

**Intro-to criticism** اسم المقرر: مقدمة فى النقد

**ENG 125** رمز المقرر:

**Dr. Nagwan magdy** استاذ المقرر:

**English Department** قسم اللغة الانجليزية:

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# **LECTURE (1)**

**16-3-2020**

**Plato attacks poetry on intellectual, emotional, utilitarian, and moral grounds (Explain)**

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**Plato's condemnation of poetry (OBJECTION TO POETRY)** هجوم افلاطون الشرس على الشعر والشعراء

**Moral:**

(a) Poetry (and drama) is not conducive to social morality, as Poets pander to the popular taste and narrate tales of man's pleasant Vices. This has a demoralizing effect. This is more so the case with drama which depends entirely on popular patronage.

(b) Poets, "tell lies about gods". Gods and great heroes descended from the gods are represented as corrupt, immoral, dishonest, indeed subject to all the faults and vices of common humanity. They thus deprave public taste and morality, and militate against reverence for the gods. Works of poets, like Homer, must not be prescribed for school study for this reason. Children tend to imitate the doings of gods and

other heroes as told to them by their mothers, they fashion their own conduct on what they read.

c- Drama is even more harmful. poets and dramatists appeal to the baser instincts of men, their love of the sensational and the melodramatic. The vulgar and the morbid is thus fostered, and a "sort of evil theocracy has taken the place of old aristocracy with disastrous consequences to national well-being.

(ii) **Emotional:** poetry, has certain inherent weaknesses which render it unsuitable for fostering wisdom and morality or bringing about the right and balanced development of the personality of the youth. These inherent weaknesses of poetry and drama are:

(a) The poets are, "divinely inspired". It means that they do not compose poetry as craft, but by virtue of some impulse of a mysterious, non-rational kind, coming from some supernatural source, outside their own personality. They utter unconsciously what the Muse impels them to say; like fountains they allow to flow out freely what comes to it. Hence their pronouncements are unreliable and uncertain. The inspiration may cease at any moment. There might be some truth in them, for they are divinely inspired. But such partial and imperfect truths must be carefully

examined. Such truths can be no substitute for knowledge based on reason. Moreover, their meaning is not always clear. They are often full of obscurities and contradictions. The poets with their emotional frenzies, and lack of moral restraint, can afford no safe guidance, moral or intellectual.

(b) The poets cannot often themselves explain what they write, for their frenzy is 'non-rational'. Allegorical interpretations may be clever. But they are useless, as they are beyond the reach of the young and the immature. Allegorical interpretation cannot justify even stories of baneful nature.

(c) Barring lyric poetry which is purely narrative, all other poetry, epic, tragedy and comedy is imitative, wholly or partially, and all imitative poetry Plato regards as pernicious. In imitative poetry; the poet, and the reader as well, identifies himself completely with the fictitious characters of poetry, and such absorption in other personalities is weakening and unhealthy. It enfeebles characters and personality, and impairs the single mindedness and integrity of the individual.

(d) It is easier to imitate the lower or baser part of the soul, the passionate element. Plato divides the soul into three parts: (1) rational, (2) spirited, (3) desirous or appetitive-and such imitation of the baser, non-rational elements give greater pleasure at the moment. Hence it is that the poets, whether epic, tragic or comic, abound in the vulgar, the sensational and the corrupt. Poetry thus has a debilitating effect; it leads to loss of balance, with feeling, unrestrained by either reason or principle.

(iii) **Intellectual:** Plato attacks poetry on intellectual grounds as well: poets have no knowledge of truth, for they imitate appearances and not the truth of things, illusions instead of reality. Poets like painters, imitate the surface or the superficial aspects of things. Beyond the world of the senses there is another world, the world of ideal reality, where concepts, like truth, virtue, beauty, etc., exist in an ideal form. The Phenomenal world is a mere illusion, a reflection or shadow of the Ideal world. The poets have no knowledge of reality; they simply imitate the shadowy or the illusionary. Poetry is thrice removed from reality: it cannot be a source of knowledge and truth. It can tell us nothing about the essential reality.

**(iv) Utilitarian,** Poetry is the product of futile ignorance; the poet who imitates without really knowing what he is imitating is demonstrating both his lack of useful purpose and his lack of knowledge. Poetry can serve no useful, practical purpose; it must not be a part of School curriculum, Thus Plato attacks poetry on intellectual, emotional, utilitarian, and moral grounds that demonstrates its uselessness, and its corrupting influences.

## **LECTURE (2)**

**23-3-2020**

**Aristotle replied to the charges made by his Guru Plato against poetry in particular and art in general. He replied to them one by one in his defense of poetry. (Explain)**

### **Aristotle's Reply to Plato's Objection**

رد ارسطو تجاه ما ذكره افلاطون

1- Plato says that art is the imitation of the actual and is removed from reality. In fact, the artist does not simply reflect the real in the manner of a mirror. Art cannot be slavish imitation of reality. Literature is not the exact reproduction of life in all its totality. It is the representation of selected events and characters necessary in a coherent action for the realization of the artist's purpose. He even exalts, idealizes and imaginatively recreates a world which has its own meaning and beauty.

2. Plato again says that art is bad because it does not inspire virtue, does not teach morality. The function of art is to provide aesthetic delight, communicate experience, express emotions and

represent life. It should never be confused with the function of ethics which is simply to teach morality. If an artist succeeds in pleasing us in the aesthetic sense, he is a good artist. If he fails in doing so, he is a bad artist. There is no other criterion to judge his worth. Similarly, Plato's charges on needless lamentations and ecstasies at the imaginary events of sorrow and happiness encourage the weaker part of the soul and numb the faculty of reason.

3. Plato judges poetry now from the educational standpoint, now from the philosophical one and then from the ethical one. But he does not care to consider it from its own unique standpoint. He does not define its aims. He forgets that everything should be judged in terms of its own aims and objectives, its own criteria of merit and demerit. We cannot fairly maintain that music is bad because it does not paint, or that painting is bad because it does not sing. Similarly, we cannot say that poetry is bad because it does not teach philosophy or ethics. If poetry, philosophy and ethics had identical function, how could they be different subjects? To denounce poetry because it is not philosophy or ideal is clearly absurd.



4. Aristotle agrees with Plato in calling the poet an imitator. Aristotle believes that there is natural pleasure in imitation which is an in-born instinct in men. It is this pleasure in imitation that enables the child to learn his earliest lessons in speech and conduct from those around him, because there is a pleasure in doing so. In a grown-up child – a poet, there is another instinct, helping him to make him a poet – the instinct for harmony and rhythm. He does not agree with his teacher in – ‘poet’s imitation is twice removed form reality and hence unreal/illusion of truth’, to prove his point he compares poetry with history. The poet and the historian differ not by their medium, but the true difference is that the historian relates ‘what has happened’, the poet, ‘what may/ought to have happened’ - the ideal. Poetry, therefore, is more philosophical, and a higher thing than history because history expresses the particular while poetry tends to express the universal. Therefore, the picture of poetry pleases all and at all times. .

5- Aristotle does not agree with Plato in the function of poetry making people weaker and emotional/too sentimental. For him, *catharsis* is ennobling and it humbles a human being.

So far as the moral nature of poetry is concerned, Aristotle believes that the end of poetry is to please; however, teaching may be the byproduct of it. Such pleasing is superior to the other pleasures because it teaches civic morality. So all good literature gives pleasure, which is not divorced from moral lessons.

## LECTURE (3)

30-3-2020

### Aristotle's Concept of Tragedy (define)

#### تعريف المأساة عند أرسطو

لتراجيديا عموماً تتعلق باستعراض أحداث من الحزن ونتيجة مؤسفة في النهاية ، كما تنطبق التي هذه التسمية أيضاً في الثقافة الغربية على وجه التحديد على شكل من أشكال الدراما اتسمت على جانب من الجدية والشهامة والتي تنطوي على شخص عظيم يمر حدها أرسطو بظروف تعيسة. (تعريف أرسطو أيضاً يمكن أن يشمل تغير الأحوال من سيء إلى جيد، ولكنه أرسطو يقول إن التغير من الجيد إلى السيء هو الأفضل لأن هذا يؤدي إلى إثارة الشفقة والخوف داخل متفرج). ووفقاً لأرسطو أيضاً فإن "هيكل العمل التراجيدي لا ينبغي أن يكون بسيطاً بل معقداً وأن يمثل الحوادث التي تثير الخوف والشفقة." ويرى أرسطو ، "أن التغير في الحال نحو التعاسة والمأساة لا يعود إلى أي خلل أو عيب أخلاقي ، ولكن إلى خطأ من نوع ما." كما أنه عكس الاعتقاد الخاطئ بأن هذه المأساة يمكن أن تنتج من قبل سلطة عليا (على سبيل المثال القانون ، الآلهة ، المصير ، أو المجتمع) ، بينما إذا كان سقوط يصف ذلك بأنه "بلية" وليس شخصية ما في هذه المحنة ناجم عن سبب خارجي ، فإن أرسطو مأساة.

#### The Definition of Tragedy

"Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in the language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation-catharsis of these and similar emotions."  
(*Poetics*, P.10)

**Explanation of the definition:** . توضیح و شرح

The definition is compact. Every word of it is pregnant with meaning. Each word of the above definition can be elaborated into a separate essay. All art is representation (imitation) of life, but none can represent life in its totality. Therefore, an artist has to be selective in representation. He must aim at representing or imitating an aspect of life or a fragment of life.

Action comprises all human activities including deeds, thoughts and feelings. Therefore, we find soliloquies, choruses etc. in tragedy.

The writer of 'tragedy' seeks to imitate the serious side of life just as a writer of 'comedy' seeks to imitate only the shallow and superficial side. The tragic section presented on the stage in a drama should be complete or self-contained with a proper beginning, proper middle and proper end. A beginning is that before which the audience or the reader does not need to be told anything to understand the story. If something more is required to understand the story than the beginning gives, it is unsatisfactory. From it follows the middle. In their turn the events from the middle lead to the end. Thus the story becomes a

compact & self-sufficient one. It must not leave the impression that even after the end the action is still to be continued, or that before the action starts certain things remain to be known. .

Tragedy must have close-knit unity with nothing that is superfluous or unnecessary. Every episode, every character and a dialogue in the play must carry step by step the action that is set into motion to its logical dénouement. It must give the impression of wholeness at the end.

The play must have, then, a definite magnitude, a proper size or a reasonable length such as the mind may comprehend fully. That is to say that it must have only necessary duration, it should neither be too long to tire our patience nor be too short to make effective representation impossible. Besides, a drama continuing for hours – indefinitely may fail to keep the various parts of it together into unity and wholeness in the spectator's mind. The reasonable duration enables the spectator to view the drama as a whole, to remember its various episodes and to maintain interest. The language employed here should be duly embellished and beautified with various artistic ornaments (rhythm, harmony, song) and

figures of speech. The language of our daily affairs is not useful here because tragedy has to present a heightened picture of life's serious side, and that is possible only if elevated language of poetry is used. According to need, the writer makes use of songs, poetry, poetic dialogue; simple conversation etc is various parts of the play. Its manner of imitation should be action, not narration as in epic, for it is meant to be a dramatic representation on the stage and not a mere story-telling.

Then, for the function/aim of tragedy is to shake up in the soul the impulses of pity and fear, to achieve what he calls **Catharsis**. "The emotions of pity and fear find a full and free outlet in tragedy. Their excess is purged and we are lifted out of ourselves and emerge nobler than before. تطهير النفس الانسانيه

تنقية نفوس المشاهدين بإثارة خوفهم مما يحدث للبطل وتحريك كوامن شفقتهم عند [أرسطو](#) ورحمتهم وهي فكرة ترجع أصولها إلى معالجة الداء بالداء فيعالج الداء الحقيقي الواقعي عن طريق إثارة شبيهة المتخيل غير الواقعي إثارة فنية قائمة على حشد المشاعر وتوجيهها بغاية تطهير النفس

## Lecture 5

### **Six Formative Elements of Tragedy** اهم عناصر

المأساة كما عرفها ارسطو

After discussing the definition of tragedy, Aristotle explores various important parts of tragedy. He asserts that any tragedy can be divided into six constituent parts.

**They are: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song and Spectacle.**

1- The Plot is the most important part of a tragedy. The plot means 'the arrangement of the incidents'. Normally the plot is divided into five acts, and each Act is further divided into several scenes. The dramatist's main skill lies in dividing the plot into Acts and Scenes in such a way that they may produce the maximum scenic effect in a natural development.

2- Characters are men and women who act. The hero and the heroine are two important figures among the characters.

- 3- Thought means what the characters think or feel during their career in the development of the plot. The thought is expressed through their speeches and dialogues.
- 4- Diction is the medium of language or expression through which the characters reveal their thoughts and feelings. The diction should be 'embellished with each kind of artistic element'.
- 5- The song is one of these embellishments. The decoration of the stage is the major part of the spectacle.
- 6- The Spectacle is theatrical effect presented on the stage. But spectacle also includes scenes of physical torture, loud lamentations, dances, colorful garments of the main characters, and the beggarly or jocular appearance of the subordinate characters or of the fool on the stage. These are the six constituent parts of tragedy.

## **Lecture (4)**

### **The tragic hero as defined by Aristotle**

**The Tragic Hero** تعريف ارسطو "بطل الماساه"

شخصية محورية نبيلة لها قدر مأساوي، أو خلل مميت، يقودها في النهاية إلى حتفها



The ideal tragic hero, according to Aristotle, should be, in the first place, a man of eminence. The actions of an eminent man would be 'serious, complete and of a certain magnitude', as required by Aristotle. Further, the hero should not only be eminent but also basically a good man, though not absolutely virtuous. The sufferings fall and death of an absolutely virtuous man would generate feelings of disgust rather than those of 'terror and compassion' which a tragic play must produce. The hero should neither be a villain nor a wicked person for his fall, otherwise his death would please and satisfy our moral sense without generation the feelings of pity, compassion and fear. Therefore, the ideal tragic hero should be basically a good man with a minor flaw or tragic trait in his character. The entire tragedy should issue from this minor flaw or error of judgment. The fall and sufferings and death of such a hero would certainly generate feelings of pity and fear. So, Aristotle says: "For our pity is excited by misfortunes undeservedly suffered, and our terror by some resemblance between the sufferer and ourselves." Finally, Aristotle says: "There remains for our choice a person neither eminently virtuous nor just, nor yet involved in misfortune by deliberate vice or

villainy, but by some error or human frailty; and this person should also be someone of high-fame and flourishing prosperity.” Such a man would make an ideal tragic hero.

## **The characteristics of Tragic Hero**

مميزات البطل الماساوي عند ارسطو

### Definition of Tragic Hero

The term [hero](#) is derived from a Greek word that means a person who faces adversity, or demonstrates courage, in the face of danger. However, sometimes he faces downfall as well. When a hero confronts downfall, he is recognized as a tragic hero or [protagonist](#). Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, characterizes these plays or stories, in which the main [character](#) is a tragic hero, as tragedies. Here, the hero confronts his downfall whether due to fate, or by his own mistake, or any other social reason.

Aristotle defines a tragic hero as “a person who must evoke a sense of pity and fear in the [audience](#). He is considered a man of misfortune that comes to him through error of judgment.” A tragic hero’s downfall evokes feelings of pity and fear among the audience.

### **Characteristics of a Tragic Hero**

Here we have basic characteristics of a tragic hero, as explained by Aristotle:

- [Hamartia](#) – a [tragic flaw](#) that causes the downfall of a hero.

- **Hubris** – excessive pride and disrespect for the natural order of things.
- **Peripeteia** – The reversal of fate that the hero experiences.
- **Anagnorisis** – a moment in time when hero makes an important discovery in the story.
- **Nemesis** – a punishment that the protagonist cannot avoid, usually occurring as a result of his hubris.
- **Catharsis** – feelings of pity and fear felt by the audience, for the inevitable downfall of the protagonist.

الخلل الذي يسبب سقوط البطل	عيبة
الفخر المفرط ، أو عدم الاحترام للنظام الطبيعي	الغطرسة
انقلاب الحظ	Peripeteia
اللحظة التي يحقق فيها البطل اكتشافاً مهماً	Anagnorisis
مصير لا يمكن تجنبه ، وعادة ما يكون عقاباً للعجرفة	عدو
الشعور بالشفقة أو الخوف من أن يختبر الجمهور بعد سقوط البطل	التنفيس

### **The meaning of Hamartia:**

*Hamartia* ('fatal flaw' or 'tragic flaw') may consist of a moral flaw, or it may simply be a technical error/ error of judgment, or, ignorance, or even, at times, an arrogance (called *hubris* in Greek). It is owing to this flaw that the protagonist comes into conflict with Fate and ultimately meets his/her doom through the

workings of Fate (called *Dike* in Greek) called Nemesis.

## **Examples of Tragic Hero in Literature**

### **Example #1: Oedipus, *Oedipus Rex* (By Sophocles)**

Aristotle has used his character Oedipus as a perfect example of a tragic hero, as he has *hubris* such that he is blind to the truth. He refuses to listen to wise men, such as Tiresias, who predicts that Oedipus has killed his father, Laius. He is tragic because he struggles against the forces of his fate, and pitiable due to his weakness, which arouses fear in the audience. Thus, Oedipus is an ideal example of the tragic hero, as he caused his own downfall, falling from his own estate and facing undeserved punishment.

### **Example #2: Prince Hamlet, *Hamlet* (by William Shakespeare)**

Hamlet is the prince of Denmark, a man of high social status and noble by birth. He is almost driven to madness by his father's tortured ghost, who convinces him that Claudius is responsible for his father's death, and that he has committed treachery. Hamlet then makes a plan to take revenge on his father's killer, but he is blinded by his hamartia, neglecting his relations with other loved ones – Ophelia and his mother Gertrude. Hamlet's hamartia is his constant contemplation and brooding, which causes him to delay, which ultimately results in his destruction. By the end, Hamlet also falls in a bloodbath, touching the hearts of the audience by highlighting the most primal fear, death.

## LECTURE 6

### **The Three Unities** وحدات ثلاثه مكونه للعمل الدرامي

1. The unity of action: a play should have one single plot or action to sustain the interest of the spectators and it can also lead him to proper purgation.
2. The unity of time: the action in a play should not exceed the single revolution of the sun.
3. The unity of place: a play should cover a single physical space and should not attempt to compress geography, nor should the stage represent more than one place.

### **Unity of Action**

The combination of incidents which are the action of the play, should be one – one story told, which is not to say it has to be about only one person, since characters are not in the center of the tragedy, but the action itself is. He is against the plurality of action because it weakens the tragic effect. Number of incidents should be connected to each other in such a way that they must be conducive to one effect.

The Unity of Action limits the supposed action to a single set of incidents which are related as cause and effect, "having a beginning, middle, and an end." No scene is to be included that does not advance the plot directly. No subplots, no characters who do not

advance the action.

This unity of action evidently contains a beginning, a middle and an end, where the beginning is what is “not posterior to another thing,” while the middle needs to have something happened before, and something to happen after it, but after the end “there is nothing else.”

The chain of events has to be of such nature as “might have happened,” either being possible in the sense of probability or necessary because of what forewent. Anything absurd can only exist outside of the drama, what is included in it must be believable, which is something achieved not by probability alone, “It is, moreover, evident from what has been said that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what may happen- what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.”(*Poetics in Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Adams. P. 54) Aristotle even recommends things impossible but probable, before those possible but improbable. What takes place should have nothing irrational about it, but if this is unavoidable, such events should have taken place outside of the drama enacted.

## **Unity of Time**

As for the length of the play, Aristotle refers to the magnitude called for, a grandness indeed, but one which can be easily seen in its entirety – in the aspect of length, than, one that can easily be remembered. The ideal time which the fable of a tragedy encompasses is “one period of the sun, or admits but a small variation from this period.. ”

The Unity of Time limits the supposed action to the duration, roughly, of a single day. Aristotle meant that the length of time represented in the play should be ideally speaking the actual time passing during its presentation. We should keep in our minds that it is a suggestion i.e. to be tried “as far as possible”; there is nothing that can be called a rule.

## **Unity of Place**

According to the Unity of Place, the setting of the play should have one place. Aristotle never mentioned the Unity of Place at all. The doctrine of the three unities, which has figured so much in literary

criticism since the Renaissance, cannot be laid to his account. He is not the author of it; it was foisted on him by the Renaissance critics of Italy and France.