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Unit I

Module I

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# ARISTOTLE

## *ON POETICS*



# Biography

- Aristotle lived from 384 BC – 322 BC
- Born in Stagira of Macedonia, Greece, in 384 BC
- He study under the philosopher Plato for 20 years in Athens, starting when he was eighteen years old (Plato was sixty)
- In 335 BC he opened his own school Lyceum (teaching logic, metaphysics, theology, history, politics, ethics, aesthetics, astronomy, meteorology, physics, and chemistry)

# *THE POETICS*

- Short treatise of 26 chapters
- Divided into 6 parts

S.No	Chapters	Description
1.	1 - 5	Introductory remarks on poetry, classification of poetry into different kinds
2.	6 - 19	Discussion of tragedy
3.	20-22	Discussion of poetic diction, style, vocabulary, etc.
4.	23	Discussion of narrative poetry and tragedy
5.	24 & 26	Discussion of epic and comparison with tragedy
6.	25	Objections of critics against poetry and Aristotle's reply



## DEFECTS OF *THE POETICS*

- Disproportionate handling of the subject
- Lyric poetry has been ignored
- Descriptive poetry is not dealt with
- Comedy and epic are not elaborated in detail
- All aspects of tragedy are not touched upon
- Telegraphic and highly concentrated style



## SIGNIFICANCE OF *THE POETICS*

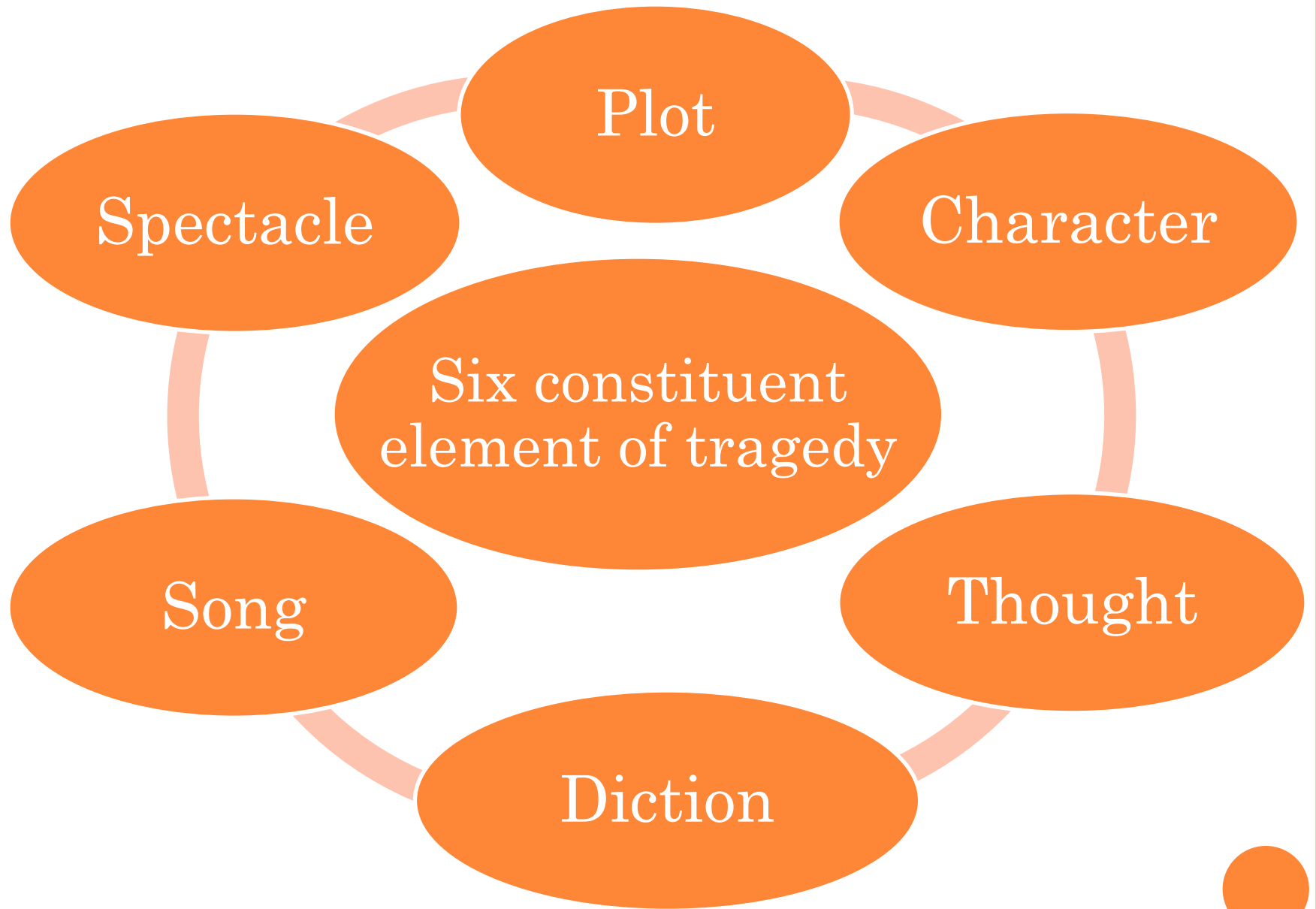
- Discards the earlier oracular method (according to which, critical pronouncements were supposed to be the result of prophetic insight), as well Plato's dialectic method (use of dialogue/discussion)
- Concrete facts and genuine exploration in search of truth
- Studying poetry and relating to man i.e. psychological
- Various phases in the history of Greek poetry is described



# DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

- The poetics is concerned chiefly with tragedy which is regarded as the highest poetic form
- He defines tragedy as “*the imitation of an action, 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; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions*”







# HIS VIEWS ON MIMESIS

- Plato was the first to use this term
- Later Aristotle gave new meaning
- Aristotelian theory defines poetic imitation as an act of imaginative recreation where the poet draws his material from the phenomenal world and makes something new out of it



- According to him, imitation is
  - Common basis for all fine arts
  - Equated with music, where the poet imitates through language, rhythm and harmony
- Also he points out that
  - different kinds of poetry differ from one another in their manner of imitation
  - Poet recreates reality creatively and brings order out of chaos



## POETRY VS HISTORY

- So, in this sense poetry seems to be superior than history because history tells us what has happened while poetry tells us what may/ought to happen
- While history represents the particular, poetry represents the universal. Hence, poetry has a permanent appeal and poetry in this light can be equated with philosophy



# KINDS OF PLOTS

## Simple

Do not  
have  
peripety  
(reversal  
of  
intention)  
or  
anagnorisis  
is  
(discovery  
of truth)

## Complex

Employ  
both  
peripety  
and  
anagnorisis



# THREE PARTS OF PLOT

- Peripety
- Discovery
- Suffering (an action of a destructive or a painful nature such as the murders on the stage, tortures, woundings and the like)



# PARTS OF TRAGEDY BASED ON QUANTITY

- Prologue- precedes the parode and the chorus
- Episode- comes between two choral songs
- Exode- comes after last choral song
- Choral portion- Parode and Stasismon
  - Parode- whole first statement of the chorus
  - Stasismon- a song of the chorus without anapaests(metrical foot consisting of two short or unstressed syllable followed by one long or stressed syllable) or trochees(a foot consisting of one long or stressed syllable followed by one short or unstressed syllable)
- Songs from the stage and commoe/s



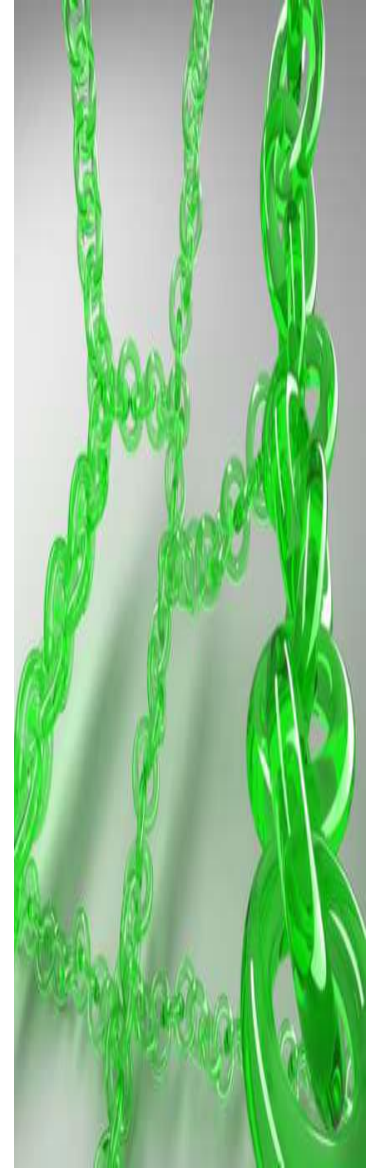
## THREE UNITIES

- Unity of action
- Unity of time
- Unity of place



Aristotle emphasizes Unity of Action ; he is against plurality of action as it weakens the final effect of Tragedy. It must be long enough to permit an orderly development of action to a catastrophe. Too short an action cannot be regarded as proper and beautiful, for its different parts will not be clearly visible, as in the case of a very small living creature. *It must be an 'organic' whole.*

## UNITY OF ACTION





Tragedy tries as far as possible, to live within a single revolution of the sun, or only slightly to exceed it, whereas the epic observes no limits in its time of action

UNITY OF TIME



# UNITY OF PLACE

Aristotle mentions that only when comparing the epic and the tragedy, the epic can narrate a number of actions going on simultaneously in different parts, while in drama such simultaneous actions cannot be represented, for the stage is one part and not several parts, or places.



# FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER

- The characters must be good
- The characters must be appropriate
- The characters must have likeness
- The characters must be consistent



# Tragic Wheel

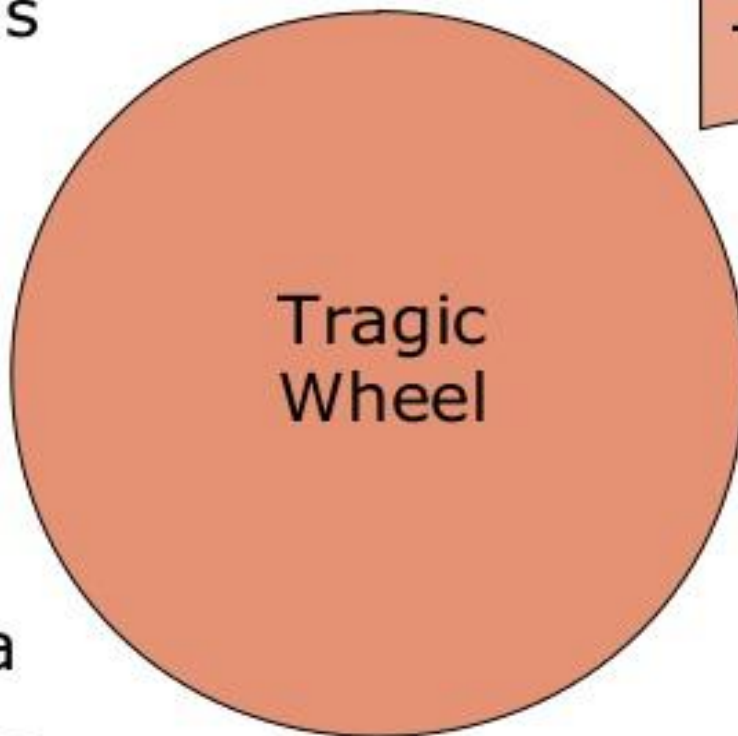
Catharsis

Purging of Emotions



Peripeteia

Reversal



Tragic Hero



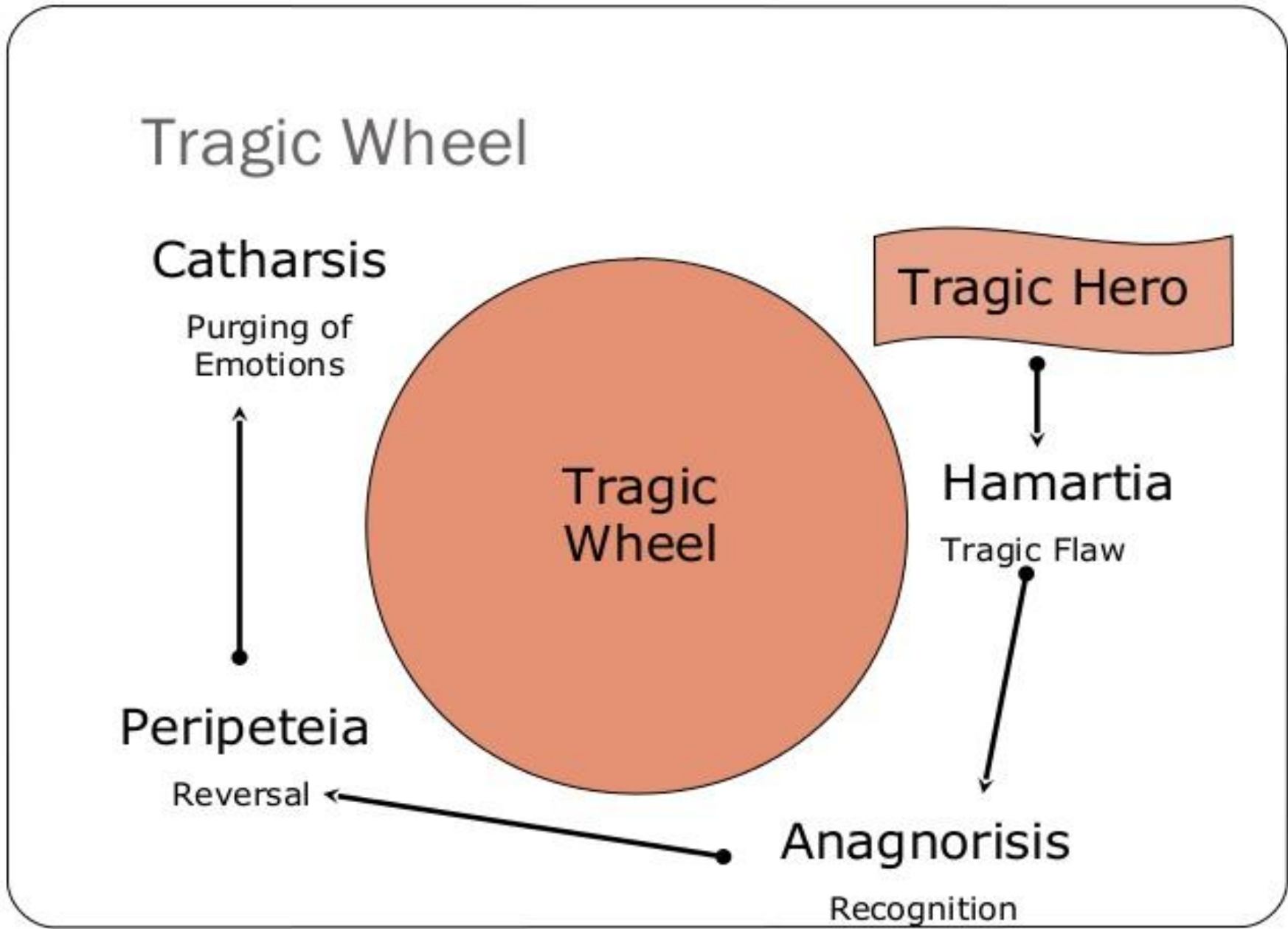
Hamartia

Tragic Flaw



Anagnorisis

Recognition



# QUALITIES OF TRAGIC HERO

- Character of noble stature and greatness
- He is not perfect though he is pre-eminently great
- Character flaw or tragic flaw or an error of judgment is triggered by tragedy
- The hero's misfortune is not wholly deserved. The punishment exceeds the crime
- There is an increase in awareness, gain in self-knowledge and, some discovery on the part of the tragic hero
- Unhealthy emotions of pity and fear arises during catharsis



# Catharsis :-

- The end of the tragedy is a *Katharsis* (purgation, cleansing) of the tragic emotions of pity and fear.
- *Katharsis* is another Aristotelian term that has generated considerable debate. The word means "purging," and Aristotle seems to be employing a medical metaphor—tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear in order to purge away their excess, to reduce these passions to a healthy, balanced proportion. Aristotle also talks of the "pleasure" that is proper to tragedy, apparently meaning the aesthetic pleasure one gets from contemplating the pity and fear that are aroused through an intricately constructed work of art.



# What is Hamartia?

- This word is first used by Aristotle in his work “Poetics”. Aristotle described Hamartia as an error of judgment or a mistake that was made by a character in a theatrical tragedy.
- By Aristotle’s definition, the Hamartia, or mistake, could have been the result by any character. Often the character was ignorant of the eventual outcome of the decision.
- One of the classical Hamartia examples is where a hero wants to achieve something but, while doing so, he commits an intentional error and he ends up achieving exactly the opposite with disastrous results.

# SOURCES OF TRAGIC PLEASURE

- Our natural sense of harmony and rhythm
- The instinct of imitation
- Imitation of the unfamiliar
- Catharsis
- Involvement of the spectator
- Inner illumination
- Unity of plot, diction, spectacle, etc.





# HORACE - ARS POETICA

- Horace (65-8 BC)
- Roman critic and lyric poet
- Dulce utile
- Odes, satires, epistles or letters



- Art of Poetry, Letter to Piso
- Poesis (subject-matter of poetry)
- Poema (form of poetry)
- Poeta (the poet)



- The poet's aim is either to profit or to please, or to blend in one the delightful and the useful
- Poetry like painting: one piece takes your fancy if you stand close to it, another if you keep at some distance. One courts a dim light, another, challenging keen criticism, will fain be seen in the glare, this charms but once, that will please if ten times repeated



# ROLE OF ELDER POETS

- Similar to Father and son role
- Good poem be the work of nature or art is a moot point
- Role of wit and training (even good Homer nods)



- “if you write poems, you will never fail to detect the spirit that lurks beneath the fox’s skin”



# ROLE OF CRITICS

- A kind and sensible critic will censure verses when they are weak; condemn them when they are rough; ugly lines he will sour in black, will lop off pretentious ornaments, force you to clear up obscurities, criticise a doubtful phrase, and mark what needs a change
- Suffer poets to destroy themselves if they choose; he who saves a man against his will as good as murders him



# LONGINUS - ON THE SUBLIME

- Longinus (1<sup>st</sup> century AD)
- Romantic critic
- On the sublime



# DEFINITION OF SUBLIME

- A certain distinction and excellence in expression. Sublimity flashes forth at the right moment, scatters everything like a thunderbolt and at once displays the power of orator in all its plentitude





# SOURCES OF SUBLIMITY

## ○ Innate sources

- Grandeur of thought (great thought and great soul)
- Passion (inspired passion-patos)

## ○ Rhetorical features

- Schemata (figures of speech)
- Phrasis (language and diction suitable to the grandeur of thought)
- Composition (harmony to bring definite shape to art)



# METAPHORS

- The right time for their use is when the feelings roll on like a spring torrent and sweep along the whole mass of them as though they were inevitable



# QUALIFICATION OF METAPHORS

- As if
- as it were
- if I may use the figure
- I may be so bold as to say
  - Softening of bold metaphors



# METAPHORICAL DESCRIPTION

- Grand figurative passages and metaphors must conduce to literary effectiveness
- Descriptive writings most readily uses them



# MISUSE OF METAPHOR

- The use of metaphor like any other to be carried to excess is evident.
- No unnecessary use of metaphor





Thank You