resentment and rivalry, but its great achievement is not simply that it enacts imaginary sacrifices on stage, avoiding real human sacrifices in the cultural world. Greek tragedy does more than serve up dramatic scapegoats for the audience’s imaginary satisfaction.

As Aristotle recognized, the best tragedies connect with the audience’s resentments by tapping into the cultural form-of-the-content that generates the most mimetic of esthetic creations. As Girard recognized, this esthetic success is bound up with the demands of cultural form. But progress in the evolution of the human race must be conceived as more than a binary option between scapegoating or non-violence. That is, Girard’s apocalyptic message that preaches only this binary message remains blind to the historical progress of esthetic form. In terms of the classical esthetic, this can be summed up by Girard’s failure to appreciate what Aristotle has pinpointed with his reflections on *hamartia*. Greek tragedy is a step forward in human culture because it uses, not sacred myth and ritual to ward off violence, but rather an imaginary secular esthetic world which leads the human community to a self-reflection that produces a greater degree of *internalization* of humane sentiments, like pity and fear, that take the place of external ritual in keeping social order.12 It is this greater internalization that allows for more freedom in the society, as the ones who internalize the human lessons of Greek tragedy have a wider range of human action available to them than would be the case if they could only be policed externally by the draconian measures of a purely mythical scapegoating religion. With tragedy, the Greeks humanize themselves.

**Summary: An Empirioschematic Evolutionary Model for Esthetics**

I may conclude the first sections of this first chapter by summarizing the results of my research thus far. We have seen that Aristotle and Girard, despite Girard’s polemics, are not engaging in opposing enterprises. Both have an indispensable anthropological dimension to their reflections on esthetic experience. My claim is that both Aristotle and Girard achieve a scientific status for their anthropological inquiry by articulating empirioschematic models of the evolution of human cultural experience. This claim may be made, but with one qualification: that Girard for polemical reasons has not explicitly recognized the significance of the evolutionary advance, in

cultural terms, with the Greek tragedy of the classical esthetic. Despite this, a comparative study
of his mimetic theory with Aristotle’s Poetics shows a semiotic correspondence of narrative
universals between Aristotle and Girard’s five indirect clues for constructing an empirioschematic
model of human cultural evolution from the data of myth. Given Aristotle’s reflection on the
evolution from mythical forms to the more advanced forms which Greek tragedy used in its
reworking of myth, I argued that Aristotle’s five most trenchant observations on tragedy’s
development in form and content corresponded semiotically with Girard’s five clues. The result at
this point of my study is that I now have a viable empirioschematic model which will aid me in
the chapters to come. By comparing the thought of Aristotle and Girard on Greek tragedy, I have
refined a fivefold empirioschematic model that may be used for the critical purpose of discerning
the evolution of form, whether esthetic or cultural.

I reached this point by reviewing Girard’s three main hypotheses: mimetic desire, the
union of violence and the sacred in the scapegoating mechanism, and the uniqueness of
Christianity in terms of revealing victimimage. I argued that the inductive manner in which these
hypotheses were formed over the course of his career shows that his intent is primarily scientific
and not religious, despite the utility of apocalyptic Christian rhetoric for vividly communicating
his hypotheses in a postmodern historical context in which concern for the victim is an academic
preoccupation. I argued that Aristotle and Girard share a common scientific method in seeking
out all possible explanatory factors involved in accounting for esthetic experience. This method
results in empirioschematic modelling, namely, those fivefold models of semiotic structure that I
identified as common to them both. Accordingly, I explicitly articulated these models that were
largely implicit but nevertheless unmistakably present in their respective classical and
postmodern approaches. This has allowed me, inspired by generative anthropology, to introduce
my own thoughts on how esthetic form and content is semiotically generated from cultural form.
The empirioschematic evolutionary model that will allow me to discuss the evolution of esthetic,
cultural, and political form in the subsequent chapters is precisely that fivefold semiotic structure I abstracted from Aristotle and Girard as a unifying scientific approach to the interdisciplinary problem of the cultural evolution of the human species.

But because this problem of cultural evolution is also connected by the Girardian hypotheses to the problem of the origin of the human species itself, I need to finish this first chapter with a discussion of this problem of human origin. This will allow me to keep the empirioschematic investigations of the subsequent chapters in philosophical perspective. The empirioschematic must not be confused with the ontological, as I will now argue in the next section, which aims to clarify the relation of Aristotle’s metaphysics to the empirioschematic modelling that mimetic theory and generative anthropology attempts. This clarification is necessary so that Girard’s approach may be evaluated from the viewpoint of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, an evaluation required to see if Girard’s thought is ultimately compatible with the Christian tradition he has reinterpreted with his postmodern victimary rhetoric.
Mimetic Theory and Aristotelian Metaphysics

First, in this concluding section of chapter one, I will orient Girard’s mimetic theory in relation to the thought of Aristotle and Derrida on metaphysics. From this, we will see how Girard’s hypothesis about scapegoating as the cause of hominization is best refined by Gans’ approach, which links the origin of human difference (i.e., humans being different from other species) to the origin of language.

Second, I will conclude by showing the relation to metaphysics of the originary scene that generative anthropology describes as a more scientific, more minimal refinement of Girard’s hominization hypothesis. From this, I set forth a highly plausible suggestion concerning how the originary scene may be understood as non-contradictory with respect to the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of metaphysics, in which the Prime Mover is the superforming cause of the evolution of the human race. These metaphysical considerations are properly outside the competence of empirioschematic science, but I wish to make this metaphysical excursus at the conclusion of the chapter in order to show how Girard’s empirioschematic scientific inquiry remains eminently compatible with the philosophical and religious tradition that still values metaphysics as the ultimate contextualizing tool for discerning evolutionary progress.

The Origin of Human Difference

The most noticeable fact about mimetic theory is that Girard has made an appeal to the Judeo-Christian religious tradition in order to put forth an anthropological hypothesis about the sudden, violent origin of human difference. Yet what is most fascinating about Girard’s thought is the way it embraces the insights of our postmodern era and radicalizes them, in order to meet the pluralistic challenges of our era with a unique hypothesis about originary unity. Girard’s mimetic theory radicalizes Derrida’s critique of metaphysics and offers an insight into human

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difference that is not pursued by contemporary anthropological science and that deconstruction, with its postmodern insights into language, has deferred to religion.

There are three approaches to the problem of human difference in our era: (1) the scientific approach (that of anthropologists, paleontologists, geneticists, and social scientists), (2) the philosophical approach (more precisely, that of what labors in the shadow of the philosophical tradition: namely, the postmodern study of language that has emerged after metaphysics), and (3) the religious approach (for my purposes, that of the West which Girard has claimed is unique).

Science assumes that the origin of human difference was a gradual development; religion, a sudden one; and philosophy points out (by deconstructing the traces in language) the onto-theological problems with adopting either of these approaches. These three approaches to the origin of the human are related, in my opinion, to three great historical events of human development. First, the advent of science has been the advent of modernity, the unleashing of the human intellect to ameliorate the sufferings of our human condition. Second, the advent of philosophy in ancient Greece has been the advent of the project of secularity, that is, the self-determination of the human race as translated into a political and economic freedom that constitutes a secular declaration of independence from the sacred. Here science complements philosophy, in that modernity has offered something that secularity originally lacked in its Greek democratic experiment: the emancipation of slaves, by means of technological substitutions. Aristotle anticipated this modern development in the Politics when he wrote:

Suppose that each tool could complete its work either by being told to do so or because it perceived what was to be done in advance, as they relate those of Daedalus or of the tripods of Hephaestus, which the poet says ‘entered the divine assembly self moved.’ If shuttles could thus do their weaving by themselves or if

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129 Suggested to me by Gans 1981a.
picks could thus play the cithara, ruling craftsmen would have no need of assistants nor masters of slaves.130

But the event into which religion has insight is neither the modernizing technological nor the secularizing political progress in history of the human race. As Gans has noted, religion’s insight is into the origin of the human,131 and not the subsequent development of the human race along secular or modern lines. In the beginning, there was... what? Literally, how can a religious creation myth tell us anything anymore in the postmodern era? What is the literal origin of human difference? When did the human begin? How did it begin?

In order to answer adequately, perhaps we ought to ask first: what is the human? How would we characterize what is unique about humanity? How do we differ from other animals? Humans are the most violent animals. Today we are threatened as never before with the threat of self-extinction. In fact, this is the dilemma that defines our postmodern era. Post-Holocaust, post-Hiroshima, we are living in the time of the post-modern,132 that is, in the time that comes after modernity: it is the time within which the projects themselves of modernity and secularity are newly problematic, and their very meaning is called into question, by the violent power of self-extinction that these projects have themselves unleashed. Their power deploys technical skill and organizes human wills towards self-determination. Everything is permitted now to humans, even planetary self-extinction. This is the postmodern historical dilemma. But has human nature changed?

At the dawn of secular history, Aristotle answered the question: what is the human? Famously, the attributed definition is: the rational animal. In our postmodern era, it is hard for us even to articulate this definition without suffusing it with postmodernist irony, the irony that, in looking back at history, recognizes our so-called “rationality” as the very source of our modern

weapons and secular political ideologies. Yet this Aristotelian definition still articulates the specific human difference that the three essential approaches of our postmodern era each examine (the three approaches of Girard, Derrida, and science). The definition says: “rational animal”; in Greek, ζωικὸν λόγον ἔχον: literally, the animal having logos, that is, the animal who has language.133 Science, philosophy, and religion today each view this specific difference, the possession of language, in three distinct ways. Let us consider now why I say there are precisely three approaches to seeing the hallmark of the human in this difference, our own peculiar possession of language.134

How are humans different from other animals? Anthropologists, sociologists, and paleontologists all represent one essential position on the origin of human difference: that of gradual evolution. Essentially, we are very smart apes. Over time, we gradually evolved the capacity for using language. And thus culture was made possible. Recently, scientists reported on promising recent research into the FOXP2 gene, a gene involved in speech and language that was positively selected in recent human evolution. (In this context, recent means 200,000 years ago, on a conservative estimate. Some scientists argue for as close as 50,000 years ago, so that the advent of the FOXP2 language gene corresponds with anthropological evidence indicating a sudden advance in human creativity, for example, in the production of art and jewelry.)135

The molecular evolution of language capabilities is one region of study, and it represents the contribution of genetic science to the problem of human origins. The right gene mutated, and we became human. This is the “scientific” answer to the question:viz., that what is human gradually evolved over time. If we wish to pinpoint the distinctively human to a unique and

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134 My discussion in this entire section on these points is inspired by and greatly indebted to Gans 1981a.
quantifiable human characteristic, genetics may allow us to do so, by pointing to a language gene 
that mutated 50,000 years ago and that thus made distinctively human culture possible.

But the origin of the human as recounted in the Bible’s Genesis myth, for example, does 
not speak of a gradual evolution. The origin of the human is a sudden irruption in history, as the 
distinctively human actor takes the stage. We need to look at such religious myth and to see what 
it offers that genetic science does not. It can offer a sudden creation story as opposed to science’s 
gradual evolutionary schema. But does this religious affirmation of the sudden origin of the 
human offer a greater insight than genetic science?

Religious myths about human origin offer the common consensus of scientific opinion an 
alternative to the evolutionary hypothesis concerning the origin of human difference. They affirm 
a significant origin; that is, not a procession of gradual evolution, but a suddenly significant 
event. As Girard’s work has suggested, this may in fact be a more scientific and more 
anthropological intuition into the prehistorical origin of the human than what is offered by the 
current state of evolutionary biology with its emphasis on gradualism. Yet while Girard’s 
hypothesis claims status as a scientific hypothesis, historically it has a kind of philosophic 
pedigree: it arose in response to Derrida’s critique of Western metaphysics as an anthropological 
radicalization of that Derridean critique. During his tenure as chair of the Department of 
Romance Languages (1965-68), Girard brought Derrida to America. He 

facilitated a symposium at Johns Hopkins which was to be important for the 
emergence of critical theory in America. With Richard Macksey and Eugenio 
Donato he organized an international conference in October of 1966, ‘The 
Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man.’ Participants included Roland 
Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Lucien Goldman, Jean Hippolyte, Jacques Lacan, 
Georges Poulet, Tsvetan Todorov, Jean-Pierre Vernant and others. It was at this 
symposium that Derrida gave his widely read and cited paper, ‘La structure, le 
sign, et le jeu dans le discourse des sciences humaines’ (Structure, sign and play 
in the discourse of the human sciences). This paper confirmed for Girard that 
Derrida was a critic to be reckoned with, and he found Derrida’s subsequent essay 
‘La pharmacie de Platon’ (Plato’s pharmacy) to be particularly significant. Girard 
would develop the pharmakos or scapegoat aspect of Derrida’s analysis of
writing/poison, placing it within history and actual social existence rather than restricting it to language and intertextuality like Derrida.136

Thus Girard, who brought Derrida to America, was influenced by the work of Derrida.137 This connection between Girard and Derrida has been studied by others,138 but with our discussion here we want to focus on the wider philosophical context for the theory of mimesis and desire that Girard, in the context of Derrida and postmodernism, puts forth after the history of metaphysics. Originally, the word “metaphysics” is the name given to a collection of Aristotelian writings: those baffling, almost unclassifiable ones that come in the Aristotelian corpus after (meta) the ones called Physics.139 Aristotle’s own term in the Metaphysics was not “metaphysics”, but rather “first philosophy”, i.e., a kind of thinking about origins.140

Girard gives a Derridean answer to the question about the origin of human difference, saying that texts (some more so than others; for example, the more purely mythical texts) can be deconstructed and revealed as texts of persecution.141 They can be deconstructed to reveal the absent presence of the scapegoat, the victim who is always already victimized to found the differentiations of all human culture.142 Girard claims that the uniqueness of the Judeo-Christian revelation lies in its historical unveiling of the scapegoating mechanism that is foundational for the various differentiations and hierarchies that characterize all human cultures. In the Biblical, but above all, Gospel texts, Christianity deconstructs the cultural forms of persecution and sides with the victim against the victimizers, says Girard.143 But the problem with this postmodern reinterpretation of Christianity is that its claim for uniqueness raises in turn the problem of pluralism: is this valorization of Christianity inevitably also implicated along with all the cultural

140 Aquinas uses Aristotelian metaphysics when thinking on origins. Cf. Summa Theologiae 1, qq. 90-102.
141 Girard 1986: 12-23.
142 Girard 1986: 24-44.
143 Girard 1996b.
forms of persecution and violence that it claims to deconstruct? Or does Girard’s postmodern hypothesis point rather to a unique human possibility, a genuine breakthrough in truly scientific knowledge?

Seen in the context of Derrida’s writings, we can arrive at both an appreciation of a Girardian breakthrough and at a critical appraisal of its present limitations. The key here is to see both Girard and Derrida historically, in the postmodern context in which scientists are pursuing their own anthropological study of the gradual evolution of human difference. Other than science’s theory of gradual evolution, there are two other positions in the great debate about the origin of human language and culture: those of Derrida and Girard. How can their approaches contribute to a more radically scientific anthropology? How can the humanities contribute to human science, the knowledge of human things?

Derrida’s deconstruction shows that, whatever the results of the scientific study of evolution, any exhibition in language that brings an origin to presence is always already a myth. Derrida’s *différence* shows how a non-origin is still originary. Girard, however, posits a violent origin in the scapegoat who is sacrificed to solve the crises of mimetic desire. The scapegoat alone is originary, and this anthropological insight survives Derrida’s deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence.

Girard’s mimetic theory lays the greatest stress on his hypothesis of the scapegoat mechanism as the generative principle of all religion and human culture. While Girard claims a scientific status for his hypothesis, Girard admits he has left the philosophical implications of his hypothesis for others, and this is fertile ground for original research, hence my study attempts, in the light of Girard, a re-reading of some key texts of Aristotle on some key issues
(e.g., in subsequent chapters, the "best tragedy" and the "best regime"). But because my re-
reading of Aristotle begins from a more recent theoretical starting point, viz., Gans’ comparison
of Derrida and Girard, Gans need to clarify, in this first chapter, the relation between
anthropological science (which, as we have seen above, uses empirioschematic tools to organize
experiential data) and Aristotelian metaphysics (which is the “first philosophy” of causal origins).

Gans has observed that Derrida’s redefinition of human difference as *différance*
radicalizes metaphysics. That is, Derrida is still metaphysical in recognizing the problem of the
origin of human difference (the cultural, after all, being what comes after nature), although
Derrida’s redefinition of human difference as *différance* denies the possibility of a solution to this
problem of origin. Derrida deconstructs philosophy’s solutions to essential questions (“what is
X?”) and concludes no solution is possible concerning human difference, because language
cannot discover its own origin. Derrida thus overlooks the possibility of a *generative* origin.

Girard’s proposed solution, however, is that the source of human difference lies in
mimetic capacity. From mimesis, rivalry is *generated*, which creates mimetic crises that are only
decisively resolved by scapegoating, with the scapegoat being the first significant and sacred
object, and historically the first scapegoating event marks the moment of hominization. Gans
observes that Girard’s hypothesis is, in one sense, the same as Derrida’s (Girard is more
anthropological than Derrida, but he is no less metaphysical, albeit in a more radically
anthropological way): in a word, says Gans, Girard anthropologizes Derrida’s deconstructive
notion of *différance*. (Derrida’s French neologism suggests a diachronic deferral in time, as
opposed to only a synchronic difference of presence. In Girard, it corresponds to both the
scapegoat’s diachronic *deferral* of conflict, and also its sacred synchronic *differentiation* of

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151 Gans 1981a: 800.
meanings for the community.) Both for Girard and Derrida, therefore, human difference is "absolutely arbitrary": for Derrida, such that no origin can ever be made present, because language always already defers such an origin and offers only supplementary traces; for Girard, such that the scapegoat chosen by any cultural lynch mob is only arbitrarily guilty. Thus the absolutely arbitrary difference of the human is for both Girard and Derrida problematically metaphysical in nature: for Derrida, it is a difference never chosen because it is never made present (only absence founds presence); for Girard, the motivation for scapegoating is always only relative to a concrete historical situation. Both these hypotheses (Derrida’s non-hypothesis and Girard’s generative hypothesis) are still too “metaphysical” because, however temporal, they stage this temporality on the representational scene of language. That is, for Derrida, difference is “always already” the deferring representation in language; for Girard, difference (however similarly temporal, relative and arbitrary) is nevertheless what first founds representation.154

Girard’s breakthrough is nevertheless less metaphysical and more resolutely anthropological, and it establishes, moreover, a link between religion and science with its generative hypothesis of the sudden origin of language. The generative function of scapegoating in culture potentially offers a scientific explanation of the emergence of human culture and language. While gradual evolution indeed occurred, evolution does not account for the sudden human transition from prehistory to history that religious myth dramatizes. In other words, the refinement of the evolutionary hypothesis only offers a more accurate horizontal temporal yardstick, but does not answer the question of the vertical problem of culturally significant meaning, which Girard, in his breakthrough, argues could be generated by the scapegoat who becomes the first deity, that is, as the first locus of significance for the now-human community.

The limitations of Girard’s theory become clear in light of Gans’ comparison of Girard’s *différence* with Derrida’s. Girard’s original event of scapegoating tries to explain the birth of human difference with its breakthrough anthropological hypothesis of generative violence, that is, of violence that generates sacred meaning. But it nevertheless conflates three things in its account of the origin of human difference: (1) the *original object* that generates a mimetic crisis (e.g., meat, i.e., a dead animal as a food source); (2) the *victim-as-scapegoat* (e.g., the member of the community lynched at the pinnacle of the crisis, i.e., the food fight); and (3) the *victim-as-signifier-of-the-sacred*.

In Girard’s understanding, these three have to be connected in one event. But note that the transition between the first two *defers resolution of conflict* (i.e., if we are no longer fighting over the meat, but all beating up on one member of the community, why would the death of that scapegoat stop the continuation of the violence to another?), whereas the transition between the last two is the *resolution of conflict by deferral* (i.e., the fascination with the scapegoat as a deity is what defers the continuation of the violence, because the deified scapegoat is the signifier of a restoration of peace and order after the aggressive discharge of tensions on a scapegoat). Empirically, the yoking of these three events, while harmonious with Girard’s exegesis of texts, especially Biblical ones, is, however, less than parsimonious as a scientific hypothesis. Scientifically speaking, it seems to require another swipe of Ockham’s razor.

But the parsimonious solution is not to separate these three moments according to the common consensus of either contemporary science or contemporary deconstruction: that is, either by dissolving the three moments so far apart that they disappear into the horizontal timeline of evolutionary gradualism or to dismiss outright the anthropological question by turning Derrida’s insight into language’s deferral of origins into a metaphysical dogma conflating still too many coincident hypotheses. Similar to Gans, I would venture to refine the Girardian hypothesis in the

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following way: to recognize that the transition from (1) to (2) is still within the physical realm of the animal and its appetitive objects (e.g., animals fighting over food), whereas the transition from (2) to (3) is within the metaphysical realm, i.e., by the generation of human difference through the recognition of significance. The distinction can be phrased this way: both transitions are transitions of mimesis, but the former as a transition of mimesis understood as imitation (of which many kinds of animals are capable), and the latter as a transition of mimesis understood as representation (of which only humans are capable).

Aristotle’s conception of mimesis, as Stephen Halliwell has argued, is underrated and misunderstood, and it can account for both these kinds of mimesis. Indeed, there is a dual aspect to Aristotelian mimesis that has not yet received adequate recognition. As Aristotle says in the Poetics, the human is the most mimetic (mimetikotaton: most imitative) among animals, yet also learns (representationally: tas matheseis poieitai dia mimeseos) through mimesis. The latter activity, learning, is an activity humans desire by nature and in which they take pleasure (pantes anthropoi tou eidenai oregontai phusel). Hence my study will proceed to work with Girard’s hypothesis to see how the one mimesis could anthropologically be generative of the other mimesis: that is, to see how imitation is generative of representation. Moreover, I will note evolutionary progress in the cultural spheres of esthetics and politics, which aim to solve the problems that human representation generates. I will observe in the next few chapters that, although resentments are born from imitation, the imitative process of resentful rivalries need not always end in scapegoating; to the contrary, achievements in esthetic and political form can defer the worst tendencies of these resentments.

What can the social sciences learn from the debate of literary scholars in the humanities like Girard and Derrida, a debate into which my study enters? I may state an answer to this

156 Poetics 4, 1448b 4-9.
157 Metaphysics I, 980a 22.
question based on the results attained in this brief section here on the origin of human difference: namely, that Girard’s hypothesis offers a way to conceive scientifically of religion’s own peculiar insight into humans as the animals having *logos*. Anthropologically, to be sure, the generative function of human difference (i.e., the function of language in founding human culture) is consonant with the findings of science. But what Girard offers postmodern anthropology, anthropology in our time, is the originary scene of culture as a basis for pluralism. As Gans says, “We cannot understand humanity in its diversity if we have no understanding of its originary unity.” Originary unity is intuited by religion with its tale of a sudden human origin. The anthropological problem of origin, which Derrida has shown is always already deferred by essentialist “metaphysics”, is one that science also metaphysically defers and cannot address unless it takes up the (originally religious) hypothesis of *sudden significance* which Girard offers in response to the limitations of both modern science and essentialist metaphysics. Where does human difference come from? It comes from an *event* (neither a “metaphysical” a-temporal essence nor a deconstructionist non-essence), an event which is the origin of language and thus of all cultural form.

Literary scholarship today can thus offer to all disciplines the origin of human difference by explaining it as an event, that is, as a *significant* event, a properly human event. This intuition of significance, preserved in religious creation myth, becomes truly scientific with Girard’s hypotheses. It offers what non-metaphysical science cannot. For significance is not generated (horizontally) by the natural mutation of a gene, but by the (vertical) human event of representation. Perhaps, as Girard suggests, the originary event is arbitrarily violent in origin, if his yoking of the three moments of the event remains defensible. But Gans’ work has explored other possibilities for mimetic theory, possibilities of refinement in light of Aristotelian

159 Gans 1997: 95.
160 I agree with Gans 1981a that it is not.
anthropology, possibilities of mimesis as originarily *non-violent* at hominization. Still, Girard’s postmodern contribution to our anthropological understanding of the generative capacities of mimesis “cannot be overestimated”.

In the remaining chapters, I will use Gans’ modification of Girard’s hypotheses to stimulate a new reading of Aristotle that will help discern an evolution of mimetic human representation in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare, in terms of both esthetic and political form. But I finish this chapter with a discussion of a recent proposal by Adam Katz for modifying Gans’ conception of the originary scene by coming to terms with the idea of “firstness” at hominization.

The Immaterial Intellect on the Originary Scene

A nagging question persists. Who was the *first* human? Call him “Adam”. But who was Adam? I will suggest that the answer that Girard’s mimetic theory gives to this question can be understood as eminently compatible with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition of metaphysics, but only if Girard’s hypotheses are *properly refined*, i.e., according to the proposals of Gans and Katz, and *properly oriented*, i.e., as an empirioschematic theory within a wider metaphysical context.

When assessing the significance of the work of Girard, because its generative evolutionary hypothesis has been articulated with such paradoxically theological rhetoric, its status as theory must eventually be placed for evaluation within the context of the Catholic metaphysical tradition that has developed in concert with its theology. In this regard, the

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161 Violence need occur only *after* the moment of hominization; cf. Gans 1997: 13-36, 131-151.
scapegoating hypothesis appears at first to be deficient in that it leaves no room for natural theology, because the status of human reason is so degraded as to be merely the evolutionary product of originary violence.\(^{168}\) But consider Gans’ suggested modification of the originary scene,\(^{169}\) which refines Girard’s hypothesis of hominization through scapegoating.\(^{170}\) If we understand hominization as more properly connected with the origin of language, rather than with the originary scapegoat event of violence, then man is recognized more properly not as a violent *homo religiosus* but rather as *homo rationalis*, the animal with language (*zoion logon echon*), as man is similarly properly recognized in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition (by defining a species using its genus and difference).\(^{171}\)

But whether or not either a Girardian or a Gansian originary scene of hominization is fully compatible with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, is not simply a matter of how congruent that scene is with this famous scholastic definition, although this definition serves as a reminder as to how to contextualize the metaphysics of the originary scene.\(^{172}\) Rather, the metaphysical dimension of the originary scene that will evaluate whether a particular evolutionary hypothesis stands or falls from the standpoint of “first philosophy,” is whether or not that hypothesis is compatible with the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of the *immaterial intellect of the human soul* being directly infused by God.

It is my contention that traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics is compatible with an empirioschematic hypothesis of the originary scene. A brief but excellent discussion of the empirioschematic and ontological issues involved in theorizing about the originary scene has recently been set forth by the physicist Anthony Rizzi.\(^{173}\) In short, the empirioschematic theory of evolution is not at odds with the Aristotelian-Thomistic qualification that God alone was capable

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170 Girard 1987a: 84-104.
172 On the permanent semiotic value of the logic of this manner of definition, see Deely 2001: 152-154.
of infusing the rational soul into the first human. Properly understood, there is nothing otiose or magical about this qualification; it is the same qualification made about every subsequent embryo in human history. From the metaphysical point of view, God alone infuses the rational soul of every human being who is conceived. But as Rizzi discusses, empirioschematic theory is constantly tempted to overstep the bounds of its modelling techniques and step into the realm of ontology. Hence the talk of “God” and “soul” seems suspect and otiose to the scientific mind habituated only in empiriological thinking. But what that talk represents is the transition from the material to the immaterial, as the rational capacity of man is infused at the point of hominization.

Rizzi postulates an evolutionary scenario that is useful for showing how the ontological and the empirioschematic must be considered in their proper domains. Indeed, he admits that that is the guiding purpose of his speculation, and he makes no claims to have “hit upon” a complete (empirioschematic and ontological) account of how the originary scene unfolded. (He states explicitly that his scenario “may not be the best possible one, but it’s meant to give one a clear sense of the key issues involved.”) Let us consider his postulated scenario and ask what is missing from it:

... a particular penultimate-man falls asleep and while he’s asleep the activity of natural factors (e.g. cosmic rays and natural ground radioactivity, which intensity and type was set by God, say in the beginning, to be such as it is at any particular moment) and the direct activity of God refashions not only the sensorial knowledge of the creature (He concurrently lets the purely animal soul fall back into potency and infuses the human soul), but also his physical appearance. The change in physical appearance serves to manifest the radical and complete internal change that is wrought by God’s action of infusion of the first human soul. The creature that then awakes is the first man.

176 Rizzi 2004: 255.
177 Rizzi 2004: 255.
A few things immediately stand out. Eve is missing. The serpent and the “apple” are missing.178 And further questions follow quickly. How will the children of Adam and Eve come to be generated? Will Eve too one day “wake up” as a human with immaterial rational capacities and then proceed to start procreating, as one now commensurate with this Adam? In other words, we need to ask how both science and metaphysics might together give an intelligible account of all the issues involved in hominization as suggested by the rest of the Biblical narrative.179 Rizzi’s scenario suggests a direction for such a harmonious account: in accord with proper metaphysics, God’s agency is reserved for the creation of the immaterial soul; in accord with proper science, if some physical refashioning is required to mark the dignity of such a being by elevating his material powers to a level suitable for working with his immaterial powers, then “cosmic rays and natural ground radioactivity” follow the laws of nature in executing that material refashioning (which, from a scientific viewpoint, would be due to “chance”, but from a theological viewpoint, of course, are due to the designs of providence). But Rizzi’s scenario is not fully satisfying as a scientific account of Genesis, for he leaves out consideration of the most interesting questions. Are Adam and Eve really just two former apes who wake up and start talking about which tree to eat from? This “scientific” story lacks all the excitement of the sin and the sex in the mythical account. Besides, if the “direct activity” of God is invoked to explain the refashioning of matter, why not just stick with the original narrative, in which God makes Adam out of dust, like a potter?180

I wish to suggest, using mimetic theory and generative anthropology, a scenario involving the sudden scene of hominization characteristic of Girard and Gans (and of the Genesis text)181 that in addition accounts for the immaterial soul, after the manner of Rizzi’s postulated evolutionary scenario. My suggestion will be an improvement on Rizzi’s scenario because, by

178 Of course, the fruit of the tree is never identified as an “apple” in the Genesis text.
180 Genesis 2:7.
placing the empiriological contributions of Girard and Gans into a metaphysical context, I can answer all the questions about Eve and the serpent, which Rizzi’s truncated scenario raises, with one and the same originary scene of hominization (as, in its own way, the Genesis text does too). But before I make my suggestion to solve the metaphysical problem of how the immaterial intellect is present on the originary scene, I need to formulate the originary scene in the clearest possible empiriological terms. That is, I need to take a position on who has the best possible scientific hypothesis of the originary scene. For this question is important not just in empiriological terms, but also metaphysical ones. A true scientific hypothesis cannot be metaphysically incoherent. Thus I need to reach the best empiriological version of the originary scene so that I will have the least amount of difficulty in seeing it in harmony with metaphysics. This refinement process will be one of purging our scientific-causal account of any mythical metaphysics. This process will culminate, in the end, with my suggestion for how to understand the full harmony of a refined scientific hypothesis (of the originary scene) with the metaphysical requirements (of what the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition calls “the immaterial intellect”).

First, I note that Gans’ originary scene must be preferred to Girard’s. Scientifically, there are many reasons why Gans’ hypothesis is more minimal and therefore preferable. But for my purposes here my main focus is on the metaphysical considerations. Metaphysically, Girard’s scene inadequately accounts for the origin of the immaterial. For him, the scapegoat serves as the material, mechanistic cause from which humanity is born. That is, the body of the dead scapegoat becomes the locus of signification. But the problem with this scenario is that it postulates the evolution of the formal cause from the material cause. That is, language comes later and is “added on” to the dead scapegoat. The signification of the scapegoat as a deity (which signification is by definition “immaterial”) is the formal representation of what has materially

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184 Girard 1987a: 99-104.
transpired: unanimous aggression has been discharged by the agency of the proto-humans, bringing about a material state of startling and unifying peace which results upon realization of the communal unity now forged with the death of the scapegoat.

But this Girardian scenario of the formalization of humanity (through language) being added on to its material realization (the scapegoat mechanism bringing peace) is metaphysically incoherent. That is, it is unsustainable from the viewpoint of a rational doctrine of causality. The only reason Girard adheres to it is because of a resolute desire to keep his hypothesis “scientific” at all costs. He thereby adopts the materialist posture of the anti-metaphysical prejudices of contemporary scientific culture. But from the standpoint of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, it is incoherent to educe formal causality from material causality. The potency of matter can only be actualized by the actuality of form. The principle of causality (which makes all scientific inquiry possible) is that “nothing changes itself”; “something can act only so far as it is in act”\textsuperscript{185}. In other words, something cannot give itself (i.e., cause itself) what it does not have (i.e., to be what it is not). This does not mean that evolution is impossible; far from it.\textsuperscript{186} It means only that when the potency of matter is reconfigured, by receiving a form of higher actuality, it requires a cause proportionate to that act of reconfiguration, i.e., capable of conferring the state of actuality of that new figuration. In an evolutionary transition, this means simply than the new form cannot arrive after the evolutionary change in the matter. Rather, it has to be coincident with that material change as its formal cause. The material development “calls for” its new form at the same time that it is ready for evolutionary advancement into a higher phase of final causality.\textsuperscript{187} The reason for this is that form and matter are the correlative principles of material beings, since any material body is in its nature a compound of matter and form;\textsuperscript{188} but since form is the higher principle

\textsuperscript{185} Rizzi 2004: 123.
\textsuperscript{187} Rizzi 2004: 251-254.
(giving its actuality to the potency of matter), as Aristotle says, the nature of a thing is primarily its form.\textsuperscript{189}

The evolution of language after the originary scene is obviously a process with material components (additional sounds, gestures, symbols, etc.) that can be added on by the human community, by means of their own rational agency, to their material repertoire of signs after that first scene of hominization. But as part of that scene, the \textit{mental act} by which an original human conceives of the \textit{material scapegoat} as somehow \textit{immaterially significant} has to be part of the scene.\textsuperscript{190} In Girard’s account of the scene, this corresponds to the deification of the scapegoat. But while this is a plausible materialist scientific hypothesis (i.e., insofar as it is restricted to material causality), it is unfortunately impossible to test empirically in material terms, since the originary scene is by definition unrepeatable. The plausibility of Girard’s scenario derives solely from his empirioschematic classification of the structures of what he alleges are the distorted mythical memories traceable to that originary scene of persecution.\textsuperscript{191} But his hypothesis does not disentangle the empirioschematic from the originary scene’s metaphysical dimension: viz., that the \textit{mental act} generated on the scene is \textit{immaterial}.

This immateriality is nothing magical or mythical, provided we can resolve it in terms of its causal explanations. Girard purports to do so, but my critique is that his material cause \textit{precedes} his formal cause. The immaterial mental act he needs to explain is: “This [scapegoat] is our communal deity.” Of course, I am expressing that mental act here with a metaphysical declarative sentence that strictly speaking is only a subsequent evolutionary mode of speech acts.\textsuperscript{192} But on the originary scene, even without such a declarative sentence, there was generated the same \textit{mental act} which this declarative sentence now attempts to represent using language. On

\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Physics} 2.1, 193a 9-193b 18.
\textsuperscript{190} On the immaterial component of mental acts, see Rizzi 2004: 68-74.
\textsuperscript{191} Girard 1986: 12-44.
the originary scene a mere gesture could have stood in for today’s declarative sentence as the representation signing that mental act. The point is that the generative hypothesis explains the generation of an *internal mental act* that defines the human as human. Therefore if the originary scene is generated by a host of material factors aligning in terms of material causality (e.g., unanimous violence against a scapegoat), the mental act that apprehends that alignment has to be coincident with that alignment. The reason for this is that a mental act cannot apprehend what it apprehends *after* it has apprehended it. By definition the formal causality of the immaterial act of apprehension must be coincident with its material causes. Otherwise no new *nature* of human consciousness has been formed. Without the correlation of matter and form, no new nature has evolved, and the only event occurring is animals apprehending (with their indexical sensory activity) various material configurations on the scene. That animal apprehension would be devoid of any communal significance because no new symbolic *form* has been given to them.¹⁹³

But in the originary scene of Gans, there is a correlation of form with matter in that the formal causality of the mental act of representation is generated together with the matter of the scene. The consequence of his modified scenic hypothesis is that a scapegoat need not necessarily be part of the scene,¹⁹⁴ which is fortunate, since it seems to be a needlessly otiose claim to demand the material presence of a scapegoat on the originary scene. Rather, what is required is simply the correlation of a formally immaterial mental act with a plausible set of material conditions that could define a group as a community:

... a circle of protohumans, possibly after a successful hunt, surround an appetitively attractive object, for example, the body of a large animal. Such an object is potentially a focus of conflict, since the appetites of all are directed to something that cannot belong to all... at the moment of crisis, the strength of the appetitive drive has been increased by appetitive mimesis, the propensity to imitate one's fellows in their choice of an object of appropriation, to such a point that the dominance hierarchy can no longer counteract the symmetry of the situation... Hence, in violation of the dominance hierarchy, all hands reach out

for the object; but at the same time each is deterred from appropriating it by the sight of all the others reaching in the same direction. The ‘fearful symmetry’ of the situation makes it impossible for any one participant to defy the others and pursue the gesture to its conclusion. The center of the circle appears to possess a repellent, sacred force that prevents its occupation by the members of the group, that converts the gesture of appropriation into a gesture of designation, that is, into an ostensive sign. Thus the sign arises as an aborted gesture of appropriation that comes to designate the object rather than attempting to capture it. The sign is an economical substitute for its inaccessible referent. Things are scarce and consequently objects of potential contention; signs are abundant because they can be reproduced at will.\textsuperscript{195}

Thus the communal understanding on the originary scene is metaphysical. By this I use the term “metaphysical” not in its pejorative sense, that is, as something scientifically otiose that invokes disproportionate principles of causality to explain states of material being. Rather I use the term in its proper causal sense, in that it denotes the immaterial being of something. The immaterial being on the original scene is the mental act by which the new humans recognize the formal significance (“a repellent, sacred force”) of the correlative material alignment (a symmetry generated by the “aborted gesture of appropriation”). This correlation of matter with form thus arrives on the originary scene as an experience of a uniquely new nature. That is, it is the inaugural experience of the human as human.

Thus, given human nature (i.e., that it is constituted and defined by mental acts of such communal significance), it is impossible to maintain an evolutionary hypothesis that postulates either the priority of a formal cause or a material cause. To assert the priority of formal causality would be to assert something like, “God made man when he said, ‘let there be man,’ and there was man.” That is, it would be to invoke merely divine causality on the originary scene. For what “divine causality” means in metaphysical terms here is simply the metaphysical causal doctrine of the priority of act to form (since the divinity of God is that, unlike any other being, he alone is pure act).\textsuperscript{196} Therefore formal causality alone without material causality is what myths recognize

\textsuperscript{195} Gans 1993: 8-9.
\textsuperscript{196} Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, qq. 2-3.
about the originary scene, viz., the formal significance of the human; but they divorce this formal significance, however, from a fully scientific account of the correlative material causes.

Girard, on the other hand, asserts the priority of a sudden material cause. The scapegoat generates communal peace, which in turn is misinterpreted and misrepresented as coming from the divine agency of that deified scapegoat. But it is impossible for this to occur as a coincident event (i.e., in which the formal and material causes coincide) that causes the new human nature, because the peace precedes the recognition of it as “divine” peace. In the Gansian scene, however, the material cause (i.e., the communal symmetry of the aborted gestures of appropriation) is inconceivable in the scenic hypothesis apart from its coincidence with the formal causality (i.e., the recognition of the gestures as ostensive, that is, as indicating the sacred object of desire in the scenic center). In Girard’s scene, because we can imagine a “time lag” between the material cause (the dead scapegoat bringing peace) and the formal cause (the recognition of the scapegoat as deity) this means that there is no necessary connection between the material and formal cause. In Gans’ scene, however, there is no conceivable “time lag”, because the formal and material causation is correlative. The formal significance is inseparable from the aborted gesture itself. The sacred center is designated by the communal sign: “This [central object of desire] is our communal deity.” The participants in the scene do not require a “time lag” to reflect on the significance of their aborted gesture, because it is the very act of their aborted gesture that is significant: i.e., it has averted violence by means of a mental act in which the community recognizes their representation of the sacred as having averted violence.

In reply, a Girardian may wish to stipulate that the recognition of the scapegoat as deity could, at one time, occur simultaneously with the generated peace. In other words, one could assert that the scapegoat mechanism would have resulted in the generation of the human when, on one occasion, there was no “time lag”. That is, at some time, then, formal and material causality had simultaneously coincided. Perhaps this would occur after several “trial runs” of the scapegoat
scenario, which eventually “clicked” simultaneously on this one occasion, finally resulting, at last, in the formal recognition that coincides with human consciousness: “This [immediately misrecognized scapegoat] is our deity.”

But this reply (viz., “imagine if ‘on this one occasion’”) does not answer the metaphysical objection to the Girardian scenario. That is, it does not address the fault in the Girardian hypothesis: that the postulated recognition of the deity (i.e., the misrecognized scapegoat) has no necessary connection between the simultaneity of the formal and material causality as constitutive of the originary scene. The possible “time lag” that we can imagine on the scapegoat scene demonstrates the lack of causal necessity in the hypothesis. Only on the Gansian hypothesis is there a necessary connection between the material and formal causality. In other words, only the Gansian hypothesis is truly scientific, whereas the Girardian scenario still postulates the magic of storytelling, the mythical intervention that “on this one occasion” humanity happened. The way to see this is to realize that the lack of a necessary correlation between matter and form in Girard’s scenario is equivalent, in metaphysical terms, to postulating that on one special day, in the blink of an eye, in one simultaneous moment, God comes down, walks up next to the scapegoat, smacks the protohumans upside the head, points to the scapegoat, and instructs the protohumans to misrecognize the dead body for Himself. In other words, Girard’s scenario, because it is not a truly minimal hypothesis, is still needlessly mythical in metaphysical terms. That is, it grants no autonomy or automatic causality to the workings of nature. It gives the illusion that Girard is explaining the scene like a scientific materialist would. Yet, at the last minute, his scene relies on a mythical divine agency, because it is forced to postulate that everything aligned causally at just one happy moment in time.

The nature of causation, however, is that it related to the order of the actual natures of the beings involved. For the originary scene to align with a causal necessity, then, Gans’ minimal

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hypothesis is preferable because it accords with a minimal account of human nature in necessary terms: that is, as formally immaterial (possessing minds in the activity of using language) but materially conditioned by an alignment of appetites, imaginations and gestures (which the activity formally signifies). But there is, however, one valid objection that can be made to the Gansian scenario. And with my preceding explanation of what the objection from metaphysics (i.e., from the principle of causality) is to the Girardian scene, we can catch clear sight of it. For there is a possibility of making the originary scene more minimal, that is, of purging it of its last narrative residue in which one unnecessary mythical element asks us to suspend our disbelief and to postulate hominization “on this one occasion”.

Adam Katz has already suggested the necessary amendment to refine the hypothesis of the originary scene into its most minimal form. His amendment concerns the originary gesture, about which he suggests the following:

… the emission of the originary sign, the gesture of renunciation enacted in the moment when mimetic crisis threatens the existence of the community itself in a generalized paroxysm of violence, is enacted by a single individual in midst of the crisis, and the other members of the proto-community in turn imitate and thereby register and confirm that sign as a sign. On its own terms, it seems to me that this sharpens precisely the elements of the originary scene that originary thinking puts to work…

After quoting the passage from Gans on the originary scene that we have already quoted above, in which Gans states, “The ‘fearful symmetry’ of the situation makes it impossible for any one participant to defy the others and pursue the gesture to its conclusion,” Katz goes on to argue persuasively for his amendment with the following rejoinder:

But then what makes the symmetry fearful, if not that somewhere in the group the violence has already begun, that is, that the ostensive sign wards off a mimetic contagion in process? In this case the aborted gesture becomes a sign in distinction from this contagion. While the aborted gesture might conceivably be made by several, even all of the participants, the necessary distinction from the

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process of contagion suggests that somewhere this distinction will be sharper, and that if the sign qua sign emerges someplace within the scene it is economical to assume that imitation of that singular gesture is more likely than a simultaneous discovery of its efficacy.200

In terms of my critique of Girard’s scene, then, which demanded a metaphysically coherent account of causality of the scene, we can see how Katz’ amendment refines Gans’ scene in accord with the strictest scientific causal requirements. The Katz amendment purges the originary scene of its last mythical “occasion” postulate. That is, we no longer have to assume that “on this one occasion” everyone just so happened to abort their gestures of appropriation at roughly the same time. We do not need any such mythical narrative requirement, in which protohumans stumble across the formal signification of the sacred because the “fearful symmetry” of the ostensive gestures just so happened to align with the material configuration of the extended arms on the encircling periphery, all arms being stretched towards the one desired object in the center.

Katz’ amendment should be adopted and confirmed, then, for a reason in addition to the ones that he has articulated (concerning all the possibilities that this more minimal hypothesis opens up for originary analysis). That is, on the basis of the reasoning I have set forth regarding the metaphysical requirements of the scene, Katz’ amendment is required if the originary scene is to be purged of any residue of mythical narrative. We have seen that “mythical narrative” is equivalent to the inordinate invocation of divine agency in any explanatory scenario. If change (especially the evolutionary change which is our subject matter here) can be accounted for by causal factors other than direct divine intervention, then the principle of causality demands that we scientifically assign a proper cause proportionate to the activation of the form on the scene. The originary scene, in metaphysical terms, only requires one protohuman to abort his gesture as he recognizes a sacrality on the scene (formal cause) that is correlative to the appetitively desired object (material cause). The reason for this being the minimal metaphysical requirement is that

only *one mental act* is required to be generated from the one correlative act of form actualizing the potency in matter. At minimum, only one protohuman on the scene is required to mentally "get it" (i.e., to represent "this is the deity") and to thus become human in nature by this first actualization of humanity. Let us name this first human in honour of the discoverer of the Katz amendment; let us call him "Adam."

And thus we have arrived at last to the point where I can offer my suggestion about how to metaphysically understand the incorporation of "firstness" on the originary scene (that "firstness" to which Katz has drawn our attention) by giving a unitary empiriological and ontological account of the scene. Improving upon Rizzi’s scenario, I suggest the following originary scene:

The community of protohumans is threatened by a contagion of violence as they battle over an appetitive object. Before the mimetic crisis had ensued, “Adam” has been the dominant animal in the hierarchy. Now he asserts his dominance, but in a new way. Whereas before he would physically defeat his rivals, it is now the case that, because the crisis of undifferentiation has led to too many simultaneous challengers for him to defeat, he throws an almost futile gesture in the direction of the desired object that he cannot possess. It is futile in that it deliberately stops short of appropriation so that he does not incur the wrath of his now numerous undifferentiated challengers. But it is not quite totally futile in that, with that aborted gesture of appropriation, he indicates both the ostensive object that is desired in the imagination *and* (inadvertently) the sacred means of ending the mimetic crisis: viz., deferring appropriative action and instead contemplating the unpossessable sacred center.201 It is an inspired moment. At this point, of the renunciation of mimetic contagion for *non-violent contemplation*, God infuses the rational soul, thus turning “Adam” into Adam, the first human. Metaphysically, God has only set his seal upon what the necessary coincidence of matter and form has brought about in this scenario: namely, a mimetic

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gesture that begins with the leader, Adam, and is then copied from him, which as it is copied by
the community moves the community from contagion to order in the manner of Gans' originrary
scene: a peaceful periphery united by an ostensive sign as they stand, in symbolic contemplation,
around a sacred center.

This improves upon Rizzi's scenario because instead of Adam "waking up" from a
random act of providence, we have a material evolution and adaptation from what was properly
materially disposed. That is, a set of material conditions (mimetic crisis and contagion) "called
out" for the reception of a new form of which that mimetic protohuman potency was also capable
at that evolutionary stage (viz., the first symbolic mental act). When the matter received its new
form, the new human community was created from each protohuman who became human by
copying the formal act of representation over violence. The evolutionary species with the material
conditions to sustain this developmental capacity of representational non-violence was thus also,
on the metaphysical level, granted the dignity of immaterial existence, which type of existence, so
metaphysics reasons, can only come about from the direct creation of God who, as immaterial, is
the only cause proportionate to the creation of immateriality.202

Finally, to answer the questions about Eve and the serpent: "Eve" was the one who
became Eve by being the first to imitate Adam's gesture. She was thus "born from his side" in the
characteristic way that humans are humans: i.e., by copying the representational mimetic gesture
of aborted appropriation, otherwise known as "language" (our species' adaptive advantage, a tool
with the potency for deferring violence). Note the suggestive figuration of Eve's origin in the
Genesis text. A rib is an (interior) curved line, like the curve of the (exterior) outstretched arm:
i.e., like an aborted gesture of appropriation. The interiority of the rib is Genesis' poetic way of
mimicking the interiorization on the originary scene of the mimetic gesture that correlativey
constitutes the mental act of representation. In other words, "Adam's rib" is non-violence. To say

202 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I, q. 90, aa. 2-3.
that Eve is created from Adam’s rib, then, is not misogynist myth; it is to credit women with being the first helpmates in deploying non-violence. Eve probably sympathised with her mate Adam’s “almost futile” gesture, expressing her solidarity with him by copying his gesture; together, their mimesis set a pattern for a new mimetic cycle, one that reversed the contagion and led to the new human community.

As for the serpent, it is the “doubling” of human nature as the rational animal that suddenly becomes present on this originary scene. As an animal, that is, in its lower nature (i.e., metaphorically crawling “low” and serpent-like), the new human still possesses animal appetite (i.e., the desire to appropriate the tasty object of desire, the food source in the sacred center over which the protohumans were likely fighting). But in its higher nature, that is, as the now-rational human (i.e., possessing the first sign), the new human understands that sign as a symbolic interdiction on the sacred center. (In this regard, note that the tree is at the center of the Garden of Eden. In this way, the Genesis text profoundly reproduces the center-periphery structure of the originary scene.)

The original sin was perhaps then committed by Eve, who first acted to appropriate the sacred center. It seems highly plausible that she would move to appropriate the sacred center first. Usually an outsider from this circle of quarrelling males, she suddenly saw a new appropriative opportunity. Urged on by “the serpent within” (“Now’s your chance! The men are all standing around enjoying this new activity of pointing at the god!”), she made her move. Her move was quickly imitated by Adam as he too “fell” from the circle of non-violence. And then the rest of the community fell into the “original sin” of the sparagmos that Gans has described so well in its evolutionary moment after the originary scene of hominization (and not before it as

\footnote{Genesis 3:3. Cf. Gans 1985: 19-23.}

\footnote{Again, the primacy of this feminine “original attempt to appropriate” divinity need not be interpreted as a misogynist element but rather as the “firstness” on the originary scene of the impulse of the most marginalized participant on the scene to gravitate first to the sacred when given the opportunity.}
Girard would have it).\textsuperscript{205} If anything, the sacred center is “scapegoated” in the sparagmos in a return to animal irrationality; but in spite of this fall, or better, because of it, the community is ever after haunted by the memory of the evolutionary moment of representation just prior to it \textit{that made the sparagmos’ “knowledge of good and evil” possible.}\textsuperscript{206} The cycle can now repeat again and again: \textit{formal recognition of the sacred is ritually re-enacted again and again in the fundamentally characteristic human mode, and the deity is killed again and again in the feeding ritual of the sparagmos that also \textit{materially} binds the community together in an adaptively advantageous socializing ritual (the communal feast).} \textit{“God is dead, and we ourselves have killed him”}: Nietzsche’s great insight was into this fundamental anthropological moment, as Girard has so persuasively argued.\textsuperscript{207}

The main actors on the originary scene, then, were the original “power couple”: Adam and Eve. Adam was the first protohuman suitably evolved to a point where, in a mimetic crisis, he could “invent” the originary sign; for this, he was rewarded by God with what the evolved material conditions \textit{on this scene} “called for”, viz., the immortality of his immaterial intellect.\textsuperscript{208} Eve was the first to copy his gesture, and thus his true “helpmate” in modelling what human community must be, i.e., able to defer violence (through language), in order for all to join it; for this, she was rewarded by God with the immortality of her immaterial intellect. So too were the other participants on that originary scene, whoever they might have been; perhaps they and their descendents were the “sons of heaven” and the “Nephilim” of the Genesis text,\textsuperscript{209} which would suggest that the human race need not go back directly to the one mother, Eve, unless she was the lone bold female who achieved hominization on the originary scene, and thus through whom alone human children could be conceived with Adam (and, if Genesis is accurate in this regard,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item Gans 1997: 133-136.
    \item Cf. Gans 1997: 142-151.
    \item Cf. Maritain 1997: 118-127.
    \item \textit{Genesis} 6:2-4.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
then the "sons of heaven" from the originary scene could have procreated humans only by union with her female descendants.\textsuperscript{210}

In such terms, then, the originary scene of mimetic theory and generative anthropology might be developed in future work (for it is beyond the bounds of the limitations I have imposed on myself in the present study to go any further). In other words, by following this example I have suggested, of explicitly re-orienting the generative hypothesis within the proper metaphysical framework in which man must ultimately be viewed, confusions and mistakes might be avoided in the refinement of the scientific evolutionary model, because any empirioschematic refinement must not be confused with the ontological domain of metaphysics. For example, it seems likely that the originary scene was a monogenetic event and not polygenetic.\textsuperscript{211} But this empirioschematic detail need not detain us from concluding with certainty about the ontological question: i.e., that sometime, somewhere, there was "firstness"; namely, a first Adam. In accord with the empirioschematic model of the originary scene, we can understand this metaphysical "firstness" (e.g., of which the Genesis myth narrates) on the originary scene of generative anthropology, viz., as the activity of the first immaterial intellect in modelling the representation of the sacred center (which was copied first by "Eve," and then by the others).

Original violence (the "original sin" of the sparagmos) is thus also only metaphysically conceivable as a "fall", i.e., only as posterior to hominization and that first human recognition of sacred interdiction. Theologically, the Genesis text is suggestive of how the drama of the originary scene might have lapsed, in both empirioschematic and ontological terms, into the "original sin": Metaphysically, Eve would have been the first transgressor of the sign, and thus we can credit her too with a "firstness", i.e., as instigator of the originary violence of the sparagmos. Empirioschematically, we might also be able to find scientific evidence for the

plausibility of this originary interpretation of the Genesis scenario, depending on whether genetic science can find a DNA trace back to the scene.\textsuperscript{212} But I leave any further consideration of these matters for theologians to work out in accord with the proper separation of the two spheres as we have treated them. Empirioschematically, genetic science will have to be used to solve the scientific problems of our parentage and our descent from the actors in the one monogenetic or many polygenetic originary scenes around the globe. Metaphysically, we can affirm Katz’ “firstness” amendment to Gans’ originary scene as the most causally coherent account of the unfolding of the originary scene, that is, of the originary minimal occurrence of immaterial intellect on the originary scene in one man first.

In conclusion, then, as a preface to the further progress of the types of evolutionary modelling research opened up by my metaphysical clarifications about the originary hypothesis, I may observe how the suggestion I have made here, updating the work of Jacques Maritain toward a Thomist idea of evolution,\textsuperscript{213} opens up lines of research in many areas besides theology. Just as Maritain assessed the state of both the metaphysical and empiriological sciences on the question of evolution, so too have we today refined the question by bringing mimetic theory’s scientific hypothesis about cultural evolution into the picture. As Maritain described the originary man, in him human nature was virtually present: “For ‘virtually’ means really, even though it may not mean formally.”\textsuperscript{214} Thus I venture to note in conclusion that humanity is virtually present in the originary scene, i.e., in a way such that from it all subsequent forms of human development are resolvable in terms of that originary scene.

\textsuperscript{212} Bonnette 2003: 155-168.
\textsuperscript{213} Maritain 1997: 85-131.
\textsuperscript{214} Maritain 1997: 95.
Summary: The Metaphysics of Politics in the Evolutionary Model

Girard’s five indirect clues for an empirioschematic resolution of the data of myth to the originary scene will assist me as I subsequently discern how myth evolves in *tragedy and other esthetic forms*. Further, I will be able to proceed to a proper analysis of *political forms* from the results of my metaphysical considerations here. This is because, given the metaphysical dimension of the originary scene, the activity of humans in politics must be understood as the activity of the *immaterial intellect* as *deliberately* applied to the organization of the human community. In evolutionary terms, it is related to the way *esthetic form manages resentment* in societies. After I explore in more detail in Chapter Two how the evolution of myth through tragedy’s formal reworkings of it is such a real achievement in *esthetic form*, I will consider in the remaining chapters not only how *political form* is related to this advance of esthetic form, but also how the “firstness” of the *statesman* hearkens back to the first experience of the metaphysical *immaterial intellect* that I have identified as the “firstness” of Adam, the first human on the *originary scene*.

In considering the problem of the origin of human difference in *metaphysical* terms, we have seen how the position of Aristotelian metaphysics is not essentialist, in that it is eminently compatible with evolutionary models. An *empiriological* science uses modelling techniques to describe reality. Physics and chemistry are able to do empiriological science on an *empiriometric* level, that is, to consider models of real beings in which the observable qualities about them are not so numerous that the phenomenon is too complex to describe mathematically. However, biology (and chemistry on a higher level) must use *empirioschematic* modelling techniques; that is, they consider vast swaths of observational data that cannot be described solely with quantitative models, and so the data is organized by hypotheses designed to account for them in the most economical schematic ways. Models of evolution work precisely this way. One cannot

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write a mathematical formula for the evolution of the human species, but nonetheless the observational data is best accounted for by the empirioschematic theory of evolution.

In considering human cultural evolution, which we saw must occur after the originary event of human difference (which Gans has hypothesized as the sudden acquisition of language), empirioschematic models are likewise useful for the evolutionary modelling of a generative account of humanity's historical achievements in esthetics and politics, as we will see in the coming chapters. These empirioschematic models ought not to be confused with the ontological or "essentialist" dogmas that are commonly thought to be the deadweight of metaphysics or religion. Despite his Christian rhetoric, we have seen that Girard is above all a scientific thinker with an empiriological evolutionary model open to scientific refinement. In this regard, I have already voiced my approval of the subtle refinements to his generative evolutionary model by Gans and Katz.

In the previous section, we saw that the integrity of the scientific nature of the generative evolutionary hypothesis still leaves open questions of theology and metaphysics for those who care to pursue them in that domain of inquiry. For my purposes in this study, however, I will not continue in that direction. Rather, the main result from this first chapter is that I now have at my disposal a rigorous articulation of a minimal evolutionary model for application to problems of esthetics and politics. As we saw, that model was derived from a comparative study of Aristotle and Girard on myth and tragedy. It is a fivefold semiotic schema for organizing form and content in a cultural poetics aiming to be as scientific as possible in classifying form and content. In terms of the originary scene as refined and amended by generative anthropology, I may restate its
fivfold semiotic structure as rearranging the Girardian elements into the following “dramatic” narrative of the originary scene:

Table 1: Empirioschematic Analysis of the Originary Scene

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Metabasis:</td>
<td>The fearful contagion of mimetic crisis threatens the protohumans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Anagnôrasis:</td>
<td>A first aborted gesture of appropriation represents the sacred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Hamartia:</td>
<td>Then, marginalized members on the scene mimic this interdiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Peripeteia:</td>
<td>The first ostensive sign has become a mimetic model, reversing the crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Pathos:</td>
<td>The sparagmos inaugurates the first ritual feast of the human community.</td>
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The community leader, Adam, is he who (in his “firstness”) discovers and represents the sacred. Because the community, in the throes of mimetic crisis, is more focused on each other than on the desired object of appropriation, the situation is ripe for a reversal of the contagion. The reversal begins on the margins, with those marginalized protohumans (like Eve) who are by nature more disposed to the esthetic experimentation of simply copying Adam as a mimetic model, rather than challenging his place in the dominance hierarchy with head-on violence. The ostensive sign catches on, starting from the outermost periphery, spreading through (good)

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216 Cf. Girard 1993: 151-152. Note that the numbering above corresponds only to my order of exposition of the fivfold semiotic structure earlier in this chapter. Girard’s numbering follows the order of my “dramatic” narrative above, except that for him the violence comes before the reversal of crisis, rather than before it, and the mythical accusation of guilt precedes recognizing signs of a scapegoating victim to be blamed with this accusation. That is, Girard’s order for mythical narrative is: (1) metabasis, (2) hamartia, (3) anagnôrasis, (4), pathos, (5) peripeteia. But the refinements of generative anthropology have led me to a reconstruction of the proper order as: (1) metabasis, (2) anagnôrasis, (3) hamartia, (4), peripeteia, (5) pathos. That is, on the originary scene Adam’s recognition of the sacred comes first before the community mimics his interdiction, and deferral comes before sparagmos.

217 I am indebted to conversations with Pablo Bandera in which he emphasized to me the nature of advanced mimetic contagion as focused away from the object. Cf. Girard 1987a: 26.
contagious mimesis, until the community of protohumans has now become a human community through the shared “fearful symmetry” of their aborted gestures of appropriation. They share the esthetic enjoyment of imaginary appropriation (which the ostensive sign designates) while at the same time they feel the force of the repulsive interdiction which the sign places over the desired object in their center (which is precisely the contact point of the human with the sacred and the metaphysical).\textsuperscript{218} The sparagmos that eventually transgresses the sign is also haunted by it, binding the community ritually in an egalitarian feast.\textsuperscript{219}

In the subsequent evolution of human cultural forms, both esthetic experience and the “firstness” of the political leader will mark the important transition points in evolutionary terms, because they are so integral to the originary scene. In the \textit{hamartia} moment of my schematization of the originary scene, the “crime” of selfishly appropriating the desired object in the center is transmuted into the involuntary but happy “error” of representing the center with an ostensive sign instead of appropriating it. (Cultural advance thus always attenuates crime and the communal resentment it brings. Note the originary role of the leader here.) In the moments of \textit{anagnōrisis} and \textit{peripeteia} in my schematization of the originary scene, the human community enjoys the esthetic satisfaction of deferring violence instead of giving in to it. As we will see, the “firstness” of the leader cannot be left out when doing originary analysis of esthetic experiences that mark important evolutionarily transitional stages, because the political is bound up with the esthetic in the originary scene due to the leader’s special “metaphysical” role in deploying the immaterial power of language.

\textsuperscript{219} Cf. Gans 1997: 142-143. Richard van Oort has suggested how the evolution of this feast could come about: “…the aborted gesture of appropriation is transformed into a sign: the deferral of mimetic conflict through representation. After this hesitation, the ‘division’ of the kill follows in the ensuing sparagmos. But this sparagmos is forever haunted by the memory of the sign, which demonstrated to each individual that his relationship to the central appetitive object is mediated by the other’s desire. Henceforth each individual will be unable to appropriate the central object without realizing that he is participating in a social act that is mediated by the other’s desire. … [The community] is now bound by a network, not of biological kinship relations, but by cultural relations: all those who participate in their ‘rite of passage’ of delayed gratification before the meat are a part of their community.” (van Oort et al. 2005)
Chapter Three will make a preparatory study of evolutionary political form for my reading of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* and Shakespeare’s *Henriad*. But first Chapter Two will survey how the fivefold semiotic structure, which we refined from our comparative study of Girard and Aristotle, is evolutionarily applicable to and visible in Greek tragedy from the point of view of “the best tragedy”. I contend that the best tragedies (understood as *serious drama*) mark not only the evolution of esthetic form to its perfection but also commemorate the achievements of political form in history. (To argue for this thesis I will examine, in Chapters Four and Five, the most famous political cycles of Aeschylus and Shakespeare in order to compare the evolution of cultural form from the classical to the neoclassical.)

Tragedy mirrors a refounding of the whole social order. This cultural rebirth succeeds in art and in history by defusing the resentment that is the engine of mimetic rivalry. Girard’s critique of cultural form is a postmodern victimary deconstruction of Aristotle’s analysis of the esthetic form of classical tragedy. But as we will see in the next chapter, unlike the multi-polar possibilities opened up by Gans’ generative anthropology, Girard’s binary reading of tragedy’s scapegoating form against its heroic content militates against the discernment of the positive evolution of esthetic form.

Metaphysics treats the theoretical problems of material and immaterial being. Gans has written about how the function of metaphysical (i.e., “declarative sentence”) language use by the human species achieves the deferral of violence.\(^{220}\) “Metaphysics is the instrument of our conquest of nature, but, in the human sphere, we must move toward its overcoming, as we seek to overcome the resentments of mimetic desire.”\(^{221}\) In other words, we can all designate the same object of desire with our declarative sentences, an act that lulls us into metaphysical forgetfulness of the mimetic origins of language itself. We think that our desires are our own, simply because

\(^{221}\) Gans 2002.
we can express them in declarative sentences. But this metaphysical forgetfulness has to be
overcome again and again in order to preserve the human community. The function of deferral in
esthetics and politics is to preserve the human community. Otherwise the consequence of non-
deferral is the mimetic contagion that results from our belief in the "romantic lie" of metaphysical
desire. In both esthetics and politics the human community returns to the structure of the
originary scene in order to defer violence. Esthetics and politics can evolve in history, and the
empirioschematic generative hypothesis of the originary scene allows us to track these changes in
retrospect, as myth and ritual have evolved into secular institutions.

Having completed my consideration of both the empirioschematic and metaphysical
structure of the originary scene, I turn now, in preparation for analyzing classical and neoclassical
depictions of the "firstness" of the statesman, to make an originary analysis of the structure of the
classical esthetic.

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222 Girard 1966.
Chapter Two:
Esthetic Form

Introduction: Evolution of the Classical Esthetic

In this chapter, I explore the evolution of the classical esthetic. In the formal evolution of the classical esthetic, there is no scapegoating conspiracy of “things hidden” that each tragedy uncovers, but rather a cultural evolution of esthetic form that defers resentment in art. Art’s resentful utopias achieve high culture when they defer resentment in history. Gans’ critique of Girard establishes that tragic form can progress across esthetic epochs, and I turn now to confirm this by suggesting a theoretical framework in which the form and content of tragedy can be seen in terms of generative anthropology, i.e., with an attempt to catch sight of the cultural context of the genesis of tragedy by reading the form and content in anthropological terms.

This semiotic reading of Greek tragedy affirms that the classical esthetic has been appropriately analyzed in Aristotle’s Poetics. It shows, therefore, how formal structure developed out of tragedy’s semiotic treatment of content. Although the analysis of form and content began in Greece with Aristotle, it is applicable to subsequent Western literature, as my treatment of Shakespeare in Chapter Five will suggest. But first I turn now to use generative anthropology to re-appropriate Aristotelian esthetic criteria as eminently suited for an anthropological analysis of Greek tragedy’s semiosis. Aristotle’s theory of what constitutes the best esthetic form of tragedy will then allow me to evaluate the Oresteia in Chapter Four in terms of esthetic form (as well as in terms of the Aristotelian political forms on which Chapter Three focuses). I turn now to consider what, according to Aristotle, constitutes the best esthetic form for serious drama.

Aristotle’s Best Tragedy

One of the most widespread assumptions about a good Greek tragedy is that it must have an unhappy ending. Aristotle himself, in Poetics 13, seems to sanction this persistent misunderstanding with his remarks on Sophocles’ most famous work, the Oedipus Tyrannus. For this reason, commentators have long puzzled over Aristotle’s subsequent ranking of Oedipus Tyrannus as a kind of second-rate tragedy in Poetics 14. The puzzle over the apparent contradiction between Poetics 13 and 14 has not been resolved by philologists, but recent scholarship has nonetheless argued persuasively that Aristotle must be read as making a coherent argument across both chapters.

In this spirit, then, that is, in defence of the coherence of Aristotle’s argument about the best esthetic experience that tragedy can offer, I argue that the Poetics needs to be read more carefully (and more anthropologically, i.e., according to the generative hypothesis of the originary scene) in order to recognize that, in Poetics 13, Aristotle is discussing the content of tragedy, and, in Poetics 14, the form of tragedy. For such a reading, Gans’ understanding of esthetic experience (as an oscillation between form and content) can help to clarify Aristotle’s argument, because Gans’ theory of esthetic history also helps to clarify, with the benefit of hindsight, the discussion of high culture and popular culture also embedded in the Poetics’ treatment of tragic form and content.

As Matthew Schneider has observed, “Aristotle anticipates Gans” in many ways, because the key insights of the Poetics into the esthetic experience of tragedy in fact address key anthropological questions:

The durability of Aristotle’s theory therefore results neither from historic accident nor scholarly conspiracy: discovering that an anthropologically-grounded theory

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225 Poetics 14, 1454a 2-7.
of the sign could sidestep Plato's fears about art initiating the contagion of conflictive mimesis enables the classical esthetic eventually to achieve its logical end point: the exploration [of] the scene of representation qua scene.  

Subsequent literary criticism may have abandoned Aristotle’s rigorous anthropological questioning, as Schneider notes, in exchange for a much more sloppy “sacred ambivalence” about esthetic experience. But in addition to shrinking from the anthropological desacralization of tragedy, literary criticism has also made Sophocles’ Oedipus into a sacred cow, by propagating (on the authority of a hasty reading of Aristotle) the idea that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is Aristotle’s favourite tragedy.

While the play’s peculiar construction of tragic irony is a unique case (and hence a special case that tests the esthetic rule about the best tragedy), apart from its irony the play is a textbook example of *clichéd form and content* in tragedy: a hero learns the truth too late, and comes to an unhappy end. It is this clichéd form and content that makes it exemplary for Aristotle’s purposes in the *Poetics*. For Aristotle thinks, and says (1453a 27-30), that Euripides, not Sophocles, is the gold standard in tragedy. To understand Aristotle on this point, we need to see that he is not contradicting himself between *Poetics* 13 and 14 on the matter of Oedipus.

Generative anthropology can help us here to make a closer reading of Aristotle’s discussion of form and content, and of high and popular culture, with regard to the esthetic of tragedy. In particular, such a closer anthropological reading solves philology’s special difficulties with the received text of *Poetics* 13 and 14. But it also serves a more general and salutary purpose. It argues against the popular prejudice of many readers of Aristotle and Greek tragedy, a prejudice to which even writings on generative anthropology have hitherto not been immune: the notion

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229 Schneider 1995.

230 I would argue that Aristotle in *Poetics* 14 (at 1453b 31-34) is aware of the special case that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* presents, because of his distinction between Oedipus, on the one hand, and Alcmaeon and Telegonus, on the other hand. Hence we surmise that Aristotle would have shared our opinion about the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, namely, that it is such an interesting topic for conversation about tragedy because it is both so *sui generis* and so clichéd.

that Aristotle gives pre-eminent esthetic rank to the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. On the contrary, Aristotle’s *Poetics* gives no warrant for us to see this play as the “perfect” tragedy\(^{232}\) or as the “greatest tragedy” of Sophocles.\(^{233}\) Even if this might be our literary opinion, it cannot be attributed to Aristotle on the basis of his text.

The *Oedipus Tyrannus* is, rather, in Aristotle’s eyes, a compendium of exemplary tragic clichés. It is, however, admittedly a *tour de force* that turns stones to bread. But Sophocles’ esthetic miracle is thus one of clichéd form and content *reworked*,\(^{234}\) to turn out unparalleled, and literally exemplary, tragic irony. But my concern here is not this unique esthetic achievement of Sophocles.\(^{235}\) It is, rather, the persistent misunderstanding of Aristotle’s discussion of the play’s clichéd form and content in *Poetics* 13 and 14, which both professional scholars and Greekless Hollywood amateurs have preferred to read as an endorsement of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and of its unhappy ending, as the Oscar-caliber “master plot” of Greek tragedy.\(^{236}\)

**Form and Content: Unhappy or Happy (*Poetics* 13-14)**

The plot of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is best summarized as, *formally*, the unhappy belated discovery of a violent *pathos* (suffering), and, with regard to *content*, as the unhappy end of a morally serious man, King Oedipus. In terms of the fivefold empirioschematic semiotic analysis I outlined in the previous chapter, this unity of form and content comprises the tragic drama as a unified artwork that reworks the semiotic elements of the originary mythical narrative (i.e., the originary narrative of the structure of the originary scene, not of any “original” precursors of

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\(^{232}\) Schneider 1995.

\(^{233}\) Gans 1993: 139.

\(^{234}\) By “reworked” I mean that the content of traditional stories is retold under new form, as Aristotle recommends (1453b 23-26).


Oedipus myths).\textsuperscript{237} I suggest that this unity may be schematized according to the five narrative universals that together semiotically constitute the tragedy.\textsuperscript{238}

### Table 2: Empirioschematic Analysis of *Oedipus Tyrannus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) <strong>Metabasis:</strong></th>
<th>There is a plague in Thebes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) <strong>Pathos:</strong></td>
<td>Thebes’ former king, Laius, has been murdered. Delphi instructs the Thebans to kill or expel the murderer(s) of Laius.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) <strong>Anagnòrisis:</strong></td>
<td>Laius is the father of Oedipus the outsider. Also, Oedipus has married the widowed queen, Jocasta, who is his mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) <strong>Peripeteia:</strong></td>
<td>Oedipus, once famed for his relentless pursuit of insight (e.g., into the murder of Laius), blinds himself. He demands to be cast out of Thebes, but the command is in vain because he is no longer in charge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) <strong>Hamartia:</strong>\textsuperscript{239}</td>
<td>Oedipus’ resolution to uncover the truth has led to the discovery that he himself is the murderer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The play, which may perhaps be dated to between 436 and 426 BCE, stands on its own, and was certainly not composed as part of a trilogy with either *Oedipus at Colonus* (401 BCE), or *Antigone* (c.442 BCE).\textsuperscript{240} Even if forced together as an artificial “trilogy” (as in contemporary anthologies commonly used in schools and universities), the three plays scarcely portray an ultimately optimistic reversal of fortune for Oedipus. While he seems, after years of wandering in misery, to be taken by the gods to themselves and to become a blessing for Athens at the end of his life, this outcome in the *Oedipus at Colonus* would have to give way chronologically to the continuance of the curse of Oedipus in the multiple suicides enacted in the *Antigone*: the suicides

\textsuperscript{237} Cf. Johnson and Price-Williams 1996.  
\textsuperscript{238} Cf. my analysis with the plot summary from which it is derived at Sommerstein 2002: 43.  
\textsuperscript{240} Sommerstein 2002: 42-43, 78-80.
of Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice. The mythological chronology of the events comprising the artificial “trilogy” would have to be: *Oedipus Tyrannus, Oedipus at Colonus,* and *Antigone.* That is, the “happy ending” of the *Oedipus at Colonus* would be succeeded by the “unhappy ending” of the *Antigone.*

In the historical chronology, of course, the play with the “happy ending” is dated decades after the other two plays, the *Oedipus at Colonus* being written instead in Sophocles’ old age. But it is interesting to note, in this regard, that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* did not win first prize in competition. The posthumous production of the latest work *Oedipus at Colonus,* however, did win first prize. Yet in spite of its lesser acclaim Aristotle nevertheless still has much to say about the *Oedipus Tyrannus* in the *Poetics.*

In the *Poetics,* Aristotle refers to the *Oedipus Tyrannus* ten times: twice with Thyestes, in chapter 13, as possessing the best sort of subject matter for tragedy; twice in chapter 11, as an example of *peripeteia* (reversal of the action) and an *anagnorisis* (recognition of persons) coincident with the *peripeteia;* again in chapter 16 as possessing (along with Euripides’ *Iphigenia among the Taurians*) the best kind of *anagnorisis* that arises from the dramatic action itself; twice in chapter 14, as a tragedy whose plot summary alone causes one to shudder (*phrittein*), containing an *anagnorisis* of *philia* (i.e. of kinship); in chapter 15, as a plot that leaves the inexplicable (the *alogon*) outside the action of the plot (meaning, as he says in chapter 24, that Oedipus’s lack of previous inquiry into how Laius died does not concern the

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243 Poetics 13, 1453a 11, 1453a 20.
244 Poetics 11, 1452a 24-33.
245 Poetics 16, 1455a 18.
246 Poetics 14, 1453b 7.
247 Poetics 14, 1453b 31.
248 Poetics 15, 1454b 8.
action of the plot);\textsuperscript{249} and in chapter 26 as being of the right (non-epic) length for effectively portraying the action.\textsuperscript{250}

This frequency of mention (a veritable top ten list of Aristotelian literary criticism) has led readers to assume that the \textit{Oedipus Tyrannus} is Aristotle's gold standard for tragedy. Yet a major puzzle has long confronted interpreters of the \textit{Poetics}: if the \textit{Oedipus Tyrannus} is so unproblematically the gold standard, how are we to reconcile the account in chapter 13 (where the Oedipus myth is the stuff of the best tragedies), and the account elsewhere (that it has the best kind of thrill, a coincident \textit{anagnorisis} and \textit{peripeteia}, as part of a taut plot structure that excludes inexplicable external action from the course of its own internal development), with the account in chapter 14? For chapter 14 argues that plot structure of the \textit{Oedipus Tyrannus} is second-best. The best formal plot structure is exemplified for Aristotle in the \textit{Iphigenia among the Taurians},\textsuperscript{251} with its coincident \textit{anagnorisis} and \textit{peripeteia} preventatively before, and not unfortunately after, the fact of violent \textit{pathos} (the main violent \textit{pathos} here which, while certainly being the play's implicit subject, is never realized as its actual content). In empirioschematic terms, this Euripidean unity of form and content may also be resolved into the fivefold semiosis of its originary elements, as in the following table:\textsuperscript{252}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{249} \textit{Poetics} 24, 1460a 30.
\item \textsuperscript{250} \textit{Poetics} 26, 1462b 2.
\item \textsuperscript{251} And also exemplified in the lost \textit{Cresphontes} and \textit{Helle}. Note that Aristotle uses \textit{kratiston} ("most powerful") as a synonym for best, because the tragedy with the most powerful esthetic effect on the audience is what is to be judged the best.
\item \textsuperscript{252} The excerpts of plot summary are quoted from Sommerstein 2002: 52. Part of my scientific approach is that a good plot summary by someone else should be amenable to my analysis of it as revealing the essential elements of the originary scene.
\end{itemize}
### Table 3: Empirioschematic Analysis of *Iphigenia among the Taurians*

| (1) **Metabasis:** | “Iphigenia, spirited away by Artemis when about to be sacrificed by her father Agamemnon at Aulis, is now her priestess in the land of the Tauri (the Crimea)...” |
| (2) **Pathos:** | Iphigenia is “obliged to sacrifice every Greek who lands there.” |
| (4) **Peripeteia:** | “Orestes and Pylades arrive in quest of the image Artemis Tauropolos; they are captured, but Iphigenia spares Pylades on condition that he takes a message back to Greece for her.” |
| (3) **Anagnórisis:** | “The message reveals her identity to Orestes, and after a joyful reunion...” |
| (5) **Hamartia:** | “...they plan and execute a scheme to escape from the wicked King Thoas, taking the image to be with them (to be set up at Halae in Attica).” That is, brother and sister commit a “crime” of theft for which Thoas takes the “blame” by his making the “mistake”.

This is the myth as reworked into the tragedy with a “happy ending” that Aristotle clearly commends in *Poetics* 14. In *Poetics* 17, Aristotle gives his own summary of the *Iphigenia* play’s plot form, that is, of the general [*katholou*] form. He exhibits this form without the “contents” [*hupothenta*] of the character names [*onomata*] and without the episodic details concerning these characters [*epeisodia*]:

As for the story, whether the poet takes its general outline ready made or constructs it for himself, he should first sketch the general outline, and then fill in the episodes and amplify in detail. The general outline [*to katholou*] may be illustrated by the *Iphigeneia*. A young girl is sacrificed; she disappears mysteriously from the eyes of those who sacrificed her; she is transported to another country, where the custom is to sacrifice any strangers to the goddess. To this ministry she is appointed. Some time later her own brother chances to arrive. The fact that the oracle for some reason ordered him to go there, is outside the

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254 On the history of the happy plot of Iphigenia the Taurian priestess, see Burnett 1971: 73-75.
general plan of the play. The purpose, again, of his coming is outside of the plot’s proper action. However, he comes, he is seized, and, when on the point of being sacrificed, reveals who he is. The mode of recognition may be either that of Euripides or of Polyidus, in whose play he exclaims very naturally: “So it was not my sister only, but I too, who was doomed to be sacrificed”; and by that remark he is saved. After this, the names being once given [hupothenta ta onomata], it remains to fill in the episodes. The episodes [ta epeisodia] must be fitting to the general action. In the case of Orestes, for example, there is the madness that led to his capture [cf. Eur. IT 281-335], and his deliverance by means of the purificatory rite [cf. Eur. IT 1029 ff.]. In the drama, the episodes are short, but it is these that give extension to epic poetry.  

This passage shows not only that Aristotle is conscious of a distinction between plot form (which can be sketched in outline without names) and plot content (which concerns the people named and portrayed in dramatic episodes). It also shows that he has reflected on the problem of plot form and content with regard to the Iphigeneia among the Taurians, the very play that he has just commended as best in form, in Poetics 14.  

The problem, however, is whether this contradicts Aristotle’s apparent recommendation of the Oedipus character-arc, the “unhappy ending” metabasis (change of fortune), in Poetics 13. (Note that in taking up this question in this manner Aristotle shows that, for the classical esthetic, the mythical metabasis content, as a “plague” of disorder, now shifts its semiotic focus to the character-arc metabasis of a human character.)  

Stephen Halliwell has rightly observed that the unhappy ending of the metabasis apparently recommended in Poetics 13 is “exceptional within the Poetics’ discussion of tragedy”; for Aristotle, “the possibility of a change in either direction” clearly describes all the metabasis options available to tragedy.  

A careful reading of the text shows that Aristotle is noncommittal on any formula for the recommended metabasis in tragedy. For Halliwell, then, there is continuity between Aristotle’s discussion in Poetics 13 and 14, and “the anomaly between Poetics 13 and 14 is nontrivial.”

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256 Poetics 14, 1454a 4-7.

with regard to the variations of plot-form is best interpreted in light of a unifying idea: the consistently serious content of tragedy. While Halliwell thus suggests a reading in the direction of content to achieve a coherent account of Poetics 13 and 14, he does not fully work out the esthetic interplay of form and content in tragedy.

Elizabeth Belfiore, in her book Tragic Pleasures, attempts to reconcile Poetics 13 with Poetics 14 by reaffirming the Oedipus Tyrannus as Aristotle’s gold standard for tragedy. In absolute terms, she suggests, Aristotle prefers a plot with an unhappy ending, where the coincident anagnorisis and peripeteia occurs after a pathos. The Iphigenia plot, with its happy ending, is ranked superior in Poetics 14 only because it “provides an easily followed formula”.

The Oedipus plot is thus absolutely best “according to craft” (kata ten tekhnen), whereas the Iphigenia plot is only relatively best; that is, relative to what poets have been able to generate in formulaic practice by chance (ouk apo tekhnes all' apo tukhes). Belfiore admits that her suggested interpretation is inconclusive and “a plausible suggestion only” because it rests on “this slight difference in phrasing” regarding chance and craft.

Despite Belfiore’s efforts, the distinction between the content apparently recommended in Poetics 13 (an unhappy metabasis) and the plot form recommended in Poetics 14 (a happy anagnorisis coincident with a peripeteia generating an ending without pathos) reflects a tension inherent in tragedy that cannot simply be explained with reference to chance practice and carefully cultivated craft. The question remains why an “unhappy ending” ought to be associated with the best craft, and the “happy ending” associated with allegedly formulaic plots. In a word, if the crowds are relatively happy with the formulaic happy Hollywood endings, why is the art-house “unhappy ending” absolutely superior? Moreover, why did allegedly formulaic happy

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261 Poetics 13, 1453a 22-23.
262 Poetics 14, 1454a 9-11.
endings evolve only later, after the earlier, absolutely superior unhappy endings? The case in point: *Oedipus Tyrannus* is likely dateable to between 436 and 426 BCE and *Iphigenia among the Taurians* is dated to c.414 BCE.²⁶⁴

The problem still remains why Aristotle in *Poetics* 14 would rank later, allegedly formulaic developments in plot composition higher than the earlier, high culture “unhappy ending” type of tragedy. Surely an appeal to chance or formula would define not the superiority, but rather the inferiority, of “happy ending” tragedies, just as people imply today when they sneer at the haphazard and formulaic composition of Hollywood endings. The problem has traditionally been seen as concerning why Aristotle gives highest rank to the Hollywood ending in *Poetics* 14 but seems to imply everywhere else that *Oedipus Tyrannus* is, despite its second-best type of ending, the Oscar-calibre gold standard in all other respects. Positing that the craft of tragedy degenerated artistically as it advanced technically introduces unwarranted (Nietzschean) assumptions nowhere justified in Aristotle’s text.²⁶⁵ A more minimal hypothesis is required to explain the harmony between Aristotle’s remarks on the *Oedipus* and those on the *Iphigenia.*

As I have already suggested, the distinction that explains this apparent contradiction in the *Poetics* is not, pace Belfiore, the distinction between chance and craft, but rather the distinction between content and form. The evolution of tragedy’s subject matter no doubt followed what, by “chance” in a given year, best resonated with audiences. But the cultivation of such tragic content (a *metabasis* that proved successful with audiences) surely was a practice that was subsequently refined by the development of craft no less than the cultivation of the tragic plot forms (that used more complicated configurations of *anagnorisis, peripeteia,* and *pathos,*). The tension between form and content is not reducible, then, to the opposition between chance and craft. The interplay between form and content, rather, opens up more possibilities for the artwork,

²⁶⁵ Cf. Nietzsche 1999. *(The Birth of Tragedy)*
possibilities greater in number than a simple binary opposition between happy and unhappy endings.

**High Culture: Pathetic or Ethical Form (Poetics 17-18)**

The fact that there is an apparent contradiction in the *Poetics* between the recommendation of happy and unhappy endings points only to the inadequacy of this binary standard for literary criticism, and not to the inadequacy of the *Poetics*. It is insufficient merely to define the difference between high culture and popular culture as the difference between unhappy endings and happy endings. Someone who classifies every movie with a happy Hollywood ending as crowd-pleasing (*philanthropon*) popular culture, and every movie with an unhappy art-house ending as serious (*spoudaios*) high culture, is being superficial. Clearly there can be products of high culture with happy endings and products of popular culture with unhappy endings. A more subtle classification, based on a more careful consideration of both the artwork’s form and content, is required. To Aristotle’s credit, the *Poetics* does contain such a careful classification and consideration. The tension reflected in the apparent contradiction between chapters 13 and 14 testifies to the depth of Aristotle’s analysis, a nascent critical theory that distinguishes between popular effect and more refined artistry, and that does so, moreover, with reference to form and content.

Evidence for reading *Poetics* 13 and 14 this way is indicated elsewhere in the work. The plot summary of the *Iphigenia* in *Poetics* 17, which distinguishes between form and content, has already been mentioned. But the distinction is prepared for from the beginning, in *Poetics* 2, where Aristotle outlines the ultimate subjects, that is, the defining content, of tragedy’s *mimesis*: namely, the type of people it represents. Tragedy represents people as better than they are in real life, whereas the content of comedy is people represented as worse than they are:
We must represent people either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. The same distinction marks off tragedy from comedy; for comedy aims at representing people as worse, tragedy as better than in actual life.266

In *Poetics* 25, Aristotle remarks that Euripides in his drama, unlike the drama of Sophocles, represents people, not as they ought to be, but as they are.267 This remark should not lead us to conclude that Aristotle thinks that Euripides composes in a third genre of drama, one that, by virtue of its realistic content, is neither tragedy nor comedy. For Aristotle says in *Poetics* 13 that Euripides is “the most tragic of the poets”.268 What we have here, rather, is only an apparent contradiction between *Poetics* 2 and 25 in Aristotle’s comparison of Sophocles and Euripides. Like the tension between *Poetics* 13 and 14, we also have here a tension that reflects the tension between content and form. We should not say that Sophocles is high culture and Euripides is popular culture, any more than we should say that unhappy endings are high culture and Hollywood endings are popular culture. (We could say such a thing, but it would be sloppy thinking that does not approach the rigor of Aristotle’s critical theory.) I will return, therefore, to this comparison of Euripides and Sophocles near the end of this chapter,269 after having studied first how Aristotle balances a consideration of content in *Poetics* 13 with a consideration of form in *Poetics* 14. Any apparent contradiction between the two considerations merely reflects the inherent tension between form and content. The proof of this interpretation, unlike Belfiore’s weak distinction between chance and craft, is a strong textual basis for reading an underlying unity in the discussions of high and popular cultural effects in the *Poetics*.

The treatise’s unity is visible when it becomes clear how the distinction between form and content neatly solves longstanding difficulties with interpreting some notorious passages. In

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266 *Poetics* 2, 1448a 2-5, 1448a 16-18.
267 *Poetics* 25, 1460b 33-36.
268 *Poetics* 13, 1453a 27-30.
269 In the section on “Cultural Form-of-the-Content: Resentment”.

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Poetics 18, four “kinds” [eide] of tragedy are identified in a passage that has long baffled interpreters with regard to how it is connected to the discussion in the rest of the Poetics.270

There are four kinds [eide] of tragedy: the complex [peplegmene], depending entirely on reversal and recognition; the pathetic [pathetike] - such as the tragedies on Ajax and Ixion; the ethical [ethike] - such as the Phthiotides and the Peleus. The fourth kind is the simple ... 271

Here the “simple” and “complex” kinds can only refer to the plot forms discussed back in Poetics 14. But the introduction of “pathetic” and “ethical” as kinds of tragedy is novel. We would suggest, however, that these two terms refer to the two possible outcomes for a character’s character-arc (metabasis, or change of fortune):272 an “unhappy” or a “happy” ending as the tragedy’s content.273 For example, Ajax and Ixion are two characters that, considered as tragic subject matter, invariably come to an unhappy end. Ajax commits suicide after losing the battle over Achilles’ armor to Odysseus and then descending into dishonorable madness. For trying to rape Hera, Ixion suffers eternal punishment in Tartarus on a flaming wheel. The pathetike outcome of both their stories offers tragedy the straightforwardly poignant and sacrificial content of intense human suffering.

The Phthiotides (“Women of Phthia”) and Peleus (the father of Achilles), on the other hand, are perhaps less clear for us as examples, for the plays do not survive (so too with Ixion). Based on what evidence we do have, however, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that they had “happy endings”. For example, the famous myth of Peleus, Achilles’ father, tells of how he wrestles the goddess Thetis who, in spite of her best efforts to change shape and escape, nevertheless is compelled to be his bride. A wedding is the classic example of a happy ending.

271 Poetics 18, 1455b 32-1456a 2.
272 Note that in tragedy’s evolution from myth, the communal metabasis content theme of “plague” becomes focused (in union with tragedy’s formal developments) into individual metabasis content themes, viz., pathetic or ethical.
273 Again, note the semiosic evolution in the classical esthetic: the metabasis as content is, in tragedy, focused on the fate of an individual and not the entire community.
and the wedding of Peleus and Thetis could have been the happy finale of a *Peleus.*

(The judgment of Paris at the ensuing wedding reception, however, and the Trojan War which followed upon it, would not be episodes proper to the unitary dramatic action of the wedding, if the wedding were taken as the content for a *Peleus.*

But if Aristotle is referring in *Poetics* 18 rather to the non-extant *Peleus* of Euripides, that play would treat the rescue of Peleus from persecutors by Philoctetes on his return from Troy.

Similarly, the ending of the *Phthiotides* would also have been happy, since the play would concern the rescue of Hermione and Orestes from their persecutors and then their marriage. Aristotle could be referring to the non-extant *Phthiotides* of Sophocles, in which this is likely what happened. Or else when he says, “Phthiotides and Peleus” (*hai Phthiotides kai ho Peleus*), he is referring to them, not as names of plays, but simply as characters, as he has just done with Ajax and Ixion. That is, he is perhaps referring to both the character Peleus and the chorus of the Women of Phthia in an extant play of Euripides, namely, the *Andromache,* in which precisely this persecution and marriage of Hermione and Orestes does happen. It would not be unusual for the play to be known by a second name; that is, by the name of its chorus, the *Phthiotides,* as well as by the name *Andromache.*

In passing, I may also note how this “happy ending” in the *Andromache* tragedy formally reworks the mythical elements of the originary scene, to which it can be resolved on the basis of a semiotic identification of narrative universals.

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275 Cf. Aristotle at 1462b 2-5 and 1459b 1-7.
277 As Post 1938: 13-15 suggests.
278 Post 1938: 14.
279 I quote the plot summary from Sommerstein 2002: 51.
Table 4: Empirioschematic Analysis of Andromache

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td><strong>Metabasis:</strong> The plague of rivalry between two rivals intensifies in the absence of order. “Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and wife of Neoptolemus, plots in her husband’s absence against his concubine Andromache (widow of Hector).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td><strong>Pathos:</strong> “...and he successfully plots to have Neoptolemus murdered at Delphi.” Esthetic sacrificial violence seals the restoration of order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td><strong>Anagnôrisis:</strong> “She calls in her father, and Andromache and her son are about to be put to death but are saved by Neoptolemus’ aged grandfather Peleus.” A friend of the accused outsider manifests himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td><strong>Peripeteia:</strong> “Hermione contemplates suicide, but her ex-fiancé Orestes, who hates Neoptolemus for having robbed him of Hermione, opportunely arrives; she runs off with him...” The crisis is reversed and there is a restoration of order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td><strong>Hamartia:</strong> “...whom she accuses of making her barren by witchcraft.” The plague (here identified with the metaphor of “barrenness”) comes complete with a mythical accusation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this later development of the classical esthetic, the elements of the originary scene are semiotically reworked into a new form of tragic melodrama. Evolutionarily, the Greeks have come a long way from the real drama of the originary scene to be able to enjoy such an imaginary play with a “happy ending”.

By adducing the Phthiotides and Peleus as examples, it seems clear that by *ethike* Aristotle means a tragedy that has a plot whose content is “persecution and deliverance”; in other words, he means a *metabasis* with a happy ending. This reading of Aristotle’s classification of tragedy (in terms of form and content) is strengthened by the parallel passage in *Poetics* 24, where Homer’s epic poems are also described both in terms of general form (being either simple or complex) and their content (being either “pathetic” or “ethical”). The passage confirms, with

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280 Post 1938: 15.
reference to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, my thesis about “pathetic” and “ethical” in *Poetics* 18 as being descriptions of the *metabasis* content (“unhappy” or “happy”):

Again, epic poetry must have the same kinds [*eide*] as tragedy: it must be simple [*haplen*], or complex [*peplegmenen*], or ethical [*ethiken*], or pathetic [*pathetiken*]. The parts also, with the exception of song and spectacle, are the same; for it requires reversals, recognitions, and sufferings. Moreover, the thoughts and the diction ought to be done well. In all these respects, Homer serves as our earliest and sufficient model. Indeed each of his poems has a twofold composition. The *Iliad* is at once simple [*haploun*] and pathetic [*Ipathetikon*], and the *Odyssey* complex [*peplegmenon*] (for recognition scenes run through it), and at the same time ethical [*ethike*]. Moreover, in diction and thought they are supreme.\(^{281}\)

Aristotle’s remarks here make sense when we consider the reworked mythical content. On the one hand, the *Iliad* has an unhappy ending, as Achilles accepts his impending death and the women of Troy mourn for the slain Hector; but not only is the *Iliad* thus *pathetike* in content, it is simple (*haple*) in form, for Achilles’ anger has simply destined him for eternal glory (*kleos*) all along.\(^{282}\) (Of course, he had not foreseen how his anger, and how he does or does not control it, would be the motive force for his winning glory in the successive conflicts, first with Agamemnon, then with Hector, and finally with Priam. But the simple plot form of the *Iliad* works out the consequences of Achilles’ wrath in all its glorious manifestations.) On the other hand, the *Odyssey* has a happy ending, as Odysseus returns home, slays the interloping suitors, and is reunited with his wife Penelope; but not only is the *Odyssey* thus *ethike* in content, it is complex (*peplegmene*) in form, as the suitors undergo a reversal (they intend to insult a beggar for sport, but in doing so they precipitate their destruction) and a recognition (for they incur the wrath of Odysseus, who it is in disguise as the beggar).

\(^{281}\) *Poetics* 18, 1459b 7-16.

\(^{282}\) For a different view of the *Iliad*, arguing that it is complex due to a *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* in response to the death of Patroclus, see Rutherford 1982. I am not persuaded by the argument, however, since Achilles forsakes neither anger nor glory at *Iliad* 18.98-126.
Better translations for “pathetic” and “ethical” in chapters 18 and 24, therefore, would be “poignant” (pathetike) for the unhappy metabasis, and “morally uplifting” or “inspirational” (ethike) for the happy metabasis. Generative anthropology, moreover, would probably be most comfortable with translations that point to generative contexts for the content of these two types of metabasis: “sacrificial” (for pathetike) and “sentimental” (for ethike). If we admit with Schneider that “Aristotle anticipates Gans”, then it is not hard to see that, in terms of ultimate content, tragedies can be either “chronicles of love” (ethike) or “chronicles of resentment” (pathetikon).283 As mythical models, Achilles is the master prototype for “resentment” stories and Odysseus, striving to return to Penelope, is the master prototype for “love” stories. Tragedy then transposes the model stories of myth into the key of high culture.284

Both Sophocles and Euripides achieve the high culture effect of Greek tragedy, but in Aristotle’s literary criticism their mimetic achievement can be distinguished with regard to how they employ form and content. Further, Aristotle’s remarks on Homer help us discern his views on the kinds of tragedy composed by Sophocles and Euripides. But before clarifying Aristotle’s stance on these more general questions, it is time now to confront the particular problem still before us: the fact that, in Poetics 14, the effect of the plot of Euripides’ Iphigenia among the Taurians is ranked by Aristotle above that of Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus. In the latter play, I maintain that Aristotle sees how Sophocles reworks clichéd tragic form and content to good effect, whereas in the former play of Euripides I see innovation that is not simply effective tragedy but, in Aristotle’s view, the full semiosic development of the composite of form and content that is most proper to the high culture of tragedy. To see this, we need to recognize the harmony in Aristotle’s presentation, as already evidenced in the discussions above (from Poetics 17, 2, 25, 18, and 24), where he has shown his sensitivity with regard to distinguishing form and

283 Cf. the thematic discussion of love and resentment in the first few Internet Chronicles of Eric Gans at <http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/vw9596.htm>.
content. I turn now to read this harmony in Poetics 13 as commending a certain exemplary content for tragedy, and in Poetics 14 as commending a certain exemplary formal structure. In the end, this will help us to see, not just how each poet is a master of the “complex” (peplegmene) plot form, but which poet is more “sacrificial” (pathetike, i.e., “poignant”) or “sentimental” (ethike, i.e., “inspirational”) with regard to content.

**Single Metabasis Story Content as Best (Poetics 13)**

First I turn to Poetics 13 to discern its recommended metabasis. We have a clear distinction between types of content in Poetics 13 with Aristotle’s distinction there between what he calls the “single” plot and the “double” plot. Aristotle describes the content of the “double” plot as what is popular with the audiences (philanthropon): the good are rewarded, and the bad are punished. In contrast, Aristotle affirms the superiority of a “single” plot because it exemplifies what he considers to be the right kind of metabasis:

A well-constructed plot [muthon] should, therefore, be single [haploun] in its issue, rather than double [diploun] as some maintain. It is required to change the fortune [metaballein] not from bad to good [eis eutukhian ek dustukhias], but, reversely, from good to bad [ex eutukhias eis dustukhian]. It should come about as the result not of depravity [dia mokhtherian], but of some great error [di’ hamartian megalen], in a character either such as we have described, or better rather than worse [beltionos mallon e kheironos]. The practice of the stage bears out our view. At first the poets recounted any plots that came in their way. Now, the best tragedies are founded on the story of a few houses - on the fortunes of Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and those others who have done or suffered terrible things. A tragedy, then, to be perfect according to the rules of art should be of this construction. Hence they are in error who censure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily [eis dustukhian]. It is, as we have said, the right procedure. The best proof is that on the stage and in dramatic competition, such plays, if well worked out, are the most tragic in effect; and Euripides, even if in other aspects he may be considered not to manage his content well, is still conspicuous as the most tragic [tragikotatos] of the poets. Thus in the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first. Like the Odyssey, it has a double [diplen] thread of plot, and opposite endings for the good and for the bad.

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285 This is my fresh interpretation of philanthropon in Aristotle, for which I credit the generative anthropology of Gans as my inspiration. At any rate, it is a word that has exercised many an interpreter. See Carey 1988 for recent discussion.
It is usually ranked in first place because of the weakness of the spectators; for
the poets are guided in what they write by the wishes of the audience. This
popular pleasure, however, is not the pleasure proper to tragedy. It is proper
rather to comedy, where those who, in the plot, are the deadliest enemies - like
Orestes and Aegisthus - depart the stage as friends at the close, and nobody is
slain by anybody.286

The sentences in this passage usually taken as commending an unhappy ending over a
happy ending must be read in the context that clearly frames the entire discussion: viz.,
Aristotle’s express preference for the “single” metabasis over the popular “double” metabasis.287
Euripides follows the right procedure because he uses a single metabasis. It is following this
principle of using a single metabasis that ensures that a poet’s effect is “the most tragic”.
Aristotle remarks that many of Euripides’ plays end unhappy,288 but with that remark, read in
context, he is still implying nonetheless that Euripides’ plays are all single in metabasis. Further,
when Aristotle says that the single metabasis should be from good to bad,289 he is speaking
relatively, not absolutely, and intends only to contrast the usual metabasis of good people
portrayed in a double plot (viz., from bad to good fortune) with the usual metabasis of good
people portrayed in a single plot (viz., from good to bad fortune). The remark is not a general
prescription that all tragedies must have unhappy endings in order for them to be “most tragic”. It
can only be misread as such if taken out of context.

In Poetics 13, the type of content that is being commended is the singular focus of plot on
one person’s fortune, and not so much the type of end that that person meets. The only
prescription for the ending is that it should be a single (haplous) plot metabasis. Tragedy’s high
culture is best achieved through a single metabasis, and not through the popular metabasis of a
double (diplois) plot ending. On the one hand, as Aristotle remarks, the double ending in comedy

286 Poetics 13, 1453a 12-39.
287 Aristotle’s discussion of mythos is treating mythical story content as reworked by tragic plot form. For
this reason I designate the types of content which he is discussing with the term metabasis. “Plot” is a
composite of form and content, but Aristotle’s discussion of single or double “plot” is a proto-semiotic
attempt to consider the content of this plot composite, i.e., as either single or double content.
289 Poetics 13, 1453a 26-27.
290 Poetics 13, 1453a 9.
would have the bad man (Aegisthus) coming to a good end (avoiding the death penalty at
Orestes’ hands), and the good man (Orestes) coming to a bad end (failing to exact the necessary
vengeance against his enemy, instead making Aegisthus his friend). On the other hand, the double
ending in tragedy would be what we actually have in Aeschylus: Orestes kills Aegisthus in
vengeance; hence the bad man comes to a bad end,290 and the good man comes to a good end.291
Aristotle is silent on whether Aeschylus’s treatment of this plot outline is more haple than diple in
its execution in the Oresteia, and thus he is silent on the rank of Aeschylus’s Oresteia as an
achievement in tragedy. But in outline, nevertheless, the revenge tragedy, with its content of
double metabasis, is a “formulaic sub-genre”292 that risks descending into the crude satisfactions
expected by popular culture, however much we must still wish to affirm that the Oresteia and the
Odyssey do not descend into such diple cliché.293 In any case, it seems clear enough that in this
passage Euripides is the “most tragic” poet, the one who has mastered the use of the content of
single metabasis.294

The classification of the possible kinds of single metabasis that precedes this very
passage in Poetics 13 also supports the thesis that, for Aristotle, a single plot metabasis with an
unhappy ending is not the preferred content. For in that preceding section he says that an unhappy
ending can be miaron, i.e., repulsive, distasteful, vulgar.295 Instead, the single plot metabasis that
is to be preferred is selected, not on the basis of the ending being happy or unhappy, but on the
basis of the metabasis being generated by a hamartia (mistake):

First, it is clear that those undergoing a change of fortune [metaballontas]
presented must not be the spectacle of noble men [epieikeis andras] brought from
prosperity to adversity [ex eutukhias eis dustukhian]: for it moves neither pity nor
fear; it is distasteful [miaron]. Nor, again, that of depraved men [mokhtherous]

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290 Aeschylus, The Libation Bearers, 838-877.
291 Aeschylus, Eumenides, 752-777.
294 Aeschylus, in contrast, may be seen to have mastered, not the content of single (haple) metabasis, but the form of simple (haplous) plot. See Garvie 1978 for details.
295 Poetics 13, 1452b 36.
passing from adversity to prosperity \([ex \ atukhias\ eis\ eutukhian]\): for this is the most un-tragic \([atragoidotaton]\) of all things; it possesses nothing of these things: it can neither be popularly satisfactory \([philanthropon]\) nor does it call forth pity or fear. Nor, again, should the downfall from good to bad fortune \([ex\ eutukhias\ eis\ dustukhian]\) of the utter villain \([sphodra\ poneron]\) be exhibited. A plot composed in such a manner would, doubtless, be popularly satisfying \([philanthropon]\), but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves. Such an event, therefore, will be neither pitiful nor terrible. There remains, then, the character between \([metaxu]\) these two extremes - that of a man who is not preeminent in excellence or righteousness, yet whose changing into misfortune \([metaballon\ eis\ ten\ dustukhian]\) is brought about not by badness or depravity, but by some error \([di'\ hamartian\ tina]\). He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous - a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families.\(^{296}\)

The important thing to note here is not that Aristotle talks about Oedipus as an example of this kind of single-plot \textit{metabasis} content. To do so would risk being misled into thinking that an unhappy \textit{metabasis} is the criterion of high culture. The important thing to note, rather, is that the desirable single-plot \textit{metabasis} is one whose content concerns \textit{hamartia}. Whether or not this content, with its \textit{hamartia} criterion, is sufficient for high culture\(^{297}\) is not reducible to an “unhappy ending” formula. Aristotle states only the guideline for the \textit{mimesis} of the \textit{metaxu} person (“the character between these two extremes”: i.e., the above-average person), and of the \textit{hamartia}, that is to be the content of the tragic representation. That is, he says that the representation ought to be of a person better rather than worse \(beltionos\ mallon\ e\ kheirono~\):\(^{298}\) i.e., more of a person as people ought to be, rather than of a person as people are. \textit{The content guideline concerns the person, and not the ending.}

In other words, the high culture criterion with regard to content is that a \textit{spoudaios} (morally serious) person, as well as the presence of a \textit{hamartia}, ought to constitute the content of the representation. By chance, plays with unhappy endings brought this fact about content to light. That is, treatment of singularly serious content seems naturally fitted for unhappy endings,

\(^{296}\) Poetics 13, 1452b 34-1453 a12.
\(^{297}\) High culture is by definition serious, i.e., \textit{spoudaios}.
\(^{298}\) Poetics 13, 1453a 16-17.
because the “unhappy” form of the ending would not dilute the pathos of the singular content either by pairing it up with some other character’s “happy ending” or by deflating that very character’s own seriousness with a “happy ending” for himself. But nevertheless we should not mistake an unhappy metabasis for Aristotle’s recommended content. The classification of the possible kinds of single metabasis in this preceding section can be summed up in the following table as:

| c(1) the very good [epieikeis] meet distasteful unhappy ends: miaron |
| c(2) the below-average [mokhtherous] meet un-tragic happy ends: atragoidotaton |
| c(3) the very bad [sphodra poneros] meets a popular unhappy end: philanthropon |
| c(4) the above-average [metaxu] meets a tragic unhappy end: pitiable & fearful |

What is needed to read this list in context is to realize that the third item, c(3), listed here on its own as a kind of single metabasis, can also be taken as one half of a double metabasis; the other half would be: “good person meets a popular happy end”. From this point on, after the classification of possible types of single metabasis, Aristotle proceeds, as we have already seen, to discuss just this sort of popularly satisfying double metabasis.

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299 Halliwell 1998: 217-220 complicates things rather too much, but relatively useful schemata of the discussion are found in Belfiore 1992: 161-162, Else 1963: 367, and Golden and Hardison 1968: 185. Examples from Belfiore corresponding to my schema are: c(1) Prometheus in Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound (pity and fear is generated, however, by Io’s analogous suffering); c(2) Medea in Euripides’ Medea (pity and fear is generated, however, by the suffering of Jason’s loved ones); c(3) the suitors in Homer’s Odyssey (pity and fear is generated, however, by longsuffering Penelope and by Odysseus in disguise as a beggar); and c(4) Oedipus in Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus (whose story, even in plot outline, generates pity and fear; cf. Aristotle, Poetics 14, 1453b 7). Note that the “c” with the numbering stands for “content”.

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I note that Aristotle excludes the logical possibility of “good person meets a happy end” from this list of four here.\textsuperscript{300} The reason is that he does go on to identify this thread of plot as usually characteristic of one half of the popular double \textit{metabasis}. As he does so, he limits himself in \textit{Poetics} 13 to rejecting its incarnation as half of the thread in the popular double \textit{metabasis}. He remains silent on whether “good person meets a happy end” is acceptable as single \textit{metabasis} content in \textit{Poetics} 13. Only in \textit{Poetics} 14 does he go on to consider this single \textit{metabasis} content, not spoken of in \textit{Poetics} 13, and to articulate the sort of form that can shape it into the best sort of composite of tragic form and content.

In other words, Aristotle’s semiotic focus here is on the type of person who is in \textit{Poetics} 13 being commended as content, and not so much on a happy or unhappy ending. A double \textit{metabasis} is identified as being (like certain types of single \textit{metabasis}) often characteristic of inferior, vulgar (\textit{miaron}), and popularly satisfying (\textit{philanthropon}) culture, and hence more proper to comedy than to tragedy. Further, an unhappy ending is not sufficient for tragic high culture content; a morally serious person implicated in mistaken action certainly is. Thus the high culture criterion is content consisting of serious (and preferably mistaken) action, which is ultimately related to how the person is portrayed relative to how people are or ought to be. By chance, craft discovered workable serious content in the unhappy \textit{metabasis}. But Aristotle’s point about Oedipus as exemplary content is not that his \textit{metabasis} is unhappy, but that it is only unhappy because its serious \textit{hamartia} content is opposed to the popular effect of the double-plot \textit{metabasis}.\textsuperscript{301} Moreover, concerning how the practice of the stage has demonstrated that Oedipus is exemplary content, Aristotle merely observes that, when in search of an effective \textit{metabasis}, poets have discovered that by experience the unhappy single \textit{metabasis} is an easy way to achieve this, because \textit{pathos} is already embedded in the unhappy content. The happy single \textit{metabasis}, however, is formally more challenging, and hence a later development, as Aristotle goes on to

\textsuperscript{300} Cf. Else 1963: 367.
\textsuperscript{301} \textit{Poetics} 13, 1453a 12-17.
discuss in *Poetics* 14. As I will explain in my exegesis of *Poetics* 14 below, the challenge posed by a happy single *metabasis* comes from the fact that it has to generate pity and fear *formally* in the absence of any realized *pathos* simple form (which simple form would generate pity and fear in the more traditional mythical semiosis of the narrative structure relying simply on *pathos*).

**Ethical Story Form as Best (** *Poetics* 14 **)**

So much, then, for content in *Poetics* 13. Regarding form, I find a clear distinction in *Poetics* 14 between four possible plot forms and their configurations of *pathos*, *anagnôrosis*, and *peripeteia*. Here is the passage and the formal possibilities it suggests (outlined in Table 6):

Let us explain more clearly what is meant by “skillful handling”. The action may be [f(1)] done consciously and with knowledge of the persons, in the manner of the older poets. It is thus too that Euripides makes Medea slay her children. Or, again, the deed of horror may be done, but [f(2)] done in ignorance, and the tie of kinship or friendship be recognized afterwards. The *Oedipus* of Sophocles is an example. Here, admittedly, the incident is outside the drama proper; but cases occur where it falls within the action of the play: one may cite the *Alceste* of Astydamas, or Telegonus in the *Wounded Odysseus*. Again, there is a third possibility: when someone is about to do an irreparable deed through ignorance, but [f(3)] comes to recognize it before it is done. These are the only possible ways: the deed must either be done or not done - and that wittingly or unwittingly; of all these possibilities, [the remaining and as yet unmentioned fourth possibility (which we ought to number, rather, on account of its extreme rarity and unsuitability for tragedy, as “possibility zero”), namely,] to be about to act knowing the persons, and then not to act, is the worst. It is distasteful [miaron] and is not tragic, for it involves no suffering [apathes]. It is, therefore, never, or very rarely, portrayed in tragedy. One instance, however, is in the *Antigone*, where Haemon tries to kill Creon [but fails, and then kills himself instead: see Sophocles, *Antigone* 1226-1243]. The next and better way [- namely, “possibility one” as mentioned above -] is that the violent deed should be perpetrated. Still better, [“possibility two” as mentioned above:] that it should be perpetrated in ignorance, and the recognition made afterwards. There is then nothing distasteful [miaron] involved, and the recognition is thrilling [ekplektikon]. The last case [- namely, “possibility three” as mentioned above -] is the best, as when in the *Cresphontes* Merope is about to slay her son, but, recognizing who he is, spares his life. So in the *Iphigeneia*, the sister recognizes the brother just in time. Again in the *Helle*, the sister recognizes the mother when on the point of handing her over. (1453b26-54a9)
Commentators, as usual, have made the passage more complicated by postulating a lacuna; my comments inserted in editorial brackets above, however, demonstrate that the passage can be read naturally in a logical progression. Following my numbering, then, the entire passage can be summarized as follows, with the four possibilities corresponding to Aristotle’s classification of a plot’s formal reworking of content, ranking the formal possibilities from worst to best.

### Table 6: *Poetics* 14's Classification of Tragic Form (Simple and Complex Plots)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>f(0)</th>
<th>Un-tragic plot, without <em>pathos</em>: about to occur with full knowledge, but averted. Example: Haemon's attack on Creon in Sophocles' <em>Antigone</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f(1)</td>
<td>Simple tragic plot, with <em>pathos</em>: occurs, and happens with full knowledge. Example: Euripides' <em>Medea</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f(2)</td>
<td>Complex tragic plot, with <em>pathos</em>: <em>pathos</em> occurs in ignorance, and <em>anagnorisis</em> happens afterwards [usually without a coincident <em>peripeteia</em>]. Example: Sophocles' <em>Oedipus Tyrannus</em> [in which, unusually but most effectively, a <em>peripeteia</em> is coincident with the <em>anagnorisis</em>].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f(3)</td>
<td>Complex tragic plot, without <em>pathos</em>: a coincident <em>anagnorisis</em> and <em>peripeteia</em> averts <em>pathos</em>. Example: Euripides' <em>Iphigenia among the Taurians</em>.</td>
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The fact that a plot structure that takes the complex form having no *pathos* is ranked highest by Aristotle should not mislead us into thinking that an *Iphigenia*-style "happy ending" is the gold standard for high culture, in contradiction with the apparent indications elsewhere that *Oedipus*, unhappy *metabasis* and all, ought to be. The recommended plot in *Poetics* 14 is not simply a popularly satisfying "happy ending" for the good guy but, more rigorously, a unitary plot that avoids an unhappy *pathos* by means of a coincident *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* having a thrilling effect.

In other words, Aristotle's semiotic insight (which, as I will explain in the next section, anticipates Gans' insight) is that a happy *metabasis* content is not as important as the formal discovery of *hamartia*. Formally, preventative discovery of *hamartia* is superior to tragically belated *anagnorisis*. Formally, *Oedipus Tyrannus* is only second-best. But this means only that high culture can treat *pathos*, *peripeteia*, and *anagnorisis* in various configurations as either

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304 Aristotle's interest in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, then, comes from his seeing it as a watershed transitional evolutionary form, i.e., marking the transition from f(2) to f(3).
present or absent in the plot structure. It does not require them to be configured so as to signify formulaically an unhappy metabasis (following a crude “high culture” formula: i.e., “avoid Hollywood endings”). Nor does it require them, pace Belfiore, to be configured so as to signify by chance (learning by chance what pleases the crowd) a formulaically happy metabasis (following an easy “popular culture” formula: i.e., “strive for big box office”). Formally, what is essentially prescribed by Aristotle in Poetics 14 is the superiority of a timely deferral of pathos to a belated recognition of the hamartia that generated a pathos. That is, the most potent tragic heroes are to learn to defer violence, not merely to suffer it.

Thus I argue that Aristotle’s discussion has attained a crucial insight to the semiosis of tragedy in its interplay of form and content. Poetics 14 distinguishes between the various simple and complex plot forms, while Poetics 13 distinguishes between the single and the double metabasis of plot content. And Poetics 13 rejects, not the happy ending metabasis, but only the popular culture incarnation of it in the double metabasis. The failure to read Aristotle’s remarks about the unhappy ending metabasis in their context leads to the mistaken conclusion that Aristotle commends only the unhappy metabasis. On the contrary, Aristotle simply commends the single metabasis. Although longstanding theatrical practice has associated the single metabasis with the unhappy ending, this is only because a single metabasis that has a happy ending is harder to achieve than the single metabasis with an unhappy ending. Hence Aristotle proceeds in Poetics 14 to analyze in detail the evolution of form that has led to the highest achievements of tragedy’s high culture. At the summit, he ranks the single metabasis content with a complex plot form that discovers and prevents violent pathos.

Resentment (Cultural Form-of-the-Content)

Yet a final question remains. Why does Aristotle rank the happy absence of pathos higher in terms of formal plot structure, when he has so emphatically treated the high seriousness of
*Oedipus Tyrannus* as exemplary in terms of content? The answer to this question lies in the esthetic theory of Gans, who has developed his analysis of esthetic history in response to Girard’s theory of mimetic desire,\(^{305}\) to explain more fully the relation of texts to material culture.\(^{306}\) Gans credits Girard alone among critics as seeing the “priority of cultural form over content”.\(^{307}\) By this Gans means that prior to both form and content in the artwork is the cultural *form-of-the-content* (*forme du contenu*): “literary works, like all cultural forms, can be traced back to *events* which form their original content”.\(^{308}\) There is an anthropological form-of-the-content that is prior to, and originarily generative of, both the artwork’s literary form and content. The anthropological form-of-the-content visible in literary works is found in individual triangles of desire or, more generally, in the resentment of the periphery toward the center.\(^{309}\) This is the human reality behind the artwork, the cultural reality that generated it. Resentment is our emotional state with regard to those ways in which we are powerless to change our station in life. In a particular situation, for example, we may be frustrated in a triangle of desire and resent the rival who models our desire for the object; the clichéd example here is the romantic triangle. In general, we inhabit the social periphery, and hold resentment towards those who inhabit the social limelight; some clichéd examples here would be resentment towards politicians or celebrities. But whatever one’s particular cultural dissatisfaction is, resentment wishes for “the simple inversion of present reality”:

The resentful imagination sees in the suspension of satisfaction, in its continual deferral, a confirmation of the eventual conversion of its own peripheral position into a new center. For if the central position on the public scene of representation can now be occupied by one like the self, then the self’s position, too, can become central.\(^{310}\)

\(^{305}\) Gans 1977.
\(^{307}\) Gans 2000a: 55.
\(^{308}\) Gans 1981a: 807.
\(^{310}\) Gans 1985: 206.
In this regard, improving upon Girard’s literary analysis of triangular mimetic desire, Gans’ generative anthropology has observed how, with such imaginary suspension, “resentment is the basis of all esthetic form”. By using resentment, Gans is best able to distinguish between popular culture and high culture in esthetic phenomena. Popular art “satisfies the resentment that generates formal closure”. For Aristotle, such popular formal closure can happen both in the happy endings of the double plot or in the unhappy endings of the single plot. But “high art turns us against [resentment]”: this is the more austere experience generated by successful esthetic complications in high culture, as Aristotle intimates with his preference for the deferral of violent pathos.

Gans explains esthetic experience as an oscillation between the contemplation of form and content. It is this oscillation that “drowns” resentment, whether in the askesis of high culture that lingers on the form of the artwork, or in the appetitive satisfaction of popular culture that lingers much more over the consumption of its content. Resentment is deferred in high culture through sublimation, but deferred in popular culture by being discharged. In this way, “mimesis is a purgative cure for resentment, a catharsis”. High culture encourages us to dwell more on form, whereas popular culture encourages us to dwell more on content. Yet we can never have an artwork made up of either exclusively form or exclusively content. And thus, on the one hand, high culture can satisfy the full range of our esthetic appetite, by allowing us to oscillate to the “vice” of popular culture (a resentful enjoyment of pure content) and, on the other hand, popular culture can satisfy our esthetic appetite by allowing us to oscillate to the “virtue” of high culture (a sublime contemplation of form). But esthetic experience, of course, is concerned primarily with neither virtue nor vice; its amoral oscillation is what makes it, not moral, but esthetic. Esthetic experience is a purgative cure for resentment because it is not concerned with

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either moral discipline or indiscipline in the real world, but rather with an emotional catharsis generated of, by, and for the imaginary world of the artwork.

The content of an unhappy metabasis is consumptively enjoyed as we resentfully delight in the fearful downfall of a great man who had previously occupied the center inaccessible to us, the resentful dwellers on the periphery. But the literary revenge enacted to satisfy our resentment also oscillates from the content to the form. The unhappy discovery of unwitting hamartia arouses our pity as we esthetically contemplate the narrative form of the suffering: the formal structure highlights the belatedness that makes our literary revenge possible. Paradoxically, in the case of Oedipus, the pathos has already occurred, before the discovery, and so we can oscillate back to resentful enjoyment of the content. Esthetically, we have our pitiable tragic form and eat its fearful content too. We pity the sacrificial form our resentment takes while, at the same time, we witness the dramatic enactment of that resentment’s fearful power.

In Sophocles, the esthetic experience is one of high culture as we can linger on the ironic form that depicts how people ought to be, that is, how they ought to bear themselves in undeserved suffering and thus merit our pity. Noble people (people “as they ought to be”) meeting an unhappy end would merely merit the pop-culture Schadenfreude provoked by the merely miaron (distastefully vulgar) metabasis: for example, as in the movies, when the wealthy and successful person (the noble type in real life that we secretly aspire to be) gets a punch in the face from the downtrodden employee. And if the businessman, moreover, is caricatured as totally evil, the violent pathos that occurs is then philanthropon (popularly satisfying). Sophocles, however, innovates in developing tragedy’s form, refining the practice of complex form in the service of high culture. His audience’s resentment towards the “better people” (the very

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315 To be sure, Jocasta’s suicide and Oedipus’ blinding are examples of pathos, but these are not the formal focus of the plot. Instead, the play formally highlights within the plot sequence the complex anagnórisis of a simple pathos that was outside the action of the play and presupposed by the plot. Any pathos within the play is therefore merely a formal doubling of the unhappy content presupposed by the play’s complex structure of anagnórisis and peripeteia.

resentment that shapes the form-of-the-content of Sophocles’ people) is sublimated by their contemplation of his artistic refinements of complex form. For example, consider how Sophocles purges Philoctetes’ (and the audience’s) resentment towards the conventional hero Odysseus: he uses the noble deeds of Neoptolemus (someone who acts as “people ought to be”).

But in Euripides, who lingers more on people “as they are”, our emotional engagement with the human content deepens. Moreover, when hamartia is discovered and pathos is avoided, as in the Iphigenia among the Taurians, the formal structure is a higher order of culture than the Oedipus plot form, because there is no pathos and hence less impetus from the narrative form (which is merely the artifice that relates to us the story of the violent pathos) for us to oscillate back to resentful enjoyment of the content. The height of Sophocles’ formal achievement was the coincident anagnorisis and peripeteia of the Oedipus Tyrannus, which was purchased, however, by placing the presupposed pathos content (i.e., the murder of Laius) outside of the drama.317 But in Euripides, the pathos is deferred, and not just by the poet, but by the play’s action: a signal advance in esthetics, for which Aristotle gives him due credit. The violent pathos in tragedy, as a formal closure with regard to human content that mimics the form-of-the-content of a longed-for, resentful real-world pathos, attains its highest possibility of deferral in Euripides’ Iphigenia. In a word, our resentment is sublimated more than indulged.318 Tragedy’s esthetic meditation on rituals of sacrifice, in Euripides in particular, are “representations”, not simply as a “mirroring” of actions, but as fictions that, in reducing the impact that a real sacrifice would have, also introduce

317 Poetics 14, 1453b 31-34. Aristotle doesn’t discuss the pathos that is in the play, but I think that perhaps the pathos of Jocasta’s suicide and Oedipus’ self-blinding in the play are sops to the “popular culture” demands of imaginary sacrificial satisfaction. The “high culture” moment, however, is Oedipus’ discovery of the play’s presupposed content: i.e., what he has done involuntarily in the pathos of Laius.

318 An example of how sublimated resentment might be effected in a relatively crude dramatic scenario: The student of the story does not throw a pie in the face of the teacher; the student comes to a knowledge of the teacher’s burden in life and bakes a pie for the school bake sale instead. For a more nuanced discussion of the configuration of high and popular culture in the postmodern era, in which they no longer simply contrast, but rather commingle, see Gans 1998.
"a representational displacement having its own force": the efficacious catharsis of esthetic experience.

Oedipus Tyrannus then is not so much the gold standard and exemplary paradigm of tragedy's high culture, as it is a handy compendium of its resentful clichés and stereotypes generative of both pity and fear: unhappy metabasis as content, and unhappy belated discovery as form. While useful for illustrative purposes, the Oedipus play's composite of form and content is not as tragic as Euripides' plots. For Aristotle's distinction between form and content, implicit in the Poetics' analysis of the esthetic of tragedy, allows us to see how Euripides' works of high culture are unlike Sophocles' works of high culture. While, on the one hand, Euripides more effectively appeals to the ethically inspirational sentimentality prized by popular culture, on the other hand, he deepens our emotional engagement with his plays' human content (by having us identify with characters as being "like us" more than having us resent them as being "better than us"). Thus Euripides, not Sophocles, best sublimates the vengeful power of resentment visible in tragedy's clichéd sacrificial form: "somebody has to die".

Aristotle's apparent endorsement of this clichéd single-plot "unhappy" tragic ending, then, ought to be read more carefully for what the text in fact says there: that this kind of single-plot "unhappy ending" is preferable only to the inferior double-plot "happy ending" preferred by popular culture. This in no way means that the single-plot "unhappy ending" is the best possible high culture ending. Aristotle's preference in Poetics 14 for the single-plot "happy ending" that defers violence confirms his attunement to the anthropological function of high culture. That is, for ethical reasons, the fully mature development of tragedy's esthetic as culturally significant finds that a timely recognition that formally defers violence is better than belated discovery of mistaken violence. For in this kind of fully developed tragic semiosis, our catharsis formally

319 Pucci 1977: 166.
320 Poetics 13, 1453a 12-17.
sublimates our resentful identification with the drama's content, a content that, anthropologically, is a mimesis of our resentful relationship with the form-of-the-content. That is, the people of the drama (as "better than" or "just as" people are) are shaped as content by a form-of-the-content: by the social resentments that originally generated the drama's subject matter and that continue to generate our fascination with its literary content. Formal deferral best sublimates our resentful relationship with the content: that is, with both imaginary content and the real form-of-the-content.

It is supremely ironic that literary criticism has been so scandalized by Aristotle's apprehension in *Poetics* 14 of this anthropological truth. For it is no small irony that, in spite of Aristotle's rigorous desacralization of the play's form and content, Oedipus has become, not anthropology's scientific recognition of tragedy's cultural form-of-the-content, but rather *literature's foremost tragic cliché*. Indeed, the hardest reading to do is a close reading of what you are closest to: neither content nor form, but the form-of-the-content. It is easier to pretend that tragedy is pure esthetic play rather than acknowledge our resentments as what generates the hold that esthetic scenarios have on us.

But now that, by making use of Aristotle's analysis of the evolution of tragic form and content (an evolution culminating in the complete esthetic development of the "best tragedy" for deferring resentment), I have identified cultural resentment as at the generative heart of tragedy's esthetic form, I am ready to proceed in Chapter Three with my analysis of the relation of political form to the evolution of cultural form that the classical esthetic marks.
The Evolution of Cultural Form

Cultural form, then, must be understood in terms of the dynamics of resentment at play in history. Esthetic form does indeed commemorate the worst-case scenario of scapegoating by which the cultural can regenerate itself with the violent "rebirth of tragedy". As we saw in Chapter One, the semiotic structure of the esthetic form of myth preserves a universal narrative echo of the scene of human origin. But as we have also seen here in Chapter Two, there is an evolution in esthetic form that occurs in Greek tragedy. This evolution is visible in the way tragic form reworks the content of myth in new esthetic configurations. The new configurations show a progressive evolution to the formal deferral of violence. In this way, art makes a positive contribution to history. By means of its esthetic form, the evolution of Greek tragedy constructs a universe of imagination in which resentments can be imaginatively indulged and drowned. The imaginary universe of Greek tragedy, because it is imbued with political significance from its civic content, has the potential also to commemorate a real cultural achievement (e.g., participatory democracy) in its esthetic universe. Before I argue that this is precisely what is visible in Aeschylus' Oresteia, I turn now to the Greek analysis of political form in its most rigorous achievement: Aristotle's Politics. Together with an understanding of Aristotle's best tragedy, we will come to see how Aristotle's best regime allows us to see what Girard misses in his analysis of serious drama. While Girard's hominization hypothesis makes a positive contribution (by seeing a scapegoating pattern in narrative universals which helps us refine an empirioschematic hypothesis about the origin of humanity), it needs also to be able to recognize how the evolution of cultural form, over time, makes esthetic and political progress. This progress occurs in the attenuation of scapegoating patterns. And the great Greek achievement in this regard, which defers resentment in history, is the polis itself. As I will now argue, against the scholarly consensus on Aristotle's Politics, Aristotle presents us with a rigorous and complete theoretical account of this political achievement. Once I establish this, it will be possible to
appreciate how political form can be mirrored in esthetic form in the manner that exhibits what
Gans has called the cultural productivity of resentment.321 That is, something good can come
from resentment. Culture can learn to defer resentment in art and in politics, by sublimating its
energy for cultural purposes, purposes higher than a mere inversion of the current social order
that would install the self in the sacred center. But that a community always seems to require a
leader, even a merely symbolic one, installed in an echo of the originary scene’s sacred center,
points to the dimension of political form which we need to analyze as bound up with the cultural
deferral of resentment.

321 Cf. Gans 1985: 171-175. (The phrase “cultural productivity of resentment” is found at 173.)
Chapter Three:
Political Form

Introduction: Scapegoating and Regime Change

As Nietzsche suggested in *The Genealogy of Morality*, resentment is a secret engine of cultural history.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^2\) His mimetic rivalry with Wagner, however, blinded him to the universality of resentment and, in particular, resentment’s cunning at work in his very own personal drama.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^3\)

The kind of “metaphysical desire” (i.e., the desire to be someone else) that humanity needs to overcome is, in its most poisonous form, founded on resentment.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^4\) “The author of *The Birth of Tragedy* failed to realize that the Greek artforms he so admired had their root in the very same phenomenon.”\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^5\) The “end of history”, in which all mimetic rivalry in the human race comes to an end (were such a thing possible), could occur only when resentment is no longer possible. But we have seen in the previous chapter\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^6\) how the classical esthetic in Greek tragedy does not annihilate resentment. In a cunning myriad of ways, it defers it in art. And, as I argued on the basis of Aristotle’s discussion of the semiosis of the best tragedy, the evolution of esthetic form follows whatever path can keep this sublimated sacrificial function of esthetic form operating to the audience’s satisfaction. But I need to investigate now in greater detail the possibility for continued progress in history of this evolution of esthetic form. In other words, is there any ontological limit to the form of the evolution of esthetic form? Or will an “infinity of semiosis” entail that, in history, anything can mean anything else?\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^7\)

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\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^3\) Girard 1978a: 61-83.

\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^4\) Girard 1966: 14-17, 59, 83-95.

\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^5\) Gans 1985: 173.

\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^6\) In the section on “Resentment (Cultural Form-of-the-Content)”.

\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^7\) Cf. Deely 1994a: 96. “Semiosis as such is an infinite progression, yes, but it is not an actual infinity of significations simultaneously given as such. Semiosis proceeds rather through a succession of significations only some of which are simultaneously achieved, while others are achieved successively and with many duplications, lapses, and overlaps.”
Although semiosis is potentially infinite in its progression, in actuality its evolution in history is marked by culturally determined ontological limits to its esthetic forms. Therefore my argument in this chapter is that the evolution of esthetic form is shaped and marked by political form. Because political form corresponds to the possibilities of real human being in history, it imposes more constraints on what semiosis is able to actually construct than does the imaginary world of esthetic form. However, in the imaginary world of the artwork, we have already seen in the previous chapter that there is a cultural form-of-the-content in which resentment gives shape to what esthetic form and content “mirrors” with its representational mimesis. The better that art accomplishes esthetic deferral of resentment, the better it has mimetically represented this cultural form-of-the-content. Otherwise there would be no catharsis of real-world resentment by means of the imaginary world of esthetic experience. Thus resentment is the cultural form that gives shape to the content of tragedy; as in Aristotle’s evolutionary model, tragic form must evolve correlative with tragic content in order to defer that resentment. But there is also in the cultural order, outside the artwork, “a socially designated praxis leading to the satisfaction of desire”.

In other words, one not only goes to Greek tragedy to satisfy one’s desires. One can also have recourse to the legislature and law courts. But while these cultural institutions mark “the emergence of real models of satisfaction”, we need to consider not only how these “praxial implementations” can in turn exacerbate desire and become new sources of resentful frustration that drive cultural evolution, we must also explore the dynamics of resentment that shape the political form of a culture: viz., “one may seek to overthrow a leader, to take his place, or one may merely seek to emulate him.” For these dynamics of resentment and regime change find a special place in marking off the historical evolution of the shape of esthetic experience.

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329 This is what has already been considered in the brilliant study of the cultural productivity of resentment in generating the birth of high culture (in Jewish narrative monotheism and Greek secular esthetic culture) in Gans 1985: 171-303.
330 All quotations are from Gans 1985: 173.
The political expression of resentment is most clearly manifested when, within any given political regime, there are factions that compete to rule. If there is indeed any real achievement in politics, it would have to be when constitutional forms change and adapt in order to bring peace between competing factions within a regime. Political regime forms, then, if they are real anthropological achievements in history, must necessarily mirror the executive solutions of statesmen, i.e., political leaders who try to defuse the cultural rivalries of resentful factions. In Chapters Four and Five, I will examine how classical drama (Greek tragedy) and neoclassical drama (Shakespeare) dramatizes such regime change in order to mythologize the "end of history". That is, I will suggest how certain dramas commemorate, with their esthetic form, a real historical achievement in political form.

Before I do so, however, I must study in this present chapter the political form that Girard leaves behind when he demythologizes the "end of history" so that it appears as apocalyptic. Girard puts forth an apocalyptic set of alternatives: either resentment will culminate in the nuclear annihilation of the planet, or surrender to mimesis of Christ will defuse our resentment and usher in the Kingdom of Heaven.331 That is, in Girard, there is only one fundamental earthly regime ("scapegoating"), against which he sets a single alternative: acceptance of the divine revelation of the scapegoating mechanism and acceptance of that revelation's unequivocal call to peace.332 In contrast, there are many regime forms in Aristotle's Politics. The question therefore arises concerning Girard's best regime (the non-scapegoating Kingdom of Heaven) and Aristotle's best regime: which form of political analysis is better suited for interpreting the full esthetic signification of cultural form, especially as esthetic signification evolves cultural semiosis from Greek tragedy to Shakespeare? My answer to this question is that both Aristotle and Girard have something to contribute to a doctrine of signs that would help decode political and esthetic

332 On the inadequacy of this approach for effectively opposing violence in this world, see the critique of Girard in Boersma 2004: 133-151.
anthroposemiosis. Girard helps us to see the real role of resentment and envy in human dynamics (most vividly in the violent extreme of such dynamics when they end in scapegoating), but Aristotle helps us to discern the various political forms that can really defer the worst violent tendencies of political rivalries.

In this chapter I will argue for an original thesis about Aristotle’s best regime in order to prepare for seeing the role of political form in semiosis of esthetic evolution. Many already recognize that Aristotle, with his political theory, is proposing a “second best” way of arranging constitutional forms: a political realism, instead of a Platonic utopia where philosophers rule. I argue that Aristotle’s response to Plato on the “best regime” (ariste politeia) is that the best potential regime can only in actuality be the best republic. This argument is suggested by the fact that Aristotle’s recommended “best regime” seems to be an aristocratic republic (politeia), the appellation of which employs the same Greek word as for “regime” (politeia).

Although Aristotle’s classical analysis of political form is eminently suited for examining political practice, there is still the problem that Christianity poses for politics, a problem that Aristotle could not have foreseen. For Christianity seems to make Aristotle’s classical ideal for political form impractical. “The decentralization of Christian society problematizes the communal scene of representation,” as Gans puts it. The more that resentment learns to defer, the more that it learns to demand. While it may be true that humanity’s vision of the “Kingdom of Heaven” becomes clearer as history progresses through distinct political and esthetic epochs, it is also true that humanity, this side of utopia, can settle for the regime “second best” to this transcendent Kingdom. The earthly regime “second best” to the heavenly Kingdom is then visible in the hard-won progressive achievements of political form in history.

333 Cf. Deely 1982: 127-30 on the “doctrine of signs” as “an objective discipline ruled by intrinsic demands indifferent to subjectivity in its individual but not in its social dimensions, and grounded in the signifying whereby the here and now acquires coherence of structure” (129).
335 Gans 1993: 160.
Therefore, despite the subsequent arrival of Christianity in history, I am arguing in this chapter that the ability to see the real evolution of political form in history is not possible without Aristotle’s innovative analysis of political form and the earthly realism of his “best regime”. Once the proper scope of the Aristotelian analysis is assessed, we can be open to Girard’s reading of the dynamics of resentment in earthly affairs. In fact, thanks to Girard, we can fully appreciate the achievement of any political compromise in regime form that brings peace. When political form pre-empts the need for scapegoating, the apocalypse of a violent power struggle is averted.

The bulwark against this apocalyptic power struggle is what I will describe as the “perfect virtue” of Aristotle’s activist ideal of happiness,\textsuperscript{336} in which the theoretical is not severed from the practical in the manner of Girard’s Christianity. Girard’s theoretical insights appear politically impractical, i.e., aimed at heralding the apocalyptic unveiling of the Kingdom of Heaven by exposing the scapegoating mechanism.\textsuperscript{337} This apocalypticism of Girard may unveil a transcendent critique of all politics, but its price is that it threatens to sever theory from practice, to the detriment of practice, by apparently ruling out a rational engagement in politics that hopes to implement wisdom as part of an earthly regime.

Nevertheless, I argue that Aristotle and Girard have insights into the human use of signs: Aristotle, as we have seen, reflects on the separation of form and content in the classical esthetic and thereby offers an empirioschematic model of semiosis in Greek tragedy; Girard, looking at the action of signs from a postmodern vantage point, uses narrative universals that correspond to Aristotle’s in order to decode the tale of the hidden victim. Therefore, because both are ultimately comparable as pioneers of cultural semiotics, we should be able to use the semiotic correspondences between their fivefold models to refine a model of semiotic structure that is applicable to key works that are of political and esthetic significance, the \textit{Oresteia} and \textit{Henriad}.

\textsuperscript{337} Girard 1987a: 253-262.
Since semiotics is the only sort of knowledge that can bridge the knowledge of theory and the
knowledge of practice,338 I will conclude this chapter by refining the fivefold model of
semiotic structure abstracted from Girard and Aristotle in order to show that Girard’s insights do
not necessarily commit us to impractical politics, if Girard, along with Aristotle, is ultimately
understood semiotically, especially in the manner suggested by generative anthropology.

Thus in this chapter I will forge a semiotic reconciliation between Aristotle and Girard on
to theory and practice, by which we may come to see the evolving role of the statesman in history
more clearly. The statesman’s activity is an effort to bring improvements in both theoretical and
practical culture to the earthly regime. In history, drama can commemorate the milestones of such
political achievement. The cultural form-of-the-content found within the esthetic form of drama is
thus a “mirror of princes”: not just in being a mirror of scapegoating patterns, but also a possible
record of executive achievement. More than a memory of scapegoating, tragedy can also be an
esthetic distillation of theoretical political wisdom as made practical in cultural form. Tragedy’s
rebirth (what a spectator undergoes through the cathartic esthetic experience of tragedy’s return to
the originary scene) then becomes what we may call philosophy’s “high culture” education, viz.,
a practical and patriotic self-energizing enterprise open to and required by every human.339 With
the rebirth afforded by tragedy, humanity can wisely settle for the “second best” regime, a regime
which is solely constituted by neither explicitly violent scapegoating, nor the apocalyptic
unveiling and abolition of all scapegoating.

By beginning, then, with the classical analysis of political form, which Plato began and
Aristotle brought to completion, I hope to refine Girard’s binary etiology of political form. For it
is my contention that Girard’s apocalyptic message, unlike Aristotle’s politics, is overly

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conditioned by the postmodern exclusion of prudence from conflictive mimesis.\textsuperscript{340} The possibility of a political education mediated by the esthetic is thus absent in Girard’s anthropology.\textsuperscript{341} But this is merely a temporary negative aspect of postmodernity’s struggle to free itself from modernity, which can be corrected by the positive semiotic insights of postmodernity;\textsuperscript{342} of these, there are definite traces in Girard’s work as well. Thus, on balance, Girard’s work may prove an invaluable aid for a semiotic study of the historically exemplary political educations available in the classical and neoclassical esthetics (exemplified in the Oresteia and the Henriad, respectively), a semiotic study to which I offer my last two chapters here as contributions.

But first I turn now to the classical analysis of political form that can help us understand why “the end of history” is something mythologized in esthetic experience but never actually reached in historical praxial implementations.\textsuperscript{343} Continuing my comparative study of Girard and Aristotle, I now track, through political form, the possible evolution of humanity from the \textit{originary scene to the best regime}.

\textsuperscript{341} Cf. Lord 1991: 49-73.
**Aristotle’s Best Regime**

Although I have refined the Girardian empirioschematic hypothesis (viz., by refining its fivefold analysis of the event of the originary scene) in order that it may better account for evolutionary progress in esthetic history, I still need to account for the progress of political form in history. And Girard’s apocalyptic hypothesis (viz., that Christianity’s unveiling of the scapegoating mechanism causes upheavals in political history) seems the most obvious entry point for considering whether or not Christianity in fact marks a radical disjunction between Aristotle’s discernment of political form and the impact of the Christian “revelation” on the possibilities of political form.344

The impact may be summed up as the apocalyptic effect of Christianity on political life. In other words, Christianity had such an impact on cultural life that drastic measures had to be taken if this-worldly political life was not to suffer at the hands of otherworldly apocalyptic influences.345 Fundamentally, these influences may be viewed either as historically deleterious or not, a fundamental disjunction that is visible, for example, in the difference of opinion between Girard and Nietzsche on Christianity. As Girard has written, Nietzsche was totally correct about the fundamental choice being between Dionysus and the Crucified; Nietzsche, however, opts for the former, while Girard, following his postmodern predilection (to choose the side of the victim), opts for the latter.346 But surely there is more for theoretical investigations to consider than a mere voluntarism confronted with a binary eschatology. Indeed, the semiotic problem seems to be how we might see Girard’s (postmodern) understanding of political form as related in evolutionary terms to a semiosis progressing, after the impact of Christianity, from Aristotle’s classical discernment of political form to the present day.

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345 Cf. Mansfield 1996 on Machiavelli’s response to what he saw as the deleterious effect of Christianity on political life.
In this regard, I see a possible semiotic reconciliation between the (practical) political insights of Aristotle and the (apocalyptic) political insights of Girard. The reconciliation comes from Gans’ suggested division of esthetic epochs. On Gans’ reckoning, there is an evolutionary transition in art between the classical and the neoclassical esthetics;\textsuperscript{347} for him, the neoclassical esthetic is “the result of the integration of Christian ethical values into the classical esthetic”.\textsuperscript{348} But is there a corresponding transition between classical and neoclassical political form? The question is difficult to approach because of the complexities of political life. But, from my analysis thus far, a definite approach has suggested itself. That is, given the relation between esthetic form and cultural form-of-the-content, which we have already seen relates the imaginary artwork to the generative resentments embedded in cultural life and to the praxial models coordinate with them, I argue that semiotically we can approach political form through esthetic form.

After all, poetry, as Aristotle observed, is more universal than history;\textsuperscript{349} therefore it is ideally suited for such an avenue of anthropological inquiry.\textsuperscript{350} Thus I will look for what evolutionary reconfigurations of the originary scene I can find in political form as that form may be found in the esthetic form of the classical and neoclassical esthetics. In the final two chapters, I will consider the concrete examples of this, but first I need to return now to Aristotle, in order to set forth classical political form as the reference point from which I argue we can then see subsequent evolution into the neoclassical form that Christianity shapes.

Just as Aristotle’s insights into the “best tragedy” helped me to clarify the relation of the Girardian hypotheses to the evolution of esthetic form, I can make similar progress in the arena of political form by discerning Aristotle’s real (not imagined) achievement in discerning political

\textsuperscript{347} Gans 1993: 117-163.
\textsuperscript{348} Gans 1993: 150.
\textsuperscript{349} Poetics 9, 1451a 36-1451b 11.
\textsuperscript{350} For a different view, favouring history instead, see Kagan 2005.
form. Once I have properly interpreted Aristotle’s “best regime” (a source of so much unresolved scholarly controversy), I may then return to Girard in order to suggest how cultural catharsis is a semiotic phenomenon related to the political evolution mirrored in esthetic evolution. But first I must discuss how Aristotle makes a real achievement in political thought by articulating how rational intervention in political form may defuse the dynamics of scapegoating and resentment in human affairs.

**Aristotle on Political Form**

The Aristotelian conception of politics is the antithesis to conspiratorial thinking. Aristotle’s analysis of regime types in the *Politics* aims to make a rational response to tyranny by making a rigorous theoretical analysis of distinct mixtures in political form. In contrast, conspiratorial thinking is a mode of theorizing born of resentment. It is characterized by the irrational search for scapegoats to bear the burden of resentment. This mode of thinking typically postulates a universal regime type (“master” vs. “slave”) in the place of Aristotle’s discernment of multiple regime forms. Aristotle, however, advocates changes in regime mixture as rational responses to the potential danger posed by the irrationality of tyranny. There is, therefore, a way to escape the war of “oligarchs vs. democrats” (rich vs. poor) once we realize that regime typology has room for more than a bi-polar, debased view of politics (upon which conspiracy-mongering is based).

“Regime change” is a buzzword from the Bush White House, describing proactive projection of democracy into troubled spots around the globe. But the word “regime” is a recent translation of a Greek term with a classical pedigree: *politeia*. It was Strauss who revived translating *politeia* as “regime” in the English tongue. Strauss noted that the classical term refers to “the factual distribution of power within the community”; that is, “the way of life of the society

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351 Cf. Huxley 1985: 139-149.
rather than its [legal] constitution.\textsuperscript{352} Plato's most famous dialogue, that classic inquiry into the "way of life" necessary for justice in the state and the soul, is known by the title \textit{Politeia}, or "Republic". But the term found its most rigorous employment in Aristotle, who distinguished between three generic types of defective rule: tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (mob rule). For Aristotle, these three correspond to the logical possibilities with regard to who in the community, holding "factual distribution of power", abuses that power: one, few, or many. Corresponding to these three defective "regimes" are three generic ideal ones: kingship, aristocracy, and \textit{politeia}.\textsuperscript{353}

The linguistic suggestion here, I argue, seems to be that the third is the preferred ideal, a \textit{politeia} with a capital \textit{P}, the "regime" that seems to be suggested as the best regime: the Regime.

In fact, Aristotle's suggestion is more than linguistic because, in his discussion of the "well-mixed regime",\textsuperscript{354} he explicitly notes that it is possible to confuse a well-mixed regime with either one of the two extremes that it mixes so well.\textsuperscript{355} Thus the generic appellation "Regime" seems appropriate for this specific regime that, through mixture, achieves a mean or middle regime between its two extremes. But, to avoid confusion in our subsequent discussions, from now on, in place of identifying the specific regime with capitalization as "Regime" and the generic regime as "regime" (without capitalization), we will simply consistently designate \textit{politeia} in its generic sense as "regime" and \textit{politeia} in its specific sense as "republic". Aristotle's best (generic) regime, then, is (specifically) a republic. Part of the reason Aristotle does not use two separate terms for the generic and specific senses, in my view, is that his response to Plato is a pun on the phrase "best regime" (\textit{ariste politeia}) that takes advantage of the ambiguity between the generic and specific senses; that is, his "best regime" is the "best republic": i.e., neither the extremely unlikely rule of a philosopher king (kingship), nor even the less unlikely but still improbable rule of the most virtuous (aristocracy), but rather the more realistic ideal of a well-
mixed republic. But before I explore this more realistic ideal in more detail, I may tabulate the quantitative analysis that Aristotle has made of political form up to this point in his discussion; he has classified the generic regime types according to the number of citizens in a regime who rule and the number of people in whose interests they rule (which, if they are the same number as the rulers, is deviant):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Rulers</th>
<th>Correct Regime</th>
<th>Deviant Regime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Kingship</td>
<td>Tyranny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Aristocracy</td>
<td>Oligarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, an analysis of the reality of political life has to move beyond the quantitative abstractions of a merely empiriometric scheme, to engage with the qualitative analysis of as much observable data from political life as we can fit into a qualitative empirioschematic classification. Such an exercise is what Aristotle undertook with his analysis of 158 different constitutions. For my purposes here, in order to come to grips with the classical analysis of political form as something coherent and useful for the evolutionary study of cultural form, I must pose the question about exactly what kind of a republic this best republic is, the best republic that suggests itself with Aristotle’s punning classification of politeia as the “correct regime”, the Republic, as listed in the above table.

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My way of answering this question is to argue that the discussion of kingship and aristocracy as putative ideals is coherent with the discussion of mixed regimes that reviews all the mixed types of oligarchies, democracies, aristocracies and republics. Other scholars, however, have been unable come up with any coherent account. The assertion of Victor Davis Hanson is representative of the consensus: “Aristotle himself was baffled about what actually distinguished some forms of oligarchies from democracies; indeed his Politics can offer only a hopelessly confused typology.” Yet (pace Hanson) there is a subtle pattern underlying Aristotle’s account. Aristotle’s discussion of mixed regimes is highly organized. My aim in the following discussion is to catch sight of the organizing principles of Aristotle’s discussion and to make an exposition of his empirioschematic classification of the political form of mixed regimes.

Although Aristotle’s conception of a “mixed regime” is acknowledged by scholarship only as a mixture of oligarchy and democracy, I set forth in my discussion here a novel but highly plausible interpretation that extends the principle of mixing from these two specific types to all the other regime types. Indeed, subsequent political theory seems to depart from Aristotle’s usage of “mixed regime” insofar as it seems to depart from discussion of the mixture of oligarchy and democracy in order to consider the mixing of other regime types, as in Polybius and Aquinas. But it is my contention that while the discussion of a mixture of oligarchy and democracy is obviously explicit in Aristotle’s text, an exhaustive discussion of the mixture of all other specific regime types with each other is also implicit in his text. This is, in my view, the guiding principle of his discussion in Book IV that continues the discussion of the problem in Book III of oligarchs being always at odds with democrats. Therefore I set forth a schematization below that attempts to justify my argument. Above all, I argue that “mixed regime” is an

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357 Politics 3.10-18.
358 Politics 4.4-11.
359 Cf. the attempt at Miller 1995: 143-269, esp. 165, 268.
360 Hanson 2004.
Aristotelian concept that applies not just to the mixture of oligarchy and democracy that Aristotle calls politeia (the "mixed regime" in the specific sense), but to any political regime in which the mixing of two specific regime principles may be discerned as more or less at work (and therefore constituting a "mixed regime" in the generic sense).

**Aristotle's Mixed Regimes**

As we have seen above, the six generic regime types are kingship, aristocracy, republic, democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny. With these generic types we have what we need to understand the underlying organization in Aristotle's discussion of all possible mixed regimes. For the discussion in *Politics* 4.4-8 considers democracy (4.4), oligarchy (4.5), aristocracy (4.7), and republic (4.8), by taking each one in turn *in mixture with each of the other types*. The discussions of kinds of kingship in *Politics* 3.14 and kinds of tyranny in *Politics* 4.10 frame the entire discussion and complete the analysis of the mixtures of all six regime types. The underlying unity, of Aristotle exhaustively working through all possible combinations in his mixtures of one generic regime type with another generic regime type, is admittedly not readily visible to the casual reader. Nor has it been adequately grasped by more sophisticated attempts to schematize the discussion.\footnote{Cf. Miller 1995: 268.} The reason for all the difficulty is that, despite the impression left by the initial classification of generic types,\footnote{*Politics* 3.7, 1279a 23-1279b 10.} Aristotle is not imposing an arbitrary mathematical schema of possibilities on political realities. Rather, he is only using the initial generic schema as a guideline or organizing tool for touring observable political realities and for discussing the mixed political forms that he finds there. Where necessary, he departs from the logical sequence of combinations when the phenomena demand it. Aristotle’s discussion of mixed regimes may be tabulated thus:

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364 *Politics* 3.7, 1279a 23-1279b 10.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingship</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
<th>Oligarchy</th>
<th>Aristocracy</th>
<th>Republic</th>
<th>Tyranny</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aristocratic</td>
<td>Aristocratic</td>
<td>Aristocratic</td>
<td>Aristocratic</td>
<td>Aristocratic</td>
<td>Aristocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Tyrannical&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;Tyrannical&gt;</td>
<td>Tyrannical</td>
<td>[Tyrannical]</td>
<td>Tyrannical</td>
<td>Tyrannical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Democratic&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;Democratic&gt;</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchic</td>
<td>Oligarchic</td>
<td>Oligarchic</td>
<td>Oligarchic</td>
<td>Oligarchic</td>
<td>Oligarchic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingly</td>
<td>Kingly</td>
<td>Kingly</td>
<td>Kingly</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

365 Politics 1285b4-6, b21-23: ἡ περὶ τοὺς ἡρωικοὺς χρόνους
366 Politics 1291b38-1292a1: τὸ τάς ἀρχὰς ἀπὸ τιμητῶν ἐστίν, βραχέως δὲ τοῦτός δυτων· δεῖ δὲ τῷ κτωμένῳ ἐξουσίαν εἶναι μετέχειν καὶ τὸν ἀποβάλλοντα μὴ μετέχειν
367 Politics 1292b1-5, 1293a22-7: μᾶλλον γὰρ ἰσχύοντες πλεονεκτεῖν ἀξίους, διὸ αὐτοὶ μὲν αἰφνύουσιν ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων τοὺς εἰς τὸ πόλεμωμα βαδίζοντας
368 Politics 1294a26-29: οὐ πόρρω σωταὶ ἄλληλοι; cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 105, a. 1
369 Politics 1285a17-18, a19-23, b23-25: ἡ βαρβαρική
370 Politics 1292a4-6, a31-38: κύριον δ’ εἶναι τὸ πλῆθος καὶ μὴ τὸν νόμον
371 Politics 1292b6-10, 1293a30-34: ἐγγύς ὡς τοιαύτη δυναστεία μοναρχίας ἐστίν, καὶ κύριοι γίνονται οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλ’ οὖς ὁ νόμος· καὶ τὸ τέταρτον εἰδώς τῆς ὁλιγαρχίας τούτ’ ἐστίν, ἀντίστροφον τῷ τελευταίῳ τῆς δημοκρατίας.
372 Politics 1294a1-4: δοκεῖ δ’ εἶναι τῶν ἀδυνάτων τὸ εὐνομεῖσθαι τῇ μὴ ἀριστοκρατούμενῷ πόλιν ἄλλα πονηροκρατούμενῳ, ὡμοίως δὲ καὶ ἀριστοκρατεῖσθαι τῇ μὴ εὐνομουμενῇ
373 Politics 1292a8-18: τῶν βαρβάρων
374 Politics 1285a32, b25-26: ἡν αἰσιμυνεῖαι προσαγορεύουσιν
375 Politics 1292a39-b1, 1291a14-21: ποιοῦσα γὰρ ἐξουσίαν μετέχειν τῷ κτωμένῳ
376 Politics 1293b17: οἶον ἢ Λακεδαιμονίων, εἰς τε ἄρετήν καὶ δήμον, καὶ ἐστὶ μίξεις τῶν δύο τούτων, δημοκρατίας τε καὶ ἀρετῆς
377 Politics 1293b35-36: ἀποκλινούσας πρὸς τὴν δημοκρατίαν
378 Politics 1295a8-18: ὡς ἐκάλουν αἰσιμυνήτας
379 Politics 1285a3, a15-17, b27-28: ἢ Λακωνική
cf. Politics 1292a1-3: τὸ μετέχειν ἀπαντᾷ τοὺς πολίτας ὃσιοι ἀνυπεύθυνοι, ἄρχειν δὲ τὸν νόμον
380 Politics 1293b20-23: ὃσι τῆς καλουμένης πολιτείας ρέπουσι πρὸς τὴν ὁλιγαρχίαν μᾶλλον
381 Politics 1293b36-40: πρὸς τὴν ὁλιγαρχίαν μᾶλλον
382 Politics 1285b33: παμβασιλεία
383 Politics 1292a3-4: τὸ παντὶ μετεῖναι τῶν ἀρχῶν, ἐὰν μόνον ἡ πολιτίς, ἄρχειν δὲ τὸν νόμον
384 Politics 1292b5-6, 1293a27-30: τὸ δ’ αὐτῶν μὲν τὰς ἀρχὰς ἔχειν, κατὰ νόμον δὲ τὸν κελέυσταν τῶν τελευτάτων διαδεχεῖσθαι τοὺς υἱείς.
385 Politics 1293b2-7: ἐν μόνῃ γὰρ ἄπλος ὁ αὐτὸς ἀνήρ καὶ πολιτίς ἀγαθὸς ἐστὶν
386 Politics 1295a18-23: ἀντιστροφὸς οὖσα τῇ παμβασιλείᾳ
387 Politics 1293b17, 1294a24-25: πλούσιον καὶ ἀρετὴν καὶ δήμον, οἶον ἐν Καρχηδόνι
388 Politics 1293b32-35: ἐστὶ γὰρ ἡ πολιτεία ὡς ἄπλος εἰπεῖ εἰπεῖς ὁλιγαρχίας καὶ δημοκρατίας

Table 8: Politics 3-4’s Empirioschematic Analysis of Mixed Regimes
Let me run through relevant textual passages of the *Politics* and show the order in Aristotle’s discussion of the mixed regimes that this table classifies. It should be kept in mind that the order in Aristotle’s inductive discussion does not precisely follow that of the columns and rows of my table, but nevertheless a careful reading of the text does show that in his discussion Aristotle is running through and exhausting the possible combinations of the generic regime types that may in fact be observed as political realities. At some points, he explicitly relates the schema for one generic regime type to a previously discussed schema of another generic regime type.390

The discussion of kingship in 3.14 exhausts the logical possibilities of kingship mixed with the four other regime types with which mixture is possible. Aristotle discusses there aristocratic kingship (founding heroes made kings by acclamation), tyrannical kingship (barbarian despotism), democratic kingship (the elected Greek tyrants or *aesymnetes*), oligarchic kingship (the Spartan perpetual generalship), and, as a fifth pure type, kingly kingship (the ideal absolute kingship of the all-controlling *pambasileia*, which easily turns into total despotism if the philosopher king is not totally wise and virtuous). Note this fifth, last possibility is simply a refinement of what kingship generically means, i.e., kingship conceived as if only “mixed” purely with itself. The only missing combination here is with *politeia*, republic, but republican kingship is not conceivable as a mixture, because *politeia* is Aristotle’s special response to Plato’s philosophical kingship: not an ideal form of kingship and its possibly mixed virtues, but rather a realistic, virtuous alternative to it. Thus the discussion of *Politics* 3.14 exhausts the five possible generic mixed combinations.391 Aristotle will not discuss the special nature of the species *politeia* (republic) until *Politics* 4.7-8.

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390 For example, in his discussion of the schemata for democracy and oligarchy; cf. *Politics* 4.5, 1292b 6-10.

391 Cf. Plato’s five regime types (*Republic* 580b): kingly, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical. No doubt Aristotle forged his theory of regime types by meditating on Plato’s timocracy and reclassifying it. Yet note that, from this meditation, the distinction that he makes between aristocracy and republic was born.
In the discussion of democracy in *Politics* 4.4, the republican possibility is also omitted from the possible mixtures, and for the same reason: that republic can only be discussed in conjunction with aristocracy, which in its special nature it closely resembles.\(^{392}\) There is no need for “democratic democracy” in its pure form to considered in 4.4, since the genus has already been discussed in 3.7 (as deviant rule of the free many); nevertheless Aristotle prefaced his enumeration of four mixed combinations with a remark on how pure democracy is rhetorically based on equality amongst the free but in fact amounts simply to majority rule.

The “kingly kingship” of the *pambasileia* (correct rule by the virtuous one)\(^{393}\) is the philosopher king extreme of 3.14 that frames the entire discussion, together with the total tyranny extreme of 4.10: two special cases that in their extremities frame the complete consideration of mixtures. The limit cases of kinship and tyranny are germane as extreme forms of democracy, but the middle species of the republic is not yet conceivable in the discussion at this point.

Thus, after speaking first of pure democracy (i.e., rhetorically based on equality but, in fact, majority rule), Aristotle explicitly enumerates (in 4.4) four types of mixed democracy as mixed from five regime types (excluding republic): aristocratic democracy (where rule is based on a low property qualification); oligarchic democracy (where those not liable to account rule, yet still adhere to the rule of law); kinly or “royal”\(^{394}\) democracy (where all democratically share in the offices by virtue of their citizenship, yet still adhere to the rule of law in the manner of a rational philosopher king; indeed, this type of regime shares the danger of a *pambasileia* in that any lack of virtue among these all-sovereign democratic citizen “kings” can lead the regime into tyranny); and tyrannical democracy (where law no longer rules in the fashion of royal rationality; instead, there is the tyranny of mob rule and its demagogues).

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\(^{392}\) *Politics* 4.8, 1294a 26-29.

\(^{393}\) Virtuous in the sense of fully rational: i.e. as both intellectually and morally virtuous.

\(^{394}\) This is the equivalent term that comes into use in the English tradition of political theory, for describing monarchical rule in terms of a contrast between “royal” rule and “political” rule; cf. Fortescue 1997: 14-23, 83-87, 127-136.
The discussion of oligarchy in 4.5 also omits the republican possibility. And it also omits the pure pleonastic form of “oligarchic oligarchy” already considered at 3.7: deviant rule by the wealthy few. Thus there are four combinations of mixed oligarchies corresponding to the remaining possibilities: democratic oligarchy (where several can acquire enough property to participate in ruling); aristocratic oligarchy (where fewer with more property themselves elect who rules; if these oligarchs elect magistrates from all the citizens of the high assessment, then this is more aristocratic, as Aristotle notes than if they elect from only a particular section of the citizens of the high assessment, which would be more purely oligarchic, i.e. “oligarchic oligarchy”); kingly or “royal” oligarchy (a hereditary system with the rule of law, not of men); and tyrannical oligarchy (a hereditary system without the rule of law, called a dynasty). Note that these correspond mutatis mutandis to the four democracy mixtures, as Aristotle explicitly suggests both with his numbering of four types and by explicitly pointing out how the last of the four types of mixed oligarchy (tyrannical dynasty) corresponds with the last of the four types of mixed democracy (tyrannical mob rule). Recall that the democracy section (at 4.4) discussed five types but the first was pure democracy and the last four the mixed types, which correspond to the same fourfold mixing scheme in the oligarchy section (at 4.5). Any confusion here is dispelled by Aristotle’s careful review (in 4.6) of how the fourfold mixings of both democracy and oligarchy work.

The sections on aristocracy (4.7) and republic (4.8) also follow a fourfold mixing, but unlike democracy and oligarchy, they now include the republican possibility. They exclude, however, the tyrannical possibility; and so the number of possible mixtures (excluding, of course, the pure types as already-discussed pure fifths) stays numbered at four actual mixtures. The reason for the exclusion of tyranny and the inclusion of republic as elements for a possible

395 Politics 3.7, 1279b 8.
396 Politics 4.5, 1292b 3-5.
398 Politics 4.6, 1293a 30-34.
mixture is, as Aristotle argues,\footnote{Politics 4.7, 1294a 1-4.} that it is simply impossible to conceive well-ordered regimes as being ruled by wicked and not by the best men. That is, “tyrannical aristocracy” and “tyrannical republic” are unthinkable oxymorons; the names for the real things that they might seem to suggest, however, would be rather “dynasty” and “ochlocracy” respectively (which have already been analyzed in the types classified under “tyrannical oligarchy” and “tyrannical democracy”). The aristocracy and republic sections, therefore, now substitute republic in place of tyranny as the fourth mixing element in their mixed types.

Included among the mixed types of aristocracy in the aristocracy section (4.7), Aristotle explicitly says that the best regime is where the good man is the good citizen.\footnote{Politics 4.7, 1293b 2-7.} This “kingly aristocracy” type is to be interpreted as the kingly or “royal” rule of the self-governing best men. It is royal because it is in accord with reason (like the pambasileia ideal) but it is aristocratic because it is spread amongst as many good men as there are ruling citizens. It is equivalent to a nation or polis of philosopher kings. This grand ideal is identified as simply the best. Then Aristotle names three more aristocratic mixed regime types, referring to the first two (republican aristocracy and democratic aristocracy) of the last three (republican aristocracy, democratic aristocracy, and oligarchic aristocracy) as “two types” (tauta duo eide) being ranked after the simply best regime (kingly aristocracy). The suggestion here seems to be that republican aristocracy, although not first-rank kingly aristocracy (the practically unrealistic ideal of the best regime) is nevertheless the best republic, because it (like Carthage) is a mixture of wealth, virtue and freedom. That is, it is republican by (horizontally) balancing wealth and freedom, and yet aristocratic by (vertically) balancing this with virtue (as I suggest in the tables below). The contrast is with democratic aristocracy, which (like Sparta) simply (vertically) balances democracy with virtue; wealth is omitted from the (horizontal) mixture. There is also a third type, oligarchic aristocracy, which inclines more toward the oligarchic element (wealth) in the
horizontal balance of wealth and freedom, which also deemphasizes the vertical emphasis on virtue in this threefold balanced mixture. The following tables may assist in visualizing the horizontal and vertical balances involved in mixing regime types. Note that what is being “balanced” are the competing resentful claims to rule, so that this is not an exercise in dry abstraction, but a real schema of how competing resentments can be ameliorated by giving two or more rival parties a share in political rule:

Table 9: Vertical Balance in Regime Mixing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type</th>
<th>Claim to Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingship</td>
<td>reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristocracy</td>
<td>virtue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyranny</td>
<td>appetite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Horizontal Balance in Regime Mixing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
<th>Republic</th>
<th>Oligarchy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim to Rule</td>
<td>freedom</td>
<td>moderation</td>
<td>wealth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any mixing of the three generic vertical regime types (Table 9) with any of the three generic horizontal regime types (Table 10) can therefore be plotted on the two dimensional schema given below in Table 11. Note that republic is the balance point between democracy and oligarchy (Table 10), and aristocracy is the balance point between kingship and tyranny (Table 9). Therefore the two dimensions (horizontal and vertical), when combined (Table 11), give a useful schema for locating any given mixed regime with respect to any of the competing claims to rule that it includes as part of its constitutional mixing:
Table 11: Balance Point [x] for the Well-Mixed Middle Regime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left Wing</th>
<th>Liberal Mean</th>
<th>Right Wing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingship: reason</td>
<td>(X) Aristocracy: virtue</td>
<td>Oligarchy: wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Sparta]</td>
<td>[Carthage]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy: freedom</td>
<td>[x] Republic: moderation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyranny: appetite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This schematization allows me to locate the various best regimes discussed by Aristotle with respect to how they mix into their constitution the various competing claims to rule: the simply best regime is kingly aristocracy, marked with an (X); the simply best republic is republican aristocracy, marked as [Carthage]; and Aristotle will go on to discuss a proposed realistic effort at mixing a regime to approximate this best republic, the “Aristotle’s Republic” of Politics 7-8, which I may designate here as slightly lower on the vertical scale as an aristocratic republic, marked with an [x], amongst the types to be discussed in the next section (4.8).

Table 12: Aristotle’s Best Regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Best Regime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingsly Aristocracy (X)</td>
<td>401 Politics 1293b 19-20: τὴν πρώτην τὴν ἀρίστην πολιτείαν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Aristocracy [Carthage]</td>
<td>402 Politics 1293b 20: ταύτα δύο εἶδη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristocratic Republic [x]</td>
<td>“Aristotle’s Republic” 403 Politics 7-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I speak of "horizontal" and "vertical" mixtures and balancing in order to stay true to the structure of Aristotle's classification (which now moves from one dimensional balance, as in Tables 9 and 10, and becomes two dimensional, as in Table 11, as Aristotle makes an explicit discussion of the three possible principles of an aristocratic mixture as virtue, wealth, and freedom).\textsuperscript{404} Kingship, aristocracy, and tyranny are principles of rule that correspond to goods of the individual (reason, virtue, and appetite); as virtue is a mean, aristocracy is a mean between the extreme claims of reason and appetite in the limits cases of philosophical kingship and total tyranny (which would correspond respectively to the perfection and corruption of an individual's virtue as an individual). This is the "vertical" dimension, related to the perfection of the individual by virtue (moral and intellectual), or his corruption by the opposite. It is schematized in Table 9. Republic, similarly, is a mean between oligarchy and democracy, as Aristotle explains (in 4.8); but it relates more to the perfection of the common good as being a balance between the claims of wealth and freedom. The republic is a moderate mean, achieving a horizontal balance between these two claims.\textsuperscript{405} Its balance is schematized in Table 10.

Finally, in the discussion of republic (in 4.8), Aristotle defines a "republican republic" (or, better, "republican regime") in its pure sense as the mixture of oligarchy and democracy.\textsuperscript{406} With its characteristic moderation, it aims at a resolution of the conflict between rich and poor. We have seen how any mixture of pretty much any two generic regime types (i.e., by mixing any two resentful, competing claims to rule) can produce a mixed regime type. Having now reached his definition of the republic (in 4.8), it is now finally appropriate for Aristotle to speak of what a well-mixed regime type would be (in 4.9). Simply put, the well-mixed regime becomes a generic "regime" in the specific sense of "republic" (viz., the purely republican regime), because it balances the ruling claims of rich and poor, oligarchs and democrats, in the noble mixture that

\textsuperscript{404} Politics 4.7, 1293b 8-17, 1294a 24-25.
\textsuperscript{405} Cf. Politics 4.11.
\textsuperscript{406} Politics 4.8, 1293b 32-35.
best moderates the competing claims. Thus the republic, purely speaking, is a horizontal balance between rich and poor, wealth and freedom. Again, Table 10 schematizes this middling ideal.

Sparta is given as an example of a well-mixed regime,407 but commentators have been perplexed by the example of Sparta as a well-mixed (and thus now apparently republican) balance of wealth and freedom when it was just recently cited,408 however, as a mixture of virtue and freedom. But there is no contradiction if the horizontal and vertical dimensions are kept in mind here. Aristotle conceives Sparta as more properly a vertical aristocratic regime; that is, oriented more to virtue (individual perfection) than to the common good which demands a mean balance of wealth and freedom (resolved by Sparta more in the horizontal direction of democracy and the egalitarian freedom it promotes): hence the “democratic aristocracy” essence of Sparta’s mixture is mainly a vertical balance between virtue and freedom, although the predominantly democratic nature of its horizontal dimension is still “well-mixed” with regard to any identifiably oligarchic features of the regime.409

A democratic republic (what Aristotle says people wrongly call a pure “republic”)410 inclines more towards the claims of freedom (those of “equality”) on the horizontal axis of the balance between freedom and wealth (and also relative, on the vertical axis, to virtue: i.e., if we wish to map this particular “democratic republic” mixture not just one-dimensionally as in Table 10, but somewhere in two dimensions, as in Table 11). An oligarchic republic inclines more to the wealth corner of the three-way horizontal-vertical triangular balance: i.e., in Table 11, somewhere in column three, row three (not counting the header row, which gratuitously uses contemporary classifications to help the reader conceptualize the resentful claims Aristotle is mixing regimes to ameliorate).

407 Politics 4.9, 1294b 16-40.
408 At Politics 4.7, 1293b 17.
409 As discussed in Politics 4.9, 1294b 16-40.
410 Politics 4.8, 1293b 35-36.
Tyranny is the sixth regime type, but because it is such an egregious abuse of power it scarcely deserves to be considered a regime “type”. Aristotle still classifies its types in *Politics* 4.10 according to its Greek, barbarian, and worst-case-scenario forms, but these are recapitulations of deviant types of kingship already discussed (in 3.14): tyrannical kingship (the barbarism of foreign despots); democratic kingship (the elected Greek tyrants or *aesymnetes*); and total tyranny (the despotic version of the *pambasileia*). Note that oligarchic (Spartan) kingship and aristocratic (heroic) kingship escape censure.

In conclusion, I may sum up the results of Aristotle’s analysis of classical political form as discerning how to manage resentment by means of mixed regimes. A well-mixed regime (4.9) achieves a horizontal balance that achieves the basic virtue of moderation in preparation for further growth in virtue in the vertical dimension. The middle regime of a republican aristocracy is the *best republic* in the specific sense: Aristotle’s specific, realistic refinement of Plato’s generic, idealistic *best regime*. Aristotle’s Republic is the “Aristo-republic” of *Politics* 7-8, in which an aristocratic republic is designed as a moderate, well-tempered regime that orients itself, through education and culture, towards virtue: the hope is that the *aristocratic republic* flourishes, as it educates its citizens, and blossoms into a *republican aristocracy*. Republic and aristocracy: they are not far off from one another, as Aristotle notes; the difference is in the citizens.

A republic aims to be the middle regime, the virtuous mean between oligarchic or democratic tendencies. But this mean virtue of the common good is a (horizontal) preparation for the virtues of the individual (vertical) excellences of the individual citizens who are the good

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411 Concerning these recapitulations, note that, in Table 8, I use angular brackets to indicate mixed regime types that are more properly classified under a different but parallel unmixed regime type, e.g., “democratic kingship” is more properly a mixed species to be classified under tyranny than under kingship. (Note also that the square brackets around “tyrannical aristocracy” indicate that it is an impossibility.)


413 *Politics* 4.8, 1294a 26-29.
individuals who rule. In Aristotle's integral vision,414 virtue has two roots: one in the common
good, one in the individual. The former (the common good) finds moderation in a republic; the
latter (the good citizen) turns it into an aristocracy.

Aristotle's republic is the middle regime,415 a proposal for a polis to mix itself well, such
that it becomes constitutionally capable of educating itself from aristocratic republicanism into
enculturation as republican aristocracy: the best republic for which we can hope, other than the
simply best regime.416 Aristotle's subsequent discussion of how the best republic naturally comes
into being (Politics 4-6), however, shows some awareness of the political offices and powers of
office that can be abused by political factions demanding scapegoats.417 He therefore advocates,
in the Politics, the mixed regime as a rational response to this potential danger posed by irrational
resentments.418

But now, having made this exposition of my understanding of classical political form, I
must pose the questions suggested by Girard's work to Aristotelian political philosophy: Will not
scapegoating in some form inevitably have to become part of this classical political form that
purports to manage resentments best? Can politics ever dispense with scapegoating? In any
earthly regime, will it not always return in some form? All these insistent questions lead, in turn,
to a final question: Does not the unveiling of the scapegoat mechanism spur on humanity to the
apocalyptic end of history, that end of all political form? For Christianity seems to raise the stakes
of politics in that its unyielding ethical claims seem to unveil for humanity either total utopia or
total annihilation as the fundamental binary direction of anthroposemiosis.

414 I argue that this "integral vision" is thus proto-semiotic in that it bridges the gulf between theory and
practice in order to consider how the perfection of any human being must be rooted in both.
415 Politics 4.11, 1296a 37.
416 Huxley 1985: 145 is therefore incorrect to assert that Aristotle's Republic is "sui generis"; as we have
argued, understood within the schema for the mixed regimes, it is a (horizontal dimension) republican
launching pad for further development as (vertical dimension) aristocracy.
The Semiotics of Cultural Catharsis

Aristotle’s achievement in the realm of classical political form is that he has proposed a political model that seeks a “horizontal” moderation and stability, in order that the citizens of that moderate regime may be open to the virtuous development of themselves in the “vertical” dimension. Keeping this classical analysis of political form in mind, I turn now to the problem of the evolution of political form after the historical impact of Christianity. Girard has emphasized the radical effect on culture of Christianity’s unveiling of the scapegoat mechanism. Politically, the various praxial implementations of Christian ethics have culminated in postmodernity’s concern for the victim. For example, in the victimary rhetoric of “political correctness” we may observe how the political predilection of postmodernity is to seek to decenter power wherever it may be concentrated, in order that the victim’s peripheral status may be redressed; i.e., only the victim may now be made into a socially acceptable center. But if this is a reductio ad absurdum of Christianity, a form of “ultra-Christianity” as Girard calls it, then this raises the question of what it is, in terms of the originary scene, that is so apocalyptic or revelatory in the Christian message that necessarily causes such deleterious effects in political life. Is the logical conclusion of Christianity a resentful victimology that leads to such decadence in politics and esthetics? Or is Christianity part of the historical process by which man self-consciously comes to enlightenment about himself, an anthropological awareness of himself as the language-using species, so that symbolic representation, being that peculiar power with which he may configure art and politics, allows him to progress, and with that progress in history, to achieve, if not non-violence, at least the deferral of violence?

The semiotic possibilities that these two questions point to, in terms of the originary scene, are those that I have discussed as the Girardian hypothesis (mimetic theory) versus the Gansian hypothesis (generative anthropology). In other words, the semiotic question that arises after classical political form meets Christianity in history is whether or not the originary scene that defines anthroposemiosis necessitates either scapegoating or deferral as what constitutes political life.

If scapegoating is necessary to constitute the worldly political order, then the best that can be hoped for is the deferral of violence in art, with its esthetic sacrificial substitutes for real victims. But nevertheless it also implies the inevitable political complicity of such art with the sacrificial cultural order and its scapegoating requirements, real or imaginary. For the sacrifices of art would always be impotent to reconfigure praxial models beyond scapegoating.

Yet, on the other hand, the Gansian hypothesis understands the impact of Christianity on this sacrificial cultural order in a way different from Girard. For Girard, the only alternative to the sacrificial order is the apocalyptic repudiation of all political and esthetic order as constituted by scapegoating. But with the generative anthropology of the originary scene, however, there is more room for a this-worldly evolution in politics and esthetics. In my view, Aristotle’s political anthropology can help play a role in advancing such originary analysis of human culture.

The moral concern of Girard has been to further the work of Christianity in exposing the scapegoat mechanism. Can this otherworldly apocalyptic message be reconciled with the classical analysis of political form? Or, upon encountering it, does the way of life commended by classical political form and reflected in the classical esthetic set us on a collision course with the end of

423 Girard 1987a: 253-262.
history (as Girard puts it: either the repudiation of scapegoating, or a final apocalypse of violence will illustrate the Gospels’ truth)?

In my view, the main issue involved in the necessities imposed by the originary scene on the evolution of political form is best summed up as the “latitude for statesmanship” that remains as an unsolved problem in the attempt of Strauss to revive the contemplation of classical political form for contemporary political theory.\(^{426}\) In Strauss’ view, Aquinas seems to curtail the latitude for statesmanship that is required in order for executive power to act nobly for the common good, because Aquinas seems categorically to be ruling some options out as always contrary to natural law.\(^{427}\) In other words, Christianity seems to curtail the possibilities for human excellence, both individually and in societies, because the demands of its revelation restrict the prudent action of statesmen.

The significance of the “latitude for statesmanship” problem suggested itself to me when I read one scholar’s argument about Strauss’ politic distortion of Aristotle having been made in order to counter Heidegger’s impolitic use of Aristotle.\(^{428}\) To Strauss’ mind, what was impolitic in Heidegger’s use was precisely what had been lost since classical political philosophy.\(^{429}\) That is, what was impolitic in Heidegger was due to the stamp of immoderation that Christianity had left on political philosophy.\(^{430}\) Because Christianity had claimed a definitive revelation about what is wrong with the world and its political order, Christianity’s immoderation turned politics into ideology.\(^{431}\) I found this suggestive, because Girard’s theory describes a disruption of the old sacred order by which the world was once ruled. Girard’s binary option (Kingdom or apocalypse) is good shorthand for the extreme ideology that can be imposed on political choice by

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427 Cf. Aquinas, ST I-II, q. 94, aa. 4-5.
Christianity. While on the one hand Christianity liberated the world from the scapegoating regime, on the other hand it also unleashed all the apocalyptic consequences of that unveiling. Strauss recognized similarly ideological political dangers of Christianity and saw them in all political forms succeeding the classical. Most especially he tracked their ideological forms in modernity.

Since my study here, however, is focusing on the evolutionary esthetic transition that Gans has described from the classical to the neoclassical, which Girard’s reinterpretation has made possible for the first time, I am looking for the change in political form corresponding to that esthetic transition. In this regard, then, I mention Strauss only in order to point to the problem of how political form evolved, thanks to Christianity, in its transition from classical political form. In a word, the esthetic transition may be summed up as fundamentally related to the evolution of the role of the statesman.

On Strauss’ view, classical political philosophy had allowed a certain “latitude for statesmanship” that Christianity now excluded from political practice. The statesman, in extreme circumstances, was allowed to perform extreme actions that might conventionally be described as “evil”. For Strauss, this was the difference between Aristotelian natural right and Thomistic natural law: Aristotle recognized that natural right was mutable, but Thomas Aquinas ruled out the possibility that natural law was changeable. In other words, classical political philosophy would not want to rule out violent “scapegoating” tactics as always evil, since a statesman in a certain circumstance might have to employ such tactics to preserve the very

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436 Strauss 1953: 120-164.
existence of the state. Strauss was no advocate of Machiavellian statecraft, but he was perceptive about how Christianity has changed political order. It seems to undermine natural right by pointing to its transcendent origin. Natural right does not transcend political society, because then it would not be natural, since man is (by nature) a political animal; this is Strauss’ understanding of Aristotle.

In my view, however, generative anthropology has clarified how the unresolved tension between reason and revelation in Strauss may be traced back to the originary scene: the natural political sociability of humans is generated, not from above by a transcendent natural law that decrees eschatological punishments and rewards, but rather by the cultural evolution set in motion by a natural originary scene. That is, the origin of god (the symbolic revelation of the sacred center) is the same event as the origin of language (the effective union of the human community on the periphery by their first mental act of human reason).

Therefore the impasse between theory and practice, which, in Strauss’ thought, is introduced by Christianity’s apparently transcendent theoretical restrictions on the latitude for statesmanship’s practice, could in fact be bridged at certain rare points in history by the statesman’s role in an evolution of semiosis. Generative anthropology suggests that we may model this semiotic structure of political evolution and its esthetic role in cultural semiosis. Before I explain in more detail this model of anthroposemiosis that, inspired by generative anthropology’s semiotic bridge between theory and practice, I will be applying the next two chapters, I first discuss in the next section how Aristotle’s conception of “perfect virtue” seems implicitly to be suggesting such a semiotic bridge between theory and practice.

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440 Swanson 1992: 200-201, esp. 201 n.16.
Anthroposemiosis and Aristotle’s Perfect Virtue

Concerning the relationship between moral and intellectual virtue, “Aristotle seems to give two contradictory accounts”: the activity of nous alone is self-sufficient (autarkes); and yet the activity of nous “does in fact presuppose the moral virtues”. But this seeming contradiction between theory and practice in an individual life can be resolved in the same manner that we resolved the difficulties in understanding what Aristotle’s “best regime” is. The “best life” for Aristotle is like the “best regime”: an appropriate mixture is required. That is, pure theoretical contemplation may be desirable just as perfect pambasileia rule by a philosopher king may be desirable. This grand utopian ideal, however, merely points to the vertical dimension that must be aspired to in order to achieve its right balance with the horizontal dimension of political life. In other words, just as the mixture of a political regime has two dimensions (as we saw in discussing Aristotle’s regime mixtures), so too does the life of an individual have a tension in two dimensions: the intellectual virtues of the theoretical life, and the moral virtues of the practical life. The controversial question, of course, is whether Aristotle’s texts in fact argue for an “inclusive” or “dominant” sense of perfect virtue; that is, whether moral virtue is included along with philosophy in the “best life” or whether philosophy alone dominates in this realm.

Anthony Kenny has suggested that in the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle seems to be proposing the “dominant” view of perfect virtue, but in the Eudemian Ethics the “inclusive” view. The upshot of Kenny’s excellent work on the question is that Aristotle’s views on philosophy and happiness cannot be seriously assessed without taking the Eudemian Ethics into consideration. Leaving aside the more complicated questions of the historical development of Aristotle’s views, i.e., the philological study of the relationship between the two works, we can

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still draw conclusions about Aristotle’s understanding of the relationship between philosophy and politics without having to choose one text over the other in order to champion a thesis. For it is enough to begin by recognizing this much:

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle presents two ideals of happiness: a first-class happiness consisting in pure contemplation, and a second-class happiness consisting in the exercise of wisdom and the moral virtues. In the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle presents a single ideal of happiness which includes both a contemplative and an active element, and which can be summarized as ‘the contemplation and service of God’.

In other words, since the *Nicomachean Ethics* presents an unresolved tension between first- and second-class ideals of happiness, it does no violence to that text if we ask whether that tension can be better understood as a harmony in light of the harmonious ideal of the *Eudemian Ethics*’ perfect virtue. If there is an intelligent harmony to Aristotle’s view of political regime forms, which I have proposed with my account of his theory of mixed regimes in two dimensions, I need to ask further if such intelligent harmony can be found in Aristotle’s view of an individual’s perfect virtue.

I think that there is such an intelligent harmony. The best way to catch sight of it is to consider the two dimensions also involved in individual virtue. Moral virtue can be seen as most choiceworthy in the horizontal dimension and intellectual virtue as most choiceworthy in the vertical dimension. A collapse into one dimension (either Aristotle’s prima facie horizontal practicality or Girard’s prima facie vertical impracticality) reduces man into a one-dimensional being. While Aristotle’s realistic political theory refuses to omit the requisite horizontal dimension (because, as we saw, he recognizes how crucial it is with his theory of the middle regime of politeia), we need to understand more clearly what the vertical dimension is oriented towards in Aristotle. It will be productive for my inquiry to look to Aristotle for a proper

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evaluation of the impact that Christianity has had on this dimension in history, i.e., in terms of the subsequent evolution of political form from classical political form.

My inquiry is aided by O'Connor's helpful suggestion to read the tension between intellectual and moral virtue in light of what he calls a "programmatic principle" concerning analogy in Aristotle. This programmatic principle allows a defence of moral virtue as still choiceworthy for its own sake, even if philosophic virtue regards morality and politics as "secondary" in status. Thus we proceed now to offer an argument to support O'Connor's mere assertion that the "dominant view" passages from *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7-8 can be interpreted reasonably and consistently with the programmatic principle.

Whether moral or intellectual, we contend that virtue has two roots: one in the common good, and the other in the perfection of the individual. We have already seen that these two roots meet in political life, as reflected in Aristotle's regime theory; that is, regimes are initially classified as correct or deviant according to whether they advance the interests of the common good or of the rulers alone. From there, the regime types may be mixed in order to ameliorate the clash of competing factions, each with their resentments making a claim for sole rule. The outcome for a well-mixed regime is the opportunity for the city's development in the vertical dimension, viz., the ennobling of its citizens as being not simply individuals improving in individual virtue but as virtuous citizens who rule. Thus individual perfection is rooted in political life insofar as political life is the womb of an individual's development. And as the individual develops, political life energizes the true self, mind. Political activity is therefore integral to Aristotle's definition of happiness as the "activity of perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue". Together with O'Connor's "programmatic principle", which suggests an analogical

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450 *NE* 10.8, 1178 a9.  
452 *NE* 10.7, 1177a 12-1177b 31.  
453 *EE* 1219a 38-39.
relation of goods between theory and practice in an individual, and with Kenny’s work on the *Eudemian Ethics*, which argues for that treatise’s importance for understanding Aristotelian ethics, let me now suggest how to interpret the Aristotelian passages’ apparently exalting theory.454

My guiding thesis for interpreting these passages is that, in light of the “programmatic principle” concerning analogy, *practical activity is the perfection of the city just as theoretical activity is the perfection of the individual*. Aristotle states this “programmatic principle” concerning analogy in order to affirm that “good” is a common term (i.e., *estin to agathon koinon ti kat’ analogian*):

Therefore the ‘good’ is not something common (*ouk estin ara to agathon koinon ti*) according to one idea. But how indeed are [things] called ['good']? For they do not seem to be things with the same name ['good'] merely by chance. Could it be there is ['good'] for them from one ['good']? Or they all contribute toward one ['good']? Or [there is ‘good’ for them] rather according to analogy (*kat’ analogian*)? For as sight ['is ‘good’] in the body, insight ['is ‘good’] in the soul, and indeed another thing ['is ‘good’] in another. But perhaps these things are to be set aside for now.455

Aristotle “sets aside” the metaphysical questions about being and analogy and so may I. For it is enough to observe the analogical relation between the city and man: *Practical activity is good in the city as theoretical activity is good in the man*. This observation will help me make sense of the full significance of three of Aristotle’s statements on the “dominant” view in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the three that I will examine below.

In the “dominant” view of happiness, Aristotle seems to set forth the perfect life for an individual man as the theoretical life because this life seems to be the perfect life in three ways: the most (1) self-sufficient, (2) leisured, and (3) choiceworthy life.456 But a political life can also be seen to be characterized by these three perfections, at least if I apply the programmatic

454 *NE* 10.7, 1177a 25-34, 1177b 1-8 and 1177b 16-18, and 10.8, 1178 a9-1178b 21.
455 *NE* 1096b 25-31.
principle and we see these three characteristics as also marking the perfection of the city's practical activity. As I apply this principle to see the analogy between the practical and theoretical life, we should keep in mind that virtue has two roots, one in the individual and one in the common good. That is, we should keep in mind that practical activity cannot be denigrated because complete happiness requires a political life, since happiness is the "activity of perfect life in accordance with perfect virtue".\(^{457}\) That this happiness is thus in a way inseparable from political activity is nevertheless no denigration of the theoretical life, because theory is noble, and the noble man ennobles practical activities: "things are noble (kala) when that for which men do them and choose them is noble (kalon)".\(^ {458}\)

The first "dominant" view passage from Aristotle I must consider makes a statement about self-sufficiency and freedom that seems to commend the theoretical life as best in terms of self-sufficiency and freedom:

> Therefore philosophy at least seems to have pleasures wonderful in their superlative purity and in security, and [it is] reasonable that sweeter is the occupation of knowing than seeking. And that which is called self-sufficiency (autarkeia) would especially concern the theoretical [activity]; for while, on the one hand, a wise man and a just man and the rest of men need the necessities for living, on the other hand, when these things have been sufficiently produced for these men, whereas the just man needs those to whom and among whom he may practice justice, similarly also the disciplined man and the manly man and each of the other [virtuous men], but the wise man is able to contemplate even while being by himself; and by as much as he is wiser, so more will he be [able to contemplate by himself].\(^ {459}\)

But while such a case may be made dialectically that the contemplative life is the most self-sufficient (autarkestatos),\(^ {460}\) because this is a dialectical argument that isolates the theoretical life "in itself" we should not lose sight of the wider context that "being by himself" is, as far as a man is concerned, not a fully realizable possibility. Only the god is the most self-sufficient. But what this means for human perfection, which is rooted not just in individual theoretical "divinity" but

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\(^{457}\) EE 1219a 38-39.

\(^{458}\) EE 1249a 6-8.

\(^{459}\) NE 10.7,3b-4, 1177a 25-34.

\(^{460}\) NE 1177a 35.
also in the common good, is that for man self-sufficiency is a kind of political freedom. That is, self-sufficiency (autarkeia) is not just a theoretical ideal but also a practical one. But it is not a practical ideal in which individual self-sufficiency is a kind of ignoble political declaration of libertarian independence, the purpose of which is to promote one's individual freedom. It is rather a communitarian political freedom, that is, it is a freedom that ennobles the realm of political activity by promoting whatever practical activities allow others to live with more self-sufficiency (autarkeia). Promoting communal self-sufficiency (autarkeia) is properly what is noble, because only it is the political freedom that, analogously speaking, is the way that practical activity perfects the common good along the same lines that theoretical wisdom would perfect an individual life. Therefore the political man who acts for the common good by promoting the most self-sufficient (autarkestatos) kind of political freedom for his community is engaging in activity analogous to the good of philosophical activity since both activities promote the highest possibilities in their spheres of action.

The second "dominant" view passage from Aristotle I must consider makes a statement about leisure and political activity that seems to commend the theoretical life as best in terms of leisured activity:

it [i.e. contemplative activity] alone may be thought to be loved on account of itself; for, beside the act of contemplation, nothing comes into being from it [i.e. contemplative activity], but from the practical [activities] we acquire either more or less beside the deed. And happiness seems to exist in leisure (skholē); for we are unleisured in order that we may have leisure, and we make war in order that we may bring peace. Therefore, on the one hand, the activity of the practical virtues is in the political [activities] or in the polemical [activities]; on the other hand, the actions concerning these [practical] things seem to be unleisured (askholoi)461

But while such a case may be made dialectically that the contemplative life is the most leisured, because this is a dialectical argument that isolates the theoretical life "in itself" we should not lose sight of the wider context that only "to exist in leisure" is, as far as a man is concerned, not a fully

461 NE 10.7.5-6a, 1177b 1-8.
realizable possibility. Only the god is the most leisured. But what this means for human perfection, which is rooted not just in individual theoretical "divinity" but also in the common good, is that for man nobility is found in leisured political activity. That is, leisure (skholē) is not just a theoretical ideal but also a practical one. Political activities can have leisure if done for the sake of what ennobles them. That is, if they serve the common good and not simply individual self-interest, then the political activity of such a man ennobles that "merely" practical activity. He is engaging in activity analogous to the good of philosophical activity since his political activities nobly promote the highest communal possibilities in that sphere of action.

The third "dominant" view passage from Aristotle I must consider makes a statement about choiceworthy activity and political activity. It seems to commend the theoretical life as best in terms of being most choiceworthy since only it is chosen for its own sake:

Indeed if, among the actions according to the virtues, the political and polemical [actions] excel in nobility and magnitude, but these [actions] are unleisured and are desired for the sake of some end and are not [actions] chosen (hairetai) on account of themselves.462

But while such a case may be made dialectically that the contemplative life is the most choiceworthy, because this is a dialectical argument that isolates the theoretical life "in itself" we should not lose sight of the wider context that only to choose "[actions] chosen (hairetai) on account of themselves" is, as far as a man is concerned, not a fully realizable possibility. Only the god is able to choose the exclusively choiceworthy. But what this means for human perfection, which is rooted not just in individual theoretical "divinity" but also in the common good, is that for man ennobled political action is choiceworthy. That is, actions are chosen (hairetai) not just in line with a theoretical ideal but also a practical one. Political activities can have a choiceworthy character if done for the sake of what ennobles them. That is, if they serve the common good and not simply individual self-interest, then the political activity of such a man is choiceworthy.

462 NE 10.7.7, 1177b 16-18.
because it ennobles that practical activity. He is engaging in activity analogous to the good of philosophical activity since his political activities nobly promote the highest communal possibilities in that sphere of action and for that very reason (i.e., they are ennobling) may also be spoken of as choiceworthy for their own sake. Politics is itself choiceworthy if it is ennobled with choiceworthy (i.e., noble) actions.

The gentleman of perfect virtue of whom Aristotle speaks does noble things for their own sake; his action even elevates natural goods. Thus we see that, understood with the programmatic principle of an analogy of proportion to noble ends, the practical life is also a (1) self-sufficient, (2) leisured, and (3) choiceworthy life. That is, it promotes (1) political freedom, (2) noble activity, and (3) chooses the common good. In this way, practical activity is noble in the city in a manner analogous to the way that theoretical activity is noble in the man: it fulfills the highest possibilities of self-sufficient, leisurely, and choiceworthy action in its sphere of activity.

Thus there is for Aristotle a profound relation between the theoretical and practical spheres. Politics may be spoken of as "secondary" to theoretical activity only inasmuch as it is grounded in the communally shared second root of virtue (i.e., the common good and not the individual good). But because virtue has two roots, any political activity that promotes self-sufficient freedom, noble leisure, and choiceworthy action is also a perfection of the theoretical dimension of an individual. Because the political life can be a noble life, the political life therefore also energizes the true self, mind.

Although the vertical nobility of a regime may be what is most choiceworthy about that regime, this does not negate the need for a horizontal foundation in the mixing of that regime so that it may grow to such noble heights. The same goes for the life of an individual. The horizontal perfections of political activity are the foundation for vertical growth in theoretical activity. In

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463 EE 1249a 6-8.
464 NE 10.7.1-9, 1177a 12-1177b 31; cf. 9.4.3, 9.4.4, 9.8.6.
terms of Aristotle’s “perfect virtue”, then, I can sum up the semiotic issue as the range of
historical possibilities open to human political action. That is, although my discussion has
affirmed the political life as Aristotle’s perfect virtue insofar as it is a self-sufficient, leisured, and
choiceworthy life when it acts nobly for the common good, it is not clear in advance what
“acting nobly for the common good” concretely consists of in any particular circumstance. And
this is precisely Strauss’ point, as I mentioned in the section preceding this one: i.e., that Aquinas
seems to curtail the latitude for statesmanship that is required in order to act nobly for the
common good, because Aquinas seems categorically to be ruling some options out as always
contrary to natural law.465 In other words, Christianity seems to curtail the possibilities for human
excellence, both individually and in societies, because the demands of its revelation restrict the
prudent action of statesmen by impractically accusing them of “scapegoating” instead of seeing
the practical nobility in their action.

The Evolution of Political Form

Girard’s postmodern reinterpretation of Christianity is important for my inquiry into
politics and esthetic evolution,466 because it both highlights Christianity’s problem for statesmen
(i.e., that it precipitates an apocalypse of politics with its critiquing and weakening of the violent
foundations of political order)467 and also reminds politics of what transcends it (i.e., the utopian
realization of a social order in which there is no more scapegoating).468 Strauss’ response to
Heidegger and to the apocalypse of modernity is on this point (i.e., with his highlighting of the
role of an Aristotelian “latitude for statesmanship” in classical political form) quite useful for my
assessment of the significance of Girard’s thought. With his emphasis on the universality of the

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465 Cf. Aquinas, _ST_ I-II, q. 94, aa. 4-5.
467 Girard 1987a: 253-259.
generative scapegoating mechanism,\textsuperscript{469} Girard’s account of worldly order has no room for the classical virtue of prudence (\textit{phronesis}),\textsuperscript{470} by which a statesman might concretely achieve, if not the abstract utopia of a non-violent Kingdom of Heaven, at least a “second best” regime marked by the highest form of human excellence realistically possible under given conditions. But is there any means by which such culturally formative acts of prudence may be realized and recognized in political and esthetic form?

I am arguing that there is; therefore, I aim to expand the work of originary analysis,\textsuperscript{471} in order to discern the mirror of politics found in esthetic form. The improved version of the originary scene, which I set forth in Chapter One along with the empirioschematic framework for recognizing the evolution of that originary scene in subsequent cultural evolution, can allow us to see the positive contribution that Girard’s work can make in assessing the impact of Christianity on cultural form (both political and esthetic). That impact of Christianity on cultural form worried Strauss because of how it seemed to forever alter the range of action open to statesmen.\textsuperscript{472} To understand this alteration in concrete terms, I will turn in the remaining chapters to an originary analysis of the most revealing moments in Greek tragedy and Shakespeare from which I can trace the impact of Christianity on statesmanship. But first I must clarify what I have determined in this chapter about political form in relation to the evolution of esthetic form.

Girard’s work has opened up the possibility for us to understand political form in fundamentally anthropological terms, i.e., in terms of resentment. When a statesman’s \textit{management of resentment}, by changes in regime mixing, becomes a real achievement in cultural form, we can (thanks to the empirioschematic evolutionary model which I have developed from the originary scene) find the traces of this cultural form as the form-of-the-content in esthetic

\textsuperscript{469} Burkert, Girard, and Smith 1987: 73-105.
\textsuperscript{470} Cf. Aquinas, \textit{ST} I-II, q. 57, aa. 3-6.
\textsuperscript{472} Cf. Schall 1981b: 488-493.
form and content. Thus it is worth clarifying the results I have arrived at in this chapter concerning classical political form in terms of the role in its evolution played by resentment.

Girard’s articulation of the “things hidden since the foundation of the world” (viz., the anthropologically constitutive role of violence and the sacred)\textsuperscript{473} has a definite political significance because of his “solution” to resentment by purely vertical means. That is, the victimary interpretation of Christianity that Girard’s postmodern orientation proposes encourages a reduction of the analysis of political form to one conspiracy theory of “master and slave”: humanity is enslaved to the scapegoating mechanism; only the Christ as our mimetic master can free us from the violent order of the world. All other political masters are in collusion with the mimetic scapegoating tactics of Satan.\textsuperscript{474} Thus Christianity leads to unrealistic and overly eschatological expectations in regime mixing with regard to the vertical dimension of setting conditions for perfecting individual virtue. In addition, this otherworldly emphasis of Christianity causes a concomitant denigration of the attempts of statesmen to balance the horizontal dimension of the war between oligarchs and democrats (i.e., rich and poor), because of the Christian emphasis of siding with the poor victims, which its vertical eschatological dimension demands.\textsuperscript{475}

But despite this apocalyptic political danger of Christianity that Girard articulates in such stark terms, Girardian theory also affords an opportunity for seeing the universal dynamics of resentment. That is, building on the work of Gans’ generative anthropology,\textsuperscript{476} we should view Girard’s insights into the constitutive role of the violent sacred not in eschatological terms but rather in evolutionary terms. The “end of history” is thus not the “best regime” of the heavenly Kingdom but rather some temporary secondary form like the “best republic” of Aristotle. Because

\textsuperscript{473} Girard 1987a: 1-112.
\textsuperscript{474} Girard 2001: 32-46.
\textsuperscript{475} Cf. Schall 1985: 29-34.
\textsuperscript{476} Gans 1985: 103-175.
these secondary forms are historical products, their cultural form is open for evolutionary analysis in two ways: one, in esthetic form, which provides a vivid anthropological record of their praxial implementation; two, in the political form (which circumscribes the ontological limit of the regime’s mixing of the dynamics of resentment) that the esthetic form mirrors in its deferral of resentment.

Rather than seeing resentment at work only in one class of humanity (the “slave morality” of the poor weak victims) as Nietzsche did, the wider scope of Girard’s hypotheses allows us to see resentment as universally constitutive in all of human culture.\(^{477}\) To be sure, the envy generated by mimetic rivalry may be the great danger that always threatens a recurrence of a scapegoating process. But as we saw in Chapter One, with my refinement of the originary scene along the lines of generative anthropology, scapegoating is not the moment of the scene that constitutes humanity as such. Rather, that moment is the mental act of the origin of language. Thus “originary resentment” is the corollary of human representation, since man is a language-using animal who defers violence through multifarious strategies of representation: i.e., language creates a communal scene that protects the community from violence, but one always resents its symbolic barrier between oneself and the immediate satisfaction of one’s appetite and imagination.\(^{478}\) As Gans notes, originary resentment “is the original mode of self-consciousness”\(^{479}\) that conditions all human cultural experience. We can catch sight of the political significance of this constituent consciousness of “originary resentment” in the following observation of Gans:

\begin{quote}
Resentment ... differs from mere envy in being directed not at contingent but at communally significant and hence ethically necessary differences. It is thus a necessary evil.\(^{480}\)
\end{quote}

\(^{478}\) Gans 1997: 144-145.
\(^{479}\) Gans 1993: 18.
Thus it is politics, which inevitably generates the “evil” of resentments from whatever worldly order of hierarchical differences it maintains, that is nevertheless the necessary management and deferral of resentment. But Christianity calls the “necessary evil” of resentment into question because “Christianity rejects the hierarchical separation of different worlds (including the esthetic) within the world”.481 In other words, its message rejects all worldly attempts to balance the two roots of human possibilities as conditioned by (in terms of Gans’ structure for the originary scene) center and periphery,482 (in terms of my discussion of the “best regime”) vertical and horizontal, and (in terms of my discussion of “perfect virtue”) theoretical and practical.

The significance of this for esthetic evolution is that Christianity’s political dangers become visible in Christianity’s impact on esthetic form. While in Greek tragedy a central hero can function, as we saw in Chapter Two, either to sacrificially indulge audience resentment (by means of killing the character) or to sublimate it (with a “high culture” catharsis), Christianity evolves the neoclassical esthetic by deploying resentment differently:

The Christian strategy for turning weakness into strength, for capturing the center from the periphery, a strategy used so successfully by the early martyrs (and one particularly abhorred by Nietzsche) is here adapted to the secular esthetic.483

Gans describes this esthetic management of resentment in terms of the originary scene that conditions all human cultural evolution. The evolution to the neoclassical esthetic from the classical esthetic occurs because Christianity changes the classical esthetic’s exclusion of the onlookers (whether chorus or audience) from the centrality of the dramatic action:

This automatic exclusion of the self from the center could not survive the coming of Christianity, with its foregrounding of the moral equality of all. As soon as we feel ourselves the potential equals in triumph and in suffering of the participants of the agon, we are no longer in the world of the classical esthetic. Classical

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decorum is lost; the rivalry of the audience with the central figure reflects *a more deeply symmetrical form of resentment* than classical form can tolerate.\(^{484}\)

I will discuss this very esthetic evolution in concrete terms, with the *Oresteia* and the *Henriad*, in the remaining chapters. But my task here now is to see the political significance of the configurations of resentment *as managed in esthetic form*.

The difficulty in this task comes from the difference between theory and practice. While we can have a cultural empirioschematic “theory” of art in terms of the semiotic structure of narrative universals that I abstracted from mimetic theory and generative anthropology (as set forth in my first two chapters), it is doubtful whether we can have any such abstract “theory” of political practice. To be sure, in this chapter we saw that Aristotle’s regime analysis provided the classical form for management of resentment. That is, a regime mixture achieving both a horizontal stability and a vertical openness to transcendent excellence was what Aristotle commended to real practice. But Christianity disrupted the classical role for the statesman who manages regime change. What does Christianity recommend for the praxis of a statesman, given that its egalitarianism calls into question his central role? Girard’s mimetic theory seems to be no help with practice, offering even less of a “latitude for statesmanship” to the statesman, such that the statesman must find the Girardian articulation of mimetic theory to be politically inapplicable and utterly useless.

But both the anthropology of Girard and of Aristotle have something positive to contribute to an understanding of the evolution of the political role of the statesman, both in (real) culture and in (imaginary) esthetic form. In Aristotle, it is his balanced and prudential approach to achieving perfect virtue, both in the good of the individual and in the common good. In Girard, although there is no articulation of the role for prudence, he nevertheless did come around to an

\(^{484}\) Gans 1993: 148-149. Emphasis in italics is mine.
articulation late in his career of the difference between good mimesis and bad mimesis.\textsuperscript{485} And because the generation of culture has a fundamentally mimetic basis, the mimesis of art (its esthetic form and content) can provide a basis for mimetically mirroring the "good" and "bad" of the prudent actions of statecraft. That is, even if because of the very nature of prudence, there can never be a "theory" of statecraft, nevertheless esthetic experience can represent and justify culturally constituting events in terms of their prudence. The artwork may thus reveal actions of statecraft that, although apparently "evil", are really salutary actions in cultural terms. In other words, apart from the political experience of the statesman himself, only in the esthetic may the vindication of the culturally necessary evil of a "latitude for statesmanship" (so that it may nobly manage resentment for the common good) be found. And because esthetic experience is constituted by the originary scene (since its "originary resentment" is what ultimately conditions all self-consciousness),\textsuperscript{486} we can best understand esthetic vindications of the "latitude for statesmanship" in terms of an originary analysis that refers all analysis of form back to that scene.

The semiotic structure of this originary scene that I see at work in the cultural evolution of history is the fivefold pattern I have already abstracted in chapter one. But its explicit semiotic structure is one that I may now schematize in this fashion: $C_1 \rightarrow A_1 \rightarrow B \rightarrow A_2 \rightarrow C_2$, where (using Peirce's terminology for the semiotic triangle of "A means B in context C") C is the interpretant, A the representamen, and B the significate.\textsuperscript{487} What this fivefold structure models, based on the semiosis of the originary scene, is that $C_1$ and $C_2$ are two political contexts, $A_1$ and $A_2$ are the esthetic signs that political leadership assumes, and B is a cultural object signified. Note that B stays the same because it is what the cultural evolutionary transition pivots upon but

\textsuperscript{485} Girard 1996a: 62-65.
\textsuperscript{486} Gans 1993: 18-20.
nevertheless reinterprets as it moves in the political and esthetic evolution from one semiotic triad to the other.488

While this presentation is abstract for the moment, it will become concrete once given the examples to be studied in the next two chapters. For now, let it suffice for me to point out that what I understand cultural catharsis to be is precisely the evolution of reinterpretation pivoting from the one semiotic triangle to the other. This evolution in cultural semiosis is modelled on the paradigmatic semiosis of the evolution of man on the originary scene, which I exhibit now in a first example here (to be supplemented in the next two chapters by examples from the classical and neoclassical esthetics) of how this evolution in semiosis is modelled by the fivefold semiotic structure I have abstracted from comparison of Aristotle and Girard; in this example, which is drawn from Girard’s narrative of the originary scene, keep in mind that content and form are relative terms that can change places in the spiral of semiosis, because any form A1 of content C1 may become content C2 relative to another subsequent form A2:489

Some violent plague of contagious disorder is the presupposed initial political metabasis content C1, a context of political form (to wit, “anarchy”) that makes it possible for preferential signs of victimage to be recognized in A1, an esthetic anagnōrisis of form objectively signifying a “crime” B, the culturally determined mistake or hamartia objectively signified as the resentful form-of-the-content. The violence directed at a scapegoat then becomes the sign A2 of the pathos that in its socially unifying formal signification of B is esthetically grounded in the transition to the new political context C2, a restoration of peace and order as being a formal peripeteia reversal from C1, a reversal that in this new semiotic triangle now “proves” the objectively signified accusation (in the first semiotic triangle) of B as being an objectively “real” crime (in its interpretation in the second semiotic triangle).

488 B stays the same only in my specific model of cultural evolution, whereas in general in the spiral of semiosis A, B, and C may change places; cf. Deely 1994a: 94-96 and Deely 2003: 163-164.
Of course, I argue that Girard’s narrative of the originary scene, while providing an extremely vivid example of the fivefold semiotic structure of a cultural evolutionary transition from one political-esthetic semiotic triangle to another, is not a fully sound model of anthroposemiosis. For the reasons I gave in Chapter One, the narrative universals reconstructed by an approach inspired by generative anthropology constitute a better model. My proposed empirioschematic model of the originary scene, then, models the originary fivefold semiotic structure of human evolution $C_1 \rightarrow A_1 \rightarrow B \rightarrow A_2 \rightarrow C_2$ in this way:

Some violent plague of contagious disorder is the presupposed initial political *metabasis* content $C_1$, a context of political form (to wit, “anarchy”) that makes it possible for the community leader Adam to be recognized in $A_1$, an esthetic *anagnōrisis* of the form of his aborted gesture of appropriation, which is objectively signifying the interdicted sacred center $B$. The violent sparagmos then becomes the egalitarian communal feast which is the sign $A_2$ of the sacrificial *pathos* that in its socially unifying formal signification of the sacred center $B$ is esthetically grounded in the transition to the new political context $C_2$, where $C_2$ is the social deferral of violence that in this new semiotic triangle, both preceding the feast and then retrospectively, “proves” the social efficacy of the objectively signified sacred center (in the first semiotic triangle) of $B$ as being an objectively “real” totemic deity (in its interpretation in the second semiotic triangle).

While tracking the spiral of semiosis may be dizzying for anyone not yet convinced of the intellectual achievements of semiotics and not trained in its ways, I thought it worthwhile to offer this schematization here to set forth a precise definition of what I understand cultural catharsis to be. Because in this chapter I have discussed Aristotle’s *Politics*, questions may have arisen in some readers’ minds about what link I see between Aristotle’s discussion of musical

\[490\] Cf. Deely 1986a: 53-68.

catharsis in the *Politics*\textsuperscript{492} and his esthetic theory as I interpreted it in Chapter Two (as pointing to an esthetic catharsis of cultural resentments). On this point, I may simply state that I am in agreement with Lord\textsuperscript{493} that for Aristotle music and tragedy are meant to be educative in “moral prudence and virtue” for ordinary people, and also that this education is something different from the homoeopathic “catharsis of pathological enthusiasm” which can be induced in abnormal people by music.\textsuperscript{494} Therefore, because Aristotle’s study of tragedy is made according to both his practical moral concerns as well as his theoretical esthetic concerns,\textsuperscript{495} I see the indispensable utility of the semiotic triangle for understanding how esthetic form and content can signify moral prudence and virtue in a particular cultural context. That is why I have abstracted a fivefold semiotic structure and grounded it in the structure of generative anthropology’s originary semiosis.\textsuperscript{496} And that, therefore, is why I think catharsis can be defined as the transition from one semiotic triangle to another when a regime change evolving in political form marks that transition as culturally significant, i.e., by means of the sign of the statesman who represents that significance esthetically.

**Summary: A Latitude for Statesmanship**

In the following chapters, I turn to exemplary vindications of the ongoing evolution of the Aristotelian “latitude for statesmanship” as found in the classical and neoclassical esthetics. Despite Strauss’s principled concerns (in the face of the Heideggerian deconstruction of ontology) that Christianity’s apocalypse of politics had negatively curtailed the “latitude for statesmanship”,\textsuperscript{497} I will discuss in the coming chapters how political form for this latitude nevertheless evolves positively in the neoclassical esthetic, in spite of the new dangers attending

\textsuperscript{492} *Politics* 8, 1341b 32-1342a 15.
\textsuperscript{493} Lord 1982: 134.
\textsuperscript{495} Lord 1982: 33-35.
\textsuperscript{496} My aim is to advance generative anthropology along semiotic lines suggested by Deely 1986a: 53-68.
\textsuperscript{497} Schall 2001: 129-142.
this positive evolution. Although in terms of regime forms, Christianity seems to restrict the horizontal latitude for statesmanship and to demand unreasonable vertical excellence from humanity, the prudence of the statesman is still capable of shaping culture in definitive evolutionary ways. I will argue for this in the subsequent chapters that attempt to find the political mirrored in the esthetic. Note, however, that I am not proposing the definitive evolutionary action of statesmen as an everyday or even regular occurrence. On the contrary, my thesis is that it is extremely rare. But when it does occur, this rare occasion then marks an epochal transition which history finds recorded in the change in esthetic form’s “mirror of princes”.

I will conclude this chapter with a summary of how what I have learned from Aristotle, seen in the context of mimetic theory and generative anthropology, aids me for making an analysis of the pivotal statesmanship in history’s esthetic mirror. In brief, I am now ready to analyze the cultural evolution of the originary scene in terms of how esthetic experience may mirror the “necessary evil” of statesmen managing resentment. For it is resentment that is the ontological limit of all political form.

Cultural form is the form-of-the-content in art’s form and content. Art’s form mirrors this cultural form. When esthetic form is so mimetic that it reveals this cultural form, Girard calls the mimesis partially revelatory, as he does in his analysis of Greek tragedy. For example, tragedy, more mimetically than the myth that preceded it, reveals the violent reciprocity of the scapegoating pattern. Thus the “bad” mimesis of cultural form (viz., the constitutive structures of resentment), when it becomes the form-of-the-content of the secular artwork, is transmuted into esthetic content subsumed under the “good” mimesis of esthetic form. In other words, cultural form is the “bad” mimesis of mimetic practice, a problem that the culture poses to be solved politically by the statesman. But esthetic form is a “good” mimesis inasmuch as it now

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499 Girard’s favourite example of this is the symmetrically angry stichomythia between Oedipus, Teiresias, and Creon.
mirrors that "bad" cultural mimesis in a way that humanity can come to a revelatory self-consciousness about it through art. Political form, in the practice of the statesman, is the practice of such esthetic prudential consciousness. Any time mimetic theory tries to move beyond this consciousness, it has crossed beyond the limits of its empirioschematic competence into the realm of either metaphysics or theology. Since I left behind these considerations of metaphysics or theology in Chapter One, I am aiming to focus on the intersection of prudence with esthetic consciousness.

What good is art? I may paraphrase the response of Girard's nascent mimetic theory to this question thus: Art is mimetic. The more mimetic it is, the more it can reveal the mimetic structures of desire, rivalry, and even scapegoating. Mimesis, while leading to conflict in daily life, becomes good in art. It holds a mirror up to ourselves, with which we can see our own mimetic behaviour. The problem is that in the telling of art and myth we fail to recognize the mimetic structure revealed and we do not escape from the romantic lie that our desire is our own and not mimetic. Only in becoming an artist, or being so immersed in the artist's world that we undergo the same revelation that the great novelists had when they composed their works, do we escape from our mimetic illusions.500

As Gans observes, the esthetic thus has a positive cultural role (even though Girard's proclamations tend to denigrate the esthetic in order to exalt "the superiority of Christianity").501

If the novel has a lesson to teach us about 'finding meaning in life,' it is not that we should renounce mimetic desire but that we should become novelists. ... we will continue to be drawn into the sacrificial process whereby the potential violence of mimetic desire is transformed into significance. But we need not transcend the sacrificial once and for all to profit from understanding its constitutive role in human culture.502

500 Cf. Girard 1966.
501 Cf. Girard 2005 on "the meaning of all my work".
Unlike Girard’s theoretical arguments on behalf of the singular “superiority of Christianity”, although esthetic, performative acts are singular events, they are more resistant to being prescriptively universalized in an esthetic theory that preaches a binary eschatology. For it is in the esthetic that the problem of resentment and desire can be temporally solved in a non-eschatological sense:

Desire is the stumbling-block of esthetic theory. Kant rightly saw that esthetic experience is not linked to appetitive satisfaction and is therefore “disinterested”; but once desire has been eliminated as a motivation, the principle that makes us call a painting, a sonata, or a narrative "beautiful" is lost. What distinguishes the beautiful object from the merely desirable one is not its lack of an appetitive basis but its provocation of a return of our attention to the image from its imagined referent; we are not incited to practical action in the service of our appetites, merely to a renewed contemplation that is nonetheless inhabited by desire. In the moment in which we experience beauty, we return to the image, real or reproduced, rather than proceed immediately toward fulfillment. Beauty’s deferral of appetitive action is not a denial of desire but a means of making it eternal ("Forever wilt thou love and she be fair," as Keats put it).

Art operates through the creation of a utopia of desire that, whether or not realized in the artwork, can never be actualized substantially. Tragedy is more profound than comedy because it thematizes this impossibility; comedy is more realistic than tragedy because in real life we do our best to avoid this thematization: except on the extreme fringes of the mensonge romantique, we marry and live more or less happily ever after rather than hubristically transgress sacred taboos. In either case, however, the esthetic utopia of desire is the source of meaning for our worldly goals, just as religion promises our spirit accession to the eternal realm of signification.503

Moreover, I am pointing out that, along with esthetic utopias of desire, political utopias of desire give form to a culture. And, in art, their “end of history” can be mythologized. The consequence I can draw from this for esthetic theory comes from the fact that the achievements of political form happen at specific historical moments. That is, in political form, the “good” mimesis recognized by mimetic theory (viz., the esthetic utopia) is put into political practice to counteract the “bad” mimesis of mimetic practice (mimetic desire, rivalry and scapegoating). In other words, an esthetic shape is given to a culture by the statesman’s prudence.

Thus, once art or language has revealed cultural form, this revelation can enter a feedback loop, in which there is poiesis not just of an artwork, but of cultural form. That is, a new social order can be founded, not just automatically and unconsciously as in the reassertion of difference of the scapegoating mechanism (which is the only fundamental political form Girard ever sees operative in anthropological history), but rather in a deliberate and conscious shaping of political form. In other words, there is such a thing as the legislative art, analogous to the poet’s art. By the application of practical wisdom, statecraft can achieve a “good” mimesis in cultural form. This “good” mimesis is not simply the habits of character that constitute virtue (the golden mean-states of virtue between opposing vices of bad mimesis), but something more than the states of habit and character.504 It is a kind of theoretical knowledge wedded with practical application: namely, prudent political philosophy.

Girard has discussed “theory” with reference to modern theoretical projects; in one essay, he notes that the great mimetic texts remain, and all the bad theory in the world has not undone the esthetic achievement of their great mimesis.505 They are more mimetic than all theory about them; hence they are worth more in revelatory terms, since they reveal more than “theory” does about human culture. Moreover, I want to expand Girard’s notion of mimetic theory so that what the great mimetic texts reveal is not simply eschatological but rather the evolution of culture. The impact of Christianity on the latitude for statesmanship is decisive, as both Strauss and Girard intuited. But generative anthropology’s refinement of Girard’s mimetic theory is capable of better accounting for this impact in terms of an evolution from the originary scene, as we will see in the examples of the coming chapters. To see the esthetic shape given to a culture by the statesman’s prudence, I will have to refer to the regime types and mixtures outlined in this chapter.

504 Cf. Aquinas, ST I-II, q. 57, aa. 1-6.
The classical esthetic is thus coincident with the birth of the politeia. In the Oresteia, the achievement in statecraft that is commemorated is that of the Greek polis itself. As we saw, Plato and Aristotle recognized this achievement in the very terminology they used. The “regimeness” (politeia) of the polis is its glory and promise. The scholiast to Plato’s Laws (1.625b) glossed politeia as “the one way of life of a whole city”; it is the union of paideia with the ruling order, such that the “distribution and disposition of a polity’s offices and honors” determines what is admired, honoured, and considered just in the regime.\(^{506}\) In the Oresteia, we will see how esthetic form mirrors the regime changes leading up to the prudent founding of an historically new kind of politeia.

Much of subsequent political theory adopted Aristotle’s view of regime mixing as the realistic guide to statecraft.\(^{507}\) Characteristic of this theory is what it now aimed at as the best possible regime in history:

The best regime cannot be any simple regime, such as monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy; it is a regime in which several forms are combined in such a way as to promote the various aspects of the common good, to each of which each political form is related in special fashion.\(^{508}\)

My task in the chapters that follow will be to see how the progress of this complex mixing is evident in esthetic works. For it is in the esthetic that I am looking for a mirror of the regime changes in political form.

The evolution of esthetic form, in my view, is precipitated by the action of a statesman who acts nobly: abstractly for the common good of all humanity, but concretely as demanded in the historical moment by “the latitude for statesmanship”. Thus the epochal evolution of the originary scene is marked off by such actors. In other words, esthetic form can mythologize how (through the statesman as metaphysical actor) humanity is achieving progress in history. Unlike

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Girard’s binary eschatology, this is an ongoing story of evolution. In my account of evolution through statecraft, I am not proposing an “elitist” ideological view of history, but rather just the opposite. The cumulative effect of all actors in history, and the burden of their manifold resentments, is what shapes human evolution from the originary scene on. The action of any statesman, as commemorated in esthetic form, is a mere inflection point. The semiotic significance of this inflection point is greater than that one prudent political actor (whose individual significance is only one of “firstness” at the inflection point). Indeed, as the esthetic work itself suggests, the significance of that historical moment stretches out to encompass every ontological region of that secular esthetic period. In other words, there cannot be a change in any historical era without the efficient causal agency of actors in history. Stated in the metaphysical terms I used in Chapter One, I say that these actors have to have immaterial intellect. That is, they are all the language users descended from the originary scene. Every one of them is characterized by the unique representational capacities with which they have been endowed by their historical moment. Thus there are many anonymous actors in history. It just so happens that the ones that are best remembered are those who are remembered by esthetic form.509

I will now turn to analyze the evolutionary significance of the Oresteia and the Henriad. The cultural dynamics of historical political resentments will be read as the cultural form-of-the-content in these plays. The significance of the new moments in the esthetic form of these plays will become visible as I apply the empirioschematic model for esthetic form I developed in the first two chapters. The empirioschematic model of political form (which I derived in this chapter from Aristotle’s Politics) is summarized below in synoptic form in Table 13:

Table 13: The Generic Regimes and the Specific Mixtures (Emphasis of the Mixture in Italics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingship (Politics 3.14): correct rule by the rational one, i.e. pambasileia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aristocratic Kingship: heroic founders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oligarchic Kingship: Spartan generalship</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Aristocracy (Politics 4.7): correct rule by the virtuous few</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingly Aristocracy: the best regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Aristocracy: the best republic (mixture: <em>virtue, freedom, wealth</em>; e.g., Carthage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Aristocracy: inclined to virtue (mixture: <em>virtue, freedom</em>; e.g., Sparta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchic Aristocracy: inclined to oligarchy (mixture: <em>virtue, wealth</em>)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republic (Politics 4.8-9): correct rule by the moderate many (mixture: <em>wealth, freedom</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic: inclined to democracy (mixture: <em>wealth, freedom</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchic Republic: inclined to oligarchy (mixture: <em>wealth, freedom</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristocratic Republic: the nobly-mixed middle republic (mixture: <em>virtue, wealth, freedom</em>)</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Tyranny (Politics 4.10): deviant rule by the appetitive one, e.g., barbarian despots</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Tyranny: Greek elected tyranny</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Oligarchy (Politics 4.5-6): deviant rule by the wealthy few</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Oligarchy: low property qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aristocratic Oligarchy: high property qualification; magistrates elected not just from the wealthiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingly Oligarchy: hereditary monarchy with rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrannical Oligarchy: hereditary monarchy without the rule of law, i.e. dynasty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democracy (Politics 4.4): deviant rule by the free many, i.e. rich and poor are equal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aristocratic Democracy: low property qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchic Democracy: lawful rule by the unaudited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingly Democracy: every citizen shares in lawful rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrannical Democracy: mob rule without the rule of law, i.e. ochlocracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This summary of mixed regime types will be a useful reference point for my discussion of the dramatization of prudence and regime change in the classical and neoclassical esthetics. The *Oresteia* celebrates the separation of the person from political office, which marks the transition from vengeance to justice in the polis. The *Henriad* celebrates the Christian king who rules, not by imposition of divine right, but by winning the consent of his subjects. How these portrayals are related to my political and esthetic schemata is the topic of my final chapters.
Chapter Four: 
Cultural Form in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*

Introduction: Classical Form and Content

It has been said that politics is the art of the possible. But the highest art of politics is the executive management of resentment. In other words, although a mixed regime form works out a compromise and ameliorates faction, the deliberate action that proceeds from the "latitude for statesmanship" has a priority over such political form: "firstness" comes first. Resentment and mimetic rivalry determine the cultural form-of-the-content that can become revealed when esthetic form and content mimetically mirror culture's dynamics of rivalry and scapegoating. And if there is more than one fundamental political form (i.e., because even though the originary scene defines the human community, it is not the only possible configuration), then political form can become a real cultural achievement. Therefore it should be possible for this cultural achievement also to be mirrored in esthetic form insofar as a new evolution in political form has managed resentment differently.

In political terms, the democratic judicial order of Athens "claims to do away with the resentful battle for the center"; it is this "contested control of the social center" that is thus the cultural content of classical tragedy. In esthetic terms, this cultural struggle is shaped in the tragic agon (struggle) not by the scapegoating of the central figure but rather by a kind of reconciliation of the center and periphery. In Aeschylus' great trilogy, the *Oresteia*, democratic Athens is celebrated as what, in "a tour de force of reconciliation", brings an end to blood feud. But this mythologizing of an "end of history", i.e., an end to the bloody tragedy of intra-societal violence by means of a new political order, is perfected in art in a way it never can be in history. History doesn't really end; neither does real violence. Nevertheless, "Art arouses resentment in

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510 See Chapter One for our discussion of "firstness" on the originary scene.
511 Gans 1993: 139.
512 Podlecki 1999: 77.
order to expel it; it incites passion in order to calm it; it forgoes total control for the sake of more effective control. Thus the aesthetic achievement of the *Oresteia* can be summed up in terms of its cultural significance as not commemorating the arrival of perfect justice (*dike*) in Athens but as a new integration of the aesthetic order with the political order by means of a new management of resentment. As Gans notes on the *Oresteia*,

this representation of a worldly “end of tragedy” within tragedy itself (not to be confused with the *mise en abyme* of the esthetic scene within itself, which is in fact just the opposite) follows the *logique du supplément*: had the suffering of reciprocal violence truly been replaced by the administration of *dike*, it would not have to be reenacted on stage in order to accomplish the esthetic deferral of resentment.

But tragedy’s aesthetic utopia reveals more in its forms than only the esthetic deferral of resentment. Even if classical Athens is not a political utopia, it is still a cultural achievement in a real way that is suggested by the aesthetic utopia of tragedy:

... a succession of religious murders, beginning with Agamemnon’s ritual sacrifice of his daughter, lead at last to the terrifying persecution of Orestes by the furies. The gods demand the murders; the gods also punish them. Religion binds the house of Atreus, but in dilemmas that it does not resolve. Resolution comes at last only when judgment is handed over to the city, personified in Athena. In the political order, we are led to understand, justice replaces vengeance, and negotiated solutions abolish absolute commands. The message of the *Oresteia* resounds down the centuries of Western civilization: it is through politics, not religion, that peace is secured. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; but justice, says the city, is mine.

In other words, the evolution of the classical aesthetic’s reconciling deferral of resentment corresponds with some real, deliberate political achievement outside of art’s aesthetic utopia.

In terms of evolution from the originary scene, the classical aesthetic “offers the first explicit identification of the human with the centrally significant”. It does this while establishing a “scenic distance” between the center and periphery on the scene of

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514 Gans 1993: 139.
representation. The esthetic effect of the dramatic action is that this scenic distance is abolished in order to reconcile the periphery with the center. But the classical esthetic is able to produce this effect because it was first to achieve the characteristic "classical separation of form and content": i.e., "the exclusive concentration on the central locus rather than the scene as a whole". In other words, the chorus, on the periphery along with the spectators, mourns the suffering of the central tragic hero. This formal mourning over humanity as the content is a breakthrough in "anthropological knowledge" because, with this classical separation between form and content, the center and periphery structure of the originary scene is first opened up to "human self-understanding". The whole esthetic effect of tragedy, by which resentment is deferred esthetically, is only possible because the esthetic experience of tragedy hearkens back to the structure of the originary scene in which an esthetic oscillation occurred between the ostensive sign and the appetitive object.

But in addition to this esthetic mirror of the originary scene, it is my claim that the classical esthetic also mirrors the classical political form for statesmanship by which the worldly achievement of (imperfect) political justice was deliberately achieved in democratic Athens. This classical political form is a unique advance in evolutionary terms: the greater stability that democracy brings to deferring the violence of resentful warring factions is an adaptive advantage which human self-understanding has attained in the self-conscious form of anthropological knowledge. But this political self-consciousness arrives along with the esthetic self-consciousness of the classical esthetic. We can see this evolutionary advance in terms of the empirioschematic evolutionary model of the originary scene when we apply that model to the Oresteia. In making this application, the explanatory power of the originary evolutionary model is revealed in how it solves longstanding difficulties with interpreting the Oresteia in political terms. Although

517 Gans 1993: 139.
518 Gans 1993: 144.
Girard’s mimetic theory can identify a number of important cultural themes in the *Oresteia* (like the vicious patterns of violent reciprocity and the constitutive social role of sacrifice),\(^{521}\) it is unable to distinguish the degree to which the anthropological self-understanding of the Greeks had in fact progressed to conscious awareness of the cultural forces of violent rivalry and sacrificial scapegoating,\(^{522}\) and had thereby evolved political and esthetic forms to deal with them. But we can catch sight of this evolution when we see the political significance of the *Oresteia* in terms of the originary scene’s fivefold configuration.\(^{523}\)

The fundamental *metabasis* of the *Oresteia* is the plague of disorder in the House of Atreus, a disorder that is a synecdoche for the human community threatened by the violence from its bitter internal rivalries. Agamemnon’s arrival home from the war is not a new post-Troy era of peace. Instead, Clytaemestra is his (unknown) mimetic double in masculine rivalry with him for rule over Argos. The resentment that plagues the community in the wake of the war is visible, leading up to Clytaemestra’s action.\(^{524}\) But her attempt at an efficacious sacrifice of Agamemnon is unsuccessful in that the problem of resentful disorder is unsolved. Scapegoating Agamemnon over Troy does not work as a political strategy: the sacrifice is corrupt;\(^{525}\) doubles succeed one another in a reciprocal violence for which there is no solution.\(^{526}\) The violent sacred cannot restore order; the violent sacred is the problem to which the Athenian *polis* will present a new human solution.

But it is not a perfect solution, since although the trilogy comes to awareness of violence as an ineffective intra-societal solution, violence against the society’s external enemies is the unifying force required to put an end to the internal sacrificial crisis. As the Furies put it:

\(^{521}\) Griffiths 1979: 24-29.
\(^{522}\) Griffiths 1979: 29-35.
\(^{523}\) See Table 1.
\(^{524}\) Cf. Ag. 438-474, 551-570, 785-804.
\(^{526}\) Griffiths 1979: 24-25.
For many ills one attitude is the cure
When it agrees on what to hate.\textsuperscript{527}

The fundamental \textit{anagnôrisis} of the trilogy is this integration of the Furies (the violence that threatens to consume all of humanity from Argos to Athens) into Athens itself by recognizing them not as enemies but as friends. They are henceforth the \textit{Semnai Theai}, the August Goddesses who will aid Athens in directing hate into the efficacious violence of foreign policy, which deals out violent \textit{pathos} for the enemies of the society.

But this does not mean that the \textit{Oresteia} and its dramatization of the role of the Furies is merely the best example in Greek tragedy of the profound role of scapegoating ("the great remedy for communal life") as Girard argues: "There cannot be a more authoritative expression of the thesis of generative violence and its derived forms than that of Aeschylus."\textsuperscript{528} This generative violence is only part of the story. To be sure, Girard wants to focus exclusively on it so that he can argue for his eschatological utopia.\textsuperscript{529} But in the esthetic utopia of the artwork there is also depicted the judicial acquittal of Orestes. In this act, the fundamental \textit{peripeteia} of the tragedy, which reverses the action of the blood feud of the House of Atreus, we have something more significant than Athena arriving as a merely mythical \textit{deus ex machina} to restore order. She is not just the mythical lie (Girard’s derogatory sense of myth) that sanctions the violence of (external) scapegoating.\textsuperscript{530} The role of persuasion in restoring order that Athena brings to the problem of the Eumenides (\textit{Eu.} 885) above all suggests the problem of leadership as connected with political solutions to violence. The political dimension of the \textit{Oresteia} cannot be reduced to one merely of scapegoating requirements; in addition to the elements to which Girard draws our attention, the \textit{Oresteia} further dramatizes the classical esthetic’s "explicit identification of the

\textsuperscript{527} \textit{Eumenides} 996-997 translated by Wills 2000: 303.
\textsuperscript{528} Girard 1987b: 150.
\textsuperscript{529} Cf. Girard 1987b: 58, 129-130, 147-152, 156.
human with the centrally significant",531 that is, it dramatizes the significance of human leadership amidst violent crises.532 The focus of the Oresteia is thus, beyond its awareness of the role of scapegoating, a focus on leadership, because the trilogy above all dramatizes "a crisis of leadership".533 Given the realities of violence and sacrifice that tragedy dramatizes, it poses a fundamental question: "What makes a great leader?"534

In terms of evolution from the originary scene, the esthetic political consciousness that the Oresteia reaches with this anthropological question is a new knowledge of hamartia. On Girard’s scene of scapegoating, a hamartia is simply the mythical accusation of guilt against the scapegoat. But as we saw in my refinement of the originary scene, the hamartia moment of the originary scene is the mimicking of the symbolic act of representation: the ostensive gesture that indicates the communally mediated object of desire in the center as interdicted. The first aborted gesture of appropriation represents the sacred interdiction: it would be a fatal “mistake” for the community to violate this interdiction and appropriate the sacred center. For symbolic representation is the community’s adaptive advantage in deferring violence. The first sign instead becomes the fundamental cultural act by which an egalitarian communal feast is made possible.535 The “origin of social differentiation”, however, comes with the “big-man” and his breach of originary equality by the social usurpation of the center.536 From accumulation of material surplus, the “big-man” establishes cultural hierarchy by making the ritual life of the culture depend on the redistribution of the surplus.537 Resentment obviously follows upon this usurpation of the social center by the “big-man”.538 Thus “the establishment of social differentiation” is what

533 Podlecki 1986: 96.
538 Gans 1985: 163-175.

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“motivates the emergence of a secular esthetic” as resentment is channelled into cultural productivity.\textsuperscript{539}

But in the self-reflective awareness of Greek secular esthetic culture, the human being who occupies the social center, as the leader of the community on the periphery, becomes for the first time a \textit{tragic} figure. That is, as a leader dramatized in the classical esthetic, his mistake (\textit{hamartia}) cannot be this or that action of domestic or foreign policy; simply being the leader is his only “mistake”.\textsuperscript{540} For the structure of the originary scene is that originary resentment esthetically constitutes the relation of the periphery to the center (we enjoy our imaginary possession of the center but resent our inability to appropriate it).\textsuperscript{541} In other words, as a human occupying the sacred center, the leader can never be without “error”, for he can never be beyond resentment. He is always subject to the prior law of resentment that structures the symbolic language scene of human consciousness. The \textit{hamartia} that belongs to every leader, simply by virtue of his being a leader, is that he is the member of the human community who inhabits the center and not the periphery. His one fundamental “mistake” is thus that he has set himself up to be the prime target for envy and resentment. Agamemnon’s brief appearance in the first play of the \textit{Oresteia} shows him fully aware of the special burden that “envy’s wicked poison” poses for the political leader:

\begin{quote}
In few men is it part of nature to respect
a friend’s prosperity without begrudging him,
as envy’s wicked poison settling to the heart
piles up the pain in one sick with unhappiness,
who, staggered under sufferings that are all his own,
 winces again to the vision of a neighbour’s bliss.
And I can speak, for I have seen, I know it well,
this mirror of companionship, this shadow’s ghost,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{539} Gans 1985: 171.
\textsuperscript{540} That is, because the leader will inevitably earn resentment against him, regardless of whether or not the resentment is legitimately grounded in an actually exercised latitude of statesmanship that breaks rules to act nobly for the common good. Being a leader means always being the prime target of potential resentment.
\textsuperscript{541} Gans 1993: 18-19.
these men who seemed my friends in all sincerity.542

The tragic irony, from which the classical esthetic’s effect of pity and fear is generated,543 is that the leader’s role is unavoidably and politically necessary in any non-egalitarian, socially differentiated culture. The recognition of this necessity is what tragedy brings to consciousness when its dramatization reconciles the center with the periphery: tragedy portrays suffering and violence as the common human condition uniting both center and periphery. But it effects a purgative cure for resentment by making the resentment towards the center thematic in its classical separation of form and content: leaders like Agamemnon, according to the classical esthetic, bear the brunt of suffering and violence. It is this central “privilege” that makes them tragic heroes.

Aristotle’s identification of *hamartia* is thus not, *pace* Gans, a confusion stemming from a wrongheaded focus on the psychology of the protagonist “as though the form were generated by its content”.544 Instead it is an anthropological identification of the very esthetic element that attenuates the injustices of scapegoating. In other words, if on the basis of the esthetic effect generated by the artwork, we can acquit Agamemnon of the “mistake” of being a human leader (i.e., being subject to the many resentments of other humans), we are less likely to resent him or any other leader for assuming the heavy burden of communal leadership. Classical esthetic form is meant to defer resentment towards the leader in the center. Aristotle’s *hamartia* has more to do with the cathartic psychology of audience reaction to the heroes who are tragedy’s content.545 That is, we can overcome our resentment towards leaders when their mortal mistakes, similar in some way to our own, are amplified by the very office they hold into the precipitating actions of their esthetic tragic suffering. Agamemnon’s fate may be “over-determined” inasmuch as there

542 *Ag.* 832-840 translated by Richard Lattimore in Grene and Lattimore 1960.
545 *Poetics* 13 is discussing content in terms of how to achieve the best esthetic reaction.
are many reasons for his tragic downfall; but all these reasons really reduce to one: he’s the one guilty of the “error” of being in the sacred center as king.

But the secular esthetic of Greek tragedy brings not just this knowledge of the leader’s central role to self-consciousness with its tragic focus. As well as mirroring the cultural dynamics of resentment in its esthetic deferral of resentment, it also mirrors the difference between good leadership and bad leadership. Because the burden of leadership assumes the burden of the management of resentment in socially differentiated societies, it requires a “latitude for statesmanship” that sometimes includes the necessary use of unanimous violence to preserve communal order. In the Oresteia in particular, we have a celebration of democracy, but also a portrait of its limitations and its unavoidable need for a leader in times of crisis. For example, the case of Orestes shows that when it comes to the hard cases of violent reciprocity, humanity deadlocks in the irresolvable dilemma of mimetic doubling. That is, Orestes’ trial is deadlocked with a tie vote: “The ballots are equal in number for each side.” (Eu. 753). Therefore Athena herself assumes the leadership role and negotiates the settlement with the Furies. But this is not a mere mythical cover for scapegoating, that to which Girard would reduce the political dimension in this Greek tragedy. On the contrary, Athena’s role symbolizes a new evolution with regard to who occupies the sacred center: Orestes departs, and the Areopagus (founded to solve the problem of violent reciprocity he and his family represent) assumes pride of place.

I interpret this founding as representing a deliberate contribution on the part of classical statecraft to the evolution of human society. Instead of Orestes or Clytaemestra or Agamemnon as targets of resentment, their executive role (i.e., deciding the end of blood feuds with definitive acquittals or executions) is assigned to the Areopagus. Thus there cannot be any resentment directed at the figure of a monarch. The faceless Areopagus takes the monarch’s place and

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547 Eu. 778-1047.
Athena seals their decisions of violence or the deferral of violence by means of her sacred approval. Only Athena can occupy the sacred center for Athens. With the founding of the Areopagus, the Oresteia thus dramatizes the “absent executive” that characterizes classical political form in terms of its evolutionary innovation in the realm of political leadership. This replacement of the prince Orestes with the institution of the Areopagus is thus the event of key political significance in the trilogy.

To fully understand the evolutionary import of this event, I turn now to the analysis of political form and esthetic form in the Oresteia by using the models for analysis that I developed in Chapters Two and Three. I will begin in the next section with an analysis of how the esthetic form of the trilogy shows a structural symmetry that represents the esthetic deferral of resentment by means of a reconciliation on both the divine and human planes. After that analysis of esthetic form, I turn finally to analyze the political form of the plays in relation to the problematic executive character of leadership that, as I have suggested in these introductory remarks, is of central significance for the classical esthetic.

In order to glimpse the political significance of this evolution in classical political form, I turn now to its dramatization in the esthetic form of the Oresteia. This dramatization accomplishes the esthetic deferral of resentment by bringing to consciousness the political process by which the bad violence of vengeance may be succeeded by the “good” violence of justice.

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549 Cf. Podlecki 1999: 80 on “the core of the play”.
Esthetic Form: The Perfect Simple Plot (From Vengeance to Justice)

In the Poetics, Aristotle remarks that episodic plots are the worst. Bad poets unintentionally compose plots this way, but even good poets can intentionally compose a plot this way. Good poets will do this, he says, to please the actors, who desire distinctive and unusual episodes to please the audience,\(^{550}\) and hence to stand out amongst the showpieces for competition \(\text{[agônismata]}\).\(^{551}\)

Aeschylus' Oresteia is our only surviving example (minus its satyr-drama Proteus) of a fully intact \(\text{agônisma}\), a complete trilogy entered as a competition piece at the City Dionysia.\(^{552}\) Aeschylus took first prize in 458 with this \(\text{agônisma}\), but how "agonismatic" is it? It may be a showpiece, but how showy is it? This is a question of literary criticism, and I will join the debate using the Aristotelian schema for the formal analysis of tragedy's evolution that I discussed above in Chapter Two.

How might Aeschylus' successful \(\text{agônisma}\) be seen in formal Aristotelian terms? In this section I present a dialectic of two possibilities: seeing the Oresteia either as complex in plot form but episodic in plot content, or as a simple plot possessing unity of action. I shall argue now first for unified content, and turn later to argue for simple form.

Unified Content, Many \textit{Metabases}

The plot of the Oresteia is unified with regard to content, I say, because one \textit{metabasis} (or "change of fortune") of the trilogy successfully transcends the three obvious, main \textit{metabases} of its three tragedies. These three \textit{metabases} are, respectively, the murder of Agamemnon, the murder of Clytaemestra, and the acquittal of Orestes.

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\(^{550}\) Cf. Politics 8.6.

\(^{551}\) Poetics 9, 1451b 37.

\(^{552}\) Gantz 1980: 136-137.
Although the three plays can each be seen to have one peculiar \textit{metabasis} as content, highlighted in boldface in Table 14, the unity of action of the trilogy’s simple plot lies in the singular defeat of vengeance by Athenian justice. The cyclical and reciprocal \textit{metabases} of the House of Atreus have changed into something new under the rule of Athenian law. Those critics who see the \textit{Eumenides}’ action in Athens, however, as tacked on to the preceding actions of murder in the House of Atreus, will disagree. This is a superficial reading that is dispelled, I believe, once the structural symmetries of the trilogy’s action are laid bare.\footnote{Cf. Wills 1961: 232.}

Apart from the aforementioned three \textit{metabases}, there are other \textit{metabases} in each play. They are indicated in Table 14 with a plus or minus sign to indicate either a happy \textit{metabasis} (+) or an unhappy \textit{metabasis} (-) for the character. While not dramatically highlighted as the main \textit{metabases}, they are present as part of the action. Are we to conclude, then, that these multiple \textit{metabases} are evidence of an episodic structure? For a lesser poet, perhaps, but notice the structural parallels between \textit{metabases} (indicated in Table 14 by the number of asterisks). In Aeschylus’ hands, I argue, there is a deliberate symmetry and arrangement of \textit{metabases}. The overall formal arrangement suggests a movement progressing through the trilogy, establishing a single \textit{metabasis}: Argive justice changes to Athenian justice. The religious dilemmas that bind the house of Atreus are solved by Athena’s intervention so that politics, not religion, brings worldly peace.\footnote{Cf. Scruton 2002: 2-3.}
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<th><strong>Table 14: Esthetic Form and Content in the Oresteia</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Metabasis Content</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ag. 947</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Agamemnon</strong>&lt;br&gt;-&lt;br&gt;peripeteia</td>
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<td><strong>Ag. 1231</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Cassandra</strong>&lt;br&gt;-&lt;br&gt;anagnorisis</td>
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<td><strong>Ch. 165</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Electra</strong>&lt;br&gt;+&lt;br&gt;anagnorisis</td>
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<td><strong>Ch. 854</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Aegisthus</strong>&lt;br&gt;-&lt;br&gt;peripeteia</td>
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<td><strong>Ch. 928</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Clytaemestra</strong>&lt;br&gt;-&lt;br&gt;anagnorisis</td>
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<td><strong>Eu. 753</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Orestes</strong>&lt;br&gt;+&lt;br&gt;peripeteia</td>
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<td><strong>Eu. 885</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Eumenides</strong>&lt;br&gt;+&lt;br&gt;anagnorisis</td>
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The *metabases* that occur in *pathos* relations between family members are successively exhausted. All negative possibilities being exhausted, the House reaches the positive (happy) *metabase* for brother and sister. Electra's reversal of fortune at the beginning of the *Choephoroi* is set against Iphigenia's at the beginning of the *Agamemnon*. The strife between gods and mortals, exemplified in the *Agamemnon* with the strife between Cassandra and Apollo, is paralleled in the *Eumenides* both with reconciliation between mortals (a tie vote which Athena transforms into a happy political alliance between Athens and Argos), and with reconciliation between gods (the Furies and the Olympians). This dual reconciliation, taking place on both the divine and human planes, reestablishes order between gods and mortals. The Furies will not make Athens sterile, for they have now a territorial home. Athens is blessed with peace from the alliances for war that its exemplary territorial jurisdiction solidifies in law. This hard-won achievement is expressed with the divine logic of an anachronistic etiology in which the classical period acquits the Dark Ages of its crimes against humanity (anarchic *stasis* and brutal tyranny): a magnanimous gesture, to be sure, and possible only from the point of view of a democracy that knows it is the worst form of government, save for all the rest. The gesture is what constitutes the single content of the trilogy's main *metabasis*. And the gesture is visible in the lesser *metabases* artfully arranged to celebrate its emergence. (Think of it as a floral bouquet of *metabases* sent to Athens, upon the occasion of the "end of history".)

The *Oresteia* is thus singular in content because of the overall unity emerging from the design of the symmetrical action. The plot of the *Oresteia* is also simple in form, I say, because the formal *differentia* that would mark it as complex are not fully developed. The reversals and recognitions in the three plays (or more precisely, the lack thereof) do not rise above the level of the content in any formal way. To see this, consider the four best candidates in the trilogy for

555 Cf. Gans 1985: 289 on “Aeschylus's equation of Athenian democracy with the *telos* of history.”
each: four reversals, and four recognitions. These eight candidates have not risen from being embedded in the symmetrical *metabasis* content to being structurally developed at the level of form. They are arranged formally only as a series of “simple plot” *pathos* relations.

Iphigenia’s sacrifice seems to mark a *peripeteia* in Agamemnon’s intended course of action. Far from an auspicious beginning to a successful war, it casts a shadow as far as his return home. The verb *metagnônai* used at *Ag.* 221 “regularly means to reverse a decision, from bad to good”.556 But this hardly counts as a *peripeteia* in the play’s action, recounting instead the action of the backstory, which, like everything else, merely forebodes Agamemnon’s imminent demise in the drama. Also, Iphigenia’s piteous looks (221) at her sacrificers would make no sense if the action were being intended as anything other than what it is, a deliberate sacrifice for military purposes.557 The sacrifice does not turn around to another course of action, but symbolizes rather what Agamemnon is willing to suffer in war. This willing action does not lead to a 180 degree reversal (say, to sudden peace with Troy). Instead, death comes full circle in the house of Atreus when it turns to Agamemnon.

Electra’s recognition scene, as Garvie has observed, is not central to the plot, as in Sophocles.558 It parallels, I note, (and thus structurally redeems) her sister Iphigenia’s sacrifice in the *Agamemnon* (an unhappy *metabasis*), by means of her counterbalancing happy *metabasis*.559 Electra departs (at *Ch.* 584), “sacrificed” in her own way to the grander narrative sweep. The gimmicky nature of the three-step recognition560 that makes the scene so memorable as a “recognition” is what makes it a pseudo-recognition in formal terms: a showy, episodic

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558 Garvie 1978: 64.
559 This is indicated in Table 14 with the rows marked by one asterisk.
560 The lock of hair, the footprints, the weaving.
digression. Despite Aristotle’s mention of the recognition scene in Poetics 16, the play’s metabasis\textsuperscript{561} belongs to Clytaemestra, not to Electra and her weepy reunion.

But in Aeschylus’ defence, the scene is not episodic inasmuch as it establishes Electra as an identical twin from head to toe. That is, she is a formal double to Orestes, so that his ultimate acquittal in the Eumenides is a metabasis structurally parallel to her happy metabasis in the Choephoroi. Both formally redeem the earlier sacrifice of Iphigenia.

The purple carpet scene cannot be a peripeteia simply because of its proximity to the king’s “overdetermined” murder. The Chorus voices their misgivings about the war to the homecoming king: “in ugly style you were written on my heart” (Ag. 801); Agamemnon acknowledges this, wary of “envy’s wicked poison” (834).\textsuperscript{562} One purple straw does not kill the overloaded camel. But the cumulative burden of envy on the king is the interpretive key to the play. When Agamemnon says, “let no eye’s envy strike from afar” (947), the irony for this prudent statesman is that envy strikes not from afar, but at home, in the bath. Clytaemestra is a monstrous double of Agamemnon because she wants to be him:\textsuperscript{563} the victor, the righteous warrior, wielding Zeus’ retributive justice. This is not a peripeteia but one violent double succeeding another: another full-circle revolution of violent action in the House of Atreus.

Clytaemestra’s anagnòrisis at Ch. 928 (“you are the snake”) is not so much sudden and personal (i.e., between her and her son) as it is impersonally embedded in the slow unveiling of the metabasis of the play. Before she confronts Orestes, she first shows a lucid awareness that the cycle of treachery is now coming full circle for her at 888, with the news of Aegisthus’ murder. Second, she recognizes her son, addressing him as such, at 896, without surprise. She does both without any shock of recognition, before finally naming Orestes as the “snake” of her dream.

\textsuperscript{561} Cf. Poetics 13 in light of my discussion of it in Chapter Two.


\textsuperscript{563} Cf. Girard 1977: 143-168.
Neither is there a surprise for the audience: her dream was the plot device that set the parodos in motion, and Orestes has already pronounced himself the snake (at 550). Given all this, her remark sounds in character: i.e., more like sour grapes than repentant shock at a sudden revelation.

Cassandra’s anagnórisis that “the female shall strike down the male” (Ag. 1438) is no anagnórisis because the Chorus does not reciprocally recognize its meaning (although the audience does). Agamemnon’s death cries (1343, 1345) and Clytaemestra’s account of the murder (1384) do not describe any revelation or recognition between the two spouses. The brief, brutal, and senseless horror is emphasized, without any melodramatic dwelling on either the king’s awareness of the betrayal or its cosmic significance. Cassandra’s remark (1438) shows the irony of her situation: Apollo, in reciprocity for her refusal, has struck her down. She is now the famous mythical female with a voice unrecognized by the male. Her prophecy makes her a foil to Clytaemestra, rather than a paradigm of anyone’s comprehension. She is the double of Clytaemestra in this sense: no one can make sense of these two females entangled in the thick web of brutal divine vengeance.

Fitted to the content of Clytaemestra as perpetrator, the lack of recognition of Cassandra is more formal irony than it is formal anagnórisis. Likewise with the boast of Aegisthus that he is nobody’s fool: “the mind has eyes” (Ch. 854). Ironically, he is swiftly dispatched (870) for a lack of foresight, having just been fooled by Cilissa and the servant women. This is closest of any example in the trilogy to what Aristotle means by a peripeteia: while setting out on one course of action, the opposite is accomplished in a reversal of that action’s course. Notice how Aeschylus, however, does not make this metabasis his focus, whereas the slaying of Aegisthus is traditionally the mythological focus of Orestes’ story. Instead Aegisthus’ blunder is a swift precursor to the much more extended, more dramatic confrontation between mother and son.

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564 Poetics 11.
565 Cf. Homer, Odyssey 1. 31-60.
With this reworking of the incident, then, Aeschylus is not perfecting the potency of a *peripeteia* scene. He is, rather, perfecting the most potent of *metabases*: in Aristotle’s opinion, those between close family members.\(^{566}\) Orestes’ relation to Clytaemestra, because closer, is more powerful in terms of simple *pathos* than his relation to his uncle/cousin Aegisthus. Formally, the plot focus is on this mother-son relation. Hence the *metabasis* of Clytaemestra is the climax of the play’s dramatic action.\(^{567}\) That is why Aegisthus is killed first.\(^{568}\)

**Simple Form, Illusorily Complex**

Garvie, in a paper entitled, “Aeschylus’ simple plots”, has made a case for seeing Aeschylus’ tragedies as the classic examples of what Aristotle means by “simple plots”.\(^{569}\) On this view, an *anagnôrasis* or *peripeteia* has to be “integral to the structure of the plot”\(^{570}\) in order for the play to be considered complex. In the words of Lucas, “the simple play moves in one direction with minor variations of pace and tension”.\(^{571}\) The “impression of complexity” is therefore not to be confused with complexity itself, and only a critical literary analysis can unravel the difference.\(^{572}\)

In his analysis, Garvie focuses on *Persae*,\(^{573}\) *Septem*,\(^{574}\) *Supplices*,\(^{575}\) and *Choephoroi*,\(^{576}\) but with a brief discussion of *Prometheus* and *Eumenides* at the end.\(^{577}\) *Agamemnon* is a reference point at the beginning and end of his argument, with its inexorably simple procession from the

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566 *Poetics* 14.
567 Indicated in Table 14 with three asterisks, as parallel to the *metabasis* of Agamemnon.
568 Indicated in Table 14 with two asterisks, as parallel to the *metabasis* of Cassandra.
569 *muthôn haploi* (*Poetics* 10, 1452a 11).
570 Garvie 1978: 66.
575 Garvie 1978: 74-76.
return of the king to his murder. Garvie argues that “the normal development of an Aeschylean plot is in a straight line from initial foreboding” to “the fulfillment of that foreboding”; yet Aeschylus typically breaks the straight line with temporary delays and surprises that make the inevitable climax “more dramatically effective when it comes”: an effective manipulation of the audience by the poet that nevertheless “never disrupts the basic unity of the play”. I would describe this as a species of formal virtuosity: that is, Aeschylus manipulates form to achieve a seamless unity with the action of his singular content.

Garvie’s argument runs into difficulty when faced with the Eumenides, which seems not to be a simple plot. He notes that apparently “the whole plot changes its direction after the acquittal of Orestes”. But it is unclear whether by this he means that the action veers into the episodic, with a new episode involving Athena and the Furies, or he means that a peripeteia has occurred (viz., that the judicial outcome now threatens to make things, not better, but worse). Therefore I find an opportunity here to enter the controversy. That is, at this point I wish to offer the requisite clarification between form and content.

Drawing upon my analysis of Aristotle, I wish to clarify what it ought to mean to assert that Aeschylus’ plots are simple. It means that they are not only simple in form, but that that form is fitted to a unity in content, namely, fitted to a singular metabasis. Garvie seems to suggest that the Furies episode, because it is a portion of the mythical plot newly invented by Aeschylus, must be considered new content in a separate episode. But I would argue that the Furies simply intend to make good on their previous threats to Athens, and that the unity of action here is found in the parallel to Orestes. As Taplin notes, usually the vindicated defendant stays (as suppliant with a home) and the vanquished prosecutor leaves (as unwelcome persecutor). Hence the Furies’

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579 Garvie 1978: 80.
581 Indicated in Table 14 with four asterisks.

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unexpected finding of a home in Athens is paralleled by Orestes’ preceding departure. Once
again, the deliberate arrangement of metabases in symmetrical episodes acquits Aeschylus on any
charge of being episodic (i.e., “agonistic” in Aristotle’s derogatory sense).

Orestes’ acquittal at Eu. 753 is not a sudden peripeteia because Athena’s vote at 735 has
already decided the outcome. The peripeteia could only be the aforementioned reversal of roles
of suppliant and persecutor: Orestes departs, but the Furies stay. But this reversal of action is not
made formally thematic by means of any self-referential lines pointing out the unexpected
symmetry. Instead the drama focuses on Athena’s persuasion (885) of the Furies. There is no
peripeteia in their hate “going” (900), for the will of Athena that, in the acquittal of Orestes,
accomplished human reconciliation despite deadlocked faction, now works to fulfilment with a
divine reconciliation of the Awesome Goddesses (Semnai Theai) to her purposes. It is thus
neither a disconnected new episode, nor a reversal of her wisely planned metabasis. Structurally,
the reconciliation on the divine plane, grounded in the soil of Athens, redeems the reciprocal
murders of the warring doubles of king and queen (Agamemnon and Clytaemestra), and their
respective lovers (Cassandra and Aegisthus). Sommerstein has argued,

Aeschylus’ plots tend to be characterized, not by abrupt changes of direction (peripeteai as Aristotle later called them), but by a build-up of tension and expectation towards a climax anticipated by the audience if not by the dramatis personae. He was quite capable of contriving peripeteia when he wished, as witness Seven against Thebes where the whole action pivots on Eteocles’ discovery that he has unwittingly brought about the fulfillment of his father’s curse; the trilogy form, however, encourages sharp changes of direction and mood between plays rather than within them.

Shall we view Aeschylus’ agónismata, with Sommerstein, as possessing formal
complexities such as peripeteia, and only possessing unity of action in individual plays, but not
over trilogies: in short, view them as complex but episodic? Or shall we adopt Garvie’s argument,

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583 Indicated in Table 14 with three asterisks.
584 Indicated in Table 14 with two asterisks.
as possessing formal simplicity of plot and unity of action: in short, view them as *simple with unified content*? The stark controversy over how to view Aeschylus’ work meets its crux with the *Oresteia*. Is there more than one *metabasis* action that is the content of the trilogy? And is this *metabasis* content fitted to a simple or complex form?

The resolution of the controversy does rest, I argue, in the critical distinction between form and content. As I have argued in Chapter Two, this distinction alone makes sense of the apparent discrepancy between *Poetics* 13 and 14: i.e., Aristotle analyzes tragic content in *Poetics* 13, and tragic form in *Poetics* 14. Applied here to the *Oresteia*, this critical distinction means a singular, inexorable *metabasis* may be fitted to a form that gives the impression of complexity, yet in fact that form can be simple, i.e., in harmony with a *metabasis*-content of only one action. And there is only one overriding *metabasis* in the *Oresteia* trilogy: the etiology of the rule of law in Athens. This one *metabasis* encompasses the other potential candidates. The internal design of the trilogy structure with respect to parallel *metabases*, as I have schematized it in Table 14, is evidence of this. *This apparent complexity in content is mirrored with an apparent complexity in form.* But both are artistic illusions. And therefore I conclude:

Aeschylus’ plots are simple in form, and it is this perfection in form that rules out our seeing their contents as allegedly episodic and “agonismatic”. That allegation holds true when a tragedy’s content ill fits its form. As I have argued, the *Oresteia*’s content is not so much three *metabases* as it is one etiology. Nor is its form a complex of four *peripeteiai* and *anagnôrises* as much as it is inexorably simple. In a word, the *Oresteia*’s formal characteristics are more at the service of its singular content than they are literary devices in ironic opposition to, or autonomously manipulative of, content. Those innovations belong respectively to Sophocles and Euripides. But because discussion of these tragedians’ contribution to the evolution of tragedy goes beyond the scope of my present study, I turn now to consider how the *Oresteia*’s esthetic
form mirrors a progression in political form in which the deliberate intervention of a human statesman occurs.
Political Form: Athenian Statecraft in Aeschylus' Oresteia

With Orestes' departure from Athens at the founding of the Areopagus, Aeschylus' Oresteia symbolically represents a human evolutionary achievement in terms of the separation of office from person in political affairs. Although Orestes is a fugitive from the violent cycle of personal reprisal killings, the tie-breaking vote of Athena for his acquittal as suppliant to the Areopagus grants him official exoneration. For just as Athena is ruler by occupying the sacred center, so too is it implied that Orestes' office must be officially protected from the violence of the periphery's resentment against the center: i.e., her judgment is the sacred seal on who stands in the center. In other words, Clytemnestra's murderous claim on the center was illegitimate because it was violence directed against a person and not against an office. The proof of this is her very succession in Agamemnon's place; if she had wanted to abolish the office, not the person, she would not have assumed his place in succession in that office. Thus the originary scene allows us to interpret the Oresteia in its full anthropological significance. Athena deliberately founds the Areopagus, and in doing so replaces the old executive office of princes like Orestes with that of the new executive of the Areopagus. This deliberate reconfiguration of executive power is meant to protect the center from the resentful periphery.

This is the deliberate achievement that establishes a new kind of national unity associated with the Greek polis, because Athens' territorial jurisdiction thus represents the rule of human law (symbolized by the Areopagus), rather than of unlimited divine will (i.e., monarchs asserting their divinely sanctioned privilege of reprisal killings). The ultimate legal reasoning behind Orestes' acquittal is thus that, looking into the historical past, he symbolizes what must occupy the sacred center (viz., the office, not the man). Looking into the future, however, a new executive is to be founded, one that is not vulnerable to the resentful assaults of the periphery as

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587 Eu. 740-741.
in the dysfunctional House of Atreus. The nomophylakes of the Areopagus are thus to be the regime’s guardians of national security in this sense: they act to preserve the privilege of the “latitude for statesmanship” in a way that better manages resentment. This is symbolized both in their establishing the Argive alliance with Orestes and in their recognition of Orestes’ right to defend the Argive executive office against Clytaemestra’s attacks on its person, whether that person is Orestes or Agamemnon.

While it is clear enough that Athena in the sacred center, as the hinge of the dramatic action, is able to reassert (against the violent resentful claims against it) the sacred center that Orestes is to occupy in his realm as king, the political import of the drama is difficult to see in terms of what Aeschylus is saying about the deliberate organisation of political institutions of his own day. With the help of the originary scene, however, we are able to identify the issue of who is to be the human leader who is to occupy the sacred center as the main issue of the trilogy. Therefore, when Aeschylus celebrates the political role of the Areopagus with his etiology in which Athena sets her seal on its role in the sacred center of Athenian political life, I conjecture that he is doing so in order to make an esthetic statement about executive power. In other words, his artwork aims to bring to prudential esthetic consciousness the particular argument for a deliberate political arrangement that can only be made in esthetic terms. What precisely this argument may have been has already been reconstructed by the best scholarship on the political background of Aeschylean tragedy: what Athena’s action from the sacred center likely symbolizes is Aeschylus’ approval of Ephialtes’ reforms, but not of Pericles’ attack on the Areopagus’ executive power.590

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589 Eu. 762-774.
590 Podlecki 1999: 80-100, 126-129.
That is, Ephialtes' democratic reforms of the Areopagus were politically salutary to Aeschylus' mind, but the abolition of its sacred center by Pericles was not.\footnote{Cf. Wallace 1974, 1989; Dodds 1953, 1960; Dover 1957; Cole 1977; and Quincey 1964.} Although on the one hand the tyranny of an undemocratic abuse of central executive power is to be avoided, on the other hand all executive power cannot be held by the democratic periphery, for this would be a recipe for anarchy (since any demagogue could then lead the periphery in his tyrannical assault on the sacred center). Aeschylus identifies this as the central political problem when he has the Furies warn,

Neither a life of anarchy
nor a life under a despot
should you praise.
To all that lies in the middle has a god given excellence.\footnote{Eu. 526-530 translated by Beer 1981: 61.}

The central political problem is thus who in the Greek polis is to be granted the "latitude for statesmanship" which is reserved for the executive power of the sacred center. For it is the periphery that must politically grant this sacred latitude to the center, since this political inevitability follows from the very center-periphery structure of the originary scene. By restricting this sacred latitude to the Areopagus, the Scylla of anarchy is avoided; and the Charybdis of tyranny was the occasion for the founding of the Areopagus in the first place, in order to avert the unending violent reciprocity which rivalry over executive power brings in its wake.

The Oresteia's critique of Pericles' usurpation of the sacred center occupied by the Areopagus is often misread as "sexual politics".\footnote{Cf. Eu. 657-673.} But as we are perhaps now at last in a position to appreciate, Athena's symbol is that of the personal state in which collective responsibility is wedded to territorial loyalty to her (Athens).\footnote{Cf. Eu. 890-891. Cf. Scruton 2002: 22-25.} Thus the trilogy's implicit statecraft proposes to resolve the quarrel of oligarchs and democrats through the classical exercise of an executive

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{591} Cf. Wallace 1974, 1989; Dodds 1953, 1960; Dover 1957; Cole 1977; and Quincey 1964.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{592} Eu. 526-530 translated by Beer 1981: 61.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{593} Cf. Eu. 657-673.
power that unites the polity. The *Oresteia* is thus an evolutionary move in human history to a patriotic politics of territorial jurisdiction.\(^{595}\) As such, it makes a definitive move to attenuate the necessities of scapegoating by means of the new political form of its leadership. The “latitude for statesmanship” is to reside only in the judgments of the Areopagus, i.e., to be kept from the hands of monarchs and demagogues. But the political form of the *polis* has to have already made this precise evolution of its executive power possible by means of proper regime mixture. To discern the fate of the central leader as bound up with the change of regime mixture in the *Oresteia* into the middle regime of the *politeia*, we now turn to the trilogy’s representation of regime change.

**Regime Change in the *Oresteia***

Seaford notes the “ambivalence” of tyrants in tragedy, as they are both detested and admired for their beneficence.\(^{596}\) This nicely captures the ambivalence of the denizens of the periphery towards the sacred center. That is, by the very metaphysical act of representing the sacred center, communal peace is achieved; but as we have seen, the originary resentment of the scenic imagination stems from our own mimetic desire to overcome metaphysics and to appropriate or usurp that center.\(^{597}\) Politically, there are many forms of praxis which this attempted usurpation may take: e.g., one might overthrow, replace, or emulate the leader.\(^{598}\) My task now is to discern what changes in political form are mirrored by the classical esthetic in the *Oresteia*.

Other than the *Prometheus Bound*, only the *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi* see Aeschylus take up the theme of tragic tyranny by using the words *tyrannos* and *tyrannis* for the regime that overthrows Agamemnon’s (Ag. 1355, 1365, 1633, Cho. 824, 863-864, 973, 1046).\(^{599}\) But philology cannot be our sole guide here, since a mere tracking of vocabulary will not resolve

\(^{595}\) Cf. Scruton 2002: 15-47.
\(^{598}\) Gans 1985: 173.
\(^{599}\) Seaford 2003: 100.
form back to the originary scene. The originary scene is an event, and thus the anthropological
discovery procedure we need is the esthetic evolution of drama.600 In terms of dramatic action, the
regime change in the trilogy seems to be straightforward as progression through three
constitutional forms: “monarchy, tyranny, democracy” 601 But since we have seen in Chapter
Three that these pure types are more commonly found in various regime mixtures, I must refine
this analysis by seeing precisely what the succession of regimes that the Oresteia presents is in
terms of our Aristotelian regime theory.

Agamemnon’s character seems to be consistently (and anachronistically) that of a
democrat.602 Agamemnon is a king (basileus); “there is no favourable use of tyrannos in
Aeschylus” and Agamemnon is “the opponent of tyrants”.603 Agamemnon demonstrates this in
word (831-955),604 and above all in deed (“trampling the purple”).605 Because he rejects the
“superior treatment” that the strewn purple robes symbolize, he is a democrat, “non-hybristic and
untyrannical”; he is not Fraenkel’s “true gentleman” but rather, in Pope’s phrase, “a true citizen
of the fifth-century Greek polis”.606

But if Agamemnon were simply an anachronistic representation of the democratic values
of the Greek polis, there would be no need for Orestes to travel to Athens for acquittal: i.e., he
would simply visit the Argive Areopagus for exoneration. But because there is no Areopagus in
Argos, there is a dramatic evolution in political form from Orestes’ Argos to Athena’s Athens.
My empirioschematic analysis of mixed regimes, derived from Aristotle,607 helps discern
precisely what that evolution is. Mixed regimes ameliorate warring factions; and as Aristotle
discussed, this mixing focuses on solving the problem of the seemingly eternal war between

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607 See Table 13.
oligarchs and democrats.\textsuperscript{608} (Note that for Aristotle, strictly speaking, “democracy” is a deviant regime form, so if one really wanted to compliment Agamemnon one would call his behaviour “republican” and not “democratic”\textsuperscript{609}) In the table below I summarize the progression of political form found in the \textit{Oresteia} and proceed now to a discussion of how the regime changes through the course of the trilogy result in the pure regime type of the “republican regime” that Aeschylus portrays at Athens, viz., the correct rule of the moderate many which balances the competing claims to rule from anarchic democrats (freedom) and tyrannical oligarchs (wealth).\textsuperscript{610}

Table 15:  \textit{Political Form in the Oresteia}  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tragedy</th>
<th>Regime Mixture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Agamemnon}</td>
<td>Aristocratic Kingship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Choephoroi}</td>
<td>Tyrannical Oligarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Eumenides}</td>
<td>Republican Regime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The virtue that Agamemnon exhibits by means of speech and deed in the \textit{Agamemnon} is not so much “democratic” in character as it is noble and aristocratic. That is, his guiding concern is \textit{for the common good}, which shows that his regime is correct in terms of its mode of rule. The type of correct regime to which his rule corresponds is therefore that which I have identified as “Aristocratic Kingship”, which Aristotle characterizes as the type of rule employed by ancient heroes,\textsuperscript{611} of whom Agamemnon is obviously a prime example. The aristocratic component of it

\textsuperscript{608} \textit{Politics} 3-4.
\textsuperscript{609} \textit{Politics} 3.7.
\textsuperscript{610} Cf. \textit{Eu.} 526-530.
\textsuperscript{611} \textit{Politics} 3, 1285b 4-6, 1285b 21-23.
corresponds to the nobility that he brings to the task of being king of Argos, i.e., he is noble because he rules for the common good. The sacrifice before battle of his daughter Iphigenia is a perfect example of his grim resolve to put the public interest before his own private interest.612

But if aristocratic kingship is so wonderful, why is a regime change necessary? We see from the fate of Agamemnon at the hands of Clytaemestra that even a noble regime like aristocratic kingship is hardly invulnerable to the forces of resentment. No regime change may have been "necessary", but the resentment that even heroes earn from the people they lead into war is unavoidable.613 Thus the regime change from Agamemnon’s aristocratic kingship into Clytaemestra and Aegisthus’ tyrannical oligarchy is therefore perfectly understandable, even if it is not necessarily inevitable.

Note that I identify the usurpers’ regime as this variant on oligarchy based on Aegisthus’ statements about how their tyranny will function: i.e., they will buy off discontent with money; their opponents will starve to death.614 Theirs is a tyrannical oligarchy because they are perpetuating the regime of a hereditary monarchy (i.e., Aegisthus merely replaces Agamemnon at Clytaemestra’s side) but now without the rule of law (a fact of regime change to which their unlawful murder of Agamemnon attests). Aristotle notes the common name for this mixed regime type of tyrannical oligarchy is dynasty.615

Yet if the correct regime of aristocratic kingship is so perilous, as the fate of Agamemnon attests, the question arises as to how a leader like Agamemnon ought to wield his executive power (i.e., his "latitude for statesmanship" which is his discretionary power over life and death) in order that he may prudently and effectively manage resentment. One may be sceptical about Agamemnon’s virtue or nobility as an aristocratic king because almost any decision of his reign,

613 Cf. Ag. 438-474, 551-570, 785-804.
614 Ag. 1638-1642.
615 Politics 4, 1292b 6-1292b 10, 1293a 30-1293a 34.
from the sacrifice of Iphigenia to the Trojan War, seems in retrospect to be imprudent. Identifying the “mistake” that brings down his regime seems to be easy since there are a multitude of ways in which armchair generals might second-guess him. But as I have already suggested above, the only significant “mistake” of which Aeschylus’ tragedy is suggesting that Agamemnon is truly guilty is his being the leader. His fundamental hamartia is anthropological: i.e., being the one in the sacred center who wields a discretionary executive power over life and death. No human can wield this power without incurring resentment, not even noble and aristocratic kings.

Therefore the question arises as to what regime form might better manage resentment. Otherwise the cycle of history may simply be one of endless regime change between aristocratic monarchs and tyrannical oligarchs. We already have seen that Aristotle’s answer, the achievement of classical political form, is the middling regime of the republic (which is perfected by orienting and educating its citizens in nobility and virtue). But the problem remaining that I must solve is what form the executive management of resentment is to take in such a republican regime. In other words, the discretionary power over life and death that an Agamemnon or Clytaemestra yields can never be obsolete in any worldly regime. The sacrificial is foundational to communal consciousness. Any human regime is ultimately structured by the center-periphery structure of the originary scene; therefore some variant form of representation will inevitably have to structure the relation of the sacred center to the resentful periphery.

My approach to the problem is not to look for subtle suggestions in Aristotle’s text about how executive power ought to be deployed. That is, because the problem is not simply a theoretical one of textual doctrines, we need to look instead to what esthetic form communicates about prudence with regard to the sacred center, since the esthetic is an invaluable anthropological discovery procedure in that it takes us back to the originary scene which defines

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the human community. My claim is that Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* commemorates a real achievement in its esthetic form, but not just of the real achievement of political form evolving, because of resentment’s violent cycles of tyrannical oligarchy, from aristocratic tyranny to a republican regime. I claim that it also commemorates the prudent esthetic consciousness that allowed a deliberate decision on the part of statesmen to arrange a better management of resentment by *better arranging executive power*. In other words, Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* mirrors the human wisdom that discretionary power is better held by the Areopagus of his *Eumenides* than by an Agamemnon or Orestes (not to mention an Aegisthus or Clytaemestra).

I will conclude this chapter with some suggestions from historical evidence that with his treatment of the Areopagus in the *Oresteia* Aeschylus had put his finger on the most profound questions in Greek history about the executive arrangement of political power. But first I will close off this section by discussing how the famous “purple carpet” debate between Agamemnon and Clytaemestra demonstrates that in spite of his being the noble leader of an aristocratic kingship, even his example of noble prudence is still tragically vulnerable to the threats unleashed by mimetic crisis. Despite his knowledge of envy’s wicked poison,\(^{618}\) he does not foresee its resentful assault as coming from Clytaemestra who, above all in this scene’s *stichomythia*, is his mimetic double.\(^{619}\)

The genius of the scene is that on the surface it is a husband-and-wife quarrel.\(^{620}\) Of course, such quarrels have a rich subtext, in that what the interlocutors ostensibly quarrel about is circling around what they are really quarrelling about. Here Agamemnon is being asked to walk on the purple robes. Clytaemestra’s hidden strategy is to incur yet more resentment against Agamemnon from the people (in order that they might greet her, after the imminent regime change, with approbation for her murder of Agamemnon). But I see Agamemnon knowledgeable

\(^{618}\) *Ag.* 832-840.


\(^{620}\) *Ag.* 930-945.
and prudent in the workings of resentment (thus he resists her request). Here now follows my translation of this scene with the subtext of the conversation as I interpret it interspersed in square brackets. I make my own translation here in order to offer extensive commentary on how the scene’s fundamental focus is the problem of the executive management of resentment.

Clytaemestra’s general strategy throughout is to wear down Agamemnon’s prudent resistance to her, since he is fearful of the great power of resentment. Her first tactic in the argument is to induce guilt in Agamemnon over his sacrifice of Iphigenia. Agamemnon has just rebuked Clytaemestra for fawning over him and suggesting he walk on the purple robes. He concludes his prudent reflections on the power of resentment with this line, which underlines his resolve to avoid envy:

I said [I want] these things because I am able to do them with good courage.

[I’m telling you, this is the wise thing to do, and do it I will.]

Clytaemestra replies with a stingingly sarcastic line about Agamemnon’s professed resolve to act prudently, her sarcasm alluding to the sacrifice of Iphigenia as supremely imprudent:

Oh sure, tell me about this thing that you will not do unwisely.

[Great, just like you willed to sacrifice Iphigenia - the wise thing done to me!]

Agamemnon replies with a reiteration that above all that he is a prudent statesman:

Know that my wisdom [in that action] is unassailable.

[Look, I did what the gods asked and what the situation demanded. The wisdom of that prudent action is especially known by me.]

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621 [Imagine the remarks in square brackets on a separate line as “subtitles” that “translate” what Agamemnon and Clytaemestra really mean as they argue. Everything else in square brackets, i.e., if on the same line as the translated Greek line, expands on the meaning of the Greek line being translated.]

622 Ag. 914-929.
623 Ag. 930.
624 Ag. 931.
625 Ag. 932.
Clytaemestra replies with yet more sarcasm about Agamemnon’s appeals to religion as cover for the sacrifice of Iphigenia, her sarcasm suggesting that he was more afraid than prudent:

Would you vow to the gods, out of fear, to do these things the way I ask?626

[You did what you did out of fear. What I’m asking of you, are you afraid of it?]

Agamemnon defends his prudence in terms of duty, allowing himself a slight sarcastic implication that Clytaemestra could be behaving better towards him:

Indeed, if a knowing oracle advised fulfilment of the duty.627

[I said I did it only because the gods asked it. I am master; know your place.]

Thus Clytaemestra loses this opening exchange because she cannot successfully assail Agamemnon’s duty to the gods or to the common good. She does inflict, however, wounds of guilt in him over his sacrifice of Iphigenia, if not over his fear of the gods. Thus, after having successfully “pushed his buttons” with this first tactic, she moves to her second tactic, which is to compare Agamemnon unfavourably to his rivals and thus to ignite mimetic rivalry in him in order to achieve her wish:

What do you think Priam would do if he had achieved these things?628

[I think perhaps Priam is the master. What would he do if he won the war?]

Agamemnon’s reply is richly sarcastic, since he considers himself to have defeated his Trojan enemy by virtue of his Greek leadership, superior in prudence:

I think that he would certainly have walked on tapestries.629

[Yes, barbarian idiots walk on tapestries. That’s what I think.]

626 Ag. 933.
627 Ag. 934.
628 Ag. 935.
629 Ag. 936.
Knowing that Agamemnon knows that the prudent statesman must minimize resentment if he is to survive, Clytaemestra now accuses him of using this knowledge to be overcautious in what is unavoidable and thus of being overcautious in a way that Priam (who simply by being a king must have had a similar knowledge of envy) would not have been:

So then don’t be ashamed if men should blame you [because King Priam would not be ashamed to be great and to thus court envy].

[And I think you are indeed afraid - of what other people think of you. That’s really why you sacrificed Iphigenia!]

Agamemnon’s rejoinder is a reiteration of the seriousness of the matter of a leader’s courting envy:

Yes, what people say is great and powerful, to be sure.

[Rightfully so. It is intelligent to take into account the mob’s great power. Yes, that’s why I sacrificed Iphigenia: *Vox populi, vox Dei.*]

Clytaemestra now spells out what she was suggesting by the example of Priam. She wants Priam to be Agamemnon’s mimetic model. So she points out that envy is inevitable because it is concomitant with greatness:

But the unenvied man is only the man who spurs on no rivals.

[He who fears the envy of the mob is the man who is will be afraid of rivals!]

Clytaemestra has invoked Agamemnon’s imaginary future rivals in order to challenge the state of his courage. She will now proceed with her third tactic, to challenge Agamemnon on behalf of his vanquished past rivals. But she faces an obstacle in the fact that Agamemnon now challenges her in the present as a rival, sarcastically commenting on this incitement to male rivalry coming from a woman:

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630 *Ag. 937.*
631 *Ag. 938.*
632 *Ag. 939.*
It is not a woman’s [duty] to long for battle.633

[Talk on, woman! I, a man, am not afraid of action. Are you challenging me?]

Clytaemestra dissembles and hides the fact that she is now Agamemnon’s mimetic double, vying with him in a “masculine” battle for ultimate command. Clytaemestra replies with sarcasm of her own, suggesting that the only rival now present is not she but rather the spectre of Priam who rebukes Agamemnon for not daring to be great and to court envy:

Yes, in your wealth [newly-won from Priam], to be conquered, then, [by Priam now the conqueror] - how fitting!634

[No, Priam himself challenges you: a cowardly, ignoble nouveau riche.]

Agamemnon now nobly seeks an end to the dispute. Rather than tyrannically overrule her, he candidly asks if this is a dispute in which Clytaemestra’s demand is non-negotiable:

Do you really value this victory in a contest [with a vanquished rival, which will only court escalated future rivalry with the mob]?635

[I cannot believe you issue this challenge. Can we negotiate a more political solution?]

Clytaemestra now knows that she has him. Because of his noble character, Agamemnon will negotiate the best possible political solution. That is, he will take the demands of rival parties into account and aim for a diplomatic solution that will dispel resentment rather than exacerbate it. Clytaemestra is thus able to get her way because she exploits the very nobility of this aristocratic king who seeks to accommodate politically the claims of resentment:

Be persuaded. You rule, to be sure, if you leave it willingly to me.636

633 Ag. 940.
634 Ag. 941.
635 Ag. 942.
636 Ag. 943.
[Ah, you are supremely prudent. By graciously taking my wishes into account, you dispel my resentment as a wise political ruler does. Too bad you don’t realize this is all a set-up and that I am the real rival who is about to murder you!]

There is more irony than sarcasm in this final remark, since Clytaemestra has now demonstrated the *hamartia* of Agamemnon’s aristocratic kingship. Because his nobility puts more stock in persuasion than violence, his discretionary executive power is vulnerable to the indiscretions of those conspiring against him. As we have seen, this *hamartia* is part of the job description of occupying the sacred center. Seeing whether a particular leniency in discretionary power will dispel resentment or exacerbate it is the supreme challenge: but the commensurate superhuman knowledge is unavailable to mortals wielding this superhuman power over life and death. Hence the fundamental insight of the classical esthetic is that mortals who occupy the sacred center must live out a tragic paradox.637 Even great kings will be overthrown.

Clytaemestra thus successfully wins the “purple carpet” argument because, although she cannot decisively escalate Agamemnon’s rivalry with Priam and Troy to rivalry with the Argives (her second tactic), she can exploit Agamemnon’s prudence by getting him to grant her a favour. Her first tactic, to circle about the issues involved in Iphigenia’s sacrifice and induce guilt over it, thus pays off in the end with her third tactic (her personal request for Agamemnon to lord his victory over his vanquished rival). Clytaemestra’s calculation in the scene is chilling. In retrospect, the “second tactic” can be seen as winning sympathy for granting the persistent request of her “third tactic”. First, she induces guilt over Iphigenia; second, she gets Agamemnon to “pull rank” on her as the male ruler for whom rivalry is solely appropriate, a move that she knows he will recognize as courting her resentment; finally, she wins the concession of having him walk on the “purple carpet” because he now seeks to dispel that resentment and politically forestall conflict with her.

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The tragedy is that he has done nothing wrong. His tragedy is most pitiable and fearful because he is a great leader who has acted nobly. Clytaemestra and Aegisthus’ deaths in the *Choephoroi* are pitiable and fearful only insofar as they are the fallout of the fall of the great aristocratic king. Aristocratic kingship has dissolved into violent reciprocity; and what hope is there in a return to an aristocratic kingship of Orestes? The *Choephoroi* dramatizes the ensuing madness when, in reciprocal violence, office is not separated from the ruler. If anyone can plead that their vengeance is the “fist of God” bringing justice, then no regime with executive power will ever be safe, whether that regime is aristocratic kingship or tyrannical oligarchy.

The problem that is posed by the executive power of the inhabitant of the sacred center is not just a problem of the individual fate of monarchs. In Pindar’s “Oresteia” (*Pythian* 11), Pindar gives an aristocratic name to the nurse (Arsinoa, meaning “with the appropriate disposition”); Aeschylus’ name for her (Cilissa) is a slave-name, which allows his drama to emphasize “how the fortunes of the great affect the humble.” In other words, the political fate of the periphery is bound up with society’s representation of the center. As we have seen, the classical esthetic achieves a real breakthrough in human understanding because its separation of form and content allows tragedy to dramatize this originary political problem. Aeschylus’ great achievement in the *Oresteia* is to commemorate the prudence required to manage resentment in the republican regime of Athens. That is, the Areopagus is to wield the discretionary power that engulfed the House of Atreus in indiscretions. Athena establishes it to dispel resentment. By placing discretionary power in the hidden hands of the *nomophylakia*, she tames the Furies.


*The Eumenides* has shown to us how esthetic form dramatizes the political problem of executive power in relation to regime change. Regime stability is found in a republican regime.

But even this regime of Athens cannot do without the discretionary power that the originary scene places in the hands of the human community. Athens’ new scenic configuration, which marks a decisive advance in human history, integrates that power into the rule of law that is maintained in its most august and prestigious form by the Areopagus.

Aristotle was aware of the need for guardians of the law. But because he says so little about it, it is difficult to reconstruct from his surviving texts his theoretical position on how executive power ought to be most prudently configured. Yet there is an intriguing historical footprint from a member of his school that sheds light on how Aristotle might have viewed Aeschylus’ prudent esthetic recommendations about the Areopagus in the Oresteia.

Demetrius of Phalerum was the one student of Aristotle and Theophrastus who, as ruler of Athens (317/6-308/7), was in a position of political power such that he could apply the political philosophy he had learnt from the Peripatetics. The evidence concerning the reforms he applied is sketchy. But it is clear that he made the nomophylakes (“guardians of the law”) the “most important magistrates in Athens”, whether by creating the office or being the first to give it “significant powers”. Demetrius’ nomophylakes were admitted to the Areopagus once they had served their term, an act that signified the importance of their office, since the Areopagus had been “guardian of the laws” before Ephialtes reformed it. It seems nomophylakes reform (which Demetrius engaged in) is misattributed to Ephialtes; that is, Ephialtes merely stripped the Areopagus of its nomophylakia (Ath. Pol. 25.2).

My own suggestion, which I make to clear up the confusion over precisely how the Demetrian nomophylakes guarded the laws, is to observe that their office was a kind of

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639 Politics 4.14, 5.8.
641 Williams 1997: 331.
642 Williams 1997: 332.
executive power, exercising discretion. This would explain the lack of precise documentation concerning how they managed the actions of legislators and magistrates. Their role cannot be predefined or spelled out, because executive discretion is what they have been entrusted with. I maintain, therefore, that the executive power of the nomophylakes was conceived to manage the health of the regime, and hence it is no surprise that most scholars find inspiration for Demetrius’ nomophylakes reform in the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.645

I think it would be inaccurate, especially given my argument in Chapter Three about Aristotle’s “best regime”, to characterize the goal of Demetrius’ executives as keeping the regime healthy as a “moderately oligarchic” regime.646 Moreover, Demetrius’ sumptuary legislation and its officers (the gynaikonomoi, “regulators of women”) suggests more that what the regime aimed at was a kind of aristocracy, that is, a regime aiming above all else to train its citizens in virtue.647 The Areopagus itself had its powers enhanced by Demetrius’ laws; the Eleven was abolished and its “power of summary judgment” transferred to the Areopagus.648 It appears a reasonable inference from Demetrius’ actions for me to argue that Aristotle held the Areopagus as an executive body in high esteem. Demetrius’ replacement of sortition with election for archons and nomophylakes suggests that his guiding political philosophy was more “republican” than “democratic” (in the sense I argued for in Chapter Three).649 Williams speculates:

Demetrius, the student of Athens’ history, may have believed that the use of sortition in place of election to choose archons was the change which had caused the collapse of the power and prestige of the Areopagus; he then sought, by reversing that change, to restore the venerable Areopagus to its deserved place of prominence in Athens’ government.650

647 Williams 1997: 335-338.
649 Williams 1997: 342 notes how election was seen as more “aristocratic” than sortition. This observation fits with my thesis that Aristotle’s “best regime” in Politics 7-8 was an aristocratic republic.
There is no greater celebration of the classical “power and prestige of the Areopagus” than in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*. That trilogy depicts a contest of resentment between oligarchs (e.g., of House of Atreus) and democrats (the Furies as mob energy); its grand finale is the overcoming, in the Areopagus, of that resentful struggle. To see Demetrius’ reforms as siding with “the standard oligarchic objections to Athens’ democracy which were enunciated in both the philosophical schools and elsewhere”, is to miss the main point in Aristotle’s politics. Demetrius would have been acting, rather, to bring about a *politeia*: neither an oligarchy nor a democracy, but rather a regime aiming to educate citizens to overcome their resentments by means of virtue.

This *politeia* is not a “conservative” oligarchic project in opposition to a “liberal” democratic one. To conceive the struggle only as a bipolar ideological struggle in such terms is to have learned neither the main lesson of Aristotle’s *Politics* about the “best regime” nor the main lesson of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* about the Areopagus’ executive power as central to Athens’ classical status as the “best regime” so far in history. Both lessons are seemingly uncanny in their similarity, until we reflect that they are both derived from that “mirror of princes” which I call the prudent exercise of statecraft and regime management. Tragedy’s esthetic and political consciousness was part of the anthropological breakthrough that allowed classical Athens to make a decisive evolutionary leap forward from the originary scene. Tragedy’s self-reflective understanding fostered the deliberate and prudent action of statesmen who replaced resentment towards kings and tyrants with something new: patriotic loyalty to a land marked above all others by the democratic rule of law.  

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651 See Girard 1987b: 147-152 on the Furies.
652 Williams 1997: 343.
Demetrius' own prudence and practical skills hardly merit the verdict of Williams that he was nevertheless, in ideological terms, still an antidemocratic tyrant.\textsuperscript{654} Anyone who, by means of reforming the mixture of a \textit{politeia}, strives to manage the recurring, warring resentments of the oligarchic and democratic factions,\textsuperscript{655} deserves rather the appellation used by Plato and Aristotle for the executive who assumes the burden of such regime management: \textit{politikos}, or statesman. What is interesting is that in Aeschylus' \textit{Oresteia}, apart from heroic Prince Orestes, this statesman is absent. Athena stands in for contemporary Athenian statesmen in the sacred center. This is obviously another sign of Aeschylus' achievement, in that he accomplishes a supreme \textit{esthetic deferral of resentment} by removing human figures of resentment (again, note that Orestes the suppliant departs Athens in the \textit{Eumenides}).

But outside of the tragedy, in real political life, the Areopagus was an ideological battleground for Ephialtes and Cimon.\textsuperscript{656} Ephialtes' reforms transferred executive functions from the Areopagus to the \textit{boule} as Athenians "saw no reason" to keep the judicial and executive authorities separate.\textsuperscript{657} "The revolution of 462 had presumably been preceded by a long agitation against the privileges of the Areopagus."\textsuperscript{658} As the best scholarship has suggested,\textsuperscript{659} Aeschylus in the \textit{Oresteia} stood against a complete collapse of executive Areopagus power into the hands of the \textit{boule}. It would be supremely imprudent to empower the furious periphery without an adequate representation of the sacred center. Aeschylus' tragic representation encoded this anthropological wisdom about executive power into \textit{esthetic} form. He drew a line in the sands of history and recognized, in the revolution of 462, an evolutionary inflection point for the human race.

\textsuperscript{654} Williams 1997: 344.  
\textsuperscript{655} Fortenbaugh and Schüttrumpf 2000: 347-380.  
\textsuperscript{656} Roberts 1982: 58, 148.  
\textsuperscript{657} Rhodes 1972: 211.  
\textsuperscript{658} Hignett 1952: 195.  
\textsuperscript{659} Podlecki 1999: 74-100, 126-129.
Aristotle carried the self-reflective inquiry into classical political form to its completion. It is interesting to note that he probably learned from his teacher Plato what Aeschylus had taught them both. For the Nocturnal Council in Plato’s *Laws* is, along the lines of Klosko’s “institutional view” interpretation, an institutional solution to the problem of which is preferable: the rule of philosophy (as in the *Republic*) or the rule of law (as in the *Laws*).\(^\text{660}\) In other words, Plato’s institutional solution is an *executive* committee, distinct from the judicial legislature.

\(^{660}\) Klosko 1988.
Conclusion: Orestes the Prince

The saga of regime change in the Oresteia thus ends with the restoration of official Argive power to Orestes, whom the rule of law has recognized as a person to be separate from his office (which discretionary power must protect) and therefore a person not guilty. In Aeschylus’ “mirror of princes”, a prudential esthetic consciousness shows how Athens’ republican regime, which charts a noble middle course between tyranny (extreme oligarchic inequality) and anarchy (radical democratic equality), still requires a distinct form of executive leadership at its helm. The territorial jurisdiction of the rule of law as human law (which resolves the dilemmas imposed by divine vengeance on the House of Atreus) is what the Furies submit to when Athena persuades them. Territorial loyalty overcomes resentment. Athena secures recognition of the human rule of law’s territorial jurisdiction with territorial loyalty: the Furies find a home at Athens. The Areopagus’ esthetic deferral of resentment comes from Athena’s ultimate occupation of the sacred center in the play. But in real life, careful statecraft will have to conserve an appropriate distribution of executive power to the Areopagus. Aeschylus in his trilogy likely signals his approval of Ephialtes’ reforms but issues an esthetic rebuke to those who would imprudently strip the Areopagus of its vitally important independent function in the body politic.

Just as Orestes inhabits the sacred center as an aristocratic monarch, so too does the Areopagus but in its new evolutionary form that is an institutional innovation achieving a deferral of resentment against executive power. The Areopagus is celebrated by Aeschylus in a way that Prince Orestes cannot be. For the Areopagus is precisely what prevents families like his from subjecting the populace to violent regime changes. Whenever a human figure stands in the sacred center, he is unavoidably a target for resentment. But the office of the Areopagus’ guardians of the law is less likely to be confused with a person who wields executive power.
The sacred center at the conclusion of the *Oresteia* is thus a “mirror of companionship” (*homiliae katoptron*) on the periphery in three ways. First, Athena in the sacred center reminds us that the center can never be abolished from the originary scene by the periphery; it will always reassert itself to re-establish communal order in some sacrificial form (hopefully not that of the Furies). Second, Orestes the Prince in the sacred center reminds us that the figure of a human person in the sacred center always invites the resentment of the periphery against the center; this originary resentment subjects humanity to the threat that it could someday everywhere be the House of Atreus writ large. Third, the Areopagus in the sacred center reminds us of the evolution in political institutions that achieved a real deferral of resentment against the executive power of princes; that is, office must be separated from person *in a way that best defers resentment*. In Aeschylus’ vision, territorial loyalty is focused on the sacred center founded by Athena so that the territorial jurisdiction of a republican regime needs no Prince Orestes. Orestes may depart Athens.

What Agamemnon thus meant when he spoke of the “mirror of companionship” has been clarified by my study of the classical esthetic. The sacred center is a “mirror of companionship”, in that the human figure in the “divine” center is a mirror of the peripheral human community that mediates itself by symbolic representation. That is, the center designated by the ostensive gesture on the originary scene reflects back the periphery to itself in the esthetic experience of human representation that constitutes the human community itself. In Agamemnon’s case, he knew how cold and lonely was this central place he occupied. The act of representation by the periphery that sustained him in the center was a deferral of resentment. Hence he knew well that his position in the center was only a mirror of deferred resentment. It was invulnerable only as long as resentment did not move to appropriate the center. The classical solution to this human political problem is to remove Orestes and his ilk from the sacred center. Athena and her executive Areopagus are to inhabit it instead.

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661 *Ag.* 839. Cf. the confusion over what this phrase means at Denniston and Page 1957: 142-143.
But when Christianity arrives in history, a new scenic configuration is required. The Incarnation usurps the sacred center from Athena and her Areopagus by once again installing a human figure in that center. The periphery is thus able to make a new kind of resentful claim on the sacred center. The “divine right of kings” allows a prince to install himself in the center as a representative of the Incarnate God-man who has usurped Athena and abolished the scenic distance between center and periphery, i.e., between god and man. This problem is dramatized by the neoclassical esthetic and I turn now to study its political solution as found in Shakespeare's own “mirror of princes”.
Chapter Five:
Cultural Form in Shakespeare's *Henriad*

Introduction: Neoclassical Form and Content

The classical esthetic has been defined as the “exclusive representation of the scenic center.”662 The play-within-a-play is a characteristic of the neoclassical esthetic because it is in that esthetic that the center and periphery are first dramatized. The classical esthetic “reproduces the ‘interior’ of the originary event: the center without the periphery.”663 Admittedly, “peripherality is figured in the tragic performance” by the classical chorus, but the important thing to note about their peripheral presence is that they “surround the central figures as onlookers rather than as sacrificers”.664 The audience too, like the chorus, consists only of peripheral onlookers. The key to the esthetic deferral of resentment in the classical esthetic is that both chorus and spectators know that they “have an imaginary but not a real place in the central agon”: i.e., they watch tragedy in order not to have to live it.665

Rivalry and resentment against the heroes and protagonists in the tragic center is thus dispelled by the classical esthetic because of the scenic distance achieved in the classical separation of form and content: *the sacrificial requirements of tragic form are fearful and its human content is pitiable.* Because “Athenian society could murder its kings in the theatre” the sacred center is a reconciling figure and locus of exclusive representation rather than a site of the periphery’s interloping contestation with the center.666

But while Jewish monotheism universalized the sacred center by removing figurality from it,667 Christianity installed a figure once again in the sacred center that mediated in its

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662 Gans 1993: 147.
666 Gans 1985: 286.
667 Gans 1990: 49-84.
victimary representation the sufferings of a universalized periphery.\textsuperscript{668} Thus the classical distance between the protagonist in the tragic center and the chorus and spectators on the periphery was abolished. The moral equality figured in the Christian revelation of the structure of the originary scene, in which the one human community surrounds the divine victim in the center, creates a new evolution in esthetic consciousness of the originary scene. The neoclassical esthetic discovers that center and periphery are to be represented together as the one scene on stage:

As soon as we feel ourselves the potential equals in triumph and in suffering of the participants in the agon, we are no longer in the world of the classical esthetic. Classical decorum is lost; the rivalry of the audience with the central figure reflects a more deeply symmetrical form of resentment than classical form can tolerate. In order to defer the corrosive effect of this internal resentment, the neoclassical esthetic must abandon the naïveté of the classical and represent the scene itself within the work. By this time, it is no longer possible to accept a legendary or historical guarantee for centrality; centrality must be demonstrated as itself a product of the scene.\textsuperscript{669}

In other words, the neoclassical esthetic puts on center stage not just kings, but rather kings and their people as a fully dramatic (center-periphery) scene that has to generate its own significance.

The “unquestioned exemplarity” of an Agamemnon or Orestes is subverted by Christianity’s “equality of souls” that esthetically abolishes classical hierarchy.\textsuperscript{670} Therefore the world of the spectator is no longer separate from the world of the protagonist because whoever is in the sacred center must now be self-conscious about his significance to the periphery. For with Christianity a step forward has been made in anthropological consciousness about the originary scene. That is, esthetic form now presents both center and periphery together as the generative context of community: i.e., God was dead, and we crucified him. Previously, figured sacred centrality was simply the god or hero around whom the community gathered in ritual or esthetic representation whose significance was self-evident. Now Christ as the victim makes the periphery self-conscious about whom it installs in the sacred center as His representative.

\textsuperscript{668} Gans 1990: 85-116.
\textsuperscript{669} Gans 1993: 148-149.
\textsuperscript{670} Gans 1993: 151.
In the neoclassical esthetic, then, an inhabitant of the sacred center must (following Christ) dramatically furnish “a sign of election” to the periphery; unlike classical heroes, neoclassical heroes “do not merely struggle for the center”: “they understand centrality as a role to be played”. 671 Shakespeare is exemplary in exhibiting this “neoclassical doubling of the scene” in which a self-conscious central figure struggles with the role he plays. 672 This “self-authored subject” or “represented self” is what now characterizes the new esthetic of the neoclassical because the center is self-consciously constructing itself before a periphery of spectators: in particular, it is “moving towards a construction of the historical self around a popular version of the form of history”. 673

When King Richard does this in Shakespeare’s Richard II, his “represented self maintains a continuity … not to the facts of history, but to the perceived shape of history.” 674 That shape is the “tragic nature of history” in which “tragic metabasis dominates history; Richard’s story is one more proof of this teleology”. 675 Richard uses this shape of history to self-consciously represent himself and generate the meaning of his history in the eyes of the periphery for whom tragic metabasis (as in the classical esthetic) reconciles the periphery with the center:

For God’s sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings -
How some have been deposed; some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed -
All murdered. For within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be feared and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable; and humoured thus,

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671 Gans 1993: 152.
673 Budra 2000: 86.
674 Budra 2000: 86.
675 Budra 2000: 86.
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell, king!
Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence. Throw away respect,
Tradition, form and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while.
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?676

Richard thus reconciles the periphery with his centrality in this typically neoclassical mode of self-consciously playing an artificial role in the scene that defers resentment. In the classical esthetic, the scene reconciled the peripheral audience with the hero on the stage’s sacred center. But in the neoclassical esthetic, the hero is conscious of his audience and internalizes their constitutive role, bringing them onto the scene of representation. They become part of the scene on stage together with him in order that he might generate the cathartic communal meaning of his historical self. The audience of spectators is thus doubled on stage because the kings on stage have internalized that audience’s constitutive role in scenic meaning. Richard’s kingly self is only a mirror of the periphery in that they alone allow him “a breath, a little scene / To monarchize”.

In other words, his neoclassical consciousness must mirror and thereby double the periphery in its constitutive role for human communal meaning:

This doubling justifies the name “neoclassical”; the new esthetic reproduces the classical scene as a whole as the guarantee of the significance of the action that takes place on it. Art remains bound to the public classical scene until the romantic era. ... Because Christianity rejects the hierarchical separation of different worlds (including the esthetic) within the world, from an external model the central figure becomes an internal rival. The center becomes the object of generalized resentment or “suspicion.” The inhabitant of the center is required to furnish a guarantee of election. The stage is no longer the structural equivalent of the scenic center; centrality is represented separately from the central figure.677

The self-authored kings of neoclassical historical drama have thus learned their lesson from Christianity’s revelation of the originary scene of human representation and integrated the role of

676 R2 3.2.155-177 (Arden Third Series, Forker 2002).
its periphery into their consciousness of self. The king thus sees his figural visage in the “mirror of history” in which the periphery has already seen him reflected. They represent his centrality, which he merely reflects back to them on the periphery. He knows he is the mirror of nothing but the dynamics of their rivalry and resentment. But by playing the scenic role that they have assigned to him in the “mirror of history”, he dramatizes the great political problem of Christian kingship: how can kings ever have a non-tragic metabasis?

Agamemnon, knowing his self to be the central mirror of resentment, hesitated to tread the purple carpet and thus to court the envy of the populace. But Richard needs no Clytaemestra to encourage him to play to the envy of the crowd. In a typically neoclassical gesture, he performs what would be the equivalent of Agamemnon strewing his own path with purple and grinding the heels of his sandals into the robes. Richard mirrors back the envy of his rivals, not by trying to avoid the tragedy of their resentment triumphant, but rather by electing himself to be the figure that mirrors the shattering power of the periphery’s new scenic role:

O, flatt’ring glass,
Like to my followers in prosperity,
Thou dost beguile me. Was this face the face
That every day under his household roof
Did keep ten thousand men? Was this the face
That, like the sun, did make beholders wink?
Is this the face that faced so many follies,
That was at last outfaced by Bolingbroke?
A brittle glory shineth in this face -
As brittle as the glory is the face!
For there it is, cracked in an hundred shivers.

This mirror scene in Richard II is justly famous, and not just for Richard’s flamboyant self-authorship along the lines of the de casibus tradition. With this scene, Shakespeare reaches the heights of the neoclassical esthetic’s achievement in anthropological self-consciousness of the originary scene as what constitutes human society:

679 R2 4.1.279-289. (Arden Third Series)
The neoclassical work puts the [originary] scene itself on stage. The height of esthetic self-consciousness in this era is the realization that the classical scene is the locus of an old and violent sacrality rejected by Christianity but remaining nevertheless the absolutely necessary locus of significance.\(^{681}\)

That is, despite the Christian revelation of the victimary structure of the originary scene (i.e., that the kings we place in the sacred center, whether esthetically in the imagination or politically in hierarchical society, either die from our resentment or survive because of its deferral), the violent sacred cannot be expelled from history. The “tragedy of history” is the *de casibus* pattern again and again. Even worse, Christianity seems to encourage a denigration of political life since worldly satisfaction can never be attained, at least if all monarchs are to take their bearings from this *de casibus* esthetic consciousness of the “mirror of history”.

Yet I argue that in Shakespeare’s *Henriad* there is a commemoration not just of this “height of esthetic self-consciousness” in which monarchs are assimilated to an esthetic deferral of the periphery’s resentment. There is also a prudential esthetic consciousness of the role that the executive management of resentment must play in the new historical world whose politics have been forever altered by Christianity. Shakespeare’s great achievement in this tetralogy is not simply to serve up monarchs like Richard for the audience’s *de casibus* satisfaction of reading their fates in the popular understanding of the tragic “mirror of history”. For just as Agamemnon’s demise at the beginning of the *Oresteia* set off a sequence of regime changes that culminated in an esthetic celebration of a real political achievement, so too does Richard’s demise (with the heights of esthetic self-consciousness that Agamemnon pointedly lacked) culminate in an esthetic portrayal of a new political consciousness that would mark the prudence of Henry V as the “mirror of Christian kings”. One can best see this new evolution of prudential esthetic consciousness, evolving to come to grips with the politically deleterious impact of Christianity, in

\(^{681}\) Gans 1993: 160.
terms of the fivefold empirioschematic model of the originary scene that I developed in Chapter One.\footnote{See Table 1.}

The fundamental \textit{metabasis} content of the \textit{Henriad} tetralogy is the constitutional crisis of the deposition of Richard II. This deposition sets off a plague of disorder, dramatized in the ongoing struggles between Henry IV and the various rebel groups who contest the legitimacy of his succession. The \textit{peripeteia} by which this disorder is reversed is the political leadership of Henry V, which brings national unity through military action against France. The apotheosis of social unity is the sacred violence at Agincourt that brings victory.

The significance of this victory is not to be reduced to an effective deployment of scapegoating violence for political purposes. On the contrary, it marks an evolution from the scapegoating \textit{sparagmos} moment of the originary scene. The defeat of France may indeed be significant as a “sacrificial feast” for England. But it is an attenuated form of sacrificial violence in that its greatest significance in evolutionary terms comes from the victory’s political achievement, viz., recognizing that consensual monarchy is the only acceptable “guarantee of election” by which Christian kings may rule.\footnote{Cf. Jaffa 2000: 127-135.} That is, rule by consent is the only “mirror of companionship” suitable for a Christian king.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Ag.} 839 and the conclusion to Chapter Four above.} The fundamental \textit{anagnorisis} moment in the tetralogy is thus of the inadequacy of Henry IV’s kingship, especially in light of the Agincourt exhortation in which the political ideal of consensual monarchy is integrated by Shakespeare into Henry V’s self-authorship as the leader who will expel \textit{pathos} from England and visit it upon France. That is, Henry V is the Christian king who is a mirror of the “band of brothers” dramatized on stage with him in the scene as the sign of his election. The guarantee of Henry V’s election to the sacred center is the story he tells of their consensual participation of sharing in the structure of the originary scene with him:

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682 See Table 1.
684 Cf. \textit{Ag.} 839 and the conclusion to Chapter Four above.
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse.
We would not die in that man’s company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the feast of Crispian.

... This story shall the good man teach his son,
And Crispin Crispian shall ne’er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world
But we in it shall be remembered,
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne’er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition. 685

That is, Henry is neither a monarch politically “scapegoated” in a (failed) effort to dispel local resentment as Agamemon was; nor is he the “absent executive” 686 that Orestes became at Athens in order for the Areopagus to ensure the rule of law in a republican regime with a minimization of resentment against executive power. Rather, with the esthetic self-consciousness (which is the “neo-” that Christianity newly brings to the “neoclassical”), Henry V furnishes himself with the only prudent self-dramatization the neoclassical esthetic will allow to a Christian monarch: consensual rule.

It is important to realize that my argument about what the “band of brothers” speech signifies in this regard is not making any claims about Shakespeare’s critical agency or personal intent. Nor is it oblivious to the problematic dramatic context of the play, the surrounding context of dramatic events that allows many critics to locate multiple ironies in the Agincourt exhortation. 687 Nor does my argument disregard the immediate historical context of the play’s performance, in which the Earl of Essex, the “General” mentioned in the play, 688 stood as a contrasting force to the singular authority of a unifying monarch. All of these three factors

685 H5 4.3.34-40, 57-63. (Arden Third Series, Craik 1995)
688 H5 3.6.75-76 and 5.0.29.35. Cf. Craik 1995: 75-77.
(authorial intent, dramatic context, and historical context) are highly debatable and I do not pretend to have settled the controversial question of how to see the play and its hero. What I am arguing, however, is how the semiotic meaning of the central hero is also generated by something that is beyond each of these three factors. Generative anthropology resolves the semiosis of any esthetic configuration of a center-periphery political form to the originary scene. Thus the ultimate signification of this “band of brothers” speech is determined by the originary moment of human evolution in the past and will continue to generate signification along these lines well into the future, in spite of any problems authorial intent, dramatic context, and historical context may pose for what appear to be irresolvable debates. The debates persist because the many ironies these latter three factors generate admit of many interpretations. But one should remember that, in political life, the mere presence of ironies does not furnish a context that would end all interpretation, but rather a new context that demands the beginning of argument and deliberation about what future action is now best suited for handling the ironies of past action. As one Shakespeare critic puts it (regarding the ironies generated for Henry V by the dramatic context),

... when they take these ironies as definitive indications of Shakespeare’s disapproval, Henry’s critics may tell us more about their own political tenderness than about the tough-minded understanding of politics which characterizes the histories generally and the present play in particular. The ironies raise rather than settle questions, and to the extent that he is at all conscious of these obliquities, Henry might feel that they are exonerated by his situation. It could be argued that the war with France and all the questionable means employed to open hostilities are justified because necessary as a desperate remedy for a desperate illness. ... The fact that foreign wars have been the doubtful resort of insecure tyrants does not mean that the expedience is practiced only by tyrants.

This critic then goes on to argue against the justness of Henry V’s expedience. But my purpose here is not to decide in like manner whether Henry V is objectively a “hero” or “villain”; I am

689 See Craik 1995: 69-80 for a good survey of the extreme variations in critical opinion about whether Shakespeare’s Henry V celebrates or satirizes its hero.
692 Alvis 2000: 123.
instead pointing out that what Girard’s scapegoating mechanism and Gan’s originary scene are trying to model is the ultimate semiosis of any “desperate remedy” in political life for a “desperate illness”. Therefore I am asserting on a semiotic level that the one unproblematic interpretation which originary analysis, based on the originary scene, opens to us is that, be he “hero” or “villain” in one context or another, Henry V is of central significance (in the same way that I showed in the previous chapter how any tragic hero of the classical esthetic is). Otherwise, I may note, we could not even be having the very arguments about what his central significance means (e.g., “hero” or “villain”). Moreover, as a defining moment in the evolution of the neoclassical esthetic, what the “band of brothers” speech also signifies, I argue, is the dramatization of the periphery on stage with the center, such that the consent that the center now requires from the periphery in political life, after the advent of Christianity, is revealed. This revelation mirrors a new stage in the evolution of historical political form.

Perhaps this semiotic function of Henry V at the conclusion of the tetralogy will become clearer if I compare Henry V’s semiosis to Richard II’s. Richard’s disordered anagnōrisis was of recognition of himself in a mirror shattered by his own hand in order to represent the resentment of those surrounding him. With the Crispin’s Day speech, however, Henry V does not see himself in a shattered mirror. He holds himself up to the periphery, the “band of brothers”, as their mirror; moreover, he invites them to either shatter it with their own will, or to join with him as a “band of brothers” in unanimous violence against the communal enemy. Again, the evolutionary advance in anthropological terms here is not the “scapegoating” by which national unity is forged (for we have seen that, because the human is constituted by the originary scene, sacrificial pathos is a commonly constitutive element of human community). The advance is rather that in his esthetically self-conscious speech Henry V is acknowledging that only by consent is it the case that the periphery will represent Henry’s sacred centrality.
The sacrificial requirements of politics are visible in many forms as the tetralogy dramatizes many events of sacrificial pathos besides that of Agincourt. A series of tragic metabases chronicle the unhappy sacrificial suffering of those who fall, while there are corresponding happy metabases as others rise in their place: Richard II dies for Henry IV to rise; Hotspur dies for Hal to rise; Henry IV dies for Henry V to rise; and Falstaff dies for Henry V’s rise to be complete. What is notable about the way they are represented is that, in this self-conscious doubling of happy and unhappy political fates, the neoclassical esthetic has made thematic how the “mirror of history” is now no longer the sad tales of heroic kings (as in the classical esthetic) but rather how the new role of the periphery is in being part of the scenic representation of the sad tales of tragic kingship. It would thus be accurate to say that the neoclassical esthetic is at least in this regard the very mirror that reflects their experience of history.

The hamartia of Henry V’s peculiar leadership in the Henriad marks an evolutionary advance from the originary scene. The leader’s “mistake” is not that he is first with the act of symbolic representation for the community, as in the originary scene. Nor is he the central locus of significance whose only “mistake” is in being the leader whose suffering is represented for the catharsis of communal reconciliation, as in the tragedy of the classical esthetic. Instead, his leadership is an executive role that is marked by the self-consciousness that the scenic role for the sacred center is burdened with the knowledge that ceremony is required. Christianity has exposed the sacrificial function of all ceremony (i.e., that all ceremony is a “mistake” from the standpoint of the Christian revelation of the universal egalitarianism of all participants in the scene), but the neoclassical esthetic remembers that, ceremony’s “fatal flaw” notwithstanding, political life demands that the show must go on. The prudential consequence that statecraft had to draw from

the scene's artificial separation of the monarch's centrality from the periphery which he governs is that, because ceremony is required, then in order to defer Christian resentment consent to ceremony is required.

Before I consider how the dramatization of regime change in the Henriad shows how consent is ultimately won, I turn now to some considerations about esthetic form in neoclassical drama. After Christianity has arrived, esthetic form seems to present genres that are required to supplement tragedy. That is, Christianity stages both the center and the periphery on the scene in these new "problem plays" and "history plays", evolutionary esthetic phenomena to which I now turn.695

695 See also Gans 1993: 145-147 for a treatment of the comic that supplements my study here of tragedy and of history plays and problem plays.
Esthetic Form in Shakespeare: Excursus on the Problem Play

In this section, I introduce another point of comparison between the classical esthetic and the neoclassical esthetic. Building on my analysis in Chapter Two of Aristotle’s understanding of the evolution of the classical esthetic, I discuss here Aristotle’s role in what presents itself as a key debate about the function of theatrical mimesis in the neoclassical esthetic. This will allow me to make clear how the classical esthetic becomes “problematic” for the neoclassical esthetic. That is, the neoclassical esthetic now evolves into the new dramatic possibilities represented by the “problem plays” of Shakespeare, which do not fit neatly into the Aristotelian analysis of tragedy in the classical esthetic. *Troilus and Cressida* in particular, with its retelling of the Trojan War of Homer’s *Iliad*, will allow me to assess the significance of this new evolution. Because Girard has dealt at such length with this play,696 it affords a good introduction to the assessment I need to make, at the end of this chapter, of the political dimension of the originary scene as it has evolved into the neoclassical esthetic’s “history plays” of the *Henriad*. Thus, before approaching the question of political form as mirrored in the esthetic form of these “history plays”, I use Aristotle as my point of entry into understanding what drama has visibly evolved into with the “problem play” *Troilus and Cressida*.

The neoclassical esthetic is more than what Ben Jonson imagined it to be. Shakespeare knew best, in my view, what its greater dramatic possibilities were. The two playwrights in their works can be seen to have debated the purpose of drama and the problematic nature of the neoclassical. Even if this debate did not occur in a self-conscious way, at least it did in a way that we can now recognize in retrospect as highly significant. The best way to see the stakes of this problem about the function of neoclassical drama, I argue, is to recognize that a plausible semiotic case may be made for seeing Aristotle as the unnamed “strange fellow” whose book Ulysses is reading in *Troilus and Cressida* (3.3.95-127).

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Achilles asks Ulysses at *Troilus* 3.3.95 what he is reading. Ulysses reports on what “a strange fellow,” an unnamed author, teaches him through the book, which he does not name (96-102). Achilles retorts that what Ulysses reports is quite commonplace and “not strange at all” (103-112). Achilles’ retort is made with a particularly negative and contradictory emphasis, because he both begins and ends his objection by asserting that what Ulysses reports is “not strange”. He calls it both “not strange” at 103, and “not strange at all” at 112. Clearly, the dramatic action is being propelled here by a debate on whether the “fellow” whom Ulysses reads is “strange” or not. The problem comes, however, in trying to identify this fellow. Perhaps, because he is unnamed, he is a mere plot device, and possesses no identity or significance beyond being an anonymous generator of dramatic conflict at the scene’s outset.

My argument, which looks for a semiotic significance of this “strange fellow” beyond mere authorial intent or dramatic context, begins with what is suggested by the historical context of the rivalry of the Poets’ War (1599-1601), a theatrical rivalry in which Jonson defined his own genre of comical satire (in the view of some scholars, in explicit opposition) against the festive comedy of Shakespeare. Given the context of that historical rivalry, I suggest that the “strange fellow” scene finds not just Ulysses theatrically alluding to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, but perhaps also Shakespeare meta-theatrically alluding to Jonson’s quotation of the Ciceronian definition of comedy in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (3.6.191-211): “Imitatio vitae, Speculum consuetudinis, Imago veritatis.” If we consider my hypothesis on the level of authorial intent, but only as a provisional way of making vivid the semiotic issues involved, then it could be observed that Jonson has culled Cicero’s definition from a passage in Minturno’s *De Poeta*, and Shakespeare’s theatrical rejoinder is thus significant as a meta-theatrical reminder that Jonson has neglected Minturno’s mention of Aristotle in that same passage. Hence Ulysses’ book could have been deliberately left unnamed in *Troilus* in order to reflect these two levels of ambiguity.

697 Cf. my discussion of the ultimate significance of the “band of brothers” speech above.
698 Minturno 1559.
On one level (the theatrical level), the book is Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. On another level (the meta-theatrical level), the book is Minturno’s *De Poeta*, with its commendation of Aristotle’s theatrical doctrine of purgation (*catharsis*). On both levels, Shakespeare would then be playfully using Aristotle to outdo Jonson’s appeal to classical models. Even if this was not historically his intent, I would still argue that in retrospect that we may recognize the significance of Shakespeare’s achievement by taking this unnamed book as an interpretive starting point for the following observations. Theatrically, Shakespeare dramatizes the Greeks at war, while Jonson has dramatized Roman poets, and in this drama “Shakespeare” appeals to Aristotle, where Jonson has appealed to Cicero. Meta-theatrically, he beats Jonson at his own scholarly game by sending him back to Minturno’s endorsement of Aristotle.

This dual invocation of Aristotle in the *Troilus* scene, however, is significant not merely as a plausible historical reconstruction of a rivalrous exercise in one-upmanship. It can be seen, more significantly, I argue, as a synecdoche for the critical debate about theatrical mimesis at the heart of what the Poets’ War signifies. Up until the breakthrough study of Bednarz, scholars have consistently underestimated the Poets’ War as being of mere biographical interest. Thanks to Bednarz’s efforts, however, we can now properly read the dramas of the Poets’ War in light of their genesis. That is, the plays are not simply born from passing professional rivalries, but rather embody and enact, in a more permanent way, *a major literary debate about the social function of mimesis*. This debate was occasioned by the rivalries of the Poets’ War, but it ought not to be reduced to them; for this reason, my reflections on the debate’s significance are not grounded exclusively in the historical data which generated its origin. In my view, whether or not it was consciously intended as such, the Aristotle invocation in *Troilus* succinctly puts in perspective Shakespeare’s theatrical rejoinders to Jonson’s “neoclassicism”. Properly understood, the Aristotle invocation clarifies not only the significance of the genesis of *Troilus* but also its genre.

For, whether intentional or not, Shakespeare’s *Troilus* satirizes Jonson’s neoclassical genre of comical satire, but in a paradoxical way. It is, I argue, more rigorously classical, in a manner that makes Shakespeare more rigorously neoclassical than Jonson himself. As the reference point *par excellence* for classical literary criticism, Aristotle can help us to see this.

Therefore, in order to respond to semiotic issues raised by Girard and Gans, my interpretation of the “strange fellow” scene below will use Aristotle to elucidate the Renaissance literary debate about mimesis that has been highlighted by Bednarz’s historical detective work. First, I will evaluate Girard’s claims that Shakespeare articulates, at 3.3.95-127, a “relational theory of self” theoretically consonant with Girard’s own mimetic theory. Seen within its historical moment, I argue, *Troilus* is not “anti-Aristotelian” as Girard has maintained.\(^{700}\) It is rather *anti-neoclassical*, but anti-neoclassical in the special sense of satirizing Jonson’s *neoclassical pretensions* (in the Poets’ War) concerning comedy, whether this satire was intentional on Shakespeare’s part or not. Second, however, I affirm that the play is, in a wider sense, *consummately neoclassical*. That is, it visibly pushes the neoclassical esthetic to its formal limits, when seen in terms of Gans’ understanding of the neoclassical esthetic within esthetic history.\(^{701}\) This “problem play” clarifies exactly what, from the standpoint of the classical esthetic, is “problematic” for the neoclassical esthetic.

On the one hand, Gans’ critique of Girard’s theory of drama is able to affirm the fundamental anthropological insights into mimetic rivalry that Girard has uncovered with his empirioschematic analysis of the structures of literary texts, *Troilus* especially.\(^{702}\) But, on the other hand, Gans’ critique is better able to interpret *Troilus* in the context of its historical moment. It can especially shed light on *Troilus*, I argue, with regard to the role that classical Aristotelian form plays in informing the structuring of *Troilus*. The ultimate significance of this

\(^{700}\) Girard 1991: 159.
\(^{701}\) Gans 1993: 150-163.
\(^{702}\) Girard 1985: 188-209.
structuring is semiotic and therefore transcends historical contextualization, but in a way that the action of signs in the classical esthetic can help us to explain the evolution of the neoclassical esthetic.

Aristotle is the "strange fellow" who helps my semiotic approach, in a concrete and convincing way, to see *Troilus* as the consummately neoclassical rejoinder to Jonson's neoclassical pretensions. Properly seen in its historical moment, the play reveals Shakespeare not, as Girard claims, as the mimetic theorist who, in *Troilus*, becomes a "prophet of modern advertising." Rather, in the light of Gans' esthetic history, which refines Girard's insights, the play commemorates instead the arrival of the modern bourgeois world, with its tensions visible in the play's somewhat baffling (but nevertheless rigorously neoclassical) esthetic form and content.

I proceed now to supplement Bednarz's work on *Troilus*, that is, with an explanation of how Aristotle is semiotically present in the two debates of the "strange fellow" scene. Afterwards, I take up, in turn, two responses, one to Girard and the second to Gans. The first response treats the critical problems with Girard's mimetic interpretation of the scene and play, and then the second response treats a possible solution to these problems in light of Gans' generative anthropology of the neoclassical esthetic.

**Aristotle and Theatrical Mimesis**

To recognize Aristotle as the "strange fellow" in *Troilus* is to recognize him in two debates. The first is between Achilles and Ulysses about the communication of virtue. The second is between Jonson and Shakespeare about comedy. The first debate is theatrical, and the second, meta-theatrical. Both debates are present in *Troilus* 3.3. I begin by considering the first debate, and the significance of seeing Aristotle's presence in it.

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703 Cf. Deely 2001: 644 on "infinite semiosis".
705 Girard 1991: 123.
Many modern commentators have not hesitated to take Achilles’ side on the issue. They regard what is voiced by Ulysses as commonplace. Achilles’ paraphrase tries to render it thus: “beauty ... commends itself to others’ eyes” (104-106). What could be more banal, or more clichéd, than observing that beauty is in the eye of the beholder? In this view, then, the substance of Ulysses’ report (96-102) and Achilles’ paraphrase of it (103-112) can easily be found in a variety of ancient and Renaissance sources.706 Hence one might conclude that it matters not whether one of these candidates is chosen, or none, for the result is the same. That is, the “strange fellow” cannot be firmly determined from the action and dialogue within the scene, and so it matters little which cliché is arbitrarily chosen to fit the occasion. The arbitrariness of the suggestions and the inconclusiveness of the scholarly debate to date, simply demonstrate the insignificance of the “strange fellow” to the dramatic action. The strange fellow could even be Shakespeare himself, who had voiced something similar in Julius Caesar: “No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things.” (1.2.52-53)707

In response to this sceptical position, however, there are two suggestive arguments. The first is from precedent. In a previous play, Shakespeare had a copy of Ovid’s Metamorphoses brought onstage as a plot device (in Titus Andronicus 4.1.42). Whether self-conscious or not, a similar kind of literary event is occurring in Troilus and Cressida, even though the author remains unnamed. In the context of the Poets’ War, such self-conscious literary stunts would be not without precedent, and meta-theatrical shenanigans, moreover, would be even more likely.708

But a second argument draws neither upon the theatrical precedents nor the meta-theatrical incentives for virtuosity, but rather upon the unfolding of the dramatic action within the scene itself. As Robertson already noticed in 1909, Ulysses goes on to answer Achilles’ protest to

the effect that Achilles has missed Ulysses’ point, even while professing to have understood it.\footnote{Hillebrand and Baldwin 1953: 412.}

In other words, both Achilles and the modern commentators profess familiarity with the thoughts voiced by Ulysses and Achilles (Troilus 3.3.96-112). Nevertheless, in the face of this, Ulysses still goes on to argue that such commonplaces are treated by the unnamed author in a decidedly different fashion (113-127). The dramatic action, then, although not moving decisively to settle the question by naming the unnamed author, does decisively move to affirm the significance of the question by asserting that there exists a “strange fellow” whose book can be read in order to see the clichés treated in a novel manner.

It is not unreasonable to expect that the subject matter of Troilus, the Trojan War, the most famous of Greek wars, is a clue to the unnamed author. Shakespeare dramatizes Homer’s epic Greece in response to Jonson’s dramatization in Poetaster of Augustan Rome.\footnote{Bednarz 2001: 206-215.} Some might argue that Shakespeare, if only for the sake of parody, could be seen as appealing to a Greek author in response to Jonson’s appeals inter alia to Cicero (in Every Man Out) and Horace (in Poetaster). In this vein, because of the obvious Greek setting of the play, the First Alcibiades of Plato has been a popular suggestion among scholars debating the identity of the “strange fellow”.\footnote{Hillebrand and Baldwin 1953: 411-415.} Yet consideration of Aristotle has been neglected until recently. William R. Elton has been the first to suggest that the unnamed author is Aristotle and that the book to which the passage alludes is the Nicomachean Ethics.\footnote{NE 1129b 30-3; cf. 1103b 13-14; see Elton 2000: 186-187, esp. 189 n.14.}

The lack of consideration of Aristotle before Elton is odd, however, for two reasons. First, it is unlikely Shakespeare would have read Plato, available to him only in the classical languages.\footnote{Bevington 1998: 365.} Second, Shakespeare demonstrates familiarity with Aristotle; if not with his texts, at least with his ideas. For example, Shakespeare had received some knowledge of Aristotle’s
definition of happiness as it is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as *The Taming of the Shrew* proves (1.1.18-20): “Virtue and that part of philosophy / Will I apply that treats of happiness / By virtue specially to be achieved.” And giving powerful circumstantial evidence for Aristotle’s topicality in *Troilus*, Shakespeare explicitly names Aristotle earlier in the play and unmistakably alludes to the *Nicomachean Ethics* when Hector debates the Trojan course of action over Helen (2.2.166-167): “Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought / Unfit to hear moral philosophy.”

Therefore, despite the anachronism, Aristotle is a neglected but promising candidate for Ulysses’ strange author. A variety of reasons accumulate to make him a most likely candidate: namely, Shakespeare’s use of the Greeks, in response to Jonson’s appeals to Roman authority; the precedents of self-conscious literary appeals within drama, including Ovid in *Titus Andronicus* and Jonson’s use of Ovid and Horace in *Poetaster*; Shakespeare’s demonstrated familiarity with Aristotle’s definition of happiness from the *Nicomachean Ethics* in both *Shrew* and *Troilus*; and that earlier invocation in *Troilus*, among the Trojans, of Aristotle by name, with allusion to the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The last reason is especially suggestive, given the context of the many parallels between Greeks and Trojans drawn by Shakespeare in *Troilus*. If Aristotle is topical earlier on in the Trojan camp, it is likely, on account of Shakespeare’s formal structuring and attention to parallels within the play, that Aristotle is also topical later on in the Greek camp.

In addition to all these arguments from probability, the best argument suggesting Aristotle as the strange fellow comes from Ulysses’ own explanation of the author’s peculiar “drift”: i.e. that “no man is the lord of anything … till he communicate his parts to others” (114-118). As Elton has shown, “parts” in the then-contemporary idiom referred to “virtues.” Hence

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714 NE 1, 1098a 16-19.
715 NE 1, 1095a 1-12.
717 Cf. the keen attention to such parallels in Girard 1985: 188-209.
718 Elton 2000: 186-187; cf. also “parts” at *Love’s Labor’s Lost* 2.1.44 and 4.2.114.

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the unnamed author’s “drift” perhaps intentionally alludes to Aristotle’s theory in the
*Nicomachean Ethics* that virtues (excellences of character) are habits, and that habits can be
formed only through practice; that is, formed only by the communication of these virtues to
others. Or perhaps this signification of Aristotle’s ideas is not intentional, but nonetheless one
that we can still see signified. In either case, Aristotle’s theory of communicative virtue most
closely fits Ulysses’ explanation of the strange fellow’s “drift”.

The “intentional” interpretation fits with Elton’s thesis that situates *Troilus* within law
students’ festivities. The Inns of Court revels frequently relied on learned allusions. Familiarity
with the *Nicomachean Ethics* would not be unusual for such an audience. Elton, therefore,
atttempts to solve the questions of the genesis and genre of *Troilus* by placing the work in an
historical context, and his accumulation of evidence leads him to argue that this context is that of
law revels. But while Elton’s work marshals an impressive array of evidence for his Inns of
Court thesis, he neglects the context of Jonson’s mimetic rivalry with Shakespeare, in which the
play was born. In that mimetic context, however, the Aristotle suggestion assumes greater
significance with regard to the play’s genesis and genre.

In that context, the learned allusions could be not those of law revels, but Shakespeare’s
responses to Jonson’s own virtuosic learning, whether he intentionally conceived of them as such
responses or not. Moreover, the theatrical genre of the play is a comical satire, but one that is also
meta-theatrically *a comical satire of Jonson’s comical satire*. Jonson had been quarrelling with
Shakespeare’s previous festive comedies, and Shakespeare responds in kind in *Troilus*, a
conscious quarrel as some scholars see it. Elton’s neglect of this context weakens his Inns of
Court thesis, which can have no satisfactory (posthumous) response to Bednarz. Moreover, the

719 *NE* 1129b 30-3; cf. 1103b 13-14.
720 Elton 2000.
722 For Bednarz’s disagreement with Elton, which I endorse, see Bednarz 2001: 295 n.12.
neglect of the Poets’ War serves only to weaken Elton’s ingenious Aristotle suggestion because, in spite its relative novelty, it can still sound, to skeptical ears, like the attribution of yet another cliché to Ulysses. This time, the strange fellow’s “drift” is said to be that virtue must be practiced before others if it is to be cultivated. What compelling reason is there either for Shakespeare or for me to invoke Aristotle’s authority as the “strange fellow” authoring that “strange” (but not necessarily overly-literary) thought, and thereby to imbue that thought with great literary-critical importance?

The most compelling reason suggesting that Shakespeare’s work points to Aristotle here, however, comes from the larger, meta-theatrical debate of Jonson with Shakespeare on the cathartic function of comedy. As I have already indicated, while Elton’s suggestion makes the best sense of the theatrical debate between Ulysses and Achilles, it is unpersuasive unless we view how the significance of Aristotle’s invocation resonates even further in the Poets’ War’s meta-theatrical context. Theatrically, the dramatic parallel between 2.2.166 (Trojans) and 3.3.96 (Greeks) is sufficiently compelling to make Aristotle one’s first choice for “strange fellow,” should one not be sceptically inclined to reserve making a choice. But a possible meta-theatrical appeal to Aristotle ought to compel even the skeptics among us to consider semiotically the necessary confrontation here between Shakespeare and Jonson, on the social function of theatrical mimesis, as articulated elsewhere in the plays of the Poets’ War.

As Bednarz has concluded from his examination of the back-and-forth of the Poets’ War, while Jonson’s conception of mimesis is more didactic, Shakespeare’s is more theatrical: “Shakespeare, contrary to Jonson’s position in Every Man Out and Cynthia’s Revels, is skeptical about drama’s moral instrumentality”. For this reason, Shakespeare consistently portrays a more theatrical conception of mimesis in response to Jonson’s didactic pretensions for comical satire. Desire in real life is theatrical, as it is on stage; that is, in both cases, it imitates the model

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provided by others, with concomitant potential for good or ill. Rather than having potential for a purely positive, didactic function, then, imitation is ambiguous, and frequently dangerous. This is precisely the conception of mimesis that has been painstakingly studied at great length by Girard with his theory of mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry.\footnote{Girard 1991: 121-166.} Theatrical mimesis, then, like “The Mouse Trap” in Hamlet, shows how mimesis can exacerbate a situation rather than educate it.\footnote{Bednarz 2001: 254.}

Likewise, in Troilus 5.2, when Ulysses shows Troilus a Cressida unfaithful with Diomedes, no moral anagnörisis and transformation occurs (as Jonson would rather contrive for a comic hero’s epiphany); the action, instead, descends into a muddle of disorder.\footnote{Sutherland 2000: 162-168.} When Troilus contends in desire with Diomedes for Cressida, an obvious parallel to the contention between Menelaus and Paris over Helen is drawn, and Shakespeare portrays lechery’s mimetic descent into war. Girard is fond of this play for good reason; it furnishes many examples to illustrate his theory of conflictive mimesis.\footnote{Cf. Girard 1973: 34-38 and Girard 1980: 107-124.} This messy portrayal in Troilus of conflictive mimesis stands opposed to Jonson’s sanitized ideal of didactic comic mimesis, namely, the non-conflictive, Ciceronian imitatio vitae.

Jonson has maintained that the authority of the poet, modeled eclectically on the best classical models, can act didactically to purge the bad “humours” of the audience.\footnote{Redwine 1970: 57-130.} For this reason, he quotes Cicero’s definition of comedy in Every Man Out.\footnote{Bednarz 2001: 67.} Comical satire effects a moral purge by being “an imitation of life, a mirror of manners, and an image of truth” (Imitatio vitae, Speculum consuetudinis, Imago veritatis): that is, once one can laugh at one’s vices, one is unburdened of them. But as Bednarz has noted (when discussing the significance of Hamlet’s production in the middle of the Poets’ War), Shakespeare, in response to Jonson, has shifted the
emphasis of the classical “purgative” notion of theatrical mimesis. With this shift of emphasis, Shakespeare, I maintain, should be seen as (intentionally or not) also responding meta-theatrically in *Troilus*’s “strange fellow” scene to Jonson’s conception of comedy. The play’s form is a mix of theatrical and meta-theatrical concerns. It is a comical satire of comical satire, but such that it problematizes comical satire. As Bednarz notes in response to Campbell, *Troilus* shows that Shakespeare objects to Jonsonian comedy and has his own ideas about satire, although it is still open for debate how far Shakespeare as a result was consciously doctrinal or argumentative.

I choose to identify the apparent allusion to Aristotle in *Troilus*’ comical satire of comical satire, therefore, as a suggestive indication about how one may understand Shakespeare’s significance as being an antithesis to Jonson’s ideal of the theatre, i.e., by pointing to Aristotle’s classical conception of theatrical mimesis. That is, Shakespeare’s emphasis, when interpreting the effectiveness of Aristotelian *catharsis* in his dramatic practice, is on the poet’s ultimate dependence on audience approbation: as Ulysses says, “no man is the lord of anything ... till he communicate his parts to others ... [that is,] till he behold them formed in th’applause where they’re extended” (3.3.116-121). Ulysses’s Aristotelian emphasis is that virtue needs to be communicated *before others* in order to be cultivated. Jonson’s didacticism, however, must be seen as merely taking refuge in Cicero’s hermetical definition of comedic mimesis, thereby buttressing the poet’s mimetic authority and autonomy, yet failing to recognize the tremendous limits that the audience places on the poet.

As Minturno argues in *De Poeta*, Aristotle’s focus on the purgative function of theatrical mimesis is superior to Cicero’s later definition of that mimesis. Bednarz has already noted Snuggs’ discovery of Minturno as Jonson’s source for the Ciceronian definition of comedy as

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731 As Campbell 1938 has recognized.
733 Emphasis mine. Arden Third Series.
734 Minturno 1559: 280-281.
employed in Every Man Out.\footnote{Cf. Bednarz 2001: 290 n.23, and Snuggs 1950.} Nevertheless, a closer consultation of Minturno’s Latin text reveals something that has great consequence for interpreting Troilus in the context of the Poets’ War quarrel over comic catharsis: Jonson, like Snuggs after him, omits Minturno’s express preference for Aristotle’s definition over Cicero’s. Therefore, with Troilus’s “strange fellow,” I believe either Shakespeare wishes to bring Minturno’s express preference for Aristotle’s definition to Jonson’s meta-theatrical attention or, at the very least, we should take this opportunity to bring the significance of this definition from the classical esthetic to bear upon our understanding of the neoclassical esthetic’s evolution from the classical. The passage from Minturno that Snuggs omits (with his ellipsis between “imaginem veritatis” and “non gravem”)\footnote{Snuggs 1950: 543.} runs thus:

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\ldots \text{seu quae cum civilia, tum privata negotia sine periculo comprehendat, sive, quod, puto, Aristoteles maxime probaret, imitationem esse ad effigendam suavi puroque sermone aliquam rerum, vel civium, vel privatarum actionem non sane insignem, ...}\footnote{Minturno 1559: 280-281.}
\]

As I said, Jonson passes over in silence this endorsement by Minturno ("puto") of Aristotle over Cicero ("Aristoteles maxime probaret") on the question of mimesis ("imitationem esse ad effigendam ... aliquam"). Hence it is entirely appropriate to view Shakespeare, with his own manifest emphasis on the audience’s contribution to theatrical mimesis, as being of historical significance in relation to Jonson, in their debate over comedy, by himself pointing meta-theatre and (intentionally or not) to Minturno’s exaltation of Aristotle over Cicero. This parallels the action on the theatrical level as Ulysses explains to the disputatious Achilles the superiority of Aristotle. Aristotle serves as a reminder to Achilles that the communication of one’s parts depends on their reception by another, and, in the meta-theatrical context, the theatrical word for virtues ("parts") carries a meta-theatrical reminder about the dependency on the audience of the
roles ("parts") that actors communicate. As Bednarz puts it, it is Shakespeare’s “players, not their scripts, who mirror life by reflecting the form and pressure of the time".\textsuperscript{738}

Jonson thinks a script can effect moral reform, but Shakespeare’s work effectively parodies this idea with his dramatization of the corruption of players’ parts into envy and emulation in \textit{Troilus}. Ulysses and Pandarus preside as directors over the respective political and erotic subplots.\textsuperscript{739} I maintain, therefore, that seeing Aristotle in Shakespeare’s hands is a critical semiotic device which provides a classical yardstick in \textit{Troilus} for seeing the neoclassical travesty that is enacted in it. Theatrical mimesis is more complicated than Jonson is able to capture with only the Ciceronian definition. Only Aristotle’s mysterious suggestion about “catharsis” from the \textit{Poetics} adequately approaches the dangerously manifold meanings of mimesis:

\begin{quote}
\textit{mimesis praxeos \ldots hedusmeno logo \ldots perainousa ten ton toioton pathematon katharsin}\textsuperscript{740}
\end{quote}

which is echoed by “imitationem \ldots ad effigendam suavi puroque sermone aliquam rerum \ldots actionem” in Minturno’s Latin.\textsuperscript{741}

Snuggs demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that Jonson in \textit{Every Man Out} both paraphrases Minturno and makes literal use of his Latin.\textsuperscript{742} Apart from the Ciceronian Latin, the literal use is visible in Jonson’s use of Minturno’s marginal gloss, “Quid sit comoedia”.\textsuperscript{743} This use, together with Jonson’s paraphrasing of portions of Minturno’s Latin, establishes Minturno as Jonson’s source for the definition attributed to Cicero.\textsuperscript{744} The Ciceronian definition of comedy was preserved in and transmitted by way of Donatus: it is missing from Cicero, \textit{De Re Publica}\textsuperscript{745}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{738} Bednarz 2001: 253.
\textsuperscript{739} Cf. Girard 1991: 121-166.
\textsuperscript{740} \textit{Poetics} 6, 1449b 27-28.
\textsuperscript{741} Minturno 1559: 280-281.
\textsuperscript{742} Snuggs 1950: 543-544.
\textsuperscript{743} Minturno 1559: 280.
\textsuperscript{744} Snuggs 1950: 543.
\end{footnotes}
IV.11, but survives in Donatus.\textsuperscript{745} Donatus would have been the indirect source for Jonson, but Snuggs has established Minturno as the direct source. Fortenbaugh on Theophrastus as Cicero’s ultimate source, however, reminds us of the ultimately Aristotelian origin of the definition (since Theophrastus was a disciple of Aristotle).\textsuperscript{746} Therefore it is legitimate to ask what (along the way from the Peripatetics to Cicero, from Donatus to Minturno to Jonson) in the definition of comedy, if anything, has been lost?\textsuperscript{747}

What was lost to Jonson was the same thing lost when Snuggs failed to quote all of Minturno: viz., Aristotle’s own peculiar conception of mimesis. Like Snuggs, Jonson passes over in silence Minturno’s reference to Aristotle. Shakespeare’s significance, however, resides in his having recognized in dramatic practice the importance of Aristotle’s theatrical conception of the catharsis achieved by mimesis (the very conception that is expressed by the classical esthetic). As Atkins has argued cogently, Jonson with all his virtuosic learning gets an incredible amount of detail correct in his assimilation and treatment of classical sources.\textsuperscript{748} Yet in one thing he was deficient: he did not properly understand mimesis as Aristotle did, viz., as imitation of human action.\textsuperscript{749} And this, of course, is where Shakespeare surpassed him, both in implicit theory and in dramatic practice.

I am arguing, therefore, that Shakespeare, with his keener sense for the ambiguities inherent in theatrical mimesis, in light of Girard’s recognition of this fact, ought to be viewed as of greater esthetic significance than Jonson. Unlike Shakespeare, Jonson, for all his didactic pretensions, missed in his sanitized notion of comedy what the classical esthetic had realized about mimesis: namely, the active role of the implicated audience in any cultural catharsis.

\textsuperscript{745} See Kaibel 1899 for the Latin text and Sidnell 1991 for an English translation.
\textsuperscript{746} Fortenbaugh 1992: 553-555.
\textsuperscript{747} In addition to the confusing history of the comic genre’s definition, the particular genre itself of satire has a long and confusing history from the Greeks to the Romans to the Renaissance. See Atkins 1968: 246-261, 312-335; Atkins 1961a: 71-119; Atkins 1961b: 37-39; Atkins 1943: 30-33. Cf. Hendrickson 1927; Knapp 1912; Ullman 1913, 1914, 1917; Wiseman 1988.
\textsuperscript{748} Atkins 1968: 246-261, 312-335.
\textsuperscript{749} Atkins 1968: 332 blames Jonson’s reliance on Heinsius in this regard.
(Consider the obvious and unmistakable inclusion of the Chorus throughout the classical esthetic as a vivid indication of its profound realization about mimesis.) The social role of theater is not entirely subject to the control of the poet, as Shakespeare well knew, a fact I try to suggest by myself seeing in the “strange fellow” scene a connection to Aristotle signified and counterpoised to Jonson. Because any catharsis has to be, not simply formed by a poet’s script, but ultimately “formed in th’applause” (Troilus 3.3.120) of the audience for the players. Hence Aristotle’s formulation on the ultimate goal of tragic drama is more apposite than Cicero’s definition of comedy and Jonson’s concept of the passive role of the laughing audience. In my view, this insight of the classical esthetic is the critical light in which one should see Shakespeare in relation to Jonson.

If considered intentional on Shakespeare’s part, then this meta-theatrical allusion, in the “strange fellow” scene, to the quarrel that Jonson has with Shakespeare over comedy, serves as a gentle and witty way for Shakespeare to satirize Jonson’s pretensions. The scene references Aristotle on two levels, i.e., with two debates: Achilles debating with Ulysses, and Jonson debating with Shakespeare. Just as Ulysses uses Aristotle to remind Achilles that virtue requires its “parts” to be communicated to others, so too Shakespeare, in the same scene, could be subtly using Aristotle to remind Jonson that the “parts” (pun intended) of the comic poet are judged by the audience’s cathartic feedback.

If considered intentional on Shakespeare’s part, then the meta-theatrical allusions to Jonson’s definition of comedy in Every Man Out are unmistakable in the language of Ulysses and Achilles: “cannot make boast to have … but by reflection” (Troilus 3.3.99-100); “speculation … is mirrored there” (110-111); “receives and renders back” (123). To the untutored ear of an Achilles, no doubt these three phrases are all equivalent to Jonson’s Imitatio, Speculum, and Imago. As Ulysses recognizes in the “strange fellow,” however, and as Shakespeare intuits along

750 As echoed in Minturno 1559: 280-281 from Poetics 6.
the lines of Aristotle, *the goal of a theatrical catharsis is complicated by the thoroughgoing mimetic structure of human action*. That is, the mirror of mimesis cannot didactically instruct an audience, as Jonson would wish, in a simple and unproblematic *catharsis* of laughter. Comic instruction can turn one sour, as Shakespeare demonstrates in his *Troilus*. For example, in the "strange fellow" scene, Ulysses applies Aristotle's mimetic theory of communicative virtue to achieve the Machiavellian end of stoking Achilles' rivalry with Ajax. Another example, involving the title characters, is that Ulysses' instruction of Troilus regarding Cressida's infidelity (which is deliberately made after the Jonsonian recognition paradigm) nevertheless spurs on the chaos of war. Both these examples show that Shakespeare's drama is significant in that, even if it was not consciously intended as such an argumentative rejoinder, it satirizes Jonson's limited understanding of mimesis. In any case, even if the connection to Aristotle on Shakespeare's part was not intentional, it is nevertheless revealing to make use of this retrospective comparison to the classical esthetic in order to raise some key issues from the works of Shakespeare and Jonson concerning mimesis.

**Scapegoats and Catharsis**

Girard himself has argued for the common element found in the catharsis that both tragedy and comedy aim at achieving. That is, both require dramatic scapegoats, since both are rooted in cultural rituals that achieve social control through group catharsis. According to Girard, I must now consider Girard's interpretation of *Troilus*’ satire, because, in many respects, my thesis on the evolution of drama from the originary scene echoes his own focus on conflictive mimesis. With Girard, one sees *conflictive mimesis* (which is dangerously and problematically "theatrical", which we saw in the previous section as best exhibited in Shakespeare's rather than Jonson's dramatic practice) as *the characteristic structure of human desire*. Girard has been a

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751 Girard 1972: 811-826.
752 Although being wary of any anthropological "dreams of cultural poetics"; cf. Greenblatt 1999: 47.
careful and subtle interpreter of the portrayal of conflictive mimesis in *Troilus*.\textsuperscript{753} *Troilus,* moreover, has been a central text in practically all of Girard's commentaries on Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{754} In general, however, is it fair of him to characterize Shakespeare as he does, as a theoretician of mimetic desire?\textsuperscript{755} In particular, is it accurate of him to characterize *Troilus's* satire as "anti-Aristotelian with a vengeance"?\textsuperscript{756}

These questions take us to the heart of Girard's dramatic theory and his view of how Shakespeare, especially in *Troilus,* deconstructs the sacrificial demands of comedy and tragedy. In response to Girard, I wish to make two main points. The first point argues for seeing the play's genesis and genre in its historical moment. I dispute Girard's claim that the play is "anti-Aristotelian"; in the context of the Poets' War, it is more properly "anti-Jonsonian". My second point, inspired by Gans, argues (in the next section) for seeing *Troilus's* wider significance within esthetic history. That is, despite its official status as a "problem play", it must be seen as eminently neoclassical. I suggest that, whether or not Shakespeare was conscious of it, from the standpoint of esthetic history, the death of Hector in *Troilus* follows the anti-Homeric historical tradition in its rigorous implementation of Aristotle's advice about the dramatization of Hector's demise.\textsuperscript{757}

But my first point is that Girard's claim that *Troilus* is anti-Aristotelian must be modified. In order to do this, we ought to recognize the narrow sense in which *Troilus* is anti-neoclassical. As I have been arguing, Bednarz has already shown the way for us to do this. We can better understand *Troilus* in its historical moment, with its satire of comical satire, by seeing it as properly anti-Jonsonian. My original contribution to this argument has been to point out Aristotle's place in the debate as the ultimate classical reference point for this neoclassical literary

\textsuperscript{753} Girard 1991: 121-173.
\textsuperscript{754} Cf. Girard 1980, 1981.
\textsuperscript{755} Girard 1991: 147.
\textsuperscript{756} Girard 1991: 159.
\textsuperscript{757} *Poetics* 24, 1460a 15, 25; 1460b 26; see Meister 1873, Eisenhut 1973, Frazer 1966, and Hillebrand and Baldwin 1953: 419-447 on Shakespeare's sources for the fates of Hector and Troilus in *Troilus*.
quarrel. Pace Girard, I have been arguing that Shakespeare uses Aristotle in Troilus to contrast his conception of mimesis with Jonson's. Therefore, Girard's "anti-Aristotle" formulation is inaccurate, because Shakespeare quarrels with Jonson's conception of catharsis, not with Aristotle's.

Girard's interpretation of Troilus recognizes that the "strange fellow" passage articulates the play's thematization of conflictive mimesis.758 Desire is corrupted in Troilus into the envy and emulation characteristic of mimetic rivalry.759 Girard, for example, sees Shakespeare as a "prophet of modern advertising" in that, with Pandarus, he lays bare the structure of how mimetic desire is manipulated in modern advertising.760 Although both entertaining and insightful, this is obviously in many ways an anachronistic reading. Girard does not shrink from it, however, because he asserts that such a trans-historical reading is justified by the incisive power of Shakespeare's mimetic theory in targeting cultural origins: "Shakespeare is a great satirist of the modern world, which had its true beginnings in the late Renaissance".761

All the same, it is necessary to refine Girard's reading of Troilus with a more historical and evolutionary perspective. Admittedly, Girard has performed a great service in calling attention to the mimetic dimensions of the play's action, but he has had to do so by means of polemic and overstatement. With his vivid anachronisms (for example, when he describes Ulysses, in the scene with Achilles, as a "media advisor," or as a talk show host) Girard commands our attention and strikingly conveys his insightful and suggestive reading.762 But recall I argue, following Bednarz's lead in the proper historicization of Troilus, that the "strange fellow" scene, with its theatrical allusion to Aristotle (whether intentionally conceived as such or not), also alludes meta-theatrically to Jonson's rival conception of comedy. This semiotic argument has

758 Girard 1991: 147.
760 Girard 1991: 123.
761 Girard 1991: 149.
definite implications for how Girard’s reading ought to be improved and historicized. Along these lines, Girard’s mimetic theory holds great potential for making sense of the historical data.⁷⁶³ Therefore given the fact that Shakespeare could not have had Girard’s mimetic theory in mind when he penned the “strange fellow” scene, what does it mean for Girard’s reading of the scene, if (as we argued in the previous section) Shakespeare/Ulysses would have in mind, not our 20th century French professor, but rather Aristotle? That is, what can we conclude from my having found a place in Shakespeare from which I may appeal to Aristotle about the limits of Girard’s own “mimetic theory” of communicative virtue?

On its own, Girard’s reading of Troilus is a major achievement, in the way that it deconstructs the mimetic dynamics of the play. To assess the limits of this achievement fairly, however, comparing Girard’s reading of Troilus with Elton’s is instructive.⁷⁶⁴ Where Girard excels in laying bare the formal dynamics of mimetic desire in the play, Elton excels in trying to find a historical context for the play’s genesis and genre.⁷⁶⁵ While we ought to reject Elton’s attempt as unsuccessful, given the more solid historical foundation in Bednarz, I have argued that Elton’s suggestion that Aristotle is the “strange fellow” finds even more support, and resonates more strongly, within the mimetic context of rivalry in the Poets’ War.⁷⁶⁶ That is, Shakespeare’s “strange fellow”, whether intentionally or not, serves to remind Jonson, with a meta-theatrical allusion to Minturno, that theatrical catharsis depends on an audience. So too does the mimetic structure of daily existence likewise derive from the communication of our “parts” to others, as Ulysses theatrically reminds Achilles.

Nevertheless, Girard falls short as Elton similarly falls short. While Elton fails to work out all the configurations of mimetic desire’s degenerating communication of “parts” within the

play, Girard does so largely in an historical vacuum. In short, while Elton is too historical, Girard
is too theoretical. Therefore, taking Bednarz as my starting point, I attempt to bring a proper
balance to both Girard and Elton in my reading of *Troilus*. But since I agree with Girard’s
theoretical exegesis of the play (viz., that it dramatizes the configurations of mimetic desire) I
must ask what the play’s *genesis* in the theatrical rivalry of the Poets’ War means for Girard’s
argument. Does the Shakespearean satire of the new neoclassical genre (Jonson’s “comical
satire”), to which this rivalry gave birth, proceed according to Girard’s description of how drama
deconstructs mimetic relations?

Girard attributes to Shakespeare an anti-political, sardonic view of history.\(^{767}\) He
characterizes *Troilus*’s satire as anti-theatrical. That is, he attributes a kind of self-loathing to any
theatrical artist who has come to full knowledge of the sacrificial requirements of his art for
achieving a successful audience catharsis:

> At their most radical and pessimistic, all great playwrights, including Molière
> and Racine, have more affinity for the enemies of the theater than for its pious
> friends.\(^{768}\)

He characterizes *Troilus*’s dramatic resolution as “anti-theatrical with a vengeance” because it
“mocks the cathartic conception of the theater”.\(^{769}\)

Given Aristotle as the “strange fellow,” however, i.e., given the context of rivalry in
which the play was born, it is not accurate to characterize the play as anti-Aristotelian. *Troilus*’s
theatrical genre is comical satire, which becomes evident when it is seen meta-theatrically as a
satire of Jonson’s new genre of comical satire. Accordingly, its *catharsis* is not “anti-
Aristotelian”; it is rather anti-neoclassical. But it is only anti-neoclassical in a narrow sense, as a

\(^{767}\) Girard 1990: 419.
\(^{768}\) Girard 1991: 159.
\(^{769}\) Girard 1991: 159.
rejoinder to the pretenses of Jonson's own peculiar comic variation of neoclassical dramatic theory.

The Neoclassical Doubling of Form and Content

Thus I argue we can recognize an evolution in the mimetic understanding of dramatists at different historical moments. While it may not be equivalent to Girard's postmodern mimetic theory, Shakespeare's understanding of theatrical mimesis is nevertheless self-consciously formulated in an "anti-Jonsonian" gesture by which he lays bare his very own (more sophisticated) comprehension of the possibilities of the neoclassical historical moment. The best way to see this at work in Shakespeare is with the help of Gans' critique of Girard, by which we may recognize how Gans' generative anthropology of esthetic history can make better sense of the esthetic form and content of *Troilus*. To see how the play is *consummately neoclassical*, that is, neoclassical in a sense wider than Jonson's understanding of neoclassicism, we must refine Girard's theory of drama by adopting Gans' view of esthetic history for our understanding of neoclassicism. Gans has explained how Girard's mimetic theory falls short in its treatment of dramatic esthetics.770

Although the cultural poetics of new historicism has vaguely recognized the relation between political cultural forms and poetic content,771 Gans credits Girard alone with affirming the priority of cultural form over content:

> Alone among literary analysts, René Girard has recognized and sought to account for the priority of cultural form over content. Following the principle that content can be interpreted only once form has been understood, Girard long ago transferred the chief focus of his activity from literary scholarship to an anthropology of cultural forms, secular and above all religious, understood as means to contain the critical danger posed to the human community by the violence of mimetic desire.772

The priority of form over content is what Girard means by the requisite catharsis common to successful tragedy and comedy: the sacrificial structure both that the audience demands and that reinforces social peace. Using concepts Greenblatt learned from Foucault,\textsuperscript{773} one might say that the “containment” and “subversion” that theater’s sacrificial structure achieves is the containment of real violence with subversive dramatic violence.\textsuperscript{774} Hence what Greenblatt calls “the fulfillment of a theatrical wish”\textsuperscript{775} is what Girard describes as the sacrificial structure of drama.\textsuperscript{776} In this regard, Girard’s cultural poetics also seems to have “imitated linguistics in its retreat from history, privileging synchrony over diachrony”,\textsuperscript{777} Girard too with his own idiosyncratic semiotic paradigm of the scapegoat has “hermeticised culture … into a self-sustaining sign system”.\textsuperscript{778}

Gans, however, rejects Girard’s reading of form against content in Shakespeare, in which Shakespeare (according to Girard) is always reluctant to concede victory to the sacrificial form of drama over its content.\textsuperscript{779} That is, the content is the resentful human being with whom we identify as the dramatic hero, whereas the sacrificial form is the tragic convention by which he must die in the dramatic action. Girard argues that Troilus’s ending satirizes the sacrificial requirements of dramatic form: Shakespeare produces an unsatisfying ending, allowing Troilus to escape a tragic fate, while emphasizing the sordid nature of the collective violence employed by Achilles to seal Hector’s fate.\textsuperscript{780} Gans, on the other hand, does not see Shakespeare as deconstructing drama by highlighting and subverting the tension between pitiable human content and fearful sacrificial

\textsuperscript{775} Greenblatt 1999: 64.
\textsuperscript{776} Girard 1972: 811-826.
\textsuperscript{778} Wilson 1992: 15.
\textsuperscript{779} Gans 2000a: 59-65.
\textsuperscript{780} Girard 1991: 227-234.
form (as Girard would have it); rather, Shakespeare consummately achieves the neoclassical
doubling of form within form.\textsuperscript{781}

To always pit dramatic form against content, as Girard does, militates against the
discernment of the progress of esthetic form in history. That progress of form is visible in all the
many esthetic variations on the containment of societal resentments throughout history. These
varied containments ought not to be reduced to a Girardian “binary logic” of cultural
“containment” by means of the dramatic “subversion” of violence.\textsuperscript{782} With regard to the progress
of esthetic form, Gans argues that neoclassicism has more to do with Christianity’s integration of
egalitarian ethical values into the classical esthetic than it does with humanist scholars appealing
to the ancients for canonical principles.\textsuperscript{783} In particular, he sees Girard’s “rediscovery of the
conflictive nature of mimesis” as the postmodern breakthrough that finally allows us to conceive
of the neoclassical as a specific esthetic.\textsuperscript{784} In the neoclassical esthetic, a “doubling of the scene”
takes place, of which “the Shakespearean play-within-the-play is the exemplary incarnation”; that
is, with the neoclassical, “The stage is no longer the structural equivalent of the scenic center;
centrality is represented separately from the central figure.”\textsuperscript{785}

Although Gans discusses this esthetic phenomenon with regard to the more familiar
Hamlet, it is actually Troilus that provides a much more clear illustration of the neoclassical. That
is, “the doubling of the scene” in Troilus is obviously none other than the parallel of the erotic
Troilus plot with the political Achilles plot, the parallel structuring of which Girard has so ably
deconstructed.\textsuperscript{786} In a word, in Shakespeare’s Troilus, the neoclassical Troilus doubles the
classical Achilles. I say “neoclassical Troilus” because, even though Troilus was known as a

\textsuperscript{782} Cf. Montrose 1996: 9.
\textsuperscript{783} Cf. Gans 1993: 150-163, esp. 150.
\textsuperscript{784} Gans 1993: 154; cf. 179.
\textsuperscript{785} Gans 1993: 153.
\textsuperscript{786} Girard 1985: 188-209.
tragic figure in antiquity, the story Shakespeare uses for Troilus is the mediaeval love story.\textsuperscript{787} And, as Gans argues, the mediaeval is the “cocoon in which the modern bourgeoisie gradually came to maturity” and that mediaeval cocoon “already illustrates the same post-classical problematic as that of the Renaissance”.\textsuperscript{788}

In Troilus, the hero of the Trojan War (Achilles) and the object of his resentment and rivalry (Agamemnon) are no longer in the scenic center.\textsuperscript{789} As in all neoclassicism, the periphery engages on the same egalitarian plane with the center.\textsuperscript{790} That is, Troilus, the amorous bourgeois everyman, is able to walk into the center of Greek myth, satirically doubling its epic concerns with his own amorous troubles. The periphery, with its erotic subplot involving Troilus and Cressida, is structured in parallel with the main political plot of classical Greek myth, that is, the central classical concern (as in Homer’s Iliad) with Achilles’ tragically heroic vanquishing of Hector in the Trojan War.

Meta-theatrically, Troilus uses tragic forms from the classical esthetic to deconstruct and satirize the sacrificial catharsis that is demanded by Jonson’s comic variations within the neoclassical esthetic. Seen both in its historical moment and in its place in esthetic history, the play is neither “anti-Aristotelian” nor anti-theatrical,\textsuperscript{791} but instead, as Aristotle’s Poetics can help illustrate, consummately neoclassical. The form of the fates of Hector and Troilus in Shakespeare’s play becomes intelligible when viewed in light of Aristotle’s classical prescriptions for dramatizing the pursuit of Hector:

Now the marvelous should certainly be portrayed in tragedy, but epic affords greater scope for the inexplicable (which is the chief element in what is marvelous), because we do not actually see the persons of the story. The incident of Hector’s pursuit would look ridiculous on the stage, the people

\textsuperscript{787} See Mackay 1996 on the Troilus myth in antiquity, a narrative that contrasts starkly with Chaucer 1998. Cf. also Hillebrand and Baldwin 1953: 424-449 on Shakespeare’s reworking of the sources.

\textsuperscript{788} Gans 1993: 150.


\textsuperscript{791} Pace Girard 1991: 158-159.
standing still and not pursuing and Achilles waving them back, but in epic that is not noticed.\textsuperscript{792}

If an impossibility has been portrayed, an error has been made. But it is justifiable if the poet thus achieves the object of poetry — what that is has been already stated — and makes that part or some other part of the poem more striking. The pursuit of Hector is an example of this.\textsuperscript{793}

Aristotle here points out that the one-on-one struggle between Achilles and Hector works in epic, but that it would appear unrealistic on stage. Anyone with battle experience does not dream that Achilles would deny himself the opportunity for certain victory by means of collective violence against Hector. Remarkably, Shakespeare portrays in \textit{Troilus} precisely the sort of dramatic realism that Aristotle recommends: that is, Achilles gets the Myrmidons to lynch Hector (\textit{Troilus} 5.7.1-6, 5.8.9-14).

In addition, Shakespeare follows Aristotle's advice in a more intense manner than his sources. Shakespeare's sources here\textsuperscript{794} have Achilles murder Hector as he despoils a knight,\textsuperscript{795} and Achilles' Myrmidons surround Troilus so that Achilles can kill him.\textsuperscript{796} Shakespeare, however, combines and intensifies the two accounts in Hector's death; and Shakespeare lets Troilus live (\textit{Troilus} 5.11.33-34). Thus Hector, while despoiling a knight, is surrounded by Achilles' Myrmidons and killed in a collective murder.\textsuperscript{797} It is perhaps impossible to say whether Shakespeare is consciously following the advice of Aristotle's \textit{Poetics}, but such a directly conscious intent based on textual knowledge seems unlikely. Nevertheless it seems only fair to credit the collective murder, as Girard does, to Shakespeare's deliberate artistic intent in reworking his sources.

\textsuperscript{792} \textit{Poetics} 24, 1460a 14-17.
\textsuperscript{793} \textit{Poetics} 26, 1460b 23-26.
\textsuperscript{794} Caxton and Lydgate, who inherit the anti-Homeric historical narrative from Dares the Phrygian.
\textsuperscript{795} Dares the Phrygian §24 in Frazer 1966.
\textsuperscript{796} Dares the Phrygian §33 in Frazer 1966; cf. Hillebrand and Baldwin 1953: 424-447.
In Troilus’s structure, then, we can observe, from our standpoint of historical retrospect, that this Aristotelian form for Hector, which acts on the play’s Hector-content, is doubled with the fate of Troilus. Troilus’ battle-frenzy courts tragic sacrificial resolution, but nevertheless ends only in a travesty of Jonson’s comic catharsis (with Pandarus and Ulysses acting in their different ways as didactic Jonsonian stand-ins). That is, the demand of the classical Aristotelian esthetic would be to dramatize the collective pursuit and murder of Achilles on stage, whereas the non-dramatic epic form allows the less realistic mano a mano of Achilles and Hector. Troilus fulfills this demand, in accordance with the classical esthetic, but it also doubles this fulfilment with the neoclassical doubling of Troilus’s fate with Hector’s. Moreover, denied a sacrificial tragic fate, Troilus’s survival (which in Shakespeare’s intent probably only serves to satirize Jonsonian dramatic epiphany) also, from our retrospective historical standpoint, prefigures the romantic esthetic. Hence the doubling in Troilus stretches the neoclassical to its limits, with the classical Hector (on the one hand) dying as Aristotle dictates, and the neoclassically pre-romantic Troilus (on the other hand) surviving a tragic sacrificial death.

This doubling of tragic ends (Hector’s successfully sacrificial, and Troilus’s not so) is thus significantly satirical both in form and content. As such, it stands not as form against content, as Girard would have it, in a kind of anti-theatrical critique of sacrificial form. It is rather, seen in its historical moment, a satire of Jonson’s comic form. But it is a satire so complex that it parodies the sacrificial requirements of that Jonsonian comic form. It portrays, by means of travesty, a non-successful identification of the neoclassical Jonsonian comic form (in which the hero learns) with classical tragic form (in which the hero dies). That is, Troilus, the comic

798 Poetics 24, 1460a 14-17.
799 Cf. Gans 1993: 161-163. Note that in Robert Henryson’s moralistic The Testament of Cresseid (1532), Troilus survives and later mourns the beggar Cressida jilted by Diomedes whom he recognizes too late (Bevington 1998: 392-393); hence this prefiguration of the romantic esthetic (i.e., its interest in the fate of peripheral lovers) within Shakespeare’s neoclassicism seems not so much a conscious innovation as indebted to the nascent romantic themes of his sources. All the same, Shakespeare’s true innovation lies in the neoclassical doubling of the scene: the peripheral Troilus and Cressida doubled with the central Hector and Achilles.
romantic hero, survives. And he has learned nothing from his neoclassical recognition scene, which Shakespeare even invests with the classical Aristotelian requirement of recognition tokens,800 when Troilus changes from his love to hate of Cressida (in full accordance, intentional or not on Shakespeare’s part, with Aristotle’s definition of recognition).801 The catharsis of this neoclassical comic survival is doubled with the classically sacrificial death of Hector. Both are unsatisfactory to the audience; but, contrary to what Girard asserts,802 this is not Shakespeare’s mockery of the cathartic conception of the theater. It is rather a travesty, both in the historical moment and in retrospect, of Jonson’s inadequate neoclassical catharsis. The adequacy of Shakespeare’s own superior achievements in neoclassical catharsis is proven simply by his theatrical success (with plays other than Troilus) in his own time.803 As Ulysses says, it is “th’applause” that is the Aristotelian yardstick of success in this new marketplace of communicated “parts,” the nascent modern bourgeois world.804

My interpretation, with its focus on Aristotle, thus seeks to correct Girard’s contentious overstatement that Troilus is “anti-Aristotelian” (which is clearly not true, once one admits, for example, that the treatment of Hector is classically Aristotelian, after Poetics 24) or that Troilus is anti-theatrical (which is simply an anachronism, given that the play is not modern but rather neoclassical). The play’s theatrical genre is neoclassical comical satire; but, meta-theatrically, it is using classically tragic forms that may seem to deconstruct and satirize the sacrificial logic of Jonson’s peculiar neoclassical comic genre. Hence sacrificial tragic form functions in Troilus in aid of its satirical content, and not, as Girard would have it, always already formally pitted against the content. Therefore, in terms of Gans’ wider definition of the neoclassical, Troilus may be seen as a prime specimen of the neoclassical esthetic’s mode of depiction of conflictive mimesis on the

800 The “sleeve” of Troilus 5.2.67-101; cf. Poetics 16, 1454b 19-30.
801 Poetics 11, 1452a 29-32.
802 Girard 1991: 159.
scene of representation. Shakespeare, in a neoclassical *tour de force*, uses tragic form to
deconstruct Jonson’s theory of comical satire.

**The Neoclassical Esthetic: The Problem of Christianity**

When seen in the context of rivalry, the genre of this “problem play” as a new evolution
from tragedy and comedy becomes visible in its doubling of form. It is a neoclassical play *par
excellence* because it bridges the romantic and classical (Aristotelian) esthetics. Admittedly,
genre alone is an inadequate yardstick, because it is mutable across esthetic history. A more
accurate yardstick is first to see each esthetic in its historical moment, before comparing it
critically across history. For this reason I have chosen to focus on Aristotle, the classical *sine qua
non* for literary criticism, in order to sort out the problems with *Troilus’s* historical genesis and
genre.

The neoclassical genre of this “problem play” can only be understood with reference to
the Poets’ War’s context of mimetic rivalry. In this light, Shakespeare is not so much a “prophet
of modern advertising” in *Troilus and Cressida* as he is the dramatist who pushes the neoclassical
esthetic to its limits. The survival of the play’s comic protagonist, Troilus, prefigures the
romantics, while the entry of this peripheral figure into the center of Greek myth deconstructs
the classics. Theatrically, then, the play’s genre is *comical satire*. This theatrical structure blurs
into meta-theater, however, as it becomes a *comical satire of comical satire*, deconstructing the
pretensions of the structure of Jonson’s neoclassical comical satire with the aid of both form and
content borrowed from the classical esthetic (viz., the death of Hector).

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Troilus survives and later mourns the beggar Cressida jilted by Diomedes whom he recognizes too late
(Bevington 1998: 392-393); hence this prefiguration of the romantic esthetic (i.e., its interest in the fate of
peripheral lovers) within Shakespeare’s neoclassicism seems not so much a conscious innovation as
indebted to the nascent romantic themes of his sources. All the same, Shakespeare’s true innovation lies in
the neoclassical doubling of the scene: the peripheral Troilus and Cressida doubled with the central Hector
and Achilles.
Although Girard’s reading of *Troilus* has shown the formal structuring of conflictive mimesis that characterizes this play, in my view he is mistaken in his more general opinion that this structuring was undertaken from a darkly pessimistic satirical intent. The play’s form and content, should we entertain the dubious hypothesis that it needs authorial intent to invest it with significance, would probably be better understood by a specific intent on Shakespeare’s part of satirizing Jonson’s comical satire. Even so, were he to admit this, Girard would still be unable to be fully sensitive to the historical context of the play, because, as Gans has explained, his theory of drama pits form against content. For Girard, dramatic form is violent and sacrificial. Both comic and tragic form require scapegoats; in both, only the content is anti-sacrificial. Thus, for Girard, the structuring cultural form of drama is always sacrificial. Despite Girard’s limitations, however, we can still resort to Gans in order to see how *Troilus* uses tragic form to deconstruct Jonson’s neoclassical comedy. The unresolved tensions and unsatisfying ending in *Troilus* derive from the intentionally parallel fates of Troilus and Hector, which is a formal doubling characteristic of the neoclassical. *Troilus*’s unsatisfactory ending is not a condemnation of theater, as Girard would have it, but (intentional or not) of Jonson’s theater. As a *reductio ad absurdum* of Jonson’s comical satire, it has a unique place in the neoclassical esthetic. Its deconstruction of a neoclassical comic form with classically tragic form makes it consummately neoclassical, as it doubles the tragic fate of the central Hector with the comic escape of the peripheral Troilus. Whether or not Shakespeare was fully conscious of all these critical ramifications, Aristotle (taken as what *Troilus*’s “strange fellow” signifies) helps us clearly to see not only the issues involved in Shakespeare’s more or less conscious literary debate with Jonson in *Troilus*, but also that play’s place in the history of esthetic form.

Aristotle is Ulysses’ unnamed author, a silent judge of the dramatic proceedings. Similarly, the classical esthetic silently judges the neoclassical esthetic’s integration of Christian

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ethical values, an integration accomplished by means of the formal doubling of the drama of the periphery (e.g., Troilus) with the drama of the center (e.g., Hector):

The neoclassical is the classical, but less, and following the logique du supplément, it requires that this less be compensated by a more of representation. But this formal requirement is fulfilled diversely by the content. The minimal fulfillment is to add nothing at all, achieving a result which is not simply the prolongation of the classical but the absence of supplementation within the neoclassical, and which produces the effect of absence and "coldness" often unfairly associated by the German theorists with the art of seventeenth-century France and its sphere of influence. All bad art is condemned ultimately for the same thing, its inability to produce the esthetic effect, but in contrast with bad classical art, bad neoclassical art is condemned in a new way: as usurping not the scene of representation as such, but this scene as previously defined by classical art. It is rejected as inauthentic, as a mere pastiche of its classical models.809

The "problem" with a "problem play" thus becomes clear. It is rejected as "inauthentic" inasmuch as it seems to be neither authentically tragic nor authentically comic in terms of being based solely on those classical models of form.

But with the "pastiche" of the fate of an amorous comic everyman (Troilus) being formally doubled with a classical tragic hero (Hector), I now have the precise definition of the "problem play" as "problem": viz., that it seems to be "bad neoclassical art". While it is the "problem plays", being neither pure classical tragedy nor pure classical comedy, which become designated as such (i.e., as "problems"), there is also the neoclassical phenomenon of the "history play". While a "history play" is thus not explicitly designated eponymously as a "problem", I must consider its esthetic and political significance in terms of the insights I have derived from the neoclassical form and content of Troilus. Fortunately, because of its place in the Poets' War, I was able to ascertain from the nature of Troilus's doubling of form exactly what that doubling was. Now, armed with a more concrete knowledge of what the neoclassical is, which I obtained from an analysis of Shakespeare's meta-theatrical "formalism" in the "problem play" Troilus's

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parody of Jonson, I can now turn to appreciate the similar doubling of form in the *Henriad* in terms of its esthetic and political significance.
Esthetic Form in Shakespeare: The History Play

Now that we have seen the content of a double metabasis in the "problem play" Troilus and Cressida (viz., Hector's unhappy metabasis and Troilus' "happy" metabasis), and have seen that double content yoked to a doubling of form (viz., the sacrificial destiny of the central classical hero Hector and the preromantic focus on the peripheral Troilus), I can apply this to achieve a better understanding of the "history play" as the neoclassical supplement par excellence.

That is, in the "history play", esthetic form is doubled with the dual content of happy and unhappy metabases in ways that explicitly mark political significance. Seen in terms of an evolution from the classical esthetic, the "history plays" take the scenic center as their own special political "problem" because Christianity has now allowed the dramatization of that center in terms of the periphery. Any man can be Troilus, whose life on the periphery is a drama of the conflictive mimesis of love and war; so too can any man now be king. Because Christianity has proclaimed the equality of all men, any man can be staged in the center of the scene of representation. Esthetic imagination is now explicitly aware that God may transpose any man from the periphery to the center and divinely appoint him as "king". The original mimetic model here is "the second person of the Christian Trinity" who, in becoming man, has scenically dramatized the center in terms of the periphery.810

Given this new relation between center and periphery, the neoclassical esthetic explicitly makes thematic a doubling of the resentment (i.e., on both center and periphery) that constitutes cultural form. As the sacrificial ritual of the originary scene becomes more and more secularized with the evolution of the neoclassical esthetic, resentment finds its way from the periphery into

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the center. That is, the neoclassical comes to an explicit knowledge with its heroes that the only thing marking off the center from the periphery is "ceremony":

And what have kings, that privates have not too, 
Save ceremony, save general ceremony? 
And what art thou, thou idol ceremony? 
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more 
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers? 
What are thy rents, what are thy comings-in? 
O ceremony, show me but thy worth! 
What is thy soul, O adoration? 
Art thou aught else but place, degree and form, 
Creating awe and fear in other men, 
Wherein thou art less happy, being feared, 
Than they in fearing? 
What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet, 
But poisoned flattery? O, be sick, great greatness, 
And bid thy ceremony give thee cure!8 Fig

As far as esthetic form is concerned, then, I may characterize the "history play" genre as marked by the double plot structure that I discussed in Chapter Two. This double plot is commensurate with the doubling of form that characterizes the neoclassical. That is, tragedy is insufficient once Christianity arrives. The history play is the great innovation in dramatic form because it dramatizes, not simply the tragic center (as the classical esthetic does), but rather the reciprocity of center and periphery. The stage becomes the scene on which the center is contested and the periphery (as dramatized on that scene) ultimately confers the significance of centrality.

An esthetic analysis of the Henriad has already been accomplished in Girardian terms elsewhere, detailing the staggering variety of all the forms of rivalry and scapegoating which the tetralogy represents.8 Therefore I turn my attention now to discussing how Shakespeare's neoclassical esthetic form, attuned to these cultural forms of political rivalry and scapegoating, is able to achieve a corollary prudential awareness of that political form which best attenuates these violent tendencies after the advent of Christianity. It is my argument that just as the Oresteia ends

811 H5 4.1.235-249. (Arden Third Series) 
812 Head 1998.
with a patriotic celebration of Athens, so too does the *Henriad* end with a celebration of England because, with Henry V's executive leadership, a solution to the political problem for Christian kings has been found.\textsuperscript{813}

Shakespeare's *Henriad* mirrors in its esthetic form the prudential solution of the nation-state.\textsuperscript{814} Henry V establishes loyalty to a territorial jurisdiction (England) as the solution to the problem of the corporate personality of the deposed sovereign (Richard II). Henry IV was an inadequate Christian king because he failed to define territorial loyalty through war. But the precondition of the rule of law is territorial jurisdiction. The only way to vanquish all resentful rebels is, as in the *Eumenides*, to secure that jurisdiction through territorial loyalty.\textsuperscript{815} We turn now to study the precise political form of the regime changes that prepared for Henry V's executive solution to the territorial loyalty problem with his *consensual leadership* of the victorious "band of brothers" at Agincourt.

\textsuperscript{813} Cf. Lowenthal 2002: 83-94.
\textsuperscript{815} Cf. Scruton 2002: 35-40.
Political Form: English Statecraft in Shakespeare’s *Henriad*

**Regime Change in the *Henriad***

Even though the esthetic self-consciousness of the neoclassical king on stage integrates the periphery into his scenic action, in political life Christian kings asserted a radical scenic distance between themselves and their subjects with the claim of divine election for their sacred centrality. Richard himself self-consciously furnishes this political claim of election in *Richard II* to his would-be deposers, dramatizing the main problem that Christianity presents for political life. That is, in the face of a Christian claim to rule such as this, *once deposition has occurred,* how can the sacred center ever furnish such a claim again and win consent by it?

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.
For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
God for His Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel. Then, if angels fight,
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.

But once a Christian king has been deposed, a plague of violence and disorder has been unleashed analogous to that crisis in the House of Atreus. Indeed, a similar crisis of undifferentiation is created by the deposition of Richard. If Athena would found an Areopagus in Athens to restore order to the human community, what similar move could be made to restore order in England? For there is no Athena in the sacred center other than the monotheistic God, and no Areopagus other than His worldly representative in the monarch. We see here, then, a concrete example of what I discussed in Chapter Three as the manner in which Christianity has removed the “latitude

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817 *R2* 3.2.54-62. (Arden Third Series, Forker 2002)
for statesmanship\(^{819}\). Apparently, there is no latitude for statesmen that would allow an Athena to replace Orestes with an Areopagus, or (more to the point here) a Richard with a Bolingbroke. Thus Richard can remark to Northumberland on the plague that the divine fury of God will unleash in reciprocity for those who illegitimately depose kings (as Agamemnon was deposed), causing pestilence to arise into future generations:

we thought ourself thy lawful king,  
And if we be, how dare thy joints forget  
To pay their awful duty to our presence?  
If we be not, show us the hand of God  
That hath dismissed us from our stewardship;  
For well we know no hand of blood and bone  
Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre,  
Unless he do profane, steal, or usurp.  
And though you think that all, as you have done,  
Have torn their souls by turning them from us,  
And we are barren and bereft of friends;  
Yet know: my Master, God omnipotent,  
Is mustering in His clouds on our behalf  
Armies of pestilence, and they shall strike  
Your children, yet unborn and unbegot,  
That lift your vassal hands against my head  
And threat the glory of my precious crown.\(^{820}\)

Even if, as Adam Usk chronicled, it was in "King Richard's nature to debase the noble and to exalt the ignoble" so that "the heroes of the realm, unable to bear such evils any longer, rose up against him",\(^{821}\) and even if Richard was, as Shakespeare dramatized, a tyrant who wronged various nobles and oligarchs of his realm (Bolingbroke in particular), \textit{the political problem still remains}. That is, how does one who has violently usurped the throne claim legitimacy, given that Christianity seems to have categorically ruled out such violent latitude for statesmen?

All that Christianity seems to allow room for is, not political latitude, but rather the popular esthetic understanding of the sad fates of kings as history's inevitably tragic teleology.\(^{822}\)

\(^{819}\) Cf. Schall 2001: 129-142.  
\(^{820}\) \textit{R2 3.3.74-90.} (Arden Third Series)  
This tragic teleology hearkens back to the structure of the originary scene by which the human community was defined by the symbolic representation of the divine sacred. I discussed the metaphysical and theological implications of this originary scene in Chapter One in terms of the Genesis myth and, as the Queen communicates to the common gardener who speaks of Richard’s de casibus fall, Richard’s fate indeed resolves back to this originary scenic structure:

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Thou, old Adam’s likeness,
Set to dress this garden, how dares
Thy harsh rude tongue sound this unpleasing news?
What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee
To make a second fall of cursed man?
Why dost thou say King Richard is deposed?
Dar’st thou, thou little better thing than earth,
Divine his downfall? Say, where, when, and how,
Cam’st thou by this ill tidings? Speak, thou wretch!
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In the neoclassical esthetic, however, the new political problem being mirrored is that it is the consent of such common gardeners that has to be won. For it is such commoners whom Christianity has now always placed on the scene, whether explicitly on stage, as here, or always already implicitly. Stinging rebukes from royal persons are not much of a solution to this political problem. Yet this one rebuke in particular is a salutary reminder of the originary structure of the scene being transgressed with the revolution by the periphery. That is, the regime change brought about by Richard’s deposition is the metabasis of a plague of disorder familiar from my schematized originary scene.826

But the Henriad also mirrors, not just this originary power of the scenic configuration of all political representation, but also an evolutionary progression of regime changes by which various mixed regimes are brought by statecraft into the incarnation of Aristotle’s “best

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824 R2 3.4.72-80. (Arden Third Series)
826 See Table 1.
regime", that is, as a form of the mixed regime which I have called Kingly Aristocracy where the good men are the good citizens who rule. This ideal is incarnated in the "band of brothers" who become the virtuous aristocrats that form the body of England whose head is the king Henry. As I already discussed above in the introduction to this chapter, this esthetic scenic configuration portrays, with Henry’s martial speech, a practical and patriotic solution to the political problem of how a Christian king ought to rule. According to the prudential esthetic consciousness of the neoclassical esthetic in Shakespeare’s Henry V, this solution is that the sacred center must win the consent of the periphery, which is a new development in evolutionary terms that still nevertheless hearkens back to the voluntary mimesis of the symbolic act of representation on the originary scene. At any rate, the full progression to this “best regime” that is celebrated at the conclusion of the Henriad is summarized in the table below in terms of my Aristotelian empirioschematic model from Chapter Three:

Table 16: Political Form in the Henriad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History Play</th>
<th>Regime Mixture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard II</td>
<td>Tyrannical Oligarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry IV, Part 1</td>
<td>Aristocratic Oligarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry IV, Part 2</td>
<td>Kingly Oligarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry V</td>
<td>Kingly Aristocracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

827 See Table 12. Cf. Table 8 and Table 13.
828 Politics 4.7, 1293b 2-7.
831 See Table 13.
In the first three plays, the instability of the English regime comes from its mixture with the “oligarchs”, which is my designation for the various noble rebels who are mixed into the realm’s constitution as rulers along with the various successive monarchs. In Richard II, Richard is a tyrant whose dynasty the oligarchs overthrow.\footnote{Politics 4.6, 1293a 30-34.} The regime thus changes from the Tyrannical Oligarchy of Richard into the Aristocratic Oligarchy of Henry IV, a regime fraught with all the plagues of rebellious disorder dramatized in Henry IV, Part I that accompany its questionable legitimacy.

Henry IV’s regime is a concrete example of the mixed regime identified by Aristotle that I classified as Aristocratic Oligarchy; it is where the nobles (the few with more property who rule) themselves elect who rules.\footnote{Cf. Politics 4.5, 1292b 1-5.} In other words, Henry IV’s regime is not a hereditary monarchy because it was founded by an act of election on the part of the oligarchs. That is, the oligarchs themselves chose Bolingbroke to replace Richard as their monarchic ruler. In deposing Richard, the oligarchs have not founded a pure (“oligarchic”) oligarchy, because for their magistrate they have not simply appointed someone chosen from the wealthiest among them, which Aristotle describes as the procedure that would be more purely oligarchic;\footnote{Politics 4.5, 1292b 3-5.} on the contrary, they have chosen Bolingbroke from among all the nobles. In other words, the oligarchs chose the aristocrat, i.e., the best man, viz., Bolingbroke, to rule them, rather than allowing considerations of mere wealth to guide their choice. The deposition of Richard has thus installed the Aristocratic Oligarchy of Henry IV.

The Aristocratic Oligarchy of Henry IV only becomes a Kingly Oligarchy in Henry IV, Part 2, where Henry IV dies and his son, Prince Hal, succeeds him as Henry V. Only then does the regime truly become a Kingly Oligarchy, the mixed regime defined by Aristotle as hereditary.
monarchy marked by the rule of law.\footnote{Politics 4.5, 1292b 5-6, 4.6, 1293a 27-30.} The elaborate scene in which Hal mistakenly believes his father to be dead and unwittingly "steals" the crown from him eventually ends with their reconciliation and with the peaceful hereditary succession of rule from father to son.\footnote{2H4 4.5.1-240. (Arden Second Series, Humphreys 1960)} The regime thus changes from the Aristocratic Oligarchy of Henry IV into the Kingly Oligarchy of Henry IV.

The \textit{anagnôrisis} of the "band of brothers" in \textit{Henry V} as the periphery that consents to Henry’s sacral centrality is what effects the final regime change in that play. England is transformed from Henry’s Kingly Oligarchy into a new regime mixture with the \textit{peripeteia} at Agincourt: viz., the regime of Kingly Aristocracy. For from this Agincourt victory, the ones who truly rule are not the oligarchic nobles who maintain Henry in power with the claims of wealth, but rather the commoners who invest Henry with national legitimacy and territorial loyalty, i.e., they rule with the claims of virtue which the St. Crispin’s Day speech makes.\footnote{H5 4.3.18-67.} The manhood of oligarchs is cheap; it is the virtuous nation of aristocratic warriors who make Henry’s reign a new regime of Kingly Aristocracy. Even if, like Aeschylus’ \textit{Orestea}, it celebrates more of an esthetic utopia than a real place, it still also commemorates a prudential self-consciousness of what leadership requires for politics to be practical, i.e., what is required in spite of Christianity’s impractical denigration of political life as a \textit{de casibus} pageant.

The tetralogy thus ends with Shakespeare’s England in esthetic form as the best regime. As a concrete esthetic image, it corresponds to Aristotle’s ideal where the best men rule by being recognized as the best citizens. In Shakespeare’s apotheosis of Henry’s neoclassical self-consciousness, we see portrayed an advance in evolutionary terms for the human community. That is, the logic of consent will now have to govern political life, for the revolution of 1399 set in motion an historical political evolution that culminated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688-
1689. This was the slow political realization of what Shakespeare’s Henry esthetically mirrored to the “band of brothers” at Agincourt.

**The Revolution of 1399: “This Sceptred Isle”**

Shakespeare’s *Richard II* dramatizes the regime change accomplished by the “Lancastrian revolution” of 1399. A few words are in order about the historical nature of this momentous *metabasis* and its ensuing plague of disorder. It is important to realize that this event ought not to be characterized as a coup, because of the scrupulous attention to precedent during the regime change. Articles of deposition were drawn up justifying the change by indicting Richard’s actions during his entire reign. The drama of the proceedings cannot be simplified into a confrontation between absolutism versus constitutionalism, because Richard was not deposed by parliament, Henry IV was not elected by parliament, and there was no new constitutional doctrine implemented (i.e., there is nothing one can point to as the “Lancastrian constitution”); as Bennett puts it, the lords and commons simply “confronted and out-stared the empty throne”.

What happened in historical terms was that the notion of a political nation expanded: i.e., the commonwealth underwent an education in how the crown and subjects in fact shared responsibility for the fate of the nation. Unlike the Roman conception of law, the English king is not the source of law; the king is subject to the law in a way that means that the English regime rejects princely power. Richard’s tragic metabasis is thus a didactic warning for princes who would scorn the law. For his regime was not really one of a Christian king, but more one of an absolutist Roman king (a Tyrannical Oligarchy, as we observed). Henry IV, on the other hand,

841 Bennett 1999: 201.
was too Christian as a king and thus unable to stop the plague of rebellion and civil strife with the requisite latitude for statesmanship. Hence Henry V was to be the golden mean between their two vices, becoming the mirror of a Christian king with practical politics.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 allowed the events of 1399 only in retrospect to be styled as a revolution. Henry IV had trouble managing the regime change, since being a “factional leader” was easier than being a king who had to manage the problems of patronage and a newly assertive commons. Once he absurdly asserted that he was “properly elected”, and on many occasions he mismanaged “the sacral dimension of his kingship”. As we have seen from my discussion of the Henriad in terms of the originary scene, clarity on precisely these two points is what a Christian king needs to be a good leader. Henry IV was apparently deeply confused on both. So it fell to Henry V to “affirm England’s corporate unity by launching an invasion of France” and demonstrate that the realm he ruled was indeed blessed by God in a sacral conferral of legitimacy.

Shakespeare’s imaginary account of the revolution of 1399 begins with the quarrel of Henry Bolingbroke (Richard’s cousin) with Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk in 1398 in Act I. This quarrel shows an aristocrat against an oligarch. The Duke of Norfolk is a corrupt oligarch, acting in his own interest (“on ancient malice”), misappropriating military funds (as Mowbray himself admits, but as a fact he reinterprets) and involved in the murder plot against the Duke of Gloucester (one of King Richard’s uncles): “some known ground of

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844 Cf. Bennett 1999: 202 on his popularity.
846 Bennett 1999: 203.
847 Bennett 1999: 204
848 Bennett 1999: 205.
849 R2 1.1.9. (Arden Third Series)
850 R2 1.1.88-91.
851 R2 1.1.128.
852 R2 1.1.100.
treachery”. Bolingbroke is a much more noble aristocrat, however, a knight whose concern, unlike Mowbray’s, is not for his own advantage, but rather nobly for the commonweal, and especially for its military health. The problem is that Richard was the instigator in the murder of Gloucester, and hence Bolingbroke’s challenge to Mowbray is also an indirect challenge to the King. Mowbray acknowledges that he had a “sworn duty” with regard to Gloucester’s murder, and this implies that Richard, not Mowbray, is ultimately to blame for the crime: a crime that is likened to Cain’s murder of Abel.

The Oresteia dramatized a family conflict of reciprocal revenge that portrayed the political change from tyrannical oligarchy to the liberty of the republican regime of Athens’ ancient Greek polis. Here too there is a family conflict. But in it, the monarch shields himself from accepting responsibility for the violence by hiding behind the divine right of kings. He can mobilize corrupt men like Mowbray to do his dirty work, but when public-spirited men of ambition like Bolingbroke challenge such immoral minions on grounds of chivalry, the king’s sacred central status is called into question. Shakespeare dramatizes the folly of Richard’s self-conception, a conception in which the monarch’s sacred status is invoked as a personal privilege and license. Instead, Richard is held accountable, not only to God, but also to the English nation as its corporate representative.

Richard first agrees to let Bolingbroke and Mowbray resolve their quarrel in an aristocratic duel to the death (“At Coventry upon Saint Lambert’s Day”). But the vacillating monarch then changes his mind before the duel begins. He instead banishes them both. Apparently God would vindicate Bolingbroke in the duel, and hence would indirectly pass divine judgment on Richard, His monarch; in trials by combat, God alone, as Richard acknowledges.

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853 R2 1.1.11.
854 R2 1.1.75.
855 R2 1.1.132-4.
856 R2 1.1.104.
857 R2 1.1.199.
awards victory.\textsuperscript{858} To avoid this fearful outcome, Mowbray is banished for life, but Bolingbroke for only six years. Moreover, both have to swear not to plot against Richard's regime. Both the banishments and the oaths make Richard's motives and fears transparent. Soon after Bolingbroke's banishment, his father falls ill. This is the twist of fate that will lead to the tragic political metabasis of King Richard. The death of John of Gaunt in 1399, Bolingbroke's father, the Duke of Lancaster, is the catalyst, in Act II, that sets in motion the banished son's revenge.\textsuperscript{859} King Richard confiscates the Duke of Lancaster's estate, after the dying man castigates him for his misrule.

It is no accident that Shakespeare's most famous paean to England ("this sceptred isle"), a speech in which the nation's interest is yoked with the political ideal of monarchy, is placed in this context, in the mouth of the dying Lancaster. For it invokes the ideal of the nation as a territory, a land, a realm: the ground upon which warring factions stand, and therefore which is prior to their interests. The common interest must therefore conform to this ideal of a land, a land ruled by law, which pre-politically defines the corporate interest of its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{860} The corporate interest alone is the glory of its monarch, and the touchstone of his sacrality. Because Richard has betrayed this corporate interest, John of Gaunt can prophesy the downfall of corrupt kings like Richard, whose petty interests will be outlasted and judged by the corporate interest of the nation itself:

\begin{quote}
This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{858} R2 1.1.203-4.
\textsuperscript{859} The plot summary of \textit{R2} initiated in this section is concluded in Appendix Two.
\end{flushright}
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry

This noble ideal set forth in the first part of John of Gaunt’s speech is, of course, immediately contrasted with a scathing denunciation of the ugly economic reality Richard has inflicted on the nation’s corporate interest. The contrast heightens the sense that the political regime is in extreme crisis because of such violent dissonances between ideal and reality. In other words, the situation is ripe for regime change, but the severity of the crisis means that such a political metabasis carries with it a host of new problems for the would-be statesman.

Henry IV’s regime change calls into question the doctrine of legitimacy of the king as divine representative of the nation. How can he represent this inviolate corporate body, if his reign has been founded by violence? As we have seen, Shakespeare’s Prince Hal provides the answer as he transforms himself to assume a figured sacral centrality for the nation. His Henry V will make a martial speech that will answer John of Gaunt’s longing for England to be led by one “reknowned for deeds far from home”.

But Adam Usk puts a speech in the mouth of Richard II that also answers to John of Gaunt’s esthetic utopia of desire. This Richard is the voice of resentment now speaking from the center which has attained historical consciousness that the centrality of kings is assigned from the periphery, a periphery which “remains outside them, and they are aware of their submission to it as well as of their essential detachment from it”.

My God, this is a strange and fickle land, which has exiled, slain, destroyed, and ruined so many kings, so many rulers, so many great men, and which never

861 R2 2.1.40-54. (Arden Third Series)
862 R2 2.1.59-68.
ceases to be riven and worn down by dissensions and strife and internecine hatreds.

O Deus, hec est mirabilis terra et inconstans, quia tot reges, tot presules, totque magnates exuluit, interfecit, destructit et depredauit, semper discensionibus et discordiis mutuisque inuidiis continue infecta et laborans.  

In my view, Shakespeare’s political tough-mindedness does not shrink before such realities, nor does it simply celebrate Henry V as the unproblematic apotheosis of a national ideal. What is striking about his dramatic achievement is that in the Henriad it is infused with what I have characterized as a prudential esthetic consciousness. He seems aware that now, in the age of the neoclassical esthetic, the center must realize that it can only be of significance for the periphery if it self-consciously enacts the ceremony of consent.

This is not to presume some all-knowing critical agency on Shakespeare’s part, as Girard would have it when he stylizes Shakespeare as a master of mimetic theory. Rather, with Gans, I think one best discerns Shakespeare’s esthetic significance with originary analysis. That is, something must be able to explain, for example, why the phrase “band of brothers” today can be shorthand for noble defence of a national ideal. In my view, the phrase would not have lasted past its historical moment had it not tapped into the power of the originary scene. As generative anthropology suggests, it is this originary scene that, beginning from the appearance of the first humans, still conditions the semiotic structure of every human use of signs.

Conclusion: Hal the Prince

In the neoclassical esthetic, the sacred center shifts to being occupied by a human sovereign conscious that he must furnish a guarantee of election. The Christian king’s problem is to become a divine representative by winning consent (in order to avoid his deposition). Shakespeare’s *Henriad* binds territorial loyalty to the corporate personality of the human sovereign.\(^{865}\) In this regard, Henry’s martial speech is often misread as simply Machiavellian, nationalist “warmongering”. It is instead the neoclassical antidote to the apolitical dangers of Christianity’s revelation of the “scapegoated” victim at the center of the originary scene, a revelation that threatens to deny worldly leaders a “latitude for statesmanship”. The tetralogy’s statecraft shows the reclamation of that latitude. It thus esthetically mirrors how to resolve the quarrel of a “divine” king and his subjects, i.e., through the neoclassical solution of the Christian executive that rules by consent. This esthetic achievement commemorates the real historical political achievement of statecraft’s move to a practical Christian politics of national loyalty.

The classical evolutionary achievement in statecraft moved from despotic rule to political rule (i.e., replacing the ritual justice of divinely-sanctioned reprisal killings with the civic justice of the human law) by founding an executive power (the Areopagus) to be protected as the sacred center. The neoclassical evolutionary achievement moved from despotic to political rule (i.e., replacing tyrannical divine justice with the natural justice of consent) by showing how executive tyrants need to discover Christian consent for their discretionary power.

The esthetic mirror of this historical process is characterized in the saga of the *Henriad* by a dramatization of the self-conscious political-esthetic representation that is a new evolution with the neoclassical esthetic.\(^{866}\) As we saw, this is the play-within-the-play doubling of form that marks the neoclassical as a new esthetic in response to the egalitarian claims of Christianity.

\(^{865}\) Cf. Scruton 2001: 208-212.
Throughout the *Henriad*, its “mirror of princes” thus shows us how the originary scene’s “mirror of companionship” demands that a monarch come to grips with the ceremony that furnishes the representative guarantee for his election to the sacred center. The *Henriad*’s neoclassical doubling of form incorporates the drama of the periphery’s originary election of the center into the underlying structure of many striking scenes.

Witness the self-conscious articulation of the scenic ceremony of the sacred center’s drama in relation to the periphery (which is implicit in each one of these quintessentially play-within-a-play neoclassical scenes): Richard self-consciously presents himself to all spectators of the “sad stories of the death of kings”\(^{867}\); he self-consciously presents his figured centrality as shattered by the peripheral ceremony of their representative agency;\(^ {868}\) Hal and Falstaff self-consciously present the permeability of the center to any interlopers from the periphery that may learn how to “speak like a king”\(^{869}\); Hal and Henry IV self-consciously present the ceremony of their succession, as each one in turn reciprocally plays at being the sacred center and at being the resentful periphery;\(^ {870}\) Henry V self-consciously presents the artifice of his sacred centrality, a conclusion drawn from his antics in disguise in the English camp of soldiers on the eve of Agincourt;\(^ {871}\) and his martial exhortation on St. Crispin’s Day is a self-conscious presentation of the scenic structure, i.e., of how the glory of the center is bound up with its representation by the symbolic virtues of a periphery composed of a consensual “band of brothers”.\(^ {872}\) Each of these scenes reveals, with all the striking power that they derive from the originary scenic configuration, a new prudential esthetic self-consciousness as to what most characterizes the historical legacy for the prince Hal: viz., a consciousness of the ceremony of consent.

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\(^{867}\) *R2 3.2.144-177.*

\(^{868}\) *R2 4.1.276-309.*

\(^{869}\) *IH4 2.4.366-468.* (Arden Third Series, Kastan 2002)

\(^{870}\) *2H4 4.5.1-240.*

\(^{871}\) *H5 4.1.227-281.*

\(^{872}\) *H5 4.3.18-67.*
General Conclusion: The Achievements of Statecraft

Territorial jurisdiction linked to territorial loyalty, as embodied in the Athens of Aeschylus’ Oresteia, is the human political achievement commemorated in the esthetic achievement of that trilogy. Its evolution was crystallized by executive responses to political crises. The House of Atreus now ends its cycle of vengeance because the office of the executive is imbued with a privileged status. Citizen loyalty should not be to a man, because tyrants are all too common and great men few and far between. The classical political solution found in the polis of the Oresteia’s Athens is that citizens should be loyal to the territory to whose jurisdiction they entrust themselves and the resolution of their disputes. Orestes anachronistically journeys to Athens to have his dispute settled. The significance of his acquittal is that his executive privilege is reaffirmed: salus populi suprema lex. That is, no legitimate resolution of a dispute can come through an attack on an executive office holder, since the executive is the sine qua non of civic harmony. The Furies’ submission to the Areopagus symbolizes their acceptance of this Greek political achievement.

The land rules, not man. The rule of law in Athens is “the law of the land”, a notion that becomes fully developed in the nation-state of England whose sovereign acquires legitimacy from the people of the nation.873 The Oresteia’s Areopagus is the executive, occupying the divine centre, overcoming the warring of resentful factions by decisions of prudence. Appropriate to the classical esthetic, Athena herself symbolizes its executive power and prerogative. In the neoclassical esthetic, however, the integration of Christian morality into the esthetic problematic means that a new political achievement is required to ward off the resentful periphery from attacking the all-too human executive in its centre. The Christian king occupies the divine centre, but he is no Athena. Now that Christianity has demythologized the Greek gods’ patronage of the

executive to whom they entrust civic harmony, the human king standing in the centre has to win the approval of his fellow humans. The neoclassical political achievement, therefore, is the winning of legitimacy through consent. Commemorated in the esthetic form of the *Henriad*, the Christian idea of the equality before God of all in Christ becomes practical and patriotic when integrated with the territorial loyalty and jurisdiction of the classical political-esthetic. This first wave of practical and patriotic politics started in 1399 with the deposition of Richard II, because this crisis of legitimacy set in motion the political process by which legitimacy of the Christian king was won by consent of the people loyal to the territory of his jurisdiction.

These conclusions about the *Oresteia* and *Henriad* were reached by approaching the political problems of the drama from the standpoint of looking for what esthetic form could reveal about the prudential consciousness the poets were communicating about leadership. Drawing upon the work of Girard and Gans, I developed an empirioschematic model of the origin of the human species and of its cultural evolution. This model looks to cultural texts as repositories of collective human wisdom concerning what kind of prudential esthetic consciousness has evolved in history in order to attenuate the sacrificial tendencies associated with the originary scene of human self-definition. The originary scene was an event that secured an adaptive advantage for the community to protect itself from intra-specific violence by means of symbolic representation of a sacred center for a communal feast. As this egalitarian community evolved into socially differentiated hierarchical society, other moments of evolutionary adaptation were required to secure advances in political freedom for the human community. By comparing Aristotle’s anthropological analysis of literary texts with Girard’s and Gans’, I was able to conclude that the best tragedies accomplish an esthetic deferral of resentment and the best political regimes reserve executive power for leadership that effectively manages resentment. In the *Oresteia*, the classical esthetic presents the institutional solution of the “absent executive”.

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of the Areopagus to defer resentment. In the *Henriad*, the neoclassical esthetic presents the best Christian king as the one who establishes a consensual territorial loyalty by making the corporate personality of the king identical with the fortune of the nation-state itself. Both are imperfect solutions to the eternal problem of the resentment intrinsic to the structure of the originary scene. But it is the originary scene that reveals itself in drama as that by which the human community must define itself through symbolic representation in art and in politics.
Appendices

Appendix One: Some Political Background to Shakespeare’s History Plays

1399 October  Accession of Henry IV
1413 March  Accession of Henry V
1422 August  Henry V dies at Vincennes and Henry VI succeeds him
1422 October  Charles VI of France dies and Henry VI becomes king

Appendix Two: Richard II Plot Summary (Acts II-V)

Richard justifies cheating Bolingbroke from his inheritance in order to finance his war in Ireland in 1399. Richard departs for Ireland, leaving old Edmund of Langley, the Duke of York, in charge, whose feckless protests against Richard’s highhanded conduct illustrate both his loyalty and indecision. Bolingbroke returns from exile to reclaim his rightful patrimony. Other noblemen with grievances are quick to join him: the Earl of Northumberland; Northumberland’s son, Henry Percy, nicknamed Hotspur; Lord Ross; Lord Willoughby; and various others.

Upon returning from the Irish wars, in Act III, King Richard finds himself in Wales, only to be deserted by a Welsh army that had previously been allied with him. The army’s desertion has been effected by rumours of Richard’s death. Richard discovers, moreover, that Bolingbroke has executed Bushy and Green, two followers and favourites of Richard. At this news, the King tries to take refuge in Flint Castle. Bolingbroke pursues him there and demands his title and rights as Duke of Lancaster. He professes to be demanding no more, but the King returns with him to London, escorted under arms as a prisoner.

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875 Chronology adapted from Fortescue 1997: xl.
Back in London, Richard and Bolingbroke appear before Parliament in Act IV, as Richard is tried for his high crimes against the state. The King is answerable to the nation, and his enemies demand a confession of guilt and his abdication of the throne. Richard refuses to give in to the demand, and Bolingbroke responds by imprisoning him in the Tower and then announcing that Richard will be deposed: Bolingbroke shall be crowned King “on Wednesday next”. The Bishop of Carlisle prophesies that the regime change will usher in civil war. To prevent the divine King from being deposed, he plots with the Abbot of Westminster and with the Duke of Aumerle (son of Edmund of Langley, the Duke of York), hoping to prevent the installation of a new monarch. Also of the party of Richard II are the Earl of Salisbury and Sir Stephen Scroop.

The death of Richard in 1400 in Act V seals the change of regime: Bolingbroke now reigns as Henry IV. Having usurped the tyrant’s rule, he now rules England as the just monarch, but the interruption of the divine right of kings brings civil strife out into open warfare. This final act contains Richard’s sad parting from his Queen, and the frustration of the Duke of Aumerle’s plot by his father, the loyal Duke of York. The Duke of York demands execution for his son (Henry’s cousin), but the Duchess of York pleads for and wins forgiveness for her son. Sir Pierce of Exton murders the deposed Richard in Pomfret Castle on a hint from Henry: “Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?” But Henry banishes the regicide, announces that he will do penance for his bloody enactment of regime change, and is left to live with the fallout from his irruption into the divine line of Kings.
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