

Aristotle's Poetics explains his goal of evaluating poetry using the following standards:

1. How to handle poetical art and its varieties

2. To talk about what a good poetry must have in terms of plot.

A poem is a mimesis, or imitation, according to the basic tenet of poetry.

Specifically, a tragedy is a copy of an action. What distinguishes something as a poem is not metric discourse but rather imitation. Therefore, the philosophical talks of Parmenides and Empedocles (written in epic meter) are not poetry, but the Socratic dialogues are.

Aristotle discusses a number of genres.

Some of the genres are obscure such as: ancient performance genres (namely dithyrambs and nomos). He seems to include instrumental music and dance as poetry. He ultimately focuses on four kinds—

i. Epic tragedy

ii. Comedy

iii. Dramatic tragedy

iv. Comedy.

2. Poetry is classified into three categories, which are generally translated as "in which," "what," and "how," as well as "medium," "object," and "mode." Although some of the specifics are unclear, the basic concepts are:

The sensory attribute that the imitation is made in terms of is called the medium.

The use of colour and figure in painting and sculpture is comparable to other imitation arts.

b. The three modes of poetry are harmony or music, discourse (speaking), and rhythm.

c. The subjects of poetry include moral character types, including good, bad, and intermediate.

d. The story is presented using one of three modes: narration, enactment, or a combination of both.

For instance, playing the flute requires both rhythm and harmony, while dancing only requires beat.

<i>Horizontal: objects</i>		<i>Good</i>	<i>Bad</i>
<i>Vertical: modes</i>			
<i>Enacted</i>		<i>Tragedy</i>	<i>Comedy</i>
<i>Narrated</i>		<i>Tragic epic</i>	<i>Comic epic</i>

What is tragedy according to Aristotle: -

“Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is 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 enactment not narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.” Aristotle defines the genre of tragedy as the culmination or perfection of the poetic art. The so-called “parts” of tragedy are:

1. *Story or plot*
2. *Character*
3. *Thought*
4. *Language*
5. *Spectacle*
6. *Song*

The story is the series of episodes. It ought to have causal unity and completeness.

The character is the moral quality of the agent.

Thought is the viewpoint of the agent and how he argues for it.

Language is the language of the discourse—it ought to be elevated and still clear.

Spectacle is the sensory appearance of a dramatic presentation. Spectacle seems to be thought of by Aristotle as a means of exposition of the story, and to essentially belong to stagecraft as opposed to poetry.

Song—music as used in drama.

By means of some of these elements poetics is connected to other parts of philosophy— plot and character connects poetics with ethics, thought with logic and rhetoric, language with grammar.

In Aristotle’s ethical theory, happiness is the supreme end of human life, and happiness is virtuous activity (in a complete life).

Happiness is thus a product of virtue and fortune and of these two only virtues is within our power.

Virtue is of two kinds:-

- i. *Intellectual*
- ii. *Moral.*

Intellectual virtue has three spheres—

- a. *The theoretical,*
 - b. *The productive*
 - c. *The practical.*
- iii. *Moral virtue is the propensity or predisposition toward behaviors that are deemed by practical reason to promote happiness, both individually and collectively. Moral goodness is the result of early instruction and the accumulation of decisions made throughout one's adult life. Every action has a purpose, and choice is "deliberate desire," or what one wants to do after weighing the options.*

Aristotle evaluates everything in poetry based on:-

1. *The tragic effect*
2. *The purgation of the emotions of pity and fear—about which he says very little.*
3. *Therefore, he reduces what some may consider the tragedy's existential or spiritual significance to the aspect of thought—that is, what the protagonists believe the events' meaning to be. Aristotle believed that story was the most important component. Here, the plot of Sophocles' "Oedipus Tyrannus" can be used to conceptualize plot according to Aristotle.*

PLOT of Oedipus Tyrannus

A prophecy states that Oedipus would kill his father when he is born to the King and Queen of Thebes. The prophecy exposes the infant Oedipus, but shepherds find him and save him. The King and Queen of Corinth adopt and nurture him, always thinking they are his biological parents. However, as a young man, he discovers a prophecy that he will mate with his mother and murder his father. In order to escape the fulfillment of the forecast.

On his way to Thebes, he fights with and murders a man he meets along the way who happens to be his biological father, Laius, without him realizing it. After arriving in Thebes, he solves the Sphinx's riddle to obtain power and marries the widowed queen—who happens to be his biological mother, although he is unaware of this. He has children with her. A plague strikes the city, which is typically seen as retribution for harbouring Laius' killer. As a responsible king, Oedipus makes the decision to eradicate the city's pollution and, in doing so, gets closer and closer to discovering the truth. After his mother/wife guesses the truth and hangs herself, Oedipus blinds himself with her brooches. He becomes an exile.

Aristotle classifies plots as

i. Simple or ii. Compound.

4. Compound plots are better than simple ones because they have one or both of the recognition and reversal components. The

discovery that a character is not who they have claimed to be is known as recognition. Moving from good or bad luck to the opposite is known as reversal (of fortune). It is clear that Oedipus Tyrannus has both recognition and reversal—reversal follows recognition. Aristotle believed that the fall of a decent man due to his Hamartia, Sin, Fault, or Flaw was the most tragic storyline since it best evoked the feelings of pity and fear that led to purgation. Because the good (Odysseus) rises and the bad falls, the Odyssey's plot is therefore not perfect in this regard.

Aristotle says that in constructing a good plot the poet ought to

- A. *“Place the scene, as far as possible, before his eyes.”*
- B. *Aristotle also says that Homer is most imitative of epic poets because he has the characters, as opposed to the poet, nearly always doing or talking. (Chapter 24)*
- C. *One could argue that there is a seventh ingredient, “world,” when applying the six elements to science fiction and fantasy. (The globe was typically presented as the world of the Homeric heroes in ancient Greek tragedy.)*
- D. *Personality—the personalities of the types of aliens in Larry Niven's Known Space—can be added to the concept of character. The main source of philosophical content in poetry appears to be thought.*
- E. *Spectacle can be thought of as including description of the world and action of the story—what is seen in the mind's eye or felt by the reader as he / she reads or listens.*

Few Important Concepts illustrated by Aristotle

1. *Hamartia* In a tragedy, hamartia is a personal mistake in the protagonist's character that leads to his terrible demise. Another name for this personality trait in heroes is a "tragic flaw." The word, which is interpreted as a blunder or error in judgment, was employed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*.

2. *Cathartic Reversal*

Since tragedy is the ultimate dramatic form, according to Aristotle, the best tragedies—and consequently the best plays—use recognition and reversal to attain catharsis. According to him, reversal ensures that the hero completes a circle by working with the spine or center of a story. His example of a hero who experiences such a reversal and thus gets cathartic self-recognition is Oedipus. According to Aristotle, catharsis is a type of atonement. For example, despite the tragic nature of Oedipus' recognition, still saves him: he has accepted his fate and is no longer living in ignorance of his tragedy.

Furthermore, in a successful drama, the spectator also experiences a form of catharsis in addition to redemption. The catharsis of the hero causes Since tragedy is the ultimate dramatic form, according to Aristotle, the best tragedies—and consequently the best plays—use recognition and reversal to attain catharsis. According to him, reversal ensures that the hero completes a circle by working with the spine or center of a story. His example of a hero who experiences such a reversal and thus gets cathartic self-recognition is Oedipus. According to Aristotle, catharsis is a type of atonement. For example, despite the tragic nature of Oedipus' recognition, still saves

him: he has accepted his fate and is no longer living in ignorance of his tragedy.

Furthermore, in a successful drama, the spectator also experiences a form of catharsis in addition to redemption. The catharsis of the hero causes both pity and fear in the audience: pity for the hero, and fear that his fate could happen to us.

3. *Complication and Denouement*

Aristotle believed that a successful drama had only two parts: the complexity, or rising action leading up to the climax, and the denouement, or "unravelling," which came after the climax. Aristotle's principle of poetic unity is followed by this dual movement. Before the unity at the core of the work is revealed, the complexity must be resolved. Naturally, a play moves on to the finale after this realization, where the importance and consequences of the unity are examined and addressed.

4. *The Imitative Nature of Art*

Aristotle contends that art is 'imitative,' that is, representative of life, while others claim that it is an expression of what is unique and special in human thought. Aristotle finds this imitative characteristic fascinating. He spends a large portion of the Poetics examining the means, importance, and outcomes of this life-impersonation. According to Aristotle, there are three ways that art might exhibit its imitative tendencies: a poet tries to depict our reality as it is, as we believe it to be, or as it should be.

5. *The Standard of Poetic Judgment*

According to Aristotle, it is foolish to point out factual flaws in a piece of art, including a lack of historical truth. He thinks that rather, we ought to evaluate a piece of work based on how well it mimics the outside world. A minor inaccuracy won't significantly affect this increased success if the copying is done with integrity and the artwork's "unity" remains intact at the end. That is to say, art should be evaluated aesthetically rather than scientifically.

6. *Tragedy vs. Epic Poetry*

Aristotle believed tragedy to be superior to comedy, even though the critics of his day regarded epic poetry as the highest art form. According to Aristotle, tragedy, like the epic, may be both edifying and entertaining when written down. However, it also has the extra benefit of being able to be consumed in a single sitting as a spectacle and musical play on stage.

7. *Tragic Hero*

According to Aristotle's theory of drama, the tragic hero is not always a model of virtue who is brought low by misfortune, nor is he an exceptionally "good" guy. Rather, the hero possesses a fault or 'frailty' that is apparent from the beginning of a play and ultimately guarantees his downfall. Furthermore, this sad fault must be relatable to the viewer.

8. *The Unity of Poetry*

The concept of "unity," which Aristotle frequently discusses in the Poetics, is occasionally interpreted incorrectly. Unity is the

capacity of the most effective dramatic plots to center on a single axis that 'unites' all of the action. According to Aristotle, a cohesive drama will have a "spine"—a primary concept that drives all of the play's action, character, thoughts, language, and spectacle.

Dr. Vandana Singh

Long Question

Q.1 Elucidate Aristotle's concept of 'Hamartia.'

Hamartia is the tragic "flaw" or "frailty" of a hero that ultimately results in his death. According to Aristotle, a good tragedy features a character whose flaw—"an error or frailty"—causes him to fail. Even though he is well-known, successful, and even appears to be moral, there is a weakness in his defense that will eventually be discovered and will be the cause of his downfall. Only via this tragic weakness in the hero—which is in turn driven by the "unity" or spine of the entire work—can fear and pity be genuinely evoked. According to Aristotle, some poets employ spectacle to evoke sympathy and terror, but this eventually fails since spectacle generates a different kind of "pleasure" than what tragedy requires. Only pity and fear can produce true 'purgation' or emotions rather than a spectacle of false catharsis.