

Example of essay on aristotle

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Many philosophers have come up with different definitions of tragedy. However, the definition by Aristotle remains the most comprehensive definition of the term. In his definition, Aristotle lays major emphasis on the terms pity and fear. According to him, these are the two main elements of tragedy. Absence of them means there is no tragedy. In plain words, Aristotle's definition of tragedy was: " Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its katharsis of such emotions. Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, and Melody" (Aristotle, 32) This was Aristotle's take on tragedy.

This definition explains that emotions that are brought about by tragedy include fear and pity. These are the end result of most tragedies. Fear, for instance, is a term that is used to refer to a kind of unpleasant emotion in humans or other animals that is as a result of some kind of threat. The threats in question, on the other hand, lead to some change in the functions of the brain. Ultimately, due to this threat causing fear, there is some kind of behavior change that is experienced. For instance, due to the induced fear, one may end up running away, they may decide to hide from the origin of the fear. Sometimes, there are some dire effects, such as the person freezing out and fainting.

As a response to threats, other people that are not affected by the tragedy may have some pity to the affected party. Simply put, pity means feeling for

the other party, or developing sadness and sorrow as a result of seeing a person being in a tragedy. Though the tragedy may never affect a person directly, seeing people in difficult situations may make one put themselves in their shoes and feel for them. Empathy and sympathy are the other terms that have been used by philosophers to characterize pity. In rare cases do people feel great seeing other people in tragedies. In such cases, the feeling may develop from some kind of historical poor relationship between two parties. Generally, seeing a person in a tragedy makes another different party feel sympathetic to them, or rather pity them.

The poetics of Aristotle famously associated fear and pity in defining tragedies. Plainly speaking, it is very difficult to see any relationship that the two words have in order for them to be considered in the definitions. The nature of association between pity and fear is very difficult to explain. Perhaps, one could argue that they are words that connote emotion, to different degrees. However, the reasons as to why Aristotle decided to pair these particular emotions as equals to explaining tragedies have never been explained. In drama, there are several emotions that are bound to be expressed. For instance, due to drama, the emotion of response to drama is key. Because of this, many questions have been asked as to why these emotions have not been documented and considered in the definition of tragedy by Aristotle.

Further questions that have been put forward include how poetics embraced the two emotions that Aristotle used. Plato is the classic philosopher who, unlike Aristotle, fails to see any link between fear and pity when referring to tragedies. In his works on tragedies, Plato is well remembered for employing

tragic pity. As a result, tragic fear is not well manifested in Plato's definition, and clearly, he does not see the two as being of equal importance when talking of tragedies. Plato's explanation to the results of tragedies, therefore, does not include fear. This is in great contrast to what Aristotle thought about when using the two emotions (Aristotle, 45).

It is important to note that definitions of tragic pity and fear are both theoretical and at times, they describe the emotions within tragedies that are aroused by dramatic events. Such emotions have different effects to tragedies. For instance, sometimes the emotions may relate to some descriptions theoretically while at other times, they may not relate to them. Many people have raised questions as to whether some pity and fear varieties can be argued to be predominant before individual dramatists and poetics. In essence, what this means is that as much as Aristotle uses pity and fear in his definition of tragedy, he fails to specify the variety of pity or fear that he refers to. Because the two terms take several forms, it becomes difficult to arrive at a certain conclusion as to the role they play in defining tragedy.

Post-Aristotle philosophers such as Schiller and Hegel, sometimes, developed different interpretations of what pity and fear stood for in the society. In defining tragedies, Aristotle failed to specify the type of emotions that he was referring to. For instance, such terms as *oiktos*, *eilos* and the cognates they presented as a result, are all used to imply pity. Looking at pity keenly as such leads to people developing more difficulties in understanding what Aristotle meant by pity. Aristotle did clearly not take the differences of the nature of emotions into account. Fear has also been found to be as a

composition of both psychological and bodily reactions. In essence, there are several categories of fear, which have different effects and different types of emotions that arise from poetry. Using fear as a general term, therefore, fails to specify the correct emotions that are brought up by the poetics.

Although pity and fear have several forms, it was essential that Aristotle paired them in describing tragedy. The two terms, as already argued, connote emotions to human beings. These emotions, in essence, can be aroused to people through spectacular means. They can also be as some result of the inner piece's structure. The two, when effected together in a tragedy indicate the superiority of the poet. It is important to note that Aristotle ignored the various forms of fear and pity, and instead, concentrated on the general emotions that are brought out. In referring tragedy to fear and pity, Aristotle sought to demonstrate the ultimate effects that literature may have on the receiver. The receiver is essentially the audience of the tragedy in poetry. The actual audience seems to be of little importance to Aristotle's concerns over poetry. Aristotle channeled much of his emphasis to the abstract audience and as a result, he despised the actual audience.

In explaining tragedy in poetry, Aristotle was of the opinion that the catharsis theory is to the effect that an important connection exists between how the audience responds and the structure of the tragedy/play (Aristotle, 67). This theory, in most cases, seeks to find literature's ultimate effects to the audience. This is where, though, Aristotle failed by not defining the various forms of pity and fear that he meant when defining tragedy. This led to some form of ambiguity in his take on the catharsis theory. Pity and fear,

according to Aristotle, have a kind of homoeopathic function. In general terms, this theory has been described by philosophers as being used to drive fear and pity out.

The catharsis theory has been interpreted differently by various people. The vaccine theory, for instance argues to the effect that the emotions that Aristotle uses to define tragedy are, to a large extent, raised where they never existed previously, before being released. As a result of this, emotional education will be produced which has the effect of preventing the emotions from overwhelming spectators in their real lives.

Some neoclassical philosophers have interpreted tragedies to a moral effect. Through the emotions that are brought about by tragedies, they argue that pride is warned against through fear while at the same time, they teach pity. It is important to note that this theory is inconsistent with Aristotle's notion, as he associated fear and pity as passions that should always be done away with. Although there are some positive effects of tragedy ethically, it should be noted that it does not give information and guidance on how people should behave. In essence, it plays its role through the emotions that it creates to the audience and with time, they get to learn some ethical issues from the tragedies. The manner in which tragedy raises emotions, for instance, plays a major role in changing the perspectives that people may develop towards a certain issue in the society. According to Aristotle, tragedy's teachings are always hidden and are indirect.

According to Aristotle, tragic pleasure refers to the manner in which humans get to enjoy emotional pain. However, to a large extent, this is a paradox of its own kind that has never been eliminated. Although the emotions that are

involved are not enjoyable, the end result of the results brings some kind of pleasure to the audience. As Aristotle argued, the tragic pleasures have some important moral and ethical lessons to humans. Although the term in itself seems to be contradictory, a simpler explanation makes a lot of sense as pertains the pleasures that can be as a result of tragedies.

In his works, Aristotle described the proper pleasure as being the pleasure that humans get as a result of some painful emotions which bring about pity and fear to the human beings. In essence, there is some pleasure that humans get from sorrowful emotions that people may be subjected to. The 'sad joy', throughout the centuries, has left many people seeking for valid explanations without success.

A good example of the tragic pleasure is when an individual watches horror movies. In essence, during this time, it would be wrong to argue that they agree with whatever that happens in the movie. Back in their mind, they know that it is a fiction movie and that the events taking place are totally fictional. Nevertheless, they develop some bonding to the scenes which are ugly and sorrowful. Despite the fear that is brought up by this, the humans still acquire some pleasure from watching. In watching such sorrow movies, the emotions of the audience are always made to believe that whatever they are seeing took place sometime in the earth. As much as they do not enjoy the experiences in the horror movies, they still enjoy watching the movies amid the fear and pity that it subjects them to.

Tragic pleasure connotes a situation whereby humans get to enjoy some emotional pain. Many philosophers have argued to the effect that it would be very wrong to morality for a human to enjoy tragic pleasure. Some, such as

Hume, have gone to the extent of arguing that tragic pleasure is not pleasure to the fullest sense. This is because of the difference in nature of the pleasure that is evoked between fictions and real-life situations. Fiction pleasure, according to Hume, is artistic pleasure. This, therefore, suggests that it is not pleasure due to the negative emotions produced.

Aristotle's tragic pleasure has been countered by several philosophers of the modern times. They do this by claiming that pleasure cannot be derived from tragedy. Sometimes, they also argue that the painful emotions are pleasurable. As such, there cannot exist at the same time, tragedy and pleasure. Emotions that are evoked by fiction are very different from emotions that are evoked in real experiences. As such, the tragic pleasure as argued by Aristotle has faced many criticisms as to its validity because of the number of issues it fails to address.

Nevertheless, going by Aristotle's argument on tragic pleasure, it becomes essential to seek the deepest level of the tragic pleasure. As Aristotle puts it in his works, the tragic pleasure need to be brought about by some form of fiction. It should also lead to some fear and pity. This is the 'proper pleasure' that Aristotle argues in his works. In the modern times, tragic pleasure is experienced in several occasions. It is not uncommon to see people watching horror movies in a condition that may suggest that they are not enjoying some of the experiences. However, they still appreciate some of the scenes they see.

In conclusion, Aristotle played an important role in contributing to poetry by explaining on some of the effects of literature. Fear and pity are some of the emotions that may be brought about by literature. This has been

experienced in several occasions through horror movies which bring about tragic pleasure.

Works Cited

Aristotle, and W D. Ross. Selections. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2007. Print.