WHAT IS TRAGEDY?

A total reverse of fortune, coming unawares upon a man who "stood in high degree", happy and apparently secure—such was the tragic fact of the medieval mind. It appealed strongly to common human sympathy and pity; it startled also another feeling, that of fear. It frightened man and awed him. It made him feel than man is blind and helpless, the plaything of an inscrutable power, called by the name of Fortune or some other name—a power which appears to smile on him for a little, and then on a sudden strikes him down in his pride.

AND THE CENTRAL FIGURE?

They are exceptional beings...a person of high degree or of public importance, and that his actions or sufferings are of an unusual kind...his nature also is exceptional, and generally raises him in some respect above the average level of humanity...characters (who) are made of the stuff we find within ourselves and within the persons that surround them...

In almost all (tragic heroes) we observe a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction, a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion or habit of mind.

Banquet scene, Lyceum Theatre (1888)