

Criticism and Theory I. ENG-301

Subject Matter: This subject is about criticism and theory. In this subject all 6 works are written by different critics.

- (1) Poetics by Aristotle.
- (2) An Apology for Poetry by Sir Philip Sidney.
- (3) Preface to Shakespeare by Dr. Samuel Johnson.
- (4) Preface to Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth.
- (5) Culture and Anarchy Chapter I by Mathew Arnold.
- (6) Religion and Literature by T.S. Eliot (Thomas Stearns Eliot).

All these critics in their works criticize the writings, works, opinions and ideas of other writers and situations and conditions of society.

(1) Poetics by Aristotle.

Introduction: Aristotle was a Greek philosopher. He was the student of Plato and he was the teacher of Alexander the great. He wrote his work Poetics on the response of his teacher's work (The Republic) in which Plato called poetry a fake thing because According to Plato: Poetry imitates the things; so that's why it is a fake element of knowledge. On his response Aristotle wrote Poetics and answered his teacher on his objections against poetry and tragedy. And in poetics Aristotle gave his own ideas related to the field of literature. And his work Poetics is considered one of the earliest literary criticism in the field of literature. His book poetics is consisting of 26 chapters.

Major Terms and ideas in Aristotle's Poetics:

Mimesis: Mimesis means imitation, representation or expression of something.

Hubris or Hybris: It means pride and arrogance.

Nemesis: It means retribution: In Greek Mythology, Nemesis is the goddess who punished someone for a wrong or criminal act. The people who were punished by Nemesis showed arrogance and hubris before the gods. That's why they were punished.

Hamartia: It is tragic flaw of a character in tragedy. It is an error of judgment by a character that leads him to his downfall.

Anagnorisis: It means recognition, identification of mistakes. For example: In tragedy, character identified his mistakes and error of judgment and then back to his initial and previous state. It is also called sudden realization.

Peripeteia: It means reversal of fortune. The reversal can be good to bad or bad to good. For example: a poor person become rich. And a rich person becomes poor. It is the reversal of fortune.

Catharsis: It is purgation or purification of someone's powerful feelings or emotions. For example: When we watch a tragic scene in a movie. And we start weeping. We feel pity for the character. And we also think that it can happen to me too.

Denouement: It is the final outcome of the story. In the structure of plot: the first thing is exposition, the second is rising action and third is climax and fourth is falling action and the last one is denouement.

Tragedy VS Epic: In his poetics, he makes a comparison between tragedy and epic poetry. He says, tragedy is written in a dramatic form while epic poetry is written in a narrative form. He says, tragedy is performed on stage while epic poetry is narrated. It is not performed on stage. He says, tragedy needs different kinds of verse while epic poetry needs only one verse. And it doesn't need extra verses. He says, tragedy is confined in a single day, so it is shorter than epic poetry while epic poetry takes a lot of time to written. So, it is longer than a tragedy.

Tragedy and Catharsis: Aristotle defines tragedy 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 play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions".

Six elements of a tragedy: Followings are the six elements of a tragedy.

1. Plot: It is one of the most important elements of tragedy. It is the sequence of incidents and events occurred in a story. A good plot involves a change from bad towards good, or good towards bad. Plot is also called the Soul of tragedy.

Followings are the two types of plot:

- a. **Simple Plot:** In simple plot, there is no peripeteia and no hamartia take place and change the fortune of the hero.
- b. **Complex Plot:** In complex plot, hamartia and peripeteia occur and change the fortunes of the hero. And create the feelings and emotions of pity and fear. It is more knowledge than the simple plot.

2. Character: It is the second and foremost element of tragedy after plot. Character is the representative of his qualities through the speeches assigned to them by the dramatist. In a perfect tragedy, the character supports the plot. The main character in a tragedy should be good, appropriate and consistent.

3. Thought: The third important element of tragedy is thought. It is the power of saying whatever can be said and should be said at each moment of the plot.

4. Diction: It is the language which is used in a tragedy. The selection of words to convey the representations. For example: Dialogues of characters.

5. Song / Melody: These are the lines assigned to the chorus in a tragedy are usually conveyed in song. For example: Sad songs that create tragic environment.

6. Spectacle: It is audience who is watching the tragedy. It is the part of tragedy but it is not so much important in a tragedy. Because, you can read a tragedy without perform it on a stage. And that the art of the spectacle really belongs to the set designer and not the poet.

The Ideal Tragic Hero: According to Aristotle: An Ideal Tragic Hero should be a person who has both good and bad qualities. He should not be completely a villain or not a hero. He has both villainous and heroic characteristics at the same time.

The Three Unities of a Play: Followings are the three unities of a play:

- 1. The Unity of Action:** It means that if you perform a play then it's action should be unite and it has one single and complete action. You should not have mixed the tragedy and comedy.
- 2. The Unity of Time:** It means that a play should be completed in one day. It should not take more than one day and extra time for completion.
- 3. The Unity of Place:** It means that the play should be cover on a single stage. It should not change the place. Because, when we change the place then audience will automatically change.

(2) An Apology for Poetry by Sir Philip Sidney.

Introduction: Sir Philip Sidney was an English poet, courtier, scholar and soldier in Elizabethan age. He wrote his work "An Apology for Poetry (A Defense of Poesy) against a Puritan writer Stephen Gosson who wrote the work (The School of Abuse) in which he made some objections on poetry. And Sidney defended the poetry against his objections.

Major forms and types of poetry:

1. **Epic Poetry:** It is a long narrative poetry that retells the heroic journey of a single person or group of persons. For example: Paradise Lost, Iliad, Odyssey and Beowulf etc.
2. **Pastoral Poetry:** It is a genre of poetry that explores the connection between human life and nature. For example: Sonnets of John Keats and Romantic poetry of romanticism writers; especially William Wordsworth.
3. **Elegiac Poetry:** It is a form of poetry in which the poet or speaker expresses grief, sadness, or loss. For example: For a child born dead by Elizabeth Jennings is an example of elegy.
4. **Lyric Poetry:** It is a type of poetry which is short, highly musical verse that conveys powerful feelings. The poet may use rhyme, meter in this poetry. It is just like a song. For example: sonnets, ballads and odes are the examples of Lyric Poetry.
5. **Tragic Poetry:** It is a form of poetry which talks about the tragic, sorrow, sadness and grief. For example: Oedipus Rex and Macbeth etc.

6. **Comic Poetry**: It is a form of poetry that create a comic and Funny situation and influence the audience with jokes and fun. For example: Cinderella and A Snow Man etc.
7. **Satire / Satirical Poetry**: It is a form of poetry that uses irony, humor or exaggeration in order to criticize an aspect of contemporary society. For example: The Rape of the Lock is the best example of Satirical Poetry.
8. **Iambic Poetry**: It is a form of poetry that uses iambic pentameter. For example: My Last Duchess and Ulysses etc.

Poetry and Poet:

Poetry: It is an imitative art that teaches its audience through pleasure and delight.

Poet: A poet is a vate and maker of something. In Ancient Greek times, people called the poets, vates (Prophets) and makers.

Poetry VS Philosophy and History: Sir Philip Sidney condemns that historians who read the history have unverified information which is trapped in the past. History talks about only past and concrete things. And Philosophy talks about the future and it is an abstract thing. But, the poets have the ability to remember and paint the all times past, present and future. Sidney does recognize the importance of both History and Philosophy but maintains that poetry represents an artistic perspective of both. So, we can say that poetry is the knowledge of both History and Philosophy and it is superior than both.

The 4 Charges of Stephen Gosson on Poetry:

1. Poetry is the waste of time.
2. Poetry is mother of lies.
3. Poetry is nurse of Abuse.
4. Plato had rightly banished the poets from his ideal world (The Republic).

The Answers of Sir Philip Sidney on these 4 objections and charges:

1. **Poetry is the waste of time:** Stephen Gosson said that there are other kinds of knowledge than why people chose poetry? Sidney replies him: He says that God gives human beings some greatest gifts and the gifts are oratio means orating, speech and reason. It is poetry which most polishes all these gifts. If we will not write our speech, reasons and oratory in a poetry form than how can we gain knowledge. So, it is the best way of gain knowledge and its knowledge is fruitful.
2. **Poetry is mother of lies:** In this response Sir Philip Sidney says that poetry is not mother of lies. Because a poet is never affirming and claiming that his ideas are totally objective. His ideas and thoughts are just his personal emotions and feelings. He doesn't claim and affirm things like historians who claim that Mughal Emperors are very good. But it's his claim and maybe this claim is wrong. So, poet is writing not affirmatively, but allegorically and figuratively.

3. It is a nurse of Abuse: In this objection Stephen Gosson said that poetry creates abusive thought, sinfulness lustful love. and it harms men's wit. In this response, Sir Philip said that is is the poet who writes this kind of vulgar and shameless poetry. So, it is the fault of such poets. You can not criticize poetry for this. It is person's own feelings and thoughts. For example: if a man who is morally corrupt then it doesn't mean that all men will be morally corrupt. So, if a poet writes abusive poetry than it doesn't mean that every poet writes abusive poetry.

4. Plato had rightly banished the poets from his ideal world: In this objection Stephen Gosson said that Plato had banished the poets from his work Republic, in his response Sir Philip Sidney says that Plato charged and abused on the poets and artists of his era who were writing bad and vulgar poetry. But he didn't abuse and charge on the art. He charged on artists not on art. Sir Philip Sidney also cites Plato's dialogue Ion as giving a "divine commendation to poetry", viewing poetry as inspired by "a divine force, far above man's wit".

(3) Preface to Shakespeare by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Introduction: Dr. Samuel Johnson was an English writer of Augustan age, poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer. He wrote his work Preface to Shakespeare after he studied and analyzed the works of Shakespeare. He studied Shakespeare more than 9 years. And then wrote his work on Shakespeare Preface to Shakespeare. In this work, he talks about the merits, demerits and three dramatic unities of Shakespeare's Works.

Merits of Shakespeare

Use of Blank Verse in his works: Dr. Samuel Johnson says that William Shakespeare perfected the blank verse in his works. He says that Shakespeare's plays are the treasure of practical knowledge. We find philosophy of life in his plays. His plays were mirror of life.

Use of Tragicomedy: In classical writings the rules are regulations for writing a tragedy or comedy are that, writer should not mingle the tragedy and comedy. He should follow the rules and write the works according to rules and laws. But, William Shakespeare use tragicomedy element in his plays. And his contemporary writers of his age didn't like it. But Dr. Samuel Johnson defends him and says that William Shakespeare did very well and he mingled the both tragedy and comedy. He argues that in a real life of a man, we don't see that we will suffer always with misfortune, sadness and grief. Sometime our fortune is good and we also enjoy the happiness of life. So, we can say that life is the mixture of both joy and sorrow. Life is not fully tragic nor fully comic.

Shakespeare a comic genius: Dr. Samuel Johnson also says that Shakespeare was also a comic genius. He says that Shakespeare was genius in comedy. When people saw his comedies they started laughing naturally. He didn't do extra hard work for writing the comedies and comic scenes. He also uses common language in his comedies that everyone understands easily.

Demerits and Faults of Shakespeare

Lack of Morality: William Shakespeare didn't write for moral purposes. He only wrote for pleasure and fun of audience. His purpose is just pleasure and fun instead of teaching something to audience. It is not a poetic justice with his plays.

Don't correct the mistakes in plot: He didn't correct the mistakes in his plot. If a mistake made in a plot he didn't improve and correct it. In his plays, he presented the different characters like, Italian, German and French. But the fault is that these characters didn't look like that. And they used English language and their nature was also English nature. So, it's a great fault in his plots.

Sometimes used cold and weak speech in plays: He often use weak speech in his plays. Sometimes he didn't follow the rules of reason and truth. In his plays, two different characters have different languages but when speak with one another they could not understand their languages. He also compresses the plot. And sometimes made it too long.

Shakespeare's use of dramatic Unities: Dr. Samuel Johnson defends Shakespeare's use of unities. According to classical rules of Aristotle there will be unity of time, place and action in a play. But, the history of Shakespeare was not a tragedy or nor a comedy. So, he didn't use the dramatic unity. In some of his plays, he didn't maintain the Unites of time and place. But, he

maintained the unity of action in his plays. He focused on the events of action. So, Unity of time and place just beautify your plays. They are not much important like unity of action. Unity of Action alone is sufficient and enough.



(4) Preface to Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth.

Introduction: William Wordsworth was a poet of romanticism era. He and his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge both wrote a work Lyrical Ballads. It is the poetry collection of 23 different poems. 19 poems of Lyrical Ballads were written by William Wordsworth. And 4 were written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The first edition of Lyrical Ballads was criticized by people. After this, he wrote a Preface to Lyrical Ballads in its second edition and in this preface he talks about the Lyrical Ballads that it was my experiment and I wrote lyrical ballads to check the public's reaction. Because at that time poets and writers didn't use the common language in their works and in Lyrical Ballads I used a very common and simple countryside language. So, he wrote this work to say that poet should not think what people like he should think what he likes. He should not follow others he should follow his own ideas and thoughts. Through this preface, we can imagine that William Wordsworth didn't want that someone criticize on him for his work. That's why he wrote Preface to Lyrical Ballads.

Definition of Poetry: "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility".

Use of common language: In this preface, he says that I use a simple and common language in my work Lyrical Ballads so, people can understand it easily. He says that when a writer uses an extraordinary language in his works it means that he is so intelligent and capable and fully knowledge person. But, common people couldn't understand the lofty language of writer because they are not intelligent and knowledgeable like him. So, William Wordsworth says a writer should use a common language in his writings that everyone can understand it easily.

Pleasure of Poetry: William Wordsworth also says that, if a person who reads a poetry of difficult language then he would not find pleasure and happiness in this poetry. And he will feel boring whenever he will read. So, William Wordsworth said that, a poet should not use the difficult language and difficult words in his poetry.

Prose and Poetry: William Wordsworth says that there is no difference between poetry and prose. The arrangement words are same in both genres.

Avoid Poetic Diction: William Wordsworth says that a writer should use meter instead of poetic diction. Because poetic diction is very complicated while meter is not complicated it is very simple and easy. If we use the meter in our poetry, then our poetry will be more easy. And the readers can understand it easily.

Poetry is Superior to Science: William Wordsworth believed that Poetry is superior to science. Because, when a scientist invents something he feels pleasure and happy. But this happiness is limited to his own mind and thoughts. While, when a poet writes poetry and he feel pleasure when he writes poetry. The reader also feels same pleasure when he reads the poetry. So, we can say that Poetry is superior to science because in poetry the pleasure is spread and in science the pleasure is not spread. It is limited.

Theory of Poetry: In theory of poetry, William Wordsworth says that when our feelings are too much. Then these feelings find a source for expulsion. Then these feelings are described in words. And the words in which we describe our feelings and emotions are called "Poetry".

Stages of writing a poetry: Followings are the 4 stages of writing a poetry:

1. **Observation:** In this stage, poet is influenced and attracted by anything. And then poet should observe this thing.
2. **Recollection:** After the observation, in this stage, a poet should recollect the all ideas about a thing which he observed.
3. **Filtering:** In this stage, a poet who observed and recollect the things cannot write all the things and ideas. He just chooses less words for poetry. A poet selects quality of words in the quantity of words. Poetry needs quality not quantity. So, this process of selecting qualitative words in quantity is called filtering.
4. **Creation of Poetry:** In this stage, poet only arranges the filtered material and qualitative words in a poetic way. And then poetry is created.

(5) Culture and Anarchy Chapter I by Mathew Arnold.

Introduction: Mathew Arnold was an English writer and critic of Victorian era. He wrote his work to criticizing on the socio-political condition and situation of English society of that time. In this essay, he talks about the two contrasting things Culture and Anarchy. This essay is consisting of 6 chapters. But, in our course outline only first chapter is included. The first chapter is "Sweetness and Light".

Chapter I Sweetness and Light: The title of this chapter is taken from a work of Jonathan Swift "Sweetness and Light" Sweetness means search for beauty in society and Light means search for knowledge in society. And According to Mathew Arnold both things are important for the people of England.

He also says that our society is continuously moving and changing. It can't be same forever. The changes will be always occurring in society. The society is made by individuals and the individuals change themselves for attaining perfection in their lives. And when society is changed then it's backbone culture is also changed. So, according to Mathew Arnold the culture is also a moving and changing phenomena.

According to Mathew Arnold no one can attain the complete perfection in society, so, a society and its culture cannot be perfect. And when society is always changed then it's backbone culture is also changed.

A culture is a code of conduct, law, ethics, moral which helps to govern society and people of society. It is soul of society.

According to Mathew Arnold: The perfection is the essence of culture. There are so many different cultures in our society. It doesn't mean that all culture will be correct. The culture which is going and running towards perfection is called true culture. He also describes true culture as working to perfect both individuals and humankind at large. He also argues that Victorian England's obsession with materialism and industrialism has led to a neglect of true culture. He portrays that Englishmen as fundamentally fixated on liberty and their own selfish pursuits instead of caring for "sweetness and light".



(6) Religion and Literature by T.S. Eliot.

Introduction: T.S. Eliot Thomas Stearns Eliot was a poet, essayist, publisher, playwright, critic and editor of Modern time period. He wrote his essay Religion and Literature to criticize on the modern writers who think that literature is only write for aesthetic purposes and not for ethical and theological purposes. In this essay, he talks about the relationship between religion and literature. And how can we attain and get the ethical and theological benefit from a literature. According to him, literature should have the message for its readers. And he also gives a message to modern writers that you should write literature not only for aesthetic purposes but also for ethical and theological purposes.

Ethical and theological aspects of a literature: The writer wrote this work in the era of Art of Art's sake. He argues that writers should not only write literature for aesthetic point of view. It should be written for ethical and theological point of view as well. He says that people only viewed a literary work as a work of imagination, it should also be considered from ethical and theological point of view. When people will view a literary work with ethical and theological point of view then it will ascertain the greatness of a literary work.

Relationship between Religion and Literature: It has been believed for a long time that there is no relationship between religion and literature. The writer believes that there is and should be a relationship between the two. In his essay, he also says that we can apply our religious applications to our literary criticism.

Three Types of Religious Literature: Followings are the three types of religious literature:

1. **Religious Literature:** It is a literature which has literary qualities in it. For example: some persons, consider the Bible only as literary work and talk of its influence on English Literature. But actually Bible is considered as "Word of God". It is a religious literature.
2. **Devotional Poetry:** In this type of religious literature, the writers don't use the verses of Bible but they use the themes of religion in their works. Poets like; Spenser, Hopkins, Vaughan, Southwell and Dante are used devotional poetry.
3. **Literature that forward the cause of religion:** In these works, the writers write about the causes of religion in literature that why religion exist in literature.

Secularization: Secularization means reading the worldly literature on political, social, economical point of view and don't read the religious literature. Focus on the world affairs instead of religious affairs.

Behavior between religion and literature: The writer says that every kind of literary work influence the behavior of human beings. If we read a secular literature, then it also affects our behavior. And if we mingle and combine some religious figures in this literature then our behavior will be change according to ourselves.

Eliot's advices to Christian readers: In this essay, the writer says that modern readers have lost their religious values and they don't have the wisdom to be able to obtain the knowledge of life. The readers are reading different books, but the content of all contemporary writers has damaged. So, a Christian reader should aware of the standards of secular, contemporary and religious literature. If he has knowledge and he reads a damage literature, then it will not harm him. T. S. Eliot didn't consider that modern literature is bad. But, he thinks that it is not read on the bases of ethics and theology. So, it should be read on ethical and theological point of view as well.