

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

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*IPSA DIXIT*

*Saturday, October 27, 2018, 8 p.m.*

## I. Poetics

What is art? Art is imitation.

Art is imitation and the different arts may differ in their medium of imitation. In the music of the flute and of the lyre, harmony and rhythm are used, whereas in dancing only rhythm is used. Other arts use language alone, although the use of a meter in a text that is not artistic does not make its author a poet, nor does the use of more than one and that of multiple frequently altering meters quite disqualify a poet. There are some arts which use all of the media just described.

Tragedy is the imitation of an action not told but performed, using character, mentality, spectacle, and music-making. Character allows us to evaluate the agents, and is revealed through their mentality. Some think the audience incapable of understanding art without the added element of excessive pantomime: this error does not touch the artist, but is charged to the performers. Of the other elements of tragedy (spectacle and music-making), spectacle may have emotional resonance but does not belong to art, and the meaning of “music-making” is obvious to everyone.

Tragedy is the imitation of an action using ἠδυσμένον [“honey-sweetened”] language embellished with harmony and rhythm. The simplest style, while perfectly clear, is much too common to be beautiful. The use of exotic expressions creates a style σεμνὴ [“exotic”] and ἐξאלλάττουσα τὸ ἰδιωτικὸν [“not like the usual”]; however this usage, when overindulged, may result in gibberish.

Where [A] is to [B] as [C] is to [D], may [A] stand for [C] and [B] stand for [D]. For example: as the sower scatters seeds, so the sun’s rays scatter light, and so we may describe the sun as σπεύρων θεοκτίσταν φλόγα [“scattering god-given light”]. The skill to form such metaphors is the only gauge of genius. As art is imitation, the poet should speak as little as possible in his own voice.

Tragedy is the imitation of an action whose practitioners may imitate: things that are or were the case, things believed to be the case, and things

that ought to be the case. Works of art are held to different standards of veracity than those of politics or ethics: thus, we may depict impossibilities in a work of art, if they serve dramatic purpose. In art, the greatest error is not one of authenticity, but of mediocre imitation.

Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is complete and whole. To be complete and whole is to have a beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is that which follows from nothing and yet has a thing which follows upon it. A middle is that which naturally follows upon something else, as some other thing follows it. An end is a thing that follows from something and has nothing following. A thing whose presence or absence makes no discernable difference is not a part of the whole.

Any beautiful work of art that is so comprised of parts must have a certain appropriate magnitude: not so small that it may be apprehended in an almost imperceptible moment of time, nor so large so as to lose the to holon [“one-ness”]. In art, the appropriate magnitude is the time it takes for fortune to change from good to bad. The most important element of tragedy is the construction of the plot.

Tragedy is the imitation of an action whose plot evokes ἔλεου [“pity”] and φόβου [“fear”]. We must therefore ask: what kinds of events strike us as terrible or pitiable? Pathos may be evoked through the use of onstage murders, woundings, and so on. These effects will be stronger if produced through surprise, and still stronger if by apparent design. It is the job of the poet to use imitation to make you enjoy these tragic emotions, which are best produced through περιπέτεια and ἀναγνωρίσεις.

περιπέτεια is a change of direction in the course of events. ἀναγνωρίσεις is recognition, and a change from blindness to sight. Together these actions, when imitated, may provoke pity and fear, thus bringing about the catharsis of these emotions, which is tragedy’s object.

ὦ γενεαὶ βροτῶν,  
ὡς ὑμᾶς ἴσα καὶ  
τὸ μηδὲν ζώσας ἐναριθμῶ.  
τίς γάρ, τίς ἀνὴρ πλέον  
τᾶς εὐδαιμονίας φέρει  
ἢ τοσοῦτον ὅσον δοκεῖν  
καὶ δόξαντ ἀποκλῖναι

Oh, generations of men  
How I count you  
As nothing while you live.  
For who, what man,  
Having had abundant happiness  
For a little while, will,  
Having had it, lose everything?

— *Text by Sophocles, from Oedipus Rex*

The key to depicting emotion in art is truly to feel the emotions themselves. Thus the artist is either a talented specialist of imitation, or a lunatic who becomes carried away.

— *Text by Aristotle, abridged Soper*

## II. Only the Words Themselves Mean What They Say

### i. Go Away

When he says, “Go away and don’t come back,” you are hurt by the words even though you know he does not mean what the words say, or rather you think he probably means “Go away” because he is so angry at you he does not want you anywhere near him right now, but you are quite sure he does not want you to stay away, he must want you to come back, either soon or later, depending on how quickly he may grow less angry during the time you are away, how he may remember other less angry feelings he often has for you that may soften his anger now. But though he does mean “Go away,” he does not mean it as much as he means the anger that the words have in them, as he also means the anger in the words “don’t come back.” He means all the anger meant by someone who says such words and means what the words say, that you should

not come back, ever, or rather he means most of the anger meant by such a person, for if he meant all the anger he would also mean what the words themselves say, that you should not come back, ever. But, being angry, if he were merely to say, “I’m very angry at you,” you would not be as hurt as you are, or you would not be hurt at all, even though the degree of anger, if it could be measured, might be exactly the same. Or perhaps the degree of anger could not be the same. Or perhaps it could be the same but the anger would have to be of a different kind, a kind that could be shared as a problem, whereas this kind can be told only in these words he does not mean. So it is not the anger in these words that hurts you, but the fact that he chooses to say words to you that mean you should never come back, even though he does not mean what the words say, even though only the words themselves mean what they say.

### ii. Head, Heart

Heart weeps.  
Head tries to help heart.  
Head tells heart how it is, again.  
You will lose the ones you love. They will all go. But even the earth will go, someday.  
Heart feels better, then.  
But the words of Head do not remain long in the ears of Heart.  
Heart is so new to this.  
I want them back, says Heart.  
Head is all Heart has.  
Help, Head. Help Heart.

### iii. *Getting to Know Your Body*

If your eyeballs move, this means that you're thinking, or about to start thinking.

If you don't want to be thinking at this particular moment, try to keep your eyeballs still.

— *Text by Lydia Davis*

*"Go Away" from Almost No Memory (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997). Copyright © 1997 by Lydia Davis. Performed with permission of the Denise Shannon Literary Agency, Inc. and the author.*

*"Head, Heart," and "Getting to Know Your Body" from Varieties of Disturbance (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009). Copyright © 2009 by Lydia Davis. Performed with permission of the Denise Shannon Literary Agency, Inc. and the author.*

## III. Rhetoric

Rhetoric.

Let rhetoric equal the ability of observing/the faculty of noting/the power to see, under any given circumstances, all the available means of persuasion.

These means take three forms: ethos, character of the speaker; pathos, stirring of emotions; logos, persuasion through truth, or apparent truth, demonstrated through speech. Thus rhetoric requires skilled command of logical reasoning, knowledge of how to excite the emotions, and personification of goodness and virtue. Means of persuasion other than these include contracts, witnesses, oaths, laws, and torture: these may provide supplements to your argument.

In rhetoric, we begin with the Proemion, which states the subject and leads into the opening notes of the theme, e.g.: "μῆνιν ἄειδε θεῶν" ["Sing, Goddess, of the wrath of –"], or "ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα" ["Tell me, O Muse, of the hero who –"], et cetera.

Once we have stated the case, we must prove it, or seem to prove. We construct logical arguments thus: "all [A] is [B]. [C] is [A]. Therefore, [C] is [B]." However in Rhetoric merely stating that "[C] is [A], for it is [B]" will suffice.

These techniques are used in weaving a narrative which will convince our listeners that the topic is essential and concerns no one more than themselves. But remember that rhetoric seeks to influence human action, and in human action

there is always more than a single possible choice: thus our premises may be merely probably, not incontrovertibly, true.

All that remains is to remind our hearers of the facts of the argument, excite in them an emotion of our choosing, and end in their good graces. Thus we conclude.

O friends! I have seen firsthand the great advantages bestowed by rhetoric on all those who seek to move through speech. Permit me, therefore, for your sake, to attempt to demonstrate to you rhetoric's great value. First, let us agree that there is one goal of all human endeavor: happiness. And does not happiness depend on goodness and virtue, and is not rhetoric needed to persuade our hearers to follow the good and to do what is right? For do they not often deliberate on questions that seem to have a multitude of answers? How can we persuade if the subject is complex and, as is so often the case, our listeners incapable of following a long chain of reasoning? How else but with rhetoric can we construct an argument so as to admit of no tenable opposing view? Its detractors will say that rhetoric may be used for evil, but is this not true of all good things? Strength and health and wealth may also be used for evil, and we must never use rhetoric to persuade our listeners of things that are immoral or worthless or false or debased or which hide the truth.

Listen to me! Truth is strong, stronger than deceit! In any crisis, the truth will inexorably rise! Therefore, where truth fails, we have failed to speak

for the truth. And this, this is rhetoric's purpose: to give to the truth a voice! For it is the voice alone, of all our faculties, which can represent our thoughts and ideas. Therefore, although the most crucial elements of rhetoric are the facts and their arrangement, we must also consider their delivery, which includes the management of the voice: whether high or low, loud or soft, et cetera. Just as we aim to conceal the effort used in composing our speeches, so we should recite them using a "natural" voice. This will come across as "honest" to our listeners and will thus be more persuasive than an artificially heightened tone. Ideally, the facts should speak for themselves, and all that we should try to do as speakers is not offend anyone without worrying about entertaining anybody. Everything apart from the analytical

demonstration of truth is incidental.

Nevertheless, the style of a speech, while incidental to its content, has great power to affect the outcome. With certain listeners, even the most exact of truths will be inadequate to sway them if presented in an ill-considered way. Therefore, we must conclude, our only hope of triumph in persuasion lies in careful study and employment of the great and crucial art of rhetoric.

I have spoken. You have heard me. The facts are before you. I await your judgment.

— *Text by Aristotle, abridged/adapted Soper, and inspired by Aristotle*

#### **IV. The Crito**

##### ***i. The Dream of Achilles***

And my soul would return...  
...from the long siege  
Come back to the shores of what you are.  
Come back from the crumbling shores.  
All night...  
the tides lay down the beat  
...whose repeated spell consumes you.

Time, time. It's time.  
Achilles...has come home.  
And soon you too will be alone.

— *Text by Robert Duncan, from Achilles' Song*

##### ***ii. The Crito***

SOCRATES: Good morning Crito!

CRITO: Good morning Socrates.

SO: You're here pretty early, aren't you?

CR: Yes, I am.

SO: What time is it?

CR: Nearly dawn.

SO: I'm surprised the warden let you in this early.

CR: He knows me by now. I am here every day.

SO: Have you been waiting long?

CR: Yes, several hours.

SO: Why didn't you wake me?

CR: You were sleeping so peacefully, I didn't want to disturb you. How can you sleep like that? You're about to be executed!

SO: It would be unseemly for a man my age to resent having to die.

CR: Everyone resents having to die.

SO: That's true. So tell me, why'd you come so early?

CR: I've got some really bad news.

SO: What news? The ship's in from Delos?

CR: No, but it's supposed to get here today.

SO: And I must die the following day, right?

CR: I guess so. That's what the authorities say.

SO: Then I don't think that the ship will come in today.

CR: Why not?

SO: I had this dream last night...guess it's good you didn't wake me!

CR: What dream?

SO: A gloriously beautiful woman...dressed in a white robe...came up to me and said:

“Ὁ Σώκρατες, ἤματι κεν τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἵκοιο.” [“O Socrates, on the fourth day you will reach Pythia”]

CR: What's that supposed to mean?

SO: It means I will not be executed today, but three days from now.

CR: Then Socrates, for the last time, I'm begging you: let me break you out of here!

SO: Crito, I can only do what seems to me to be right, regardless of the predicament that I find myself in. Let's examine the situation together, and if I can't convince you that it would be wrong to break the law by escaping, then I'll go with you. Ok?

CR: Fine.

SO: Suppose that while we were planning to run away from here, or whatever you want to call it, the laws were to appear before us and say:

THE LAWS: Socrates, can you deny that you seek to destroy us, the Laws? Do you imagine that a city can survive if its laws have no force?

SO: Suppose we then reply: “yes, I intend to destroy you, because I have been condemned unjustly.”

CR: Makes sense to me.

SO: But then suppose the laws continue:

LA: Was this our understanding? Or did you not agree to abide by us, and to obey our honest ruling? Did we not give you life through the marriage of your parents? Did we not demand your education?

SO: I have no complaint against the laws of marriage or of child-rearing.

SO: Then I guess they'd say:

LA: Can you now deny you were our child, and our servant? Are you not thus bound to honor and obey us? Just as you may not harm your mother or father, so you may not harm the laws!

SO: What do you think Crito? Do the laws speak correctly?

CR: Uh...I guess so.

LA: Consider this, O Socrates,

SO: the laws would probably continue,

LA: That by living in this city, you have also chosen to abide by us, its Laws, and, having been accused, your choice was clear:

**[cadenza]:** persuade...or obey!

The fact remains...

SO: They would say,

LA: ...if you break your covenant with us, the Laws, you wrong the very state which gave you life! And when you meet the laws of the next world, they will know how you abused us, their brothers!

ἀλλὰ μὴ σε πείσῃ Κρίτων ποιεῖν ἃ λέγει μᾶλλον ἢ ἡμεῖς. [Do not listen to Crito, instead listen to us]

SO: This is what I seem to hear them saying, just as the κορυβαντιῶντες hear music in a trance, and the sound of their words drowns out all voices. But speak, if you have anything to say.

— *Text by Plato, abridged/adapted Soper*

## V. Metaphysics: texts

We all, by our nature, desire to know. But how is knowledge acquired? We are none of us able to know the whole of truth, yet neither can each of us fail completely in knowing some part of the nature of things. Therefore, though we each contribute but little or nothing, in combining the efforts of all individuals seeking the truth, we will find the result is something of magnitude. As the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so are the minds of our souls to the splendor of the most natural truths.

We begin by wondering at observable facts (what is the diagonal of a square? Why is a circle two pi?), advancing to somewhat more complex matters of greater concern (why does the moon wax and wane? What substance makes up the stars? How is the solstice produced?), until we arrive at the most fundamentally difficult questions, most crucial, most basic, and yet most remote from empirical reasoning: what is the nature of being? Some say this nature resides in principles, made from opposites: odd and even, one and many, male and female, good and bad. Some say that the source of being is one.

Regardless, we may say that the search for truth is the search for cause: what causes things to be?

We may consider four types of cause. Material cause, of what things are made: the cause of the flute is silver and gold. Formal cause, the form or the pattern: the cause of the octave is a two-to-one ratio. Efficient cause, the source of the movement: the cause of the drumroll is the percussionist. Final cause, the ultimate purpose: our taste for enjoyment is the cause of music.

So much for the why, now as to the what: what does it mean to be? I do not come to be myself only when I am musical, nor do I cease to be me when I lose this characteristic. Therefore, there must be some fundamental substance which is preserved despite alteration, as all complex sounds consist of the same constituent parts.

When the physical characteristics of things, the length and breadth and depth, are stripped away, that which remains we call "matter." But matter cannot be the fundamental substance, for that must be something eternal, which does not change

– as a circle is eternal, whole and complete and continuous.

Form exists apart from matter. But is an object separate from its form? When the object is taken apart, the form no longer exists but the elements exist, and these elements are made of elements. The fundamental substance must be indestructible, unable to be broken apart.

And if there exists no fundamental substance, but only individual things, we can never know anything, for when individual things are removed from our senses, how can we be completely certain that they still exist? The fundamental substance must exist apart from the realm of perceivable things.

Everything that changes is changed by something and into something which, thus changed, then changes something into that which, thus changed,

then changes something into that which, thus changed, then changes something into that which is changed and which changes. And this series must have a first term, for beauty and perfect goodness is not in the final effect but in the original cause, which produces change but is not itself changed, and which, we have discovered, is eternal, indestructible, and which lies outside the empirical world.

Somewhere, beyond the fixed stars, the First Mover produces all motion through infinite time; and is itself unmoved; and has no motion but thought.

And we long to be in that state of supreme contemplation.

And we sometimes are.

– *Text by Aristotle, abridged/adapted Soper*

## VI. Cipher

### *i. Jenny Holzer feat. Ludwig Wittgenstein*

“I came to language because I wanted to be explicit about things...and it became clear that the only way to do it was to use language. People can understand you when you say...something.”

– *Jenny Holzer, interview in The Progressive (Apr. 1993: 30)*

### *ii. Pietro Bembo feat. Michael Drayton*

‘A.’...con ciò sia cosa che ella più di spirito, e più al cielo ne va esso spirito.

Viene ultimamente la ‘U,’ molto più ristretto, il che toglie alla bocca e allo spirito dignità...

Debole e leggiero e chinato e tuttavia dolce spirito, è richiesto alla ‘I’...soave nondimeno alquanto.

Buono è il suono della ‘O,’ allo spirito della quale mandar fuori, il che rotondo e sonoro nel fa uscire.

‘A.’... it is this that sends out the most spirit, and so sends the most spirit up to the heavens.

We come last to ‘U,’ much more restricted, a pulling-out takes away from the mouth the dignified spirit...

Weak and slight and bent, and yet with a sweet spirit, next we come to ‘I,’ which is very gentle.

How good is the sounds of ‘O,’ which sends the spirit out with lips quite extended, it is round and sonorous as it exits.

...while we are abroad,  
Shall we not touch our lyre?  
Shall we not sing an ode?  
...Though in the utmost peak  
A while we do remain...

— *Michael Drayton, from An Ode Written in the Peak*

### **iii. Introducing Sigmund Freud**

*[Spoken by soprano, simultaneously with violinist]:*

The dream is not comparable to the irregular sounds of a musical instrument, which, instead of being played by the hand of a musician, is struck by some external force; the dream is not meaningless, not absurd, does not presuppose that one part of our store of ideas is dormant while another part begins to awake. It is a perfectly valid psychic phenomenon, actually a wish-fulfillment. It may be enrolled in the continuity of the intelligible psychic activities of the waking state....It is built up by a highly complicated intellectual activity. The first dream which we have considered was the fulfillment of a wish; another may turn out to be the realization of an apprehension; a third may have a reflection as its content....Are there, then, dreams other than wish- dreams; or are there none but wish- dreams?

*[Spoken by violinist, simultaneously with soprano]:*

If, in the evening, I eat anchovies, olives, or other strongly salted foods, I am thirsty at night, and therefore I wake. The waking, however, is preceded by a dream...namely, that I am drinking....And then I wake, and find that I have an actual desire to drink. Even if we conclude that every dream has a meaning and psychic value, we must nevertheless allow for the possibility that this meaning may not be the same in every dream. The first dream which we have considered was the fulfillment of a wish. If the dream, as this theory defines it, represents a fulfilled wish, what is the cause of the striking and unfamiliar manner in which this fulfillment is expressed?

— *Sigmund Freud, from The Interpretation of Dreams (trans. James Strachey)*

### **iv. Guido d'Arezzo presents Sarah Teasdale (feat. Jenny Holzer)**

Sicut omne quod dicitur scribitur, ita ad cantum redigitur omne quod scribitur. Canitur ergo omne quod dicitur.

Just as everything that can be spoken can be written, so everything can be made into song that can be written. Therefore everything can be made into song that can be spoken.

— *Sarah Teasdale, from Moods*

“I came to language because I wanted to be explicit about things...and it became clear that the only way to do it was to use language. People can understand you when you say...something.”

— *Jenny Holzer, IBID*

So one and the same sign can be common to two different symbols.  
In this way the most fundamental confusions are easily produced.  
In order to recognize a symbol by its sign, we must observe how it is used with a sense.

— *Ludwig Wittgenstein, from Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (trans. Frank P. Ramsey and C.K. Ogden)*