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## ARISTOTLE ON THEORY OF COMEDY: THE PROBLEM OF SOURCES

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The bulk of Aristotle's extant works date back to his late period. Most of the early writings are of great importance, but, unfortunately, got lost, including the second book «Poetics» devoted to the analysis of comedy and the definition of the concept of funny. Thus, before the researchers of the Aristotle's comedy the first question arises – What sources can we rely on revealing the views of Aristotle on the nature of the comic?

For example, the disputable situation concerns the followers of the philosophical school of Aristotle – the peripatetics: are their ideas on comedy from Aristotle and his «Poetics» or are they their own works, having no foundation of their concepts of the teacher? Z. A. Barzakh investigated this question in detail in her dissertation [1]. For instance, she gives the following arguments: «so, in the exoteric works of Aristotle at least elements of the literary theory known to us from the «Poetics» are contained. The fact that exoteric works were widely known in the era of Hellenism is undeniable. Consequently, this theory could be known in the era of Hellenism, and thus we can talk about the continuity of tradition» [1. P.40]. Theophrastus, one of the disciples of Aristotle, understands comedy as an imitation of life, this idea was taken over from the teacher, but some differences in the wording of judgments still take place. «The epic is the content of divine and human deeds. Comedy is the content of human Affairs, not associated with danger. Mim is an imitation of life, containing both permissible and impermissible» [1. P.70] – this definition of the concepts of Theophrastus is very different from the Aristotelian definitions. Therefore, imitation still remains the basis of any epic, tragedy and comedy, the difference between these genres lies in the area. Theophrastus' comedy is safe or not directly related to danger, i.e. it does not contain suffering, whereas in Aristotle's «Poetics» there is not even the word «security» or «danger». However, according to Z. A. Barzakh, this deformation is caused either by his mediator between Diomedes and Theophrastus, or by Diomedes himself, because it was he who preserved fragments of the works of Theophrastus, who at one time possessed the library of Aristotle [1]. To sum up, the understanding of comedy as an imitation of life has become a tradition transmitted from Aristotle to Aristophanes of Byzantium through Theophrastus, and then directly to Cicero. As a result, we can conclude that although the views of the followers of the philosophical school of Aristotle in some places are far from Aristotle himself, however, the basis for the study of the works of peripatetists, referring us to Aristotle, still takes place.

Another important point regarding the source of knowledge of comedy that needs clarifying, concerns the influence of Aristotle and the peripatetics on Cicero. «Comedy as the imitation of life, the mirror of custom, the image of truth» [2. P.22] – on the one hand, the parallel with the Aristotelian theory of comedy is quite obvious, but on the other hand, these connections are rather doubtful, since Cicero had a habit of rewriting the views of Aristotle depending on the conditions of the context in the course of argument. The area of the comic is estimated by him as some defect or, as it was by Aristotle, a mistake. And further, like Aristotle, Cicero limits this area is a sphere of

«safe». Theophrastus, for example, though uses the term «error» to define the ridiculous, but omits the concept of defect. This discrepancy is caused by the fact that the ancient Greek terms are often ambiguous and vague, which is also noted by Z. A. Barzakh in her work: «thus, ἀμάρτημα in the field of comic can be implied not only errors and delusions, but also flaws of character, and even speech irregularities» [1. P.7]. The similarity between Aristotle and Cicero regarding the types of humor should also be explicated. Initially, Aristotle, even in the first part of «Poetics», divided humor into two types: «high» and «low» or noble, based on irony and slave, clownish, using abuse. The same concept we can see in Cicero's treatise «De Oratore»: «There are two sorts of jokes, one of which is excited by things, the other by words. By things, whenever any matter is told in the way of a story... Another kind is that which consists in a slight change in a word, which, when produced by the alteration of a letter, the Greeks call paronomasia» [3. pp.239–256]. Also, to clarify the essence of the phenomenon of comic, they have something in common – the theme of «unexpected» laughter, i.e. the one that contains irony, which subsequently turns into a remark. For comparison, passages from Aristotle and Cicero: «Irony better befits a gentleman than buffoonery; the ironical man jokes to amuse himself, the buffoon to amuse other people» [4. P.15]; «Such jests are insipid, or witty only when another answer is expected; for our surprise (as I before observed) naturally amuses us; and thus, when we are deceived, as it were, in our expectation, we laugh» [3. P.260].

All in all, the problem of establishing links between the teachings of Aristotle and his followers, which serve as a source in determining the nature of the comic, allows completing the teachings of Aristotle, despite the loss of the second book «Poetics». In conclusion, let us point out the characteristics of the comic in Aristotle, which are common to him and his disciples: firstly, imitation or reproduction of the action; secondly, the element of the ugly – perverted and funny at the same time, like a mask; thirdly, the presence of errors – makes a moral defect in the character of comedy; finally, security as the absence of suffering.

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