CHAPTER 5

LABOR ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNIÓN OF CAMARAS
Chapter 5
LATER INTERPRETATIONS OF THE THEORY OF CATHARSIS

The fact that the term Catharsis is not explicitly explained by Aristotle in the 'Poetics' gave free rein to the imaginative speculations of later exegeses of Aristotle. Prof. Else notes that there are as many as "147 different books, dissertations and articles since 1856 whose titles clearly indicate that they deal specifically with Catharsis." It is not possible to master this flood of publications. In fact, there are two main lines of interpretation of Catharsis. "The exegeses of Aristotelian Catharsis have chiefly devoted their efforts to arguing the question whether the term 'Catharsis' is a medical Hippocratic metaphor implying the purgation or expulsion of something harmful, the emotions themselves - or is a religious or moral metaphor, implying the purification or depersonalization of our usually selfish emotions of pity and fear." We shall now study these two major implications of the term Catharsis in the later interpretations.

The idea of Catharsis, in the sense of a working off of emotions brought about by something that excites emotion was

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not unknown in late Greek literature. It is recognised in reference to music by Plutarch (circa 46-119 A.D.) and Aristides Quintilanus (2nd or 3rd cen. A.D.) and in reference to drama by Isamblichus (250-330 A.D.) and Proclus (410-485 B.C.)\(^3\). The theories reproduced by these writers are clearly of peripatetic origin, and on exactly the same lines as the Aristotelian justification of the emotional force of music and of the drama in the brief statement in the 'Politics'.

Prof. Bywater notes that "In his very curious chapter on the 'akrathoresios', on whom wine is said to have a sedative effect, Plutarch illustrates the paradox (Lu Conv. 3.8, 657a) by a parallel instance, that of the sad airs at funerals, which while exciting the grief of the mourners at the same time work off their sorrow."\(^4\)

In Aristides Quintilanus' 'De Musica', 3.25, the description of the Cathartic effect of the music and dancing in the Bacchic and other mysteries has a distinct Aristotelian imprint.

In 'De Mysterioris', 3.9 (ed. Porthez), writing as a Neoplatonic occultist against the naturalistic explanation of enthusiasm, Isamblichus insists that it is an error to regard

\(^3\) I have cited these references from Ingram Bywater - Aristotle on the Art of Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 156-59.

\(^4\) Ibid., p.157.
the offset of the enthusiastic music as being of the nature of a mere "spokatharais", a working off or evacuation of some morbid product within the soul. Prof. Bywater says, "There is reason to think that the theory thus set aside was that of Theophrastus, and through him, of Aristotle.... The theory, Isambichus is accepting for the moment is that the passions cannot be suppressed for any length of time with impurity; that they require an occasional outlet (spokathaironemai) to keep them quiet, and that the secret of our interest in the drama is that it serves to work off our emotion".5

It is clear that Isambichus must have had a pathological explanation of the effect of the drama before him. But he has taken the edge off the Aristotelian theory by giving it an ethical turn; It will be seen that he makes the Cathartic of passions mean the same thing as the moderation of them, thus anticipating by many centuries the interpretation of 'purifying emotions' now usually associated with the names of Heinsius and Lessing.

The Cathartic effect of the drama is one of the many controversial points discussed by Proclus in his commentary on Plato's 'Republic'. According to Proclus the Aristotelian answer to Plato was that the drama serves a useful purpose as an outlet for emotions which would disturb the peace of the

5 Ibid., pp. 157-58.
soul, if their just claims were not recognised and from time to time duly satisfied by means of some such gratification as is supplied in the theatre. This view of the effect of the drama Proclus attributes to Aristotle, but the statement in its existing form seems rather to have been taken from some follower of Aristotle, possibly from Theophrastus, its pharmacology representing the sense rather than the words of the aristotelian original.

Disengaged from its neoplatonic surroundings in Isamblician and Proclus, the Catharsis theory before them may be thus reconstructed in outline. The drama has a therapeutic rather than a directly moral effect; and the excitement it supplies is required by us at times to carry off or purge away certain emotions and relieve the soul of the disgust they would cause, if defrauded, the satisfaction naturally due to them. The whole theory in fact is simply a fuller and more complete version of that we still have in brief in the 'Politics' with 'apokatharsia' in place of the primitive aristotelian term 'Katharsis'.

In the Renaissance period we find Italian critics like Minturno (The Art of Poetry, 1564) helped to revive and perpetuate the physiological interpretation. He writes,

"as a physician eradicates, by means of poisonous medicine, the fervid poison of disease which affects the body, so tragedy purges the mind of
its impetuous perturbation by the force of those emotions beautifully expressed in verse."  

Here, he adheres to the pathological connotation of the metaphor.

It is 'purgeation' in Aristotle's sense when Lyly (1554-1606) speaks of "the roote Sabarbe, which beinge full of choler, purge the choler", or when Shakespeare's Richard II explains, "Let's purge this choler without letting blood".  

It is Milton (1608 to 1642) who unhesitatingly embraces the medical meaning when he talks of the sublime moral dignity of the form in his preface to Samuel Agineson: "Tragedy as it was ancientsly componsed, hath been over hold the gruwest, the moralist and most profitible of all other poeme: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passion that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: For so in physick things of melancholic hue and quality are used against sour, salt to remove salt humour."  

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Here, Milton links the older notion of tragedy as helpful in the reduction to just measure of bodily excess with the medieval physiology of the combination of the four cardinal humours. Milton seems to use the theory here in the Hippocratic sense of removal of excess by purgation and the achievement of a moral and spiritual poise which is supposed by him to be the effect of classical tragedy. The closing lines of Samson Agonistes:

"He servents he, with new acquiet of true experience, from this great event with peace and consolation hath dismissed

And calm of mind, all passion spent — confirm

Milton's view of the 'Catharsis' of tragedy.

We must note here as Prof. Lucas says,

"The Catharsis of such passions doeth not mean that the passions are purified and subdued; it doth not mean that men are purged of their passions; it means 'simply that the passions themselves are reduced to a healthy balanced proportion'."

Thus we see that in the ancient and in the medieval times 'Catharsis' was interpreted in its pathological — physiological meaning.

In all these above interpretations the Aristotelian exegestes have explained the term Catharsis as a medical

 Lucas, pp. 32-33.
metaphor, implying the pathological effect – purgation or expulsion of something harmful – the excessive emotions of pity and fear.

Now we shall examine the second major interpretation of the term Catharsis as 'purification' a religious or moral metaphor, implying the purification or aesthetic depersonalization of our usually selfish emotions of pity and fear. According to this interpretation Catharsis is supposed to be a metaphor from the religious rites of humiliation or purification, whereby the hand or soul was cleansed from some pollution or stain of sin. According to this 'purifying' concept the term 'Catharsis' would naturally imply that certain passions require 'purification' from something, i.e. from something more or less of the nature of an impurity. What this element of impurity is, and in what sense, the emotions in question are supposed to become 'pure' are points on which, there is a great divergence of opinion among the upholders of this interpretation of Catharsis.

Lessing's (1787) Interpretation of Catharsis

Lessing is one of the chief exponents of this theory of 'purifying' emotions. In his work 'Hamburgische Dramaturgie', published in 1767-7, he discusses the great critical problem, the relation of a German national drama to the pseudo-classical French Theatre and consequently the true mind of antiquity which
the later parodied. In this book Lessing takes his stand upon
the 'Poetics' of Aristotle. He says,

"I do not hesitate to confess (even if in those
enlightened times I am to be laughed out of
consequence for it) that I hold the Poetics to
be as infallible as the elements of Euclid.
Its principles are just as true and as certain,
only not so simple, and therefore more exposed
to misrepresentation. Especially I believe that
I can prove with reference to tragedy, the account
of which is preserved to us pretty complete, that
it cannot move a step from Aristotle's direction
without departing from its own perfection in the
same measure."

Lessing understood Catharsis as a conversion of
passions into virtuous dispositions, asserting, beyond doubt
that the aim of all poetry is to inspire a love for virtue.

Lessing was first, to point out the interdependence of pity
and fear from the 'Rhetoric'. Lessing brings in the recipro-
cal definition of pity and fear from 'Rhetoric' to understand
the concept of Catharsis. As Prof. Boscanquet says,

Lessing takes "the greatest step on which the later
and more subtle theory, both of Lessing himself and
also of Bernays, is founded".

Pity and Fear in their relation to real life are
reckoned by Aristotle as 'disquieting element'. Each of them,
according to the definition in the 'Rhetoric', is a form of
pain. Lessing substitutes Burke's 'sympathy', the German

10 Cited from Bernard Boscanquet, History of Aesthetics,
11 Ibid., p.235.
'Mitlleiden' (which merely means sharing the feeling or suffering of another) for the Greek term 'cloee' or 'pity'. And he brings the whole modern or romantic conception so powerfully developed by Lessing, of the widening of the individual self into the great self of humanity. Lessing bases his theory on the same passage from the Politics, where Aristotle describes the three kinds of music. The religious Frenzy or 'enthusiastic' is cured by the 'enthusiasm', and it is evident from this, that enthusiasm is considered both as a cure and as a disease. Pity and Fear seem to be identified with the minor forms of mental disturbance and enthusiasm for the more serious religious manifestations. Persons who suffer from pity and fear in a mild degree are compared to those violent sufferers who are benefitted by the Frenzy of exotic religious rites and the sacred songs connected with them. The enthusiastic music (that of the hymns of Olympus for instance) has a salutary effect on those subjects of 'enthusiasm', restoring them to a normal condition of calm and peace.

With this explanation of the passage in the 'Politics', Lessing says,

"The tragic purification of the passions, consists, morally in the conversion of pity and fear into virtuous habits of mind (Tugendhafte Fertigkeiten). But as with every virtue, according to Aristotle, there are on either side of it extremes of excess and defeat, between which it stands as a mean, Tragedy if it is to turn pity into virtue, must be able to purify us from both extremes of pity and it must do the same thing with fear likewise." 12

12 Bywater, p.160.
Barnays, expanding Lessing’s interpretation also thinks that Aristotle intends to insist on the essential interconnec-
tion of ‘sympathy’ and ‘fear’, in the sense that our feelings of a common nature and possibilities shared by ourselves and the person in the drama awaken in us the thought of our own participation in that human destiny which can do such things as we see. He says,

"It is only when the actual (material, external) fear operates indirectly through sympathy with a person, that the process of purgation can take place in the spectator’s mind, by the individual self being enlarged into the self of all humanity, and so coming face to face with the terribly sublime laws of the universe and therein comprehensible power, which develops mankind, and being penetrated by that sort of fear which as an ecstatic shudder in presence of the universe is pleasurable in the highest way and without disturbance."

It is clear that while professing to remain within the Aristotelian theory of tragedy, we have here a generalised conception of tragic motive. It may be a development inherent in Aristotle’s theory, but it is not evident from the words preserved in the ‘Poetics’. Yet if we are asked how far it represents Aristotle’s meaning, it is difficult to answer because we can only have the written word and not what Aristotle himself may have understood.

Prof. Bywater points out in his commentary that

13 Bosanquet, p.236.
"This whole theory, as stated even by Lessing, is open to many and very grave objections. (1) It confuses two distinct things, the purification of the soul from a feeling, (2) It confuses the idea of 'pure' and 'moderate', though there is no direct logical or other relation between them; excess or defect in certain matters may be a fault, but they cannot be termed 'imperfect'. The primary error, however in this and similar interpretation of 'Katharos von Katharos', is that it reads a directly moral meaning into the term, as though the theatre were a school and the tragic poet a teacher of morality'.

Butcher's (1894) Interpretation

The next outstanding interpretation of Katharos as 'purification' of feelings is put forward by Prof. . . . .

Butcher in his learned Essay - 'Function of Tragedy'. Here he adopts the illustrative implication of the term Katharos. It connects more readily with normal modern views about the dignity of the tragic experience and its enlargement of our souls. In his essay, the 'Function of Tragedy', after explaining Bernays' theory based on the passage of the 'Politics', Butcher writes, "Now, Bernays transferred the Katharos of the Politics almost without modification of meaning to the simple idea of an emotional relief, a pleasurable vent for overcharged feeling. This idea, no doubt, almost exhausts the meaning of the phrase as it is used in the 'Politics'. It also expresses, as has been above explained, one important...

aspect of the tragic Pathos. But the word, as taken by Aristotle into his terminology of art, has probably a further meaning. It expresses not only a fact of psychology or of pathology, but a principle of art. The original metaphor is in itself a guide to the full aesthetic significance of the term.

In the medical language of the school of Hippocrates it strictly denotes the removal of a painful or disturbing element from the organism, and hence the purifying of what remains, by the elimination of alien matter. Applying this to tragedy we observe that the feelings of pity and fear in real life contain a morbid and disturbing element. In the process of tragic excitation they find relief, and the morbid element is thrown off. As the tragic action progresses, when the tumult of the mind, first roused, has afterwards subsided, the lower forms of emotion are found to have been transmuted into higher and more refined forms. The painful element in the pity and fear of reality is purged away; the emotions themselves are purged. The curative and tranquillising influence that tragedy exercises follows as an immediate accompaniment of the transformation of feeling. Tragedy, then, does more than effect the homeopathic cure of certain passions. Its functions on this view is not merely to provide an outlet for pity and fear, but to provide for them a distinctively aesthetic satisfaction, to purify and clarify them by passing them
through the medium of art". Prof. Butcher further explains the nature of this clarifying process by explaining the nature of tragic emotions of pity and fear. He believes that the experience of pity and fear in a tragedy is different from their experience in real life. He says,

"The conditions of dramatic representation, and above all the combined appeal which tragedy makes to both feelings, will considerably modify the emotions as they are known in actual reality. Pity in itself undergoes no essential change. It has still for its object the misfortunes of 'one who is undeserving' which phrase, as interpreted by Aristotle (Poet. ch.xiii), means not a wholly innocent sufferer, but rather a man who meets with suffering beyond his deserts. The emotion of fear is profoundly altered when it is transferred from the real to the imaginative world. It is no longer the direct apprehension of misfortune impending over our own life. It is no longer on the actual approach of danger. It is the sympathetic shudder we feel for a hero whose character in its essentials resembles our own.

The tragic sufferer is a man like ourselves; and on this inner likeness the effect of tragedy, as described in the 'Poetics', mainly hinges. Without it our complete sympathy would not be enlisted. The resemblance on which Aristotle insists is one of moral character. His hero (Poet. ch.xiii) is not a man of flawless perfection nor yet one of consumate villainy; by which we must not understand that he has merely average or mediocre qualities. He rises, indeed, above the common level in moral elevation and dignity, but he is not free from frailties and imperfections. His must be a rich and full humanity, composed of elements

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15 Butcher, pp.252-55.
which other men possess, but blended more harmoniously or of more potent quality. So much human nature must there be in him that we are able in some sense to identify ourselves with him, to make his misfortune our own. At the same time he is raised above us in external dignity and station. He is a prince or famous man who falls from a height of greatness. Apart from the impressive effect of the contrast so presented, there is a gain in the hero being placed at an ideal distance from the spectator. We are not confronted with outward conditions of life too like our own. The pressure of immediate reality is removed we are not painfully reminded of the cares of our own material existence. We have here part of the refining process which the tragic actions undergo within the region of art. They are disengaged from the petty interests of self, and are on the way to being universalised.

He concludes his interpretation with:

"Pity and Fear awakened in connection with those larger aspects of human suffering, and kept in close alliance with one another, become universalised emotions. What is purely personal and self-regarding drops away. The spectator who is brought face to face with grander sufferings than his own, experiences a sympathetic ecstasy, or lifting out of himself. It is precisely in this transport of feeling which carries a man beyond his individual self, that the distinctive tragic pleasure resides. Pity and fear are purged of the impure element which clings to them in life. In the glow of tragic excitement those feelings are so transformed that the net result is a noble emotional satisfaction." 17

Here we see that Prof. Butcher implements many modern ideas and subtleties in the theory of Catharsis. As

16 Ibid., pp.253-61.
17 Ibid., p.267.
said before we have no evidence of such meanings in the words of the 'Poetics'. Prof. Batcher himself is aware of that fact as he writes,

"The sting of the pain, the disquiet and unrest, arise from the selfish element which in the world of reality clings to these emotions. The pain is expelled when the taint of egoism is removed. If it is objected that the notion of universalizing the emotions and ridding them of an intrusive element that belongs to the sphere of the accidental and individual is a modern conception, which we have no warrant for attributing to Aristotle, we may reply that if this is not what Aristotle meant, it is still true that the natural outcome of his doctrine, to this conclusion his general theory of 'Poetry points'."

Bywater's (1909) Interpretation

After Prof. Batcher, the next prominent Aristotelian exeget is Prof. Ingram Bywater. In his learned commentary he gives and explains both the major interpretations of the theory of Catharsis and concludes,

"That, however, is not Aristotle's theory: the great function of the tragic poet, he thinks, is to excite certain emotions and procure us the pleasure that must accompany such excitement (Poet. 14, 1453 b 11). This pleasurable excitement of emotion, in fact, is with him the end and aim of Tragedy, so far as the poet himself is concerned. The statesman, however, viewing human nature and society as a whole, is able to

10 Ibid., pp.263-69.
look beyond all this, and see the ultimate justification of the existence of tragedy. In the politics, accordingly, Aristotle recognizes the usefulness of Tragedy, explaining that it supplies a natural want, as a sort of Catharsis of emotion, which as emotional creatures can require from time to time to keep their souls in health and quietude. This is a reasonable apology for tragedy and a sufficient answer to Plato’s criticism.  

Thus Bywater also accepts ‘Catharsis of emotions’ as the justified meaning of the theory.

Taylor’s (1919) Interpretation

A. J. Taylor in his book ‘Aristotle’ (1919) explains the theory of Catharsis in the following manner. After comparing Aristotle with Plato he says,

“Shore is, however, one important difference between the two philosophers which must be noted, because it concerns Aristotle’s chief contribution to the philosophy of fine art. Plato had in the Republic proposed to expel the ‘florid, languishing or unduly exciting forms of music not only from the schoolroom, but from life altogether, on the ground of their unwholesome tendency to foster an unstable and morbid character in those who enjoy them. For the same reason he had proposed the entire suppression of tragic drama. Aristotle has a theory which is directly aimed against this overrestrained Puritanism. He holds that the exciting and sensational art which would be very bad as daily food may be very useful

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Bywater, p.161.
as an occasional medicine for the soul. He would retain even the most sensational forms of music on account of what he calls their "purgative" value. In the same spirit he asserts that the function of tragedy with its sensational representations of the calamities of its heroes, is "by the vehicle of fear and pity to purge our minds of those and similar emotions."

The explanation of the theory is to be sought in the literal sense of the medical term "purging". According to the medical view which we have already found influencing his ethical doctrine, health consists in the maintenance of an equality between the various ingredients of the body. Every now and again it happens that there arise superfluous accretions of some one ingredient, which are not carried away in the normal routine of bodily life. These give rise to serious derangement of function and may permanently injure the working of the organism, unless they are removed in time by a medicine which acts as a purge, and clears the body of a superfluous accumulation. The same thing also happens in the life of the soul. So long as we are in good spiritual health our various feelings and emotional moods will be readily discharged in action, in the course of our daily life. But there is always the possibility of an excessive accumulation of emotional "moods" for which the routine of daily life does not provide an adequate discharge in action. Unless this tendency is checked we may contract dangerously morbid habits of soul. Thus we need some medicine for the soul against this danger, which may be to it what a purgative is to the body.

Now it was a well-known fact, observed in connection with some of the more extravagant religious cults, that persons suffering from an excess of religious frenzy might be cured homoeopathically, so to say, by artificially arousing the very emotion in question by the use of exciting music. Aristotle extends the principle by suggesting that in the artificial excitement aroused by violently stimulating music or in the transports of sympathetic apprehension and pity with which we follow the disasters of the
stage-hero® we have a safe and ready means of ridding ourselves of morbid emotional strain which might otherwise have worked havoc with the efficient conduct of real life.

The great value of this defence of the occasional employment of sensation as a medicine for the soul is obvious. Unhappily it would seem to have so dominated Aristotle's thought on the functions of dramatic art as to blind him to what we are accustomed to think the nobler function of tragedy.20

Taylor concludes his interpretation with the remark:

"But it may be worthwhile to remark that the worth of Aristotle's account of tragedy as art criticism has probably been vastly over-rated."21

We may not agree with Prof. Taylor's remark that the worth of Aristotle's account of tragedy as art-criticism is overrated. We have seen in Aristotle's concept of tragedy that he has touched many fundamental points about art and the power of artists to arouse or evoke the emotions. It is obvious that he interprets Catharsis in its pathological meaning.

Interpretation of Ross (1923)

J.D. Ross, in his book 'Aristotle (1923) adheres to the 'Purification' theory of Catharsis but emphasizes on the

21 Ibid., p. 90.
pleasure which he thinks is the ultimate aim of art. After explaining the passage in the 'Politics', he writes,

"Three things are to be noted here - (1) that cathartic melodies are distinguished from those which are ethical and aim at 'instruction', i.e. at improvement of character. This is itself almost enough to refute those who make Aristotle's account of tragedy a moralistic one involving the purification of the passions. The aim under which that of tragedy is subsumed is pleasure. The fine arts in general are among those which aim at pleasure, in distinction from the useful arts which produce the necessaries of life and from the sciences which aim at knowledge. But the pleasure arising from catharsis is a specific one, distinct from that of mere relaxation and amusement. The tragic poet must aim at producing the pleasure aroused by relief from pity and fear, and no other. Whether Aristotle definitely recognized aesthetic pleasure as a species, included under pleasure in general, and including the pleasures produced by the various arts, is doubtful. (2) The language is medical, and more clearly seen to be medical, the more closely it is examined in connection with Aristotle's biological works and the Hippocratic writings. (3) Aristotle's usage elsewhere shows that 'the purgation of such emotions' probably means 'the removal of them', not (as has more usually been supposed) 'the removal of the inferior elements in them'. But it does not mean the entire removal of them; Aristotle would not think it good for a man to be entirely freed from all tendency to fear or to pity; there are things which we ought to fear, and things which we ought to pity. It means 'the removal of them in so far as they are in excess'. There is nothing in the medical association of catharsis that forbids this interpretation and common sense is in its favour.32"

But it does ask many questions which suggest that the theory of Catharsis so interpreted, does not explain the full significance of the tragic experience. He asks, "Do most men in fact go about with an excessive tendency to pity and fear? And are they in fact relieved by witnessing the sufferings of the tragic hero? That we somehow benefit by seeing or reading a great tragedy and that it is by pity and fear that it produces its effect, is beyond doubt, but is not the reason to be found elsewhere? Is it that people deficient in pity and fear because their lives give little occasion for such feelings are for once taken out of themselves and made to realise the heights and depths of human experience? Is not this enlarging of our experience, and the accompanying teaching of 'self-knowledge and self-respect' the real reason of the value which is placed upon tragedy?"

Lucas on Catharsis

P.L. Lucas points out very succinctly that the theory of Catharsis as 'purification' is not correct and is inadequate to explain the tragic experience in its fuller significance. First, there has been age-long controversy about Aristotle's meaning, though it has almost always been accepted that whatever he meant was profoundly right. Many, for example, have translated Catharsis as 'purification', 'correction or refinement',

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23 Ibid., pp.234-35.
'reinigung', veredlung', or the like. It has been suggested that our pity and fear are "purified" in the theatre by becoming disinterested. It is bad to be selfishly sentimental, timid, and querulous, but it is good to pity Othello or to fear for Hamlet. Our selfish emotion has been "sublimated". All this is most edifying, but it does not appear to be what Aristotle intended.

There is strong evidence that Catharsis means, not purification but purgation. A medical metaphor (Aristotle was the son of a physician), yet, owing to changes in medical thought, purgation has become radically misleading to modern minds. Inevitably we think of purgatives, and complete evacuation of waste products, and then outrages critics ask why our emotions should be so ill-treated. But Catharsis means 'Purgation, not in the modern, but in the older, wider, English sense which included the partial removal of excess 'humeurs'."

Lucas also points out that one should not mistake "Aristotle's definition of tragedy to mean that he thought Catharsis the one and only function of drama. And so elsewhere, in moments less austere, he mentions also what to most of us seems more important in drama - its pleasures; the pleasure of catharsis itself, of emotions relieved; the pleasure of artistic representation; the pleasure of style, metre and music; the pleasure also (though it should remain subordinate) of scenic effects."25

24 Lucas, op. cit., p.37.
25 Ibid., pp.45-46.
But still the stress on Catharsis as the main aim of tragedy remains and "Aristotle is speaking as moralist and legislator. The popular attraction of Tragedy may be that appropriate pleasure, which, as Aristotle himself says, it is also its business to give, yet the actual benefit of Tragedy might none the less be this purgation from excess of emotions like pity and fear."26

Prof. Lucas is not ready to accept such a theory of Catharsis because he believes we go to the theatre not because we are suffering from excess of emotions but from deficiency and we go on not to be 'purged' but to be fed.

"And so we too go to tragedies not in the least to get rid of emotions, but to have more abundantly; to banquet, not to purge. Our lives are often dull; they are always brief in duration and confined in scope; but in drama or fiction, even the being 'whose dull morrow cometh and is as today is' can experience, vicariously something more."27

He concludes with, "To conclude, the theory of Catharsis seems to be interesting, and not without some truth; but for less profound that critical mystery-saugering has tried to make it. If one were pleading before the government

26 Ibid., pp.47-48.
27 Ibid., p.73.
of some new utopia, against some new Rousseau, in favour of
allowing drama, it would be unwise, I think, to base one's
case very much on the doctrine of Catharsis. 23

Jarry's (1962) Interpretation

Prof. J.G. Jarry in his book, 'Greek aesthetic
Theory' thinks from the passage in the 'Politics' that
Aristotle was conscious of both medical and religious ana-
logies, when he used the term Catharsis. Prof. Jarry thinks
that the history of the word Catharsis makes it quite natural
that both analogies should have suggested themselves to
Aristotle. But he does not agree with the general idea - "The
very notion that morbid passions may be exercised simply by
giving them expression is psychologically false; and to
attribute such an idea to Aristotle is an affront to the
memory of one who was a penetrating psychologist." 29

He further adds,

"The Cathartic experience, then is obviously both
hymnistic and moral. It is psychiatric. The
difference between the religious and medical view
- so much debited - is not really important, since
the fundamental notion is one of ablation under hypnosis, but if the point be pressed
it would seem that, paradoxically, Aristotle's
view of "religious" Catharsis is medical, while
his concept of artistic Catharsis is religious.
For he clearly indicates that the Catharsis of
enraged songs caters for psychopaths, while the
Cathartic elements of ordinary music are a
relief to ordinary people in whom anxiety states

28 Ibid., p.53.
29 J.G. Jarry, Greek Aesthetic Theory (London:
are not so strongly pronounced. The difference between religious and medical psychology is to be found in a different concept of normality. To the medical man normal mentality is average mentality. To a religious view, the normal is the ideal and the average is psychopathic.  

He concludes his interpretation with the words - "at the same time, a term such as deathless with its purificatory or clarificatory implications suggests some degree of moral or rational amelioration, such as might well mark the end as distinct from the process of act. . . . . Aristotelian seems to demand that the hypnotic and fascinating power of poetry shall be exercised in pursuit of a moral or rational end." 31

**Elia's (1957) Interpretation**

Prof. Gerald V. also in his encyclopedic work, "Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument", gives altogether different interpretation of the 'Oedipus' clause of the famous definition of tragedy. He is so fed up with the whole controversy over Oedipus that he thinks, "the question remains whether it should not be declared officially closed or closed." 32 Noting the fact that nothing has been said about Oedipus, before the definition, he bases his interpretation on what is

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30 Ibid., pp.126-127.
31 Ibid., p.128.
32 Also, op.cit., p.225.
said later in chapters 13 and 14 of the 'Poetics'. He says,

"Tragedy which imitates action, is itself an action. According to Aristotle's analysis, which is put forward and strongly emphasized later in this chapter, this action is represented by the plot, the plot is the imitation of it. ... The purification, then, is carried forward by the plot, the structure of events, which is the poet's con indispensable contribution to the play ... this reading makes Catharsis a process, not an end-result, and a process operated by the poet through his 'structures of events'. It follows that some tragedies will accomplish it supremely well, others less well, still others, it may be, not at all. If Catharsis depends on the constructive activity of the poet, it cannot be a standard result, automatically attained by any play called Tragedy." 33

Prof. Else has explained in detail Aristotle's theory of Tragedy, Plot, Complex-plot with Purification and Recognition, tragic here, his harr aria, emotions of pity and fear and comes to the conclusion: "Thus the Catharsis is not a change or end-product in the spectator's soul, or in the fear and pity (i.e. the dispositions to them) in his soul, but a process carried forward in the emotional material of the play by its structural elements, above all by the recognition. For the recognition in the pay-off, to use a vulgar but expressive colloquialism, or in more conventional figure, it is the hinge on which the emotional structure of the play turns. The Catharsis, that is the purification of the tragic act by the demonstration that its motive was not 'misan' is accompanied by the whole structure of the drama, but above all by the recognition.

33 Ibid., pp. 230-231.
This interpretation makes Catharsis a transitive or operational factor within the tragic structure itself, precedent to the release of pity, and ultimately of the tragic pleasure, rather than the be-all and end-all of tragedy itself.\(^{34}\)

He further adds,

"As we said earlier, one of the great virtues of the traditional view(s) was its(their) vagueness: a vagueness which made it possible to stretch 'Catharsis' to cover almost every conceivable variety of literary experience. We have grown used to feeling - again vaguely - that serious literature is hardly respectable unless it performs some 'Catharsis'. 'Catharsis' has come, for reasons that are not entirely correct, to be one of the biggest of the 'big' ideas in the field of aesthetics and criticism, the Mt. Everest or Kilimanjaro that looms on all literary horizons."\(^{35}\)

Thus we find that Prof. Else gives an altogether modern interpretation of the term Catharsis. He dissociates it from the emotions of spectators and makes it an integral part of the structure of the events in tragedy.

After reviewing some of the major interpretations of the theory of Catharsis and the ancient evidence in Aristotle and elsewhere, we can gather the meaning of it thus. 'Catharsis'

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.439.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p.443.
in a Purgeation, accompanied by a pleasurable sense of relief
from accumulating emotional tendencies, especially tendencies
to pity and fear, which would otherwise poison our mental health.
How this Purgeation is achieved is not more explicit by
Aristotle. But we can understand that pity and fear aroused in
the spectator purge or purify themselves. This theory, thus
interpreted has following significant aspects: (1) The theory
of Catharsis is in relation with the spectator. It describes
the emotional effect of a tragedy on the spectator. (2) It
assumes that pity and fear are elements in human nature. (3) They
are present in a disgusting degree and are by nature painful.
(4) The arousal or excitation of pity and fear in a tragedy,
serves as a sort of medicine, producing Catharsis—purgeation to
lighten and relieve the soul of the accumulated emotions within
it, (5) and as the relief is wanted, there is always a harmless
pleasure attending the process of relief.

As we have noted that there are two main lines of inter-
pretation of 'Catharsis', one holding to the medical sense —
purgeation or relief of the soul or spirit from the emotions, the
other explaining the word in various ways but tending towards
an ethical concept — purification of emotions. But the inter-
pretation of Catharsis in the medical sense, still remains, with
minor variations in detail, what "one might call the vulgate."36

Whatever interpretation we take either of 'Purgation' or 'purification', it still remains a fact that they eschew an ulterior motive, a practical purpose to the experience of a tragic drama. By the tragic experience either we have 'purification' or 'purification' of our emotions.

This purificatory or clarificatory implications suggest some degree of moral or rational elucidation, such as might well mark the end as distinct from the process of art. Aristotle, here, seems to demand that the fascinating power of poetry shall be exercised in pursuit of a moral or rational end. To credit poetry and drama with such motives is to make them trespassers in the domain of religion and morality.

All the Aristotelian exegesis agree that 'purification' or 'purification' produces a relief which is always pleasurable. This means that the tragic experience gives pleasure. But why it is pleasant and how it gives pleasure? - decide the nature of pleasure. Pleasure is the feeling that follows, or a kind of bliss that supervenes upon any unimpeded activity or perhaps it is the activity. Since activity differs in kind, their pleasure also differs in kind, each has a pleasure peculiar or appropriate to it. The pleasure produced by laughter is a very different kind of pleasure, which is a result of a relief. Aristotle describes this kind of pleasure in the 'Nicomachean Ethics' (117b 16). So writes,
"It seems that pleasure is implied in the relief of some initially distressing privation. Yet this is not true of all pleasures. For no pain is associated with the pleasures of learning, smell, hearing, and sight ..." 37

Here, we find that Aristotle is aware of what Plato calls 'mixed pleasures' in 'Philebus' (51b-52b). In 'Philebus' (51b-52b) Protagoras asks what pure pleasures are and receives the following answer from Socrates: "They centre in those colours and forms which we describe as beautiful, as well as in odours for the most part and sounds and all those things which are unheeded and painless in their absence, though their presence is felt and fraught with unalloyed pleasure." 38 The debate is pursued and Socrates enumerates things in which beauty and pleasure is inherent, and defines pleasure as "instinctive experience which untempered by reflection." 39 Our enjoyment of colours, forms and tones is allied to the pleasure which we take in learning and intellectual activity.

It is very unfortunate that Aristotle does not ascribe such 'unalloyed or pure pleasures' to poetry and drama, but describes this pleasure in medical terms. It is not that Aristotle is not aware of such pleasures. In the 'Necies' also, he describes the pleasure of learning. "To be learning

38 Ibid., p.34.
39 Ibid., p.35.
something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind." In the 'Rhetoric' also he describes such pleasures - "Again, since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant - for instance, painting, sculpture, poetry and every product of skilful imitation; this latter even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant; For it is not the object itself which here gives delight; the spectator draws inference ('That is a so-and-so') and thus learns something fresh." The instinctive pleasure we take in imitation described in the 'Poetics' (4.1343b 5), the beauty that is to be found in size and order (Poet, 6, 1450b 37), his association of beauty with Mathematics in 'Metaphysics' (1073b 5) make it clear that Aristotle was aware of such pleasure but to poetry and drama he has ascribed the pleasure, which is a result of clarificatory or purificatory process which removes the painful element.

In this way Aristotle, the philosopher and the statesman identifies tragedy with good and ultimately with useful. Tragedy is good because it purges the bad element in our emotions. Instead of watering and feeding our emotions as Plato alleged, tragedy purges the emotions and that is the greatest justification for tragedy.

40 Poet, 4,1443b 12.
41 Rhetoric, 1.2, 1371b 5.