

Group Discussion of *The Alcestiad*

Group Members _____

Procedure: One of you volunteer to be spokesperson and note taker. Try to find at least 1 quote to illustrate at least the 3 **boldfaced** criteria. If you complete that and still have time, just see which of the criteria seem to apply; not all will & some overlap. Spokesperson: Write your group's comments below (use back if necessary). Turn in this sheet at end of class.

Aristotle's theory of tragedy

Who is the Tragic **Hero** and how is s/he **heroic** (superior, near-miss, great, admirable in some way)?

What is TH's **hamartia**, that is, tragic **flaw AND action** (error in judgment, mistake, sin)?

What speech could be TH's **anagnorisis** (epiphany, self-knowledge, realization of truth, the TV of life)?

Describe how TH's fortune reverses (the fall) because of the hamartia and perhaps the anagnorisis as well.

Where is our compassion (pity, sympathy, or empathy) and terror (fear, horror) aroused? (*catharsis*)

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Hegel's theory of tragedy

How is TH damned if do, damned if don't (choose your poison, no-win or lose-lose, rock and hard place)?

The collision of two equally justified ethical principles (state the two ethical principles in the abstract)

How is TH both innocent and guilty or neither innocent nor guilty?

How is TH one-sided? Is TH really so one-sided that he/she really has no choice as Hegel claims?

How does canceling out the one-sidedness restore the balance or harmony?

Where does [what functions as] the chorus express "the unsevered consciousness of the god-like"?

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Kierkegaard's theory of tragedy

Contrasts ancient (Greek) tragedy to modern (Shakespeare and beyond) tragedy

Ancient

external, objective, **communal**

fate: passive, victim, innocent

child-like suffering, **sorrow**, deeper feeling

Modern

internal, subjective, **individual**, **alienated**

free will: active, bears entire weight his/herself, guilty

adult-like suffering, **pain (anxiety)**, **reflection**

Note: When there are multiple boldfaced terms on one line, you may choose just one term each for Ancient or Modern.

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Nietzsche's theory of tragedy

N says that tragedy juxtaposes the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Though these are binary oppositions, both are necessary and must be balanced (all A is bad; all D is bad). They are based on the Greek deities Apollo and Dionysus, and you can see in the list of associations of the A and D below how they take off from literal qualities of the deities and then become more abstract and/or metaphorical. The Tragic Hero bears the burden of the Dionysian Truth for us, but he or she is destroyed by it. We (audience/reader) get a glimpse of Dionysian Truth through the Apollonian veil (the spectacle of the play performed), and are saved from destruction because of the Apollonian and the Tragic Hero's sacrifice. **What is the terrible truth that the TH discovers and is destroyed by?**

Apollonian

sun, sky, light, visible, above
plastic arts (sculpture, architecture)
illusion/appearance (veil, mask)
civilization, society, sober, calm
order, reason, logic, sanity
conscious, superego
boundaries, rules, laws
the establishment, the Man
individuation, separation
tragic hero

Dionysian

vine, wine, earth, dark, invisible, below
music
Truth/Reality
nature, primordial, intoxication, ecstasy
chaos, passion, irrationality, insanity
unconscious, id
no boundaries, freedom, hedonism
sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll, man
loss of individuation (self), one with nature, primal unity
chorus

Note: When there are multiple boldfaced terms on one line, you may choose just one term each for Apollonian & Dionysian.