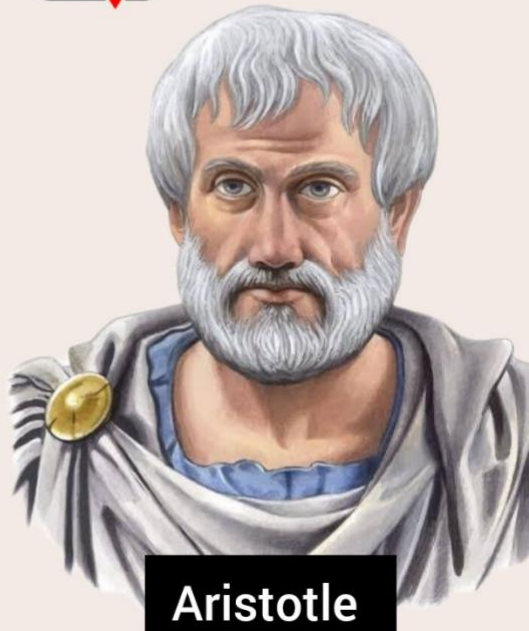


Poetics by Aristotle

Poetics

PDF

With Notes



Aristotle

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graph TD; Poetry[Poetry] --> Medium[Medium]; Poetry --> Object[Object]; Poetry --> Mode[Mode]; Mode --> Comedy[Comedy]; Mode --> Tragedy[tragedy]; Mode --> Spectacle[Spectacle]; Tragedy --> Plot[Plot]; Tragedy --> Character[Character]; Tragedy --> Thought[Thought]; Tragedy --> Diction[Diction]; Tragedy --> Song[Song]; Plot --> Reversal[reversal]; Plot --> Recognition[recognition]; Character --> Good[good]; Character --> Appropriate[appropriate]; Thought --> Consistent[consistent]; Thought --> Inconsistent[consistently inconsistent]; Diction --> Consistent; Diction --> Inconsistent; Song --> Consistent; Song --> Inconsistent;
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The diagram illustrates Aristotle's classification of poetry. It starts with 'Poetry' at the top, which branches into 'Medium', 'Object', and 'Mode'. 'Mode' further branches into 'Comedy', 'tragedy', and 'Spectacle'. 'tragedy' is further divided into 'Plot', 'Character', 'Thought', 'Diction', and 'Song'. 'Plot' is associated with 'reversal' and 'recognition'. 'Character' is associated with 'good' and 'appropriate'. 'Thought' is associated with 'consistent' and 'consistently inconsistent'. 'Diction' and 'Song' are also associated with 'consistent' and 'inconsistent'.

Aristotle's “**Poetics**” is a classic work of literary criticism that focuses on the principles of tragedy and epic poetry. It explores aspects like plot structure, character development, and the role of emotions in storytelling.

The Poetics contain **twenty six chapters**. The first four chapters and twenty-fifth are devoted to poetry, the fifth in general way to comedy, epic and tragedy; the following fourteen to tragedy; the next three to poetic diction; the next to epic poetry and the last to comparison of epic and tragedy.

Aristotle explores each component of **poetry** separately and starts with the principles of poetry, which he says is only “natural.”

Aristotle argues that all poetry is a form of imitation because human beings have a natural tendency for imitation, and since humans learn lessons through imitation from a young age. There is natural pleasure in imitation that enables the child to learn his earliest lessons in speech and conduct from those around him.

Aristotle claims that poetry differs in three ways: its medium, its object, and its mode of imitation.

Medium: Medium is the means through which an artist imitates an object. For example In painting, the medium of imitation is color and shape. Similarly in poetry, the medium is language, rhythm and melody.

Object: An object is the thing that is imitated in a work of art. According to Aristotle, an object can be anything, it can be a person, thing or an event.

Mode: Mode is the way in which an artist imitates an object. For example, in epic poetry, the mode is narration; however, in tragedy, the mode of imitation is actors on a stage.

Comedy

- Comedy imitates ordinary or less virtuous people.
- Comedy does not show pain.
- It does not evoke painful emotions in the audience.
- It focuses on human weaknesses.

Tragedy

- Tragedy and epic poetry imitate admirable or virtuous people.
- Tragedy evoke painful emotions in the audience and deals with serious issues.
- A tragedy must be “whole,” and it must have proper beginning, middle, and end.
- It is written in language that has rhythm and melody, and it is performed by actors, not by narration.
- It purifies the audience by producing in them the emotions of fear and pity and bring Catharsis.

A tragedy has six components, that are plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle.

Plot:

- Tragedy imitates actions, and these actions are the events that make up the plot.
- The tragic actions must have specific size or length.
- It must have a proper beginning middle and end.
- Every tragic plot involves a change of fortune.
- Plot can be complex in which a change of fortune involves recognition, reversal. A reversal is a change from one state to the opposite state. On the other hand, recognition “is a change from ignorance to knowledge.
- The best plot, is one in which recognition and reversal occur at the same time, such as Sophocles’s Oedipus Rex.

Character:

Aristotle argues, that the function of tragedy is to rouse fear and pity. It cannot be complete without an ideal tragic character. Aristotle defines four things that go into the construction of a character.

Goodness: A tragic hero should not be extremely good or extremely bad. He should just be good. He should be neither perfectly virtuous nor a consummate villain.

Appropriateness: Aristotle's second prescription is that the character should be appropriate. For example, a man should not act like a woman or a woman should not act like a man.

Consistent: A character should be internally consistent. When applied, the Law of Probability and Necessity defines it as necessary for a character to react in a certain way. There should not be an unexpected change in the development of the character.

Consistently inconsistent: If a character is usually foolish, it's odd if he suddenly becomes smart and intelligent. In this case it is helpful to explain why this change happens, or else the audience might be confused. If a character often changes his mind, it should be clear that this is a trait of the character.

Thought:

Thought means what the characters think or feel. It is the intellectual element in a tragedy, and it is expressed through a character's speech.

Diction:

Diction is the medium of language or expression through which the characters reveal their thoughts and feelings. The diction should be embellished and dignified. Aristotle states that the poetic vocabulary that a poet uses may be divided into six kinds.

1. Common everyday speech
2. Foreign words imported from other languages.
3. Metaphorical words
4. Newly coined words
5. Ornamental words
6. Words are not entirely invented but modified by lengthening and shortening them.

Song:

Song is an historical element because historically, the tragedy began with song and dance. Greek chorus was performed certain factors essential in drama.

Spectacle:

The spectacle is a theatrical effect presented on the stage. But it also includes scenes of physical torture, dances and colorful garments.