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HUMAN DRAMA IN ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

INTRODUCTION

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle outlined the fundamental basis for the creation and functioning of drama as an art form, together with the key role played within this by the natural tendency towards imitation (*mimesis*)¹ that distinguishes humans from animals.² According to this Greek philosopher, this mechanism makes it possible to create an experience in the recipient's mind similar to that which he or she experiences in the real world. However, the presented article does not seek to analyse the Aristotelian conception of art or imitation, but rather to present drama as an actual human event. The guiding idea here is that reversing the mechanism of imitation makes it possible to treat the *Poetics* as primarily a bearer of knowledge about the drama of the person actually caught up in a tragedy. According to Aristotle, the feelings of pity and fear which should be aroused by tragedy reveal the essence of human drama and, at the same time, enable the viewer to experience the latter viscerally.³

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¹ Christof RAPP, "Tragic Emotions," in *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, ed. Pierre Destrée, Penelope Murray (Malden–Oxford–Carlton, NJ: Blackwell Publishing), 445–446.

² Stavros TSITSIRIDIS, "Mimesis and Understanding: an Interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* 4.1448b4 – 19," *The Classical Quarterly* 55, no 2(2005): 435.

³ The problem of human drama is developed in contemporary thought by, among others, Józef Tischner, whose concept refers to phenomenology, philosophy of dialogue and existentialism. He describes the human drama as follows: "So what is drama? Man lives in such a way that he takes part in drama—he is a dramatic being. He cannot live otherwise. His nature is a dramatic time and two openings—an intentional opening to the stage and a dialogical opening to another human being. To be a dramatic being means: to exist in a specific time and in a certain way to open to others and the world—the stage." Józef TISCHNER, *Filozofia dramatu* (Kraków: Znak, 2006), 7.

RECOGNIZING DRAMA

In his analysis of dramatic art (tragedy and comedy) Aristotle shows how we come to recognize that we are dealing with drama *per se*. The mind recognises drama by making itself familiar with the plot (the sequence of events) according to which the action unfolds.⁴ However, the mind cannot itself get us involved in the drama in question: rather, for this to occur the appropriate feelings must be engendered—ones which spontaneously reflect the content apprehended by the mind. That is why an appropriately composed tragedy aims at generating related emotional responses, in order that the recipient may truly understand and experience the drama. That is why the fact of whether a play is well written or staged is determined by the author's ability to evoke particular feelings. Aristotle stresses that "tragedy, however, is an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear."⁵ He also says that it refers to events which evoke feelings of "pity or fear."⁶

According to Aristotle, "pity may be defined as a feeling of pain [directed] at an apparent evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon."⁷ The feeling of pity appears when we see another person's suffering resulting from the evil he or she has experienced. Moreover, "[f]ear may be defined as a pain or disturbance due to imagining some destructive or painful evil in the future."⁸

Reversing the concept of *mimesis*, we may state that pity and fear are feelings related not only to drama as an art form, but also to the individual drama of an actual person. Pity is felt by someone who sees someone else's dramatic experiences rather than by persons who endure these by themselves.⁹ Fear, however, is not subject to such limitations, as it is shared by both the person who experiences their own drama and the one who just learns of someone else's. Aristotle, moreover, requires that above and beyond the *mimesis* and acts of recognition that serve to evoke feelings of pity

⁴ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1450 a., in *The Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁵ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1452 a.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 1452 a-b.

⁷ ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, 1385 b.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 1382 a-b.

⁹ Malcolm HEATH, "Aristotelian Comedy," *The Classical Quarterly* 39, no 2(1989): 401.

and fear, tragedy also be accompanied by physical suffering (*pathos*)¹⁰—something which is not itself a specific feeling, but rather is responsible for imparting a sense of reality to the emotions. Suffering may be defined as “(...) an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as murders on the stage, tortures, wounding, and the like.”¹¹ According to Aristotle, it is not a feeling, but something that enables the person to experience a sense of participatory involvement in the tragedy as an important and painful situation. In the case of someone's particular drama, awareness of the seriousness of the situation follows automatically for them, as the person upon whom it impacts.

Aristotle does not reduce the range of feelings that appear in the dramatic art to pity and fear, but he emphasizes that they are necessary in order to experience purification (*katharsis*) without which tragedy is pointless. The kind of human drama that cannot be expressed through pity and fear, even with the addition of similar feelings such as terror, is really something quite different. Therefore, it is obvious that pity and fear do not exhaust the whole range of feelings that—from the existential point of view—accompany or may accompany what constitutes drama for human beings. Drama may evoke such diverse feelings as anger and hatred on one side, and love on the other. However, it is pity and fear—not other emotions—that make us experience a given situation as drama. “(...) Pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves (...).”¹² That is why pity and fear may be treated as factors which determine whether a person's condition or situation is dramatic or not.

THE NATURE OF DRAMA

The Greek term *dràma* means “action” and it derives from the verb *dran*—to do, act, perform. Aristotle makes reference to this etymology, claiming that the term “drama” stems from the fact that it shows acting characters, because “(...) in a play the personages act the story.”¹³ Thus, the very word “drama” does not refer to human experience, but to the way of presenting it, and therefore to the art of the latter. The unique features of drama are to be found in the fact that it reveals a person through their actions, and not

¹⁰ Stephen HALLIWELL, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chicago, IL: University Chicago Press, 1998), 263.

¹¹ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1452 b.

¹² Ibidem, 1453 a.

¹³ Ibidem, 1448 a.

through first-person speech, as is the case with the lyric form, or through narration, as in the epic genre.¹⁴ Thus, human drama as a subject matter is not to be associated with a particular form of art, but rather with what tragedy—leaving aside comedy—refers to in virtue of being a kind of dramatic art.

According to Aristotle,

a tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.¹⁵

The plot of a tragedy is something serious, and it refers to events that are important in the life of a person. This is why it imitates the actions that determine success or disaster in a person's life;¹⁶ moreover, despite the fact that moral action is related to a person's happiness, for Aristotle, such actions cannot be identified with moral actions. The difference between those two kinds of action is clearly explained by M. Husain:

The contrast shows that [...] ethical action is under the agent's causal control because it is an internal good, a good of the soul rather than an external one. Hence, it is largely (though not entirely) independent of external factors and of what happens or befalls, including radical changes of fortune. These are marginalized as mere additions to life (*prosdeitai*), which do not affect the ethical quality of actions nor success in life nor happiness. [...] Tragic action, by contrast, is not under the agent's (the protagonist or protagonists) causal control, because it is not internal but external, what happens or befalls (*pragmata, pathemata*), which paradigmatically includes a radical change of fortune (*peripeteia, eutychia, dystychia*). What is marginal in ethical action is central in tragic action. Causal agent-control is replaced by causal action-control, since the parts of the complex tragic action stand in a relationship of sequential efficient causality (*met' allela* and *di' allela*), and the agent suffers the results (*pathemata*) of this self-contained action causality.¹⁷

There is certainly an important difference between a morality in which the action is focused on the good of the acting subject, and the action of even the same subject in tragedy. This does not mean that tragedy cannot have

¹⁴ Ibidem, 1448 a; Ian Christopher STOREY, Arlene ALLAN, *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama* (Malden–Oxford–Carlton, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1.

¹⁵ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1449 b.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 1450 a.

¹⁷ Martha HUSAIN, *Ontology and the Art of Tragedy. An Approach to Aristotle's Poetics* (New York, NY: University of New York Press, 2002), 88.

a moral dimension, or that it cannot be rooted in the moral conditions in which the acting person may be involved, such as moral law. However, just as morality underlines the person's dependence on themselves, tragedy emphasizes the person's inability to avoid drama despite having made an attempt to rationally direct their own fate. In the actions taking place in tragedy, the aim is not to show what is morally good, but to reveal the drama of the person's situation, and ultimately that of the human condition. Being dependent on the circumstances over which they have limited influence or control, the person turns out to be a being whose situation is existentially uncertain and unstable,¹⁸ someone who is always vulnerable to existential injuries. One may say that tragedy, for some reason, reveals the person's "critical" situations by means of the plot—situations which Karl Jaspers describes as struggle (*Kampf*), death (*Tod*), randomness (*Zufall*), and guilt (*Schuld*).¹⁹ However, in this case we do not mean the person's dependence on a fate which determines their life, although such themes constitute the plot of some tragedies. We mean that the person lies at the centre of the tragedy, together with their drama and all of its specific reasons.

THE SUBJECT OF DRAMA

According to Aristotle, the basis for tragedy is a plot which reveals human drama, and this in turn is indicated by feelings of pity and fear. Those feelings are a psychological response on the part of the audience to the tragedy of the characters. The background for the plot includes well-known mythological stories which play the role of a paradigm that helps us recognize what constitutes drama. Storey underlines the fact that the contemporary concept of tragedy is very different to the Greek understanding and is marked by an association with sudden accidents caused by nature or other people's actions resulting in deaths.²⁰ However, according to the Greeks, tragedy need not be related to death, nor need it necessarily lead to an unhappy ending. As a result, one should rather discuss what constitutes drama than what tragedy itself consists of.

¹⁸ Philip TONNER, "Action and Hamartia in Aristotle's Poetics." "E – L O G O S", ELECTRONIC JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY/2008, accessed: December 21, 2017, <http://nb.vse.cz/kfil/elogos/history/tonner08.pdf>, 21.

¹⁹ Karl JASPERS, *Psychologie Der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1960), 256.

²⁰ STOREY, ALLAN, *A Guide*, 72–73.

The first determinant of drama is pity, and Aristotle claims that what causes it stems from the very definition of pity itself. This includes, on the one hand, a person's innocence and, on the other, a situation that causes a particular (destructive or painful) case of the suffering of that person:

All unpleasant and painful things excite pity, and all destructive things; and all such evils as are due to chance, if they are serious. The painful and destructive evils are: death in its various forms, bodily injuries and afflictions, old age, diseases, lack of food. The evils due to chance are: friendlessness, scarcity of friends (it is a pitiful thing to be torn away from friends and companions), deformity, weakness, mutilation; evil coming from a source from which good ought to have come; and the frequent repetition of such misfortunes. Also the coming of good when the worst has happened: e.g. the arrival of the Great King's gifts for Diopeithes after his death. Also that either no good should have befallen a man at all, or that he should not be able to enjoy it when it has.²¹

In the quotation cited above, the factors that engender pity may be divided into those which result in failure (deficiencies) in the being's integrity, and those conducive to its perfection. The first group may include death, physical suffering and injuries, old age, illness, lack of food, disability, and ugliness. The second group includes loneliness resulting from the lack or loss of friends, inability to avoid evil and suffering (multiple occurrences of the same disaster), being confronted by evil instead of receiving an expected good, good that comes too late, or a lack of joy after recognising or receiving a good. However, not all of these sufferings and deficiencies evoke pity, indicating the existential drama that is involved in the latter.²² Aristotle underscores the fact that pity is evoked by destructive suffering, in the sense of suffering that eventually leads to loss of life, or painful suffering, related to the marking of human existence with a deficiency or loss that is impossible or difficult to remove.

The experience of pity directs our attention to two main situations which, according to Aristotle, can result in a person's being engulfed by drama and disaster. Each of those situations is related to a form of the person's contact with evil as an existential deficiency. This evil may appear directly, in nature or in their functioning, or indirectly, as a good which results in a deficiency or loss only accidentally and in specific circumstances. In the first case, human drama results from the inability to avoid an evil which threatens the person's biological or intellectual life; in the second, it results from the

²¹ ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, 1386 a.

²² HEATH, "Aristotelian Comedy," 353.

absence of the capacity to receive the good that is on offer for sustaining or developing such life.

Apart from pity, human drama evokes fear, yet in his *Poetics* Aristotle does not analyse the latter thoroughly. Nevertheless, in his writings about nature²³ he discusses the physiology and physiognomy of fear, and in the rhetorical works he analyses it from a philosophical point of view:

From [...] definition it will follow that fear is caused by whatever we feel that has great power of destroying us, or of harming us in ways that tend to cause us great pain. Hence the very indications of such things are terrible, making us feel that the terrible thing itself is close at hand; and this—the approach of what is terrible—is danger. Such indications are the enmity and anger of people who have power to do something to us; for it is plain that they have the will to do it, and so they are on the point of doing it. Also injustice in possession of power; for it is the unjust man's choice that makes him unjust. Also outraged excellence in possession of power; for it is plain that, when outraged, it always chooses to retaliate, and now it has the power to do so. Also fear is caused by those who have the power to do something to us, since such persons are sure to be ready to do it.²⁴

Fear is a person's natural response to situations in which he or she experiences evil. What seems crucial is Aristotle's remark that the factor that causes fear is the awareness of the closeness of an evil that cannot be avoided or overcome. Therefore, both pity and fear are feelings that appear in the presence of some evil posing a threat to some actual good.²⁵ Aristotle presents four reasons for the appearance of such evil. The first is enmity and anger, which may be ascribed to hatred. Aggressiveness may also result from fear, or from injustice, or out of a desire for the restoration of justice. However, what is most important for fear to be experienced is not the motive of the acting person—i.e. the reason for which an evil appears—but the conviction that a person has that they will encounter someone who wishes them ill. At the same time, fear may arise not only as the fear of someone, but also in situations in which evil cannot be ascribed to anyone specific, as in the case of an impending death.²⁶

²³ ARISTOTLE, *Problems*, 947 b–949 a.

²⁴ ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, 1382a–b.

²⁵ Henryk KIEREŚ, *Człowiek i sztuka* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2006), 110.

²⁶ ARISTOTLE, *On Virtues and Vices*, 1250 a.

 DRAMA AS A BEARER OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS

According to Aristotle, the central character of a tragedy cannot be just any sort of person. Were that to be so, it would be impossible to achieve the effect of pity and fear that leads to the experience of *katharsis*. Such feelings can only be evoked by a character with particular features:

He states [...] that the only kind of character who can properly evoke these emotions is the individual who is not exceptional in virtue and justice, nor one who suffers from vice or depravity, but rather someone who is between these opposite poles or who is better rather than worse than such a person.²⁷

In contrast to the drama present in a tragedy, though, human existential drama is not limited to just certain people. In reality, each person, irrespective of whether they are good or bad, or the social position they hold, can be affected by drama. Moreover, unlike in art, human drama stands prior to the related feelings of pity and fear, and is not inherently directed towards *katharsis*.

According to Aristotle, a person is a rational being (*zoon logikon*), capable of leading their own life and performing their own actions. However, neither reason nor morally good action can save them from an impending existential drama. Such drama not only results from the power and inevitability of the evil which a person is faced with in their lives, but is also a consequence of their own imperfections. Aristotle underlines the fact that the subject of the tragedy is a mistake made by the character (*hamartia*). *Hamartia* may be understood as a purely intellectual mistake (a failure of recognition), or as a “tragic flaw,”²⁸ with the emphasis being placed in the latter case on some negative aspect of their personality rather than on any accidental failing.²⁹ However, *hamartia* cannot itself be explicated without taking into account both voluntary and involuntary action.³⁰

A person may experience drama both in situations in which their mistake results from their own conscious deeds, and in those in which the mistake is made without them being aware of such facts.³¹ However, just as is the case

²⁷ Leon GOLDEN, “Aristotle on the Pleasure of Comedy,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 382.

²⁸ Nancy SHERMAN, “Hamartia and Virtue.” In *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 177–196.

²⁹ STOREY, ALLAN, *A Guide*, 10, 84.

³⁰ Eckhart SCHÜTRUMPF, “Traditional Elements in the Concept of Hamartia in Aristotle’s Poetics,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 92(1989): 145.

³¹ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1453 b.

in the tragic art form itself, existential drama is at its most clear cut when it affects someone who is innocent: someone who undergoes it as a result of some absence of awareness for which they are nevertheless themselves entirely blameless. Therefore, the mistake committed need not exhibit the characteristics associated with moral culpability and, indeed, in Greek tragedy itself such a mistake is a kind of breach of the existing order and relations among beings that objectively requires correction. The subject of most tragedies includes the lives of characters who decide to act against their nature or status, or are forced into particular actions as a result of specific circumstances. Aristotle emphasizes that in the play, the factor strengthening the experience of the drama is the awareness that people who do not know about their relationship, act against each other.³² Also in the situation of an existential drama, the awareness of a complication (of doing or experiencing harm) in the lives of people close to one another intensifies this experience.

The mistake in question results in evil, but in a Greek tragedy this need not mean that its end is destined to be an unhappy one.³³ It may involve a passage from happiness to disaster, but may sometimes evince a transition from unhappiness to happiness.³⁴ Similarly, existential drama need not entail an unhappy ending to someone's history, though it is a situation that leaves their life marked by the struggle it brings with it, and the resulting suffering does constitute a challenge to their humanity. In this way, drama becomes a bearer of knowledge about what it means to be a human being.

THREE SOURCES OF HUMAN DRAMA

In the light of the Aristotelian conception of tragedy we can indicate three main factors that make human existence dramatic and, at the same time, reveal human drama: susceptibility to mistakes, the impermanence and uncertainty of certain situations, and vulnerability to existential injury. Each of these has its roots in the evil that affects human beings.

The fact that Aristotle referred to mistakes in his concept of tragedy is far from accidental: his emphasis upon the susceptibility of human beings to making mistakes is not aimed at vindicating them by questioning or ignoring their responsibility for their own actions. Making a mistake when consider-

³² ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1453 b.

³³ STOREY, ALLAN, *A Guide*, 73.

³⁴ ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1451 a.

ing, evaluating or deciding whether or not to do something may bring with it dramatic consequences. A person can sometimes avoid a specific mistake, but being human makes it impossible to avoid mistakes all the time. Also, not all mistakes result in drama, and not all of them are related to moral responsibility. The human susceptibility to making mistakes results in the fact that a person is a being entangled in dramatic situations, and experiencing existential drama is a part of the human condition itself. It is precisely because the mistake is blameless, that it can involve them in a drama that will go on to evoke feelings of both pity and fear, and such feelings, in turn, testify to the human capacity for what Edith Stein calls empathy (*Einfühlung*).³⁵ In experiencing those feelings, we discover that we, too, are constantly susceptible to making similar mistakes. This human susceptibility is a form of deficiency (*steresis*), conceived as a category that also includes misadventure and injustice.³⁶ In human life, these deficiencies corresponding to the absence of some “deserved good”³⁷ are both wrong and harmful.³⁸

Another factor that can contribute to the occurrence of drama is a person’s susceptibility to existential injury. This is something that reveals itself in their life, but which nevertheless should not be reduced to psychological considerations. Moreover, it does not refer to the person’s individual manner of responding to and experiencing this or that situation. Existential injury will certainly be reflected in their psychological responses, but by virtue of affecting them as a human being, irrespective of their individual way of experiencing what is going on. According to Aristotle, a well-constructed tragedy should touch on precisely some such universally relevant “place” or aspect of existence, and because of this, he thinks that its plot should refer to some myths.

What is more, existential injury may take various forms—a fact which highlights the relative nature of the human efforts aimed at avoiding it. Indeed, drama will often arise in the most unexpected circumstances, as “[t]he best tragic *pathos* arouses pity and fear because it is an action in which *philos* harms *philos* (14 1453b14–22), and *philo*i are those who are least expected to harm one another.”³⁹ In terms of humanity itself, people’s suscep-

³⁵ Edith STEIN, *On the Problem of Empathy*, transl. Waltraut Stein (Washington, WA: ICS Publications, 1989).

³⁶ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1135 b.

³⁷ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1173 b.

³⁸ Stanisław ZIEMIAŃSKI, “Zło fizyczne i moralne w świetle arystotelesowskiej koncepcji bytowego braku,” *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* 12, fasc. 3(2017): 38.

³⁹ Elizabeth S. BELFIORE, *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 134.

tibility to being hurt stems from their lack of resistance to the physical (*blale*) evil that affects them. Physical evil may affect our integrative aspect, being related to deficiencies in the body and its functioning (atrophy, getting old, disability), or our self-perfecting aspect, involving lack of knowledge, mistakes, sadness, fear, etc. The other form of evil is moral evil (*kakon, kakia*), deriving from a lack of the proper virtues, as exhibited in actions that reveal either shortages or excesses.⁴⁰

Human drama is also rooted in the impermanence and uncertainty of human intentions. Thus, as Tonner claims, “[h]amartia or ‘tragic error’ brings to the fore the fragility and contingency of human flourishing.”⁴¹ The more firmly rooted in reality the person is and the greater the power they possess, the more visible will be their fragility. That is why, according to Aristotle, tragedy should be focused on noble characters⁴²) in the midst of enjoying respect and success.⁴³ When confronted with a reality which, against the person’s best will and intentions, interferes with their existence, the person often feels helpless and defenceless. Especially in such situations, people are brought to experience vividly the fact that they cannot fully control their own actions or fate. Drama thus reveals the fragility and weakness of human plans and intentions, as well as the uncertainty of our existential condition. At the same time, it manifests that element of arbitrariness in the world that poses a constant threat to them, and which they constantly try to overcome, even though they cannot succeed in doing so. In this way the person’s existence turns out to depend not only on themselves, but also on factors beyond their control.

CONCLUSIONS

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle submits drama as an art form to a thorough analysis—especially tragedy. He understands such an art form to be a mimetic recreation of life that, in the case of tragedy, is focused on feelings of guilt and fear. Reversing the mechanism of mimesis makes it possible to highlight the existential situations evoked by such feelings. These reveal what drama

⁴⁰ ZIEMIAŃSKI, “Zło fizyczne”, 39.

⁴¹ TONNER, “Action and Hamartia,” 2.

⁴² ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 1454 a.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, 1453 a.

means for the person it affects, and shows what it is that ultimately makes us into beings for whom it represents a threat. Human drama results from the fact that a person faces evil as a deficiency or lack of something affecting such aspects of their life as their integrity or aspiration to self-perfection. It manifests our susceptibility to making mistakes, engenders existential injury, and emphasizes the impermanence of the human situation and existence itself. Such considerations show that Aristotle's ideas are not far removed from modern conceptions emphasizing both the accidental and the dramatic nature of human existence.

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LUDZKI DRAMAT W *POETYCE* ARYSTOTELESA

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie dramatu jako wydarzenia ludzkiego w *Poetyce* Arystotelesa. Zdaniem autora, odwrócenie mechanizmu naśladownictwa (*mimesis*), używanego przez Arystotelesa do tworzenia tragedii, pozwala potraktować *Poetykę* przede wszystkim jako nośnik wiedzy o dramacie człowieka jako bohatera tragedii. Uczucia litości i trwogi, których powinna dostarczyć tragedia, ujawniają, co jest dramatem człowieka, a zarazem co sprawia, że człowiek może doświadczyć dramatu. Dramat ten wynika nie tylko z siły i nieuchronności zła, na które natrafia człowiek w swoim życiu, ale także jest następstwem jego niedoskonałości. Przejawia się ona w podatności człowieka na błąd, nietrwałości i niepewności jego sytuacji oraz podatności na egzystencjalne zranienie.

Słowa kluczowe: Arystoteles; poetyka; dramat; człowiek; egzystencjalne zranienie; *mimesis*.

HUMAN DRAMA IN ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

Summary

The aim of this paper is to present drama as it figures in Aristotle's *Poetics* as a human event. According to the author, reversing the mechanism of imitation (*mimesis*) used to create tragedy makes it possible to treat the *Poetics* as primarily a bearer of knowledge about actual persons. The feelings of pity and fear that should be aroused by tragedy reveal the essence of human drama per se. Such drama results from the fact that a person faces evil in the sense of a deficiency or lack of something affecting such aspects of their life as their integrity or self-perfection. It thus manifests our human proneness to mistakes, as well as susceptibility to existential injury, and in so doing emphasizes the impermanence of the human situation and existence itself.

Key words: Aristotle; poetics; drama; person; existential injury; *mimesis*.