

Literary Criticism

Hassaan Bin Zubair



According to the Syllabus of Government College
University Faisalabad (GCUF) and other Major
Universities of Pakistan



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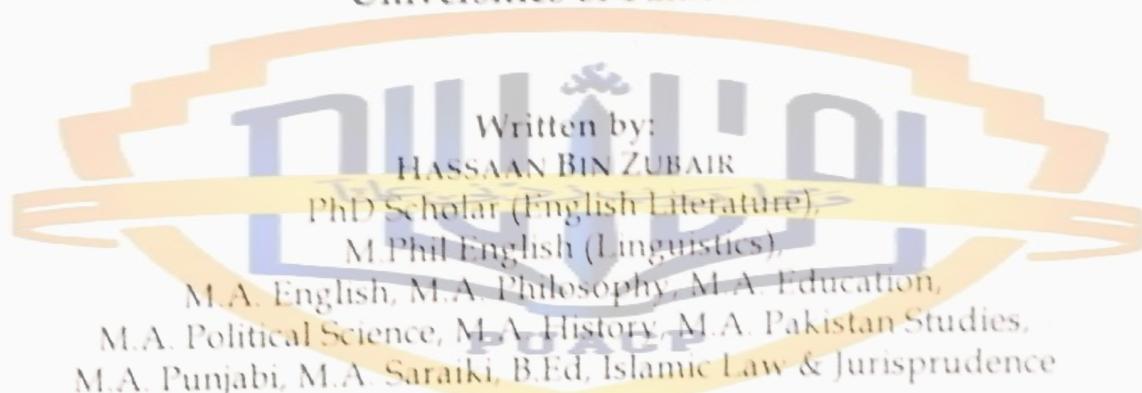
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Literary Criticism – I & II



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Chapter 01

Poetics Aristotle

IMITATION

Aristotle explained the meaning of the word "imitation" to defend poetry which is called Aristotle's concept/theory of imitation. Although he was not the first to use this word yet he comes first in redefining its meanings. Word "imitation" was used as a synonym for copy of a copy before Aristotle. Plato used this word for the first time. He was of the considered view that poetry was a shadow of a shadow, thus, it was twice away from reality. It is better to understand the meanings of imitation as demonstrated by Plato before discussing Aristotle's concept/theory of imitation. One thing should be remembered, poetry does not mean only modern poetry. Nowadays is a genre of literature but in the past, drama, comedy, and the epic poem was in poetic form. Furthermore, everything was called poetry, and writers were called poets. Hence, when we (or Aristotle) mention poets should be considered every writer whether he is a dramatist, novelist, or poet. Likewise, poetry means whole literature.

Plato's Concept of Imitation

Plato was against poetry and poets. He said that the poets used to present a copy of nature in poetry. He quoted an example of a painter and said that a painter first saw nature and then created its copy on the canvas. Plato was of the view that the world had been created from an idea; the idea was an original thing, whereas this world was its copy. Let's look at an example to clarify it; when a carpenter builds a chair, he has an idea in his mind, which can be called a blueprint. When he builds a chair, it is a copy of that idea. Similarly, this world was created from an idea, therefore, it was not original but a copy. A poet imitates nature in his poetry which is already a copy. Hence, he makes a copy of a copy. In this way, poetry is twice away as reality.

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Aristotle's Concept of Imitation

Aristotle answered Plato and refuted the charge against poets. He redefined the meanings of imitation. Regardless of that whole concept of idea and copy remained the same. In simple words, Aristotle agreed that the world was created from an idea and the world was its copy. He also agreed that a poet imitated reality/nature but the meaning of the word imitation did not mean mere copy. He did not consider poetry twice away from reality.

Imitation is a Creative Process

Imitation is a creative process in the eyes of Aristotle. He links poetry with music instead of painting. He says that poetry is pleasant just like a flute's sound that is full of harmony; therefore, it is not right to compare poets with painters and poetry with painting. A poet further says Aristotle, does not present things as they appear but bestows them his imagination. Hence, poetry is not the process of seeing things and simply converting them to words; a poet reinvents things with his imagination and experiences.

Three Modes of Imitation in Aristotle's Concept/Theory

Aristotle's concept/theory describes three modes of imitation. The first chapter of the poetics is relevant in this regard, in which he tries to explain the mode of imitation.

There are three modes of imitation in the eyes of Aristotle.

- Tragedy,
- Comedy and
- Epic Poetry.

Poetry Presents Men in Action

In tragedy and poetry, the manner of the poet is action, whereas, in the remaining one, his manner is narrative. Aristotle's concept/theory of imitation emphasizes "Men in action". Supernatural elements cannot be shown in dramatic forms on the stage, therefore, they can be included in epic poetry. Tragedy presents men as better than they are but comedy presents them as worse. However, the purpose remains the same which is to imitate things with the power of imagination.

Realistic Poetry

Aristotle has not mentioned the third form of poetry. Critics object to it. They say that Aristotle is not aware of the third form i.e.

reality. Many dramatists, in the modern world, are sketching realism but it does not mean that they have no creative powers. Though the reality is being presented yet there are feelings and emotions in it. Moreover, emotions and feelings can only be added if the poet/dramatist has good imaginative powers. A true poet illustrates the pain and sorrows of life, which are real but always effects.

Imitation vs. Reality and History

If imitation is the name of copying facts then there must be no creativity in poetry. As mentioned earlier, Aristotle argues that a poet presents men in action. He presents men as they were or are or as they ought to be. If men are being presented as they are without any blend of imagination and creative power then it is not poetry but history. Creativity differentiates history from poetry. A historian may also write about the sorrows and pains, suffered by humans, but it would not necessarily be filled with emotions. The strong power of imagination is required to convert ordinary and simple incidents to extraordinary events so that they cause "catharsis". Aristotle's redefined "imitation" is the only concept/theory, through which poetry becomes highly effective. Aristotle encouraged poets to write poetry. He blows a new soul to the word "imitation". Plato's charges against the poets have successfully been refuted by Aristotle in his book "Poetics". Aristotle's concept/theory of imitation shows the world that it is not merely a procedure of copying things but a creative process, which requires high imaginative powers. Hence, it cannot be called duplicating things. It is a process of creating something astonishing from ordinary things with the help of a strong vision. A poet, hence, through imitation brings things closer to reality instead of taking them twice away from reality.



CONCEPT OF TRAGEDY

"Tragedy," says Aristotle, "is an imitation [*mimēsis*] of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude...through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation [catharsis] of these emotions." Ambiguous means may be employed, Aristotle maintains in contrast to Plato, to a virtuous and purifying end. Aristotle's theory of tragedy is completely based on induction. The ample examples or citations that Aristotle uses in his text from the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides, make the idea clear that his theory of this literary genre comes from his extensive reading of their tragedies,

and the ideas are mere generalizations of the commonalities in their tragedies. Thus, it is interesting to see a theory that followed the genre for which it is theorized. But in modern times this theory has lost its importance with the development of different sorts of tragic plots ending with a catastrophe. Now its significance is limited to the level of differentiating the Aristotelian mode of tragedy from the non-Aristotelian mode.

Aristotle defines tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is serious and having magnitude, complete in itself" in the medium of poetic language and the manner of dramatic presentation which incorporates "incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of such emotions". An undeniable fact associated with this cathartic effect is that the tragic representation of suffering and terrific defeat leaves an audience, not depressed, but relieved or even exalted. This distinctive effect on the reader, "the pleasure of pity and fear", is a basic way to distinguish it from comic and other forms of dramatic representation. Moreover, Aristotle makes the pleasure of pity and fear a rule that governs the organization of the tragic plot and choice of the tragic hero and sees that a dramatist's aim should always be how to achieve this end in his drama.

There are six major components in tragedy according to Aristotle:

- (a) Plot
- (b) Character
- (c) Thought
- (d) Diction
- (e) Song
- (f) Spectacle

(a) Plot

Aristotle defines plot as the soul of tragedy and emphasizes much on its unity. He treats it as a unified artistic whole directed toward the intended effect, that is, the pleasure of pity and fear and catharsis of such human emotions. Being a unified whole, a plot should have a proper beginning, a middle, and an end in which every part supports the whole and none of the parts are non-functional. And being an imitation of an action, the plot should imitate single action. The inclusion of a series of actions simply because they happen to a single character does not make an artistic whole.

In the plot, the events develop from complication to catastrophe. The "hamartia" or a severe tragic flaw of the protagonist leads to the complication and a sudden revelation, or "anagnorisis", of this flaw intensifies the complication and it in turn anticipates the tragic end of the character, or catastrophe after a sudden reversal in the fortune of the character, that is, "peripeteia". In this way, the plot moves from hamartia through anagnorisis and peripeteia to catastrophe. This shows that Aristotle favours the complex plot as opposed to the simple plot in which reversal of the situation is almost impossible.

(b) Character

It has second place after the plot. By character, Aristotle means the tragic hero who is always a nobleman who in turn is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil but a mixture of both. He is always higher than ordinary moral worth. If according to Aristotle, the character is better than we are, the tragic effect will be stronger. The tragic and unfortunate end of such a character moves in us to pity and fear. He moves in us to pity because his misfortune is greater than what he deserves from his hamartia. Likewise, he moves us to fear, for we think of what will happen to our lesser and fallible selves.

(c) Thought

It is a way of saying what is appropriate to a given circumstance or situation. There should be a proper relationship between thought and situation. For example, a grave situation always expects a grave thought and vice-versa.

(d) Diction

It refers to the expression of meaning in words, or it is a primary mode of imitating the action. Words are a medium of representation and bearer of tragic meaning and effect.

(e) Song

The song is taken to be chief among the embellishments used in tragedy. It particularly refers to the song sung by a group of people known as the chorus. Or, in other words, it refers to what is generally known as chorric commentary in tragedy. It includes an analysis of the major events of the past, present, and what will happen in the future that intensify the dramatic effects. It narrates the major events that are not shown on stage.

(f) Spectacles

It means the scenes used in drama for the sake of the emotional attraction of the audience. It heightens the emotional significance of an event in the drama. But this is the sole work of a stage machinist or manager to set the scene as described by the dramatist. This theory of tragedy later developed through Castlevetro to neo-classical theorists like Corneille in 16th and 17th centuries. But where Aristotle is descriptive in his own right, the neoclassical theorists developed it as a rule of tragedy with an addition of two other elements to make up three unities of drama assimilating Aristotle's emphasis upon the unity of action.



PLOT

By plot, Aristotle means the arrangement of incidents. Incidents mean action, and tragedy is an imitation of actions, both internal and external. That is to say that it also imitates the mental processes of the dramatic personae. The first essential to creating a good tragedy is that it should maintain the unity of the plot. This means that the plot must move from beginning to end according to a tightly organized sequence of necessary or probable events. The beginning should not necessarily follow from any earlier events, and the end should tie up all loose ends and not produce any necessary consequences. The plot can also be enhanced by intelligent use of *peripeteia*, or reversal, and *anagnorisis*, or recognition. These elements work best when they are made an integral part of the plot. A plot should consist of a hero going from happiness to misery. The hero should be portrayed consistently and in a good light, though the poet should also remain true to what we know of the character. The misery should be the result of some *hamartia*, or error, on the part of the hero. A tragic plot must always involve some sort of tragic deed, which can be done or left undone, and this deed can be approached either with full knowledge or in ignorance. Aristotle discusses thought and diction and then moves on to address epic poetry. Epic poetry is similar to tragedy in many ways, though it is generally longer, more fantastic and deals with a greater scope of action. After addressing some problems of criticism, Aristotle argues that tragedy is superior to epic poetry.

The plot evokes tragic pity and fear during its movement from complication to catastrophic resolution. Aristotle uses this distinctive

effect of a plot to distinguish tragic plots from other plots, like comic and satiric, and he regards it as a determining principle in the organization of the plot. The *hamartia* of the protagonist leads to the complication in the plot and a sudden revelation of that flaw, or *anagnorisis* intensifies the complication. This revelation reverses the protagonist's fortunate fate into an unfortunate one, known as *Peripeteia* that ultimately leads to catastrophe or a tragic end of the life of the hero. This shows that Aristotle favours a complex plot as opposed to a simple plot in which reversal of the situation is almost impossible.



CHARACTER

Character is one of the parts of tragedy. By character, Aristotle does not always mean the people depicted in poetry; instead, a character in Poetics often refers to a character's moral fortitude and disposition. According to Aristotle, characters are either admirable or inferior, and their actions reflect this disposition. Aristotle argues that character is the second-most important component of tragedy after plot. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, is an imitation of an action, not merely of a person, and character determines if that action will be admirable or inferior, that is, moral or immoral. Aristotle believes that the best tragedies have a balance between good and evil characters. A character shouldn't be too moral, but their change of fortune should arise from an error that is not a moral deficiency.

To understand the relationship between plot and character in a tragedy, we must know the 'ethos', 'dianoia', and 'praxis'. The term 'ethos' is generally translated as "character". If we take the word as a whole revelation of a person, then we go beyond the Aristotelian sense. In poetics, ethos and dianoia are two elements that cause action. Ethos is the moral element in character, and it unfolds a certain direction of the will. Dianoia is the thought through which ethos can find outward expression. In a dramatic dialogue, the two elements ethos and dianoia may be found side by side. There is a slight difference. Whenever a moral choice is manifested there ethos appears and in the intellectual reflection of the speaker is manifested dianoia.

Aristotle turns his attention towards the character of the tragic hero and lays out four requirements. First, the hero must be good. The character of the hero denotes the hero's moral purpose in the

play, and a good character will have a good moral purpose. Second, the good qualities of the hero must be appropriate to the character. For instance, warlike qualities can be good, but they would be inappropriate in a woman. Third, the hero must be realistic. In other words, if he is drawn from myth, he should be a reasonable semblance of the character portrayed in myths. Fourth, the hero must be consistent (by which Aristotle means the hero must be written consistently, not that the hero must behave consistently). He accepts that some characters are inconsistent but that they should be written to be consistent in their inconsistency. Like the plot itself, the behaviour of the characters should be seen as necessary or probable, by the internal logic of their personality. Thus, a character may behave inconsistently so long as we can perceive this inconsistency as stemming from an internally consistent personality.

From these requirements, Aristotle thinks it clear that the *lisis*, or denouement, should arise out of the plot and not depend upon stage artifice. Both the characters and the plot ought to follow a probable or necessary sequence so that the *lisis* should be a part of this sequence. Improbable events, or the intervention of the gods, should be reserved for events outside the action of the play or events beyond human knowledge. The actual incidents themselves should not rely on miracles but on probability and necessity. To reconcile the first requirement that the hero is good with the third requirement that the hero is realistic, Aristotle recommends that the poet should keep all the distinctive characteristics of the person being portrayed but touch them up a little to make the hero appear better than he is. For instance, in the *Iliad*, Homer repeatedly describes Achilles' hot temper and yet makes him seem exceedingly good and heroic nonetheless.



CATHARSIS

Word "catharsis" has been used in Aristotle's "Poetics" but he forgot to define its concept. He left its definition to critics and students of literature. However, no clear definition of "catharsis" is available. It has much importance in every language. There is no word in English literature, which has been debated so much as the word "Catharsis" has been debated and translated. Commonly, it has been defined as a process of releasing and thereby providing relief from strong or repressed emotions. Some other meanings which come to mind after reading Aristotle's poetics are:

- Purgation,
- Purification,
- Cleansing,
- Release,
- Relief,
- Emotional release,
- Freeing,
- Deliverance,
- Exorcism,
- Abreaction,
- Depuration,
- Lustration.

Catharsis in real meaning explains the importance of tragedy. In Aristotle's eyes, tragedy is the purgation of emotions such as pity and fear that defines the concept of catharsis. The whole "Poetics" of Aristotle emphasizes the catharsis of pity and fear. Thus, the word became a matter of controversy among critics. Aristotle defines tragedy and says that when the protagonist, who is a mixture of good and bad qualities, suffers and falls from prosperity to adversity, it causes the catharsis of pity and fear. Thus, the word "Catharsis" is not a simple noun instead it is a symbol of emotions. Every critic defines this word as per his knowledge and experience. It is impossible to extract the exact concept of catharsis only from Aristotle's "Poetics", therefore we have to rely upon the suggestions, provided by critics. We have to consider the arguments of every critic and then draw a conclusion that who has best defined it. Catharsis means purification and refinement. We find peace because of the harmonization we face after the outlet of emotions. It purifies our hearts. We feel the same after watching every tragedy whether it is "Othello", "Hamlet" or any other from the past like "Oedipus Rex". A tragedy always purifies our soul with a touch of refinement. It can also be referred to as a homeopathic treatment as defined by Milton.

Purgation and purification best describe catharsis. Undoubtedly, Aristotle lays great importance on pity and fear and when spectators witness the pain of the hero they feel pity for him. In a tragedy, the reader/spectator puts himself in the place of the tragic

hero and thinks about what he could do if he were the hero. Every person feels the same as felt by a tragic hero. Feelings and emotions are there in everyone. These are natural and everyone possesses them. What makes difference is their suppression. Some can suppress them easily whereas others cannot. Ultimately feelings of pity and fear arise and the same increase with every hardship faced by the tragic hero.

A tragedy, in true words, is the purgation of these feelings and emotions. Catharsis thus is synonymous with relief that is observed by every person after the purgation of feelings. We know that feeling, no matter what their type is, creates disturbance until they are released. A true tragedy first provokes these feelings and then gives relief from them. Hence, catharsis has also been defined as the purgation of feelings that arise while observing a tragedy.

After seeing the sufferings of the hero, feelings of pity and fear certainly arouse and the spectator refuses to take such steps, which causes suffering. If we see the word catharsis in this context then it reveals that Catharsis is merely used for teaching. Of course, the spectator learns something from tragedy and every tragedy has a subject, which indeed has a moral lesson. Perhaps Aristotle uses this word for teaching. It is necessary to remember that Aristotle emphasizes too much on the main character and says that he must be the combination of good and bad qualities. If the character is a mixture of good and bad, the spectator, after witnessing suffering does not dare to take such steps but if he is too good, it will be unjustified for a good man to suffer and instead of learning he will show his sympathy. If he is a bad person, then his sufferings are good because he deserves it. Aristotle kept morality on his mind while defining tragedy. So, the word catharsis may be used for morality and teaching purposes in "Poetics".

Catharsis has different meanings in every language. The controversy is still unresolved. It would be easier if Aristotle had defined this word but he could not do so. Perhaps, he could not realize the importance of this word. Aristotle emphasized the catharsis of pity and fear. Critics defined catharsis as emotional fortitude, physiological balance, a process of emotional outlet, purgation, purification, and homeopathic treatment. Every mind has its interpretation so far as the meaning of this word is concerned. It has been defined more than any other word in English literature yet ironically it is undefined. As discussed earlier, it is not simply a word but a name for emotions, thus, it is difficult to define. The conclusion

can be drawn that the words, purgation purification and refinement best describe the meaning of catharsis.



POETICS (*Chapter-wise Summary*)

Part I

I propose to treat Poetry in itself and its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each, to inquire into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry. Following, then, the order of nature, let us begin with the principles which come first. Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also, Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects—the medium, the objects, and the manner or mode of imitation being in each case distinct. For as there are persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form, or again by the voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or 'harmony,' either singly or combined. Thus in the music of the flute and of the lyre, 'harmony' and rhythm alone are employed; also in other arts, such as that of the shepherd's pipe, which is essentially similar to these. In dancing, rhythm alone is used without 'harmony'; even dancing imitates character, emotion, and action, through rhythmical movement. Another art imitates using language alone, and that either in prose or verse— which verse, again, may either combine different meters or consist of but one kind—but this has hitherto been without a name. For there is no common term we could apply to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues on the one hand; and, on the other, to poetic imitations in iambic, elegiac, or any similar meter. People do, indeed, add the word 'maker' or 'poet' to the name of the meter, and speak of elegiac poets, or epic (that is, hexameter) poets, as if it were not the imitation that makes the poet, but the verse that entitles them all to the name. Even when a treatise on medicine or natural science is brought out in verse, the name of the poet is by custom given to the author; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the meter so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other

physicist rather than a poet. On the same principle, even if a writer in his poetic imitation were to combine all meters, as Chaeremon did in his Centaur, which is a medley composed of meters of all kinds, we should bring him too under the general term poet. So much then for these distinctions. There are, again, some arts that employ all the means above mentioned- namely, rhythm, tune, and meter. Such are Dithyrambic and Nomic poetry, and also Tragedy and Comedy; but between them originally the difference is, that in the first two cases these means are all employed in combination, in the latter, now one means is employed, now another. Such, then, are the differences between the arts concerning the medium of imitation.

Part II

Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness, and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. It is the same in painting. Polygnotus depicted men as nobler than they are, Pauson as less noble, and Dionysius drew them true to life. Now it is evident that each of the modes of imitation above mentioned will exhibit these differences, and become a distinct kind in imitating thus distinct objects. Such diversities may be found even in dancing, flute-playing, and lyre-playing. So again in language, whether prose or verse unaccompanied by music. Homer, for example, makes men better than they are; Cleophon as they are; Hegemon the Thasian, the inventor of parodies, and Nicochares, the author of the Deiliad, worse than they are. The same thing holds good for Dithyrambs and Nomes; here too one may portray different types, as Timotheus and Philoxenus differed in representing their Cyclopes. The same distinction marks Tragedy from Comedy; for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life.

Part III

There is still a third difference- how each of these objects may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration- in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does or speak in his person, unchanged- or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us. These, then, as we said at the beginning, are the three differences that distinguish artistic imitation- the medium, the objects, and the manner. So from one point of view, Sophocles is an imitator of the same kind as Homer- for both imitate higher types of

character; from another point of view, of the same kind as Aristophanes- for both imitate persons acting and doing. Hence, some say, the name 'drama' is given to such poems, as representing action. For the same reason, the Dorians claim the invention both of Tragedy and Comedy. The claim to Comedy is put forward by the Megarians- not only by those of Greece proper, who allege that it originated under their democracy but also by the Megarians of Sicily, for the poet Epicharmus, who is much earlier than Chionides and Magnes, belonged to that country. Tragedy too is claimed by certain Dorians of the Peloponnese. In each case, they appeal to the evidence of language. The outlying villages, they say, are by them called domain, by the Athenians demoi: and they assume that comedians were so named not from komazein, 'to revel,' but because they wandered from village to village (kata komas), being excluded contemptuously from the city. They add also that the Dorian word for 'doing' is dran, and the Athenian, prattein. This may suffice as to the number and nature of the various modes of imitation.

Part IV

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.' For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause. Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm, meters being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry.

Poetry now diverged in two directions, according to the individual character of the writers. The graver spirits imitated noble

actions and the actions of good men. The more trivial sort imitated the actions of meaner persons, at first composing satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men. A poem of the satirical kind cannot indeed be put down to any author earlier than Homer; though many such writers probably there were. But from Homer onward, instances can be cited in his Margites, for example, and other similar compositions. The appropriate meter was also here introduced; hence the measure is still called the iambic or lampooning measure, being that in which people lampooned one another. Thus the older poets were distinguished as writers of heroic or lampooning verse. As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation so he too first laid down the main lines of comedy, by dramatizing the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire. His Margites bear the same relation to comedy that the Iliad and Odyssey do to tragedy. But when Tragedy and Comedy came to light, the two classes of poets still followed their natural bent: the lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians since drama was a larger and higher form of art. Whether Tragedy has as yet perfected its proper types or not; and whether it is to be judged in itself, or relation also to the audience- this raises another question. Be that as it may, Tragedy--as also Comedy- was at first mere improvisation. The one originated with the authors of the Dithyramb, the other with those of the phallic songs, which are still in use in many of our cities. Tragedy advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped.

Aeschylus first introduced a second actor; he diminished the importance of the Chorus and assigned the leading part to the dialogue. Sophocles raised the number of actors to three and added scene painting. Moreover, it was not till late that the short plot was discarded for one of greater compass, and the grotesque diction of the earlier satyric form for the stately manner of Tragedy. The iambic measure then replaced the trochaic tetrameter, which was originally employed when the poetry was of the satyric order and had greater with dancing. Once dialogue had come in, Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure. For the iambic is, of all measures, the most colloquial we see it in the fact that conversational speech runs into iambic lines more frequently than into any other kind of verse; rarely into hexameters, and only when we drop the colloquial intonation. The additions to the number of 'episodes' or acts, and the other

accessories of which tradition tells, must be taken as already described; for to discuss them in detail would, doubtless, be a large undertaking.

Part V

Comedy is, as we have said,^o an imitation of characters of a lower type- not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. It consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted but does not imply pain. The successive changes through which Tragedy passed, and the authors of these changes, are well known, whereas Comedy has had no history because it was not at first treated seriously. It was late before the Archon granted a comic chorus to a poet; the performers were till then voluntary. Comedy had already taken definite shape when comic poets, distinctively so-called, are heard of. Who furnished it with masks, or prologues, or increased the number of actors- these and other similar details remain unknown. As for the plot, it came originally from Sicily; but of Athenian writers, Crates was the first who abandoned the 'iambic' or lampooning form, and generalized his themes and plots. Epic poetry agrees with Tragedy in so far as it is an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type. They differ in that Epic poetry admits but one kind of meter and is narrative in form. They differ, again, in their length: for Tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit, whereas the Epic action has no limits of time. This, then, is the second point of difference; though at first the same freedom was admitted in Tragedy as in Epic poetry. Of their constituent parts some are common to both, some peculiar to Tragedy: whoever, therefore knows what is good or bad Tragedy, knows also about Epic poetry. All the elements of an Epic poem are found in Tragedy, but the elements of a Tragedy are not all found in the Epic poem.

Part VI

Of the poetry which imitates in hexameter verse, and of Comedy, we will speak hereafter. Let us now discuss Tragedy, resuming its formal definition, as resulting from what has been already said. 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 action, not of

narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. By 'language embellished,' I mean language into which rhythm, 'harmony' and song enter. By 'the several kinds in separate parts,' I mean, that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song. Now as tragic imitation implies a person acting, it necessarily follows in the first place, that Spectacular equipment will be a part of the Tragedy. Next, Song and Diction, for these are the media of imitation. By 'Diction' I mean the mere metrical arrangement of the words: as for 'Song,' it is a term whose sense everyone understands. Again, Tragedy is the imitation of action; and action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these—thought and character—are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends. Hence, the Plot is the imitation of the action—for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents.

By Character, I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated. Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, and Song. Two of the parts constitute the medium of imitation, one the manner, and three the objects of imitation. And these complete the first. These elements have been employed, we may say, by the poets to a man; in fact, every play contains Spectacular elements as well as Character, Plot, Diction, Song, and Thought. But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. The tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as a subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the ends of a tragedy, and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. The tragedies of most of our modern poets fail in the rendering of character, and of poets in general this is often true. It is the same in painting; and here lies the difference between Zeuxis and Polygnotus. Polygnotus delineates character well; the style of Zeuxis is devoid of ethical quality. Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect.

nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents.

Besides this, the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy- Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes- are parts of the plot. Further proof is, that novices in the art attain to finish of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets. The plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy; Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in the painting. The most beautiful colours, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of a portrait. Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and the agents mainly with a view of the action. Third in order is Thought- that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. In the case of oratory, this is the function of the political art and the art of rhetoric: and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians. Character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character. Though, on the other hand, is found where something is proved to be or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated.

Fourth among the elements enumerated comes Diction; by which I mean, the expression of the meaning in words; and its essence is the same both in verse and prose. Of the remaining elements Song holds the chief place among the embellishments. The Spectacle has, indeed, an emotional attraction of its own, but, of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry. The power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors. Besides, the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.

Part VII

These principles being established, let us now discuss the proper structure of the Plot, since this is the first and most important thing in Tragedy. Now, according to our definition Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal

necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well-constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end haphazardly but conform to these principles.

Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as if there were one a thousand miles long. As, therefore, in the case of animate bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view; so in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory. The limit of length for dramatic competition and sensuous presentment is no part of artistic theory. For had it been the rule for a hundred tragedies to compete together, the performance would have been regulated by the water clock— as indeed we are told was formerly done. But the limit as fixed by the nature of the drama itself is this: the greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be because of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous. And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad.

Part VIII

The unity of the plot does not, as some people think, consist of the unity of the hero. For infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action. Hence the error, as it appears, of all poets who have composed a Heracleid, a Theseid, or other poems of the kind. They imagine that as Heracles was one man, the story of Heracles must also be a unity. But Homer, as in all else he is of surpassing merit, here too—whether from art or natural genius— seems to have happily discerned the truth. In composing the Odyssey he did not include all the adventures of

Odysseus- such as his wound on Parnassus, or his feigned madness at the mustering of the host- incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connection: but he made the *Odyssey*, and likewise the *Iliad*, to centre round an action that in our sense of the word is one. Therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural units of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. A thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference is not an organic part of the whole.

Part IX

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. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: poetry tends to express the universal, history of the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speaks or acts, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is- for example- what Alcibiades did or suffered. In Comedy this is already apparent: for here the poet first constructs the plot on the lines of probability and then inserts characteristic names- unlike the lampooners who write about particular individuals. But tragedians still keep to real names, the reason being that what is possible is credible: what has not happened we do not at once feel sure to be possible; but what has happened is manifestly possible: otherwise, it would not have happened. Still, there are even some tragedies in which there are only one or two well-known names, the rest being fictitious. In others, none are well known- as in Agathon's *Antheus*, where incidents and names alike are fictitious, and yet they give nonetheless pleasure.

We must not, therefore, at all costs keep to the received legends, which are the usual subjects of Tragedy. Indeed, it would be absurd to attempt it; for even subjects that are known are known only to a few, and yet give pleasure to all. It follows that the poet or 'maker'

should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions. And even if he chances to take a historical subject, he is nonetheless a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them, he is their poet or maker. Of all plots and actions, the episodic ones are the worst. I call a plot 'episodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. Bad poets compose such pieces by their fault, good poets, to please the players; for, as they write show pieces for competition, they stretch the plot beyond its capacity and are often forced to break the natural continuity. But again, Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action but of events inspiring fear or pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will then be greater than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design. We may instance the statue of Mitys at Argos, which fell upon his murderer while he was a spectator at a festival, and killed him. Such events seem not to be due to mere chance. Plots, therefore, constructed on these principles are necessarily the best.

Part X

Plots are either Simple or Complex, for the actions in real life, of which the plots are an imitation, obviously show a similar distinction. An action that is one and continuous in the sense above defined, I call Simple, when the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation and without Recognition. A Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both. These last should arise from the internal structure of the plot so that what follows should be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of propter hoc or post hoc. Part XI Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. Thus in Oedipus, the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus and free him from his alarms about his mother, but by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect. Again in the Lynceus, Lynceus is being led away to his death, and Danaus goes with him, meaning to slay him; but the outcome of the preceding incidents is that Danaus is killed and Lynceus saved.

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Recognition, as the name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in Oedipus. There are indeed other forms. Even inanimate things of the most trivial kind may in a sense be objects of recognition. Again, we may recognize or discover whether a person has done a thing or not. But the recognition which is most intimately connected with the plot and action is, as we have said, the recognition of persons. This recognition, combined with Reversal, will produce either pity or fear; and actions producing these effects are those which, by our definition, Tragedy represents. Moreover, it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend. Recognition, then, being between persons, it may happen that one person only is recognized by the other- when the latter is already known- or it may be necessary that the recognition should be on both sides. Thus Iphigenia is revealed to Orestes by the sending of the letter, but another act of recognition is required to make Orestes known to Iphigenia. Two parts, then, of the Plot- Reversal of the Situation and Recognition- turn upon surprises. The third part is the Scene of Suffering. The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like.



IMPORTANT QUESTION

1. Write a note on Aristotle's concept of Catharsis.



Chapter 03

Preface to Lyrical Ballads William Wordsworth

Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, written by William Wordsworth, is a landmark essay in the history of English Literature. Considered to be the Romantic Manifesto on poetry and society, the Preface is a work that is crucial to our understanding of the progress of Romantic literary thought, originating in 18th-century Europe, which has been immortalized in our view of poetry and how we think of it today. William Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" which was penned in association with S.T. Coleridge turned out to be a milestone work in the history of English literature. In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth propounds his concept of poetry, the subject and theme of poetry, the purpose and function of poetry, and the language fitted for poetry. Wordsworth's ideas changed the outlook of English literature in the 19th century and also announced the romantic period in the true sense.

Historical Background

The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads first appeared in the 2nd edition of the poetry collection Lyrical Ballads (1801) and later expanded in the 3rd edition (1802). It would be helpful for us to first familiarize ourselves with this historical context of the 18th century.

Europe

- i) **Massive industrialization and urbanization:** During this period, London became the urban centre of industrial development and huge masses of people migrated to the cities in search of jobs.
- ii) **The Backdrop of the Neoclassicals:** Neoclassical works were known for their adherence to rules and regulations of satire and their strict definitions of what is poetry. Their language was far from what people used in daily

conversations and they spoke of extraordinary subjects. Neoclassicism was followed by Romanticism.

iii)

Rise of Romanticism: Romanticism is different from romanticism (notice the capital 'R' vs. the lower-case 'r') Romanticism was a movement that sought to break away from old norms and beliefs by revolutionizing the way people thought about society in 18th century Europe.

Inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution - to shake up the foundations of old hierarchical structures and distressed by the rise of the choking city life, the Romantic Wordsworth set out to challenge old notions regarding poetry.

Wordsworth's relation to Nature/Countryside Wordsworth is celebrated as a nature poet because of his beautiful descriptions of nature and rural/countryside areas. However, to reduce his work to just an imitation of trees and flowers would be immature. Wordsworth admired nature/countryside not only because it looked beautiful, but because the simplicity and beauty that nature/countryside provided allowed people to be in touch with their soul and experience true beauty in life. Wordsworth believed that city life made the masses dull and stagnant, it had reduced them to overworked machines who failed to appreciate the simple beauty of life. He called this state of mental stagnancy savage torpor.

Tired of the highly elevated topics of neoclassical poets and their over-complicated language, Wordsworth wanted "*to make the ordinary extraordinary*". Wordsworth found inspiration from everyday figures of everyday life. Whether it be the famous Solitary Reaper or the Daffodils - Wordsworth's poetry flows to admire the simple beauty that exists in daily life.

Who is a poet?

For Wordsworth, a poet is simply "*a man speaking to men*" - a fellow human just like all of us trying to communicate his perception and experience of truth and beauty. However, the poet differs from regular people because of his higher sensitivity to the happenings around him and a deeper connection with his feelings, moods, and emotions as they arise in response to these outer happenings.

What is a poem?

Wordsworth famously defined poetry as "*a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings which are recollected in tranquillity*". Simply speaking, the highly sensitive poet can experience the beauty of

ordinary life, capture his own emotions as they arise, and is finally able to sit in a calm, peaceful space to use his imagination to recollect these emotions and finally write about them.

What is the language in which a poem should be written?

Wordsworth believed that the "*real language of men*" – ordinary daily language – should be used to write poetry. However, Wordsworth refined this common language to a purer form without losing the essence of its simplicity.

The Egotistical Sublime

The Egotistical Sublime is a concept that simply means that a poet's subjective view of truth and beauty is extremely attached to his work. The poems they produce are filled with their imagination and perspective on how they perceive things around them. Wordsworth's works are often said to be examples of the Egotistical Sublime since his own experience of things is what he believes to be everyone's experience of things.

Wordsworth's Definition of Poetry

The definition that Wordsworth put forward in 1802 is crucial, he says: "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling, it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity..." (William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads). From Wordsworth's definition of poetry, it is comprehensible that poetry is a subject of imagination and motivation. Poetry develops from the passion and emotion of the poet. Poetry's starting point is the emotions in the heart, not the reason of intellect. The foundational aspects of poetry are passion and emotion. Without these fundamental aspects, good poetry cannot be composed. The insistence on imagination, feeling, passion, and emotion is an explicit withdrawal from the neoclassical emphasis on "reason" and "objectivity".

Poetic Process

According to Wordsworth, four stages are needed to complete a poetic process:

1. **Recollection**
2. **Contemplation**
3. **Renewal of the original emotion, and**
4. **Composition**

At the outset, the poet observes certain things, characters, or circumstances. It creates forceful feelings and emotions in the poet's mind. Then he lets these emotions bog down together with the sensation that it has stirred. After this, in the second stage, there will be recollection or remembrance of those emotions and sensations in tranquillity and contemplation. There might be a gap of many years between the initial or primary sense of emotions and the contemplation of it. The emotions of the first phase hang in the mind of the poet until the unwanted emotions, which were random and secondary, precipitate. After contemplation, the initial or primary emotions and sensations get purified and filtered and what is left is considered universal and all-important truth. The primary or initial impression has now been gotten rid of unneeded material. At this stage, memory plays a crucial role. This whole procedure works very slowly but it is only by way of such a procedure of "purification" that the personal feelings are reformed into the universal.

The emotions that are left after contemplation are different from the emotions that a poet received in the first stage. The word that Wordsworth emphasizes here is "kindred". Wordsworth said that the emotions which are generated at the beginning and the emotions that are created after contemplation are both related but not identical because there is a filtration or purification of emotions. Therefore, at this moment of creation, 'tranquillity' is no more there. It has been substituted by emotional excitement. The creative process at this stage carries with it pleasure, indeed "an overbalance of pleasure" as Wordsworth puts it. In this process of creativity, the mind is, altogether, in a state of pleasure and delight. The job of the poet is to share this pleasure and delight with his readers to communicate at an elevated level than other men.

The Aim and Function of Poetry

Wordsworth says that the purpose of poetry is to convey pleasure. But this pleasure is not superficial, trivial enjoyment that we get, for example, by watching rope dancing. Instead, Wordsworth wished that with his poetry, he would be able to "console the afflicted". The pleasure of poetry elevates and edifies readers.

The Subject Matter of Poetry

William Wordsworth states that his content has been events and circumstances from daily life. And he has associated them with a language used by the common man, simultaneously casting over

them a shade of imagination. Wordsworth provides certain objectives for his choice of subject matter from common and rural life.

- Human emotions and passions mature well in rustic and rural life.
- The elementary emotions and feelings of the human heart correspond in a state of significant simplicity in the rustic and common situations of life.
- In common and rural conditions of life, human emotions are contained in the pleasing and lasting shape of nature i.e., outer nature, and therefore the emotions are more elevated and lasting than those of polished and aristocratic people of cities.
- The attitude and behaviour of the rustic people develop from those of elementary passions and feelings, which are more simply comprehensible and more permanent.

In short, Wordsworth explains that in the rustic and common situations of life "the elementary feelings" from an alliance with nature are unsophisticated, easy to comprehend, and simple.

Wordsworth's use of Common Language

Wordsworth used the common people's language after filtering it out of rough expressions, out-of-order syntax, and other flaws. Wordsworth has favoured the common man language because common people live together and are always in contact with nature from which the greatest and the best portion of human language originally evolved. In addition, because the humble and rural people have a very low probability of connecting with cities, rustic people do not have a vanity in their language. They convey their sentiment and emotions by way of easy, uncomplicated, and basic expressions. Thus, their language is more intense, more authentic, and more vigorous.

Wordsworth's Concept of a Poet

Wordsworth says that a poet should be a "man speaking to men". The poet's foremost purpose should be communication. A poet should not write for his fulfilment and delight but should share his ideas and emotions with his readers. Wordsworth says that the poet is distinct from common living persons not in kind, but in the standard and degree to which he owns certain qualities.

1. A poet is a person who has a **higher sensibility** in contrast to common human beings. A more active sensibility assists him to respond more firmly to outer impressions. Accordingly, his emotions and feelings are more passionate.
2. The imaginative power of a poet is greatly higher than that of other ordinary human beings. It allows him to expand his range of emotions. He can experience and react to those feelings that he has not personally confronted.
3. The poet possesses a more **comprehensive soul** compared to other common living persons. He portrays the passions and feelings of other human beings sharply.

The poet, thus, has the gifts of imagination, sensibility, fancy, observation, and judgment. Later William Wordsworth included that a poet should acquire sincerity as well. By sincerity, Wordsworth intended that the poet should labour hard to revise his poem to obtain artistic simplicity and coherence. He should take pains to convey himself in unequivocal terms. Therefore, we can say that Wordsworth was not completely unsighted to the necessity of artistic finish.

Wordsworth himself applied his concept of poetic composition to write poetry. Wordsworth never wrote poetry immediately after he came across any sensation or situation. He used to give time to his sensations to bog down his mind, and as he asserts in his theory Wordsworth contemplates those emotions later in tranquillity and composes poems. His well-known poems "The Tintern Abbey," "The Solitary Reaper," and "The Daffodils" were written according to his theory of poetic composition.

IMPORTANT QUESTION

1. Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, discuss in detail.

Chapter 07

Culture and Anarchy

Mathew Arnold

Culture and Anarchy, major work of criticism by Matthew Arnold, was published in 1869. In it, Arnold contrasts culture, which he defines as "the study of perfection," with anarchy, the prevalent mood of England's then-new democracy, which lacks standards and a sense of direction. Arnold classified English society into the Barbarians (with their lofty spirit, serenity, and distinguished manners and their inaccessibility to ideas), the Philistines (the stronghold of religious nonconformity, with plenty of energy and morality but insufficient "sweetness and light"), and the Populace (still raw and blind). He saw in the Philistines the key to culture; they were the most influential segment of society; their strength was the nation's strength, their crudeness; it, therefore, was necessary to educate and humanize the Philistines. Arnold saw in the idea of "the State," and not in any one class of society, the true organ and repository of the nation's collective "best self."

Chapter One: Sweetness and Light

The opening chapter is where the author lays down the fundamental foundation of his perspective on the definition of culture. That definition put simply, is a society's inexorable movement toward the idea. In seeking perfection, there are two requirements: an eagerness to learn based on seeing things as they are and the effort to ensure that the rest of society is constructed upon this knowledge and recognition. As a result, the irony is that culture is never completed because perfection cannot be attained; culture is always in flux and adaptable.

Chapter Two: Doing as One Likes

Rather than an assertion of philosophy like the first chapter, the second chapter is more like a response essay. The response to criticism, however, effectively serves the purpose of defining what lies in opposition to culture: anarchy. Anarchy is the result of doing

as one likes based on the freedom to enjoy the act rather than the consequences of that act. Thus, in Arnold's mode of structural thinking, anarchy differs substantially from the modern definition in that it is worshiping freedom itself as a concept rather than the benefits which come with understanding the responsibilities that come with being free. This conceptualization of anarchy has rooted in the idea of British citizens have become too willing to trust in the machine of parliamentarian democracy to solve problems created by the conflict of everybody doing as he likes.

Chapter Three: Barbarian, Philistines, Populace

The terminology of the past is exploited by Arnold to describe the then-modern subdivision of classes. Matthew Arnold is a great fighter for the prevailing real culture in the society of London. He finds the kingdom of materialism that is trying to strangle real culture. So, in this chapter, Arnold divides the society of England into three classes - The Aristocratic Class, the Middle Class, and the Working Class. He finds Anarchy very common in these classes and analyses them with their virtues and defects. He designates the Aristocratic class of his time as the Barbarians, the Middle class as the Philistines, and the Working class as the Populace. His scrutiny of three classes of his time proves him a well-experienced critic:

- **Barbarian**

The Barbarians are represented by the privileged aristocracy while the role of the Philistines had been handed down to the middle class. That means, of course, that the working class got off pretty easy with just being called the Populace. He then goes on to sharpen the definition of the signature character traits separating these classes from the other. Barbarians suffer from too great a refinement that winds up caring for most empty matters. For Aristocratic class, he views this class lacks adequate courage for resistance. He calls this class the Barbarians because they believe in their individualism, liberty, and doing as one likes; they had a great passion for field sports. Their manly exercise, their strength, and their good looks are found in the Aristocratic class of his time. Their politeness resembles the Chivalry Barbarians, and their external styles in manners, accomplishments, and powers are inherited from the Barbarians.

- **Philistines**

The Philistines are defined by self-satisfaction and are too prone to conservative acceptance of the status quo. The other class is the

middle class or the Philistines, known for their mundane wisdom, an expert in the industry, and found busy in industrialization and commerce. Their eternal inclination is to the progress and prosperity of the country by building cities, and railroads and running the great wheels of industry. They have produced the greatest mercantile navy. So, they are the Empire builders. In this material progress, the working class is with them. All the keys to progress are in their hands.

• *Populace*

The Populace turns out to be the real fly in the ointment here because although they recognize they will never be considered equal to the Barbarians, they view the Philistines as within reach and so aspire to their ability to do as they like. Now we're talking about too much freedom for too many people and that is the essence of anarchy. The other class is the working class or the populace. This class is known as raw and half-developed because of poverty and other related diseases. This class is mostly exploited by the Barbarians and Philistines. The author finds democracy arousing in this class because they are getting political consciousness and are coming out from their hiding places to assert an English man's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, meeting where he likes, bawling what he likes, and breaking what he likes.

Despite such a class system, Arnold finds a common basis of human nature in all. So, the spirit of sweetness and light can be founded. Even Arnold calls himself philistine and rises above his level of birth and social status in his pursuit of perfection, sweetness, light, and culture. He further says that all three classes find happiness in what they like. For example, the Barbarians like honour and consideration, field sports, and pleasure. The Philistines like fanaticism, business and money making, and comfort and tea meeting, but the Populace class, hated by both classes; like shouting, hustling, and smashing beer. They all keep different activities to their social status. However, there are a few souls in these classes who hope for culture with a desire to know about their best or to see things as they are. They have the desire to pursue reason and to make the will of God prevail. For the pursuit of perfection, it does not lie only on the genius or the talented persons, but also on all classes. Love or the pursuit of perfection is within the approach of the common people. He calls the man of culture the true nurse of pursuing love and sweetness and light. He finds such persons in all three classes who have a general human spirit for the pursuit of

perfection. He says that the right source of authority is the best self or the right reason to be achieved by culture.

The Best Self or the Right Reason & the Ordinary Self

Here he discusses the best self or the right reason and the ordinary self that can be felt in the pursuit of perfection only. In this regard, he talks about the bathos, surrounded by nature itself in the soul of man, which is presented in the literary judgment of some critics of literature and in some religious organizations of America. He further says that the idea of the high best self is very hard for the pursuit of perfection in literature, religion, and even politics. The political system, prevalent in his time, was of the Barbarians. The leaders and the statesmen sang the praises of the Barbarians for winning the favour of the Aristocrats. Tennyson celebrates in his poems the glory of the great broad-shouldered genial Englishmen with his sense of duty and reverence for the laws. Arnold asserts that Tennyson is singing the praise of the philistines because this middle class is the backbone of the country in progress. The politicians sing the praise of the populace for carrying their favours. Indeed, they play with their feelings, having shown the brightest powers of sympathy and the readiest power of actions. All these praises are mere clap-trap and tricks to gain applause. It is the taste of bathos surrounded by nature itself in the soul of man and comes into ordinary self. The ordinary self enforces the readers to misguide the nation. It is more admirable, but its benefits are entertained by the representatives and ruling men.

Arnold inclines to right reason as a paramount authority that has the appeal to best self. All the classes must follow it, otherwise, anarchy will prevail, and they will do what they like to do. In education, he wants to prevail over the best self because it was in jeopardy. He thinks that when one man's particular sort of taste for the bathos shall tyrannize over the other man's, as a result, the right reason or the best self must fail to rule in education. He insists on the right reason which is the authority in the matter of education. The state of affairs in education arises from the lack of intellectual flexibilities in educationists who are neglecting the best self or right reason and are trying to appeal to the genial taste for the bathos, and tearing it to its natural operation and its infinite variety of experiments. Arnold wants to bring reform in education by shifting the management of public schools from their old board of trustees to the state. Like politics, in education, the danger lies in unchecked and unguided individual action. All the actions must be checked by the

real reason or the best self of the individual. It is the opinion of some people that the state may not interfere in the affairs of education. The liberal party men believe in liberty, the individual liberty of doing as one likes, and assert that interference of the state in education is a violation of personal liberty. Arnold says that such ideal personal liberty has still an indefinite distance. The mission of Arnold's culture is that each individual must act for himself and must be perfect. The chosen people or classes must dedicate themselves to the pursuit of perfection, and he seems to be agreed with Humboldt, the German Philosopher, case of the pursuit of perfection. The culture will make them perfect on their foundation. So, it is essential that man must try to seek human perfection by instituting his best self or real reason; culture, in the end, would find its public reason.

Chapter Four: Hebraism and Hellenism

Or, put another way, Jewish traditions and Greek traditions. The Hebraic system is far too taxed by the wages of sin and is much closer to Team Hellenism with embodies those twin principles of culture: seeking knowledge and seeing the world as it is. The ideal, however, is very much a synthesis of the two, with the Hebraic system's highly constructed and codified system of conduct and obedience having its dark side, but also manifesting a clear dogged tenacity in surviving long after Hellenistic society collapsed.

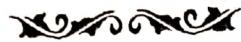
Chapter Five: *Porro Unum Est Necessarium*

The Latin translates to "but one thing is needful." These essays were written at a time when the Puritans dominated the discourse of British theology and for them, the one needful thing most virtuous above all else was the vaunted Puritan work ethic. Arnold's response is essentially Jack Torrance-like in its estimation: all work and no play make Puritan Jack dull. And by dull, it meant not boring, but incomplete. The entire ideological framework of the text is that the ideal balance of the state is moderation. Recognizing a kindred spirit between the Hebrews and the Puritans in their tenacity to get the work done, Arnold is not so much suggesting that they start carving nude statues or anything in particular, but rather hinting quite strongly that perhaps the problem is that there is never just one needful thing.

Chapter Six: Our Liberal Practitioners

This is usually considered the least interesting section of the book for modern readers because it is an attempt to apply the theoretic constructs outlined previously to concrete political and

religious events occurring in England at the time. References to the Real Estate Intestacy Bill, the Liberation Society and multiple personages whose names are lost to all but the most precisely focused of historical scholars are likely go over the heads of most readers and certainly motivate a great many to simply zone out and move straight to the book's short Conclusion which summarizes all the high points.



THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME

The essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" was published by Matthew Arnold in his first collection of critical writing 'Essays in Criticism' in 1865. The essay deals with Arnold's interpretation of criticism and his critique of writers who write politically or religiously biased literature thus narrowing its scope. Matthew Arnold begins the essay by recalling the fact that there was a great need for and importance of criticism in English Literature. However, the general opinion was that the creative effort of the human spirit is far superior to the critical effort. Even Wordsworth, whom Arnold admired, spoke disparagingly of criticism and said that the critic could not have a sensitivity fine enough to appreciate the finer influences of genuine poetry. According to Wordsworth, the time spent on writing a critique was better spent on original compositions. It is because a false or malicious critique would do much harm but an original composition however dulls it might be, would not harm.

Arnold finds this argument unsustainable. According to him, if a person is genuinely interested in criticism then he shall not spend time in the field of creative effort for which he has no aptitude. He agrees with the view that critical activity may be a lower faculty than creative activity. He also concurs that malicious criticism is harmful. But he does not agree that it is better to give time to inferior creative work than to criticism. He substantiates his point by citing some examples. For example, he points out that he cannot imagine that D. Johnson continued writing plays like Irene, instead of writing Lives of the Poets or Wordsworth producing inferior poems such as his Ecclesiastical Sonnets instead of writing the admirable Preface to Lyrical Ballads. Arnold expresses his satisfaction that Goethe, one of the greatest poets, wrote a good deal of criticism. Hence one may use his creative faculty in producing great critical work and not just in the creation of great works of literature and art.

However, the exercise of creative faculty for the production of great works of art and literature is not possible in all epochs and at all times. Elaborating on this, Arnold says that the creative artist works with certain elements and certain materials. In the case of literature, this material is in form of ideas. If there is a lack of this material, then creative work is not possible. There may be a period when there is a lack of this current of fresh and new ideas. However, these ideas are not discovered by the literary artists but it is the business of the philosopher. The literary artist's work is synthesis and exposition. "The real work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery." He is inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere by a certain order of ideas and deals with these divinely and presents them in the most effective and attractive combinations. From these observations, Arnold makes a very important statement. He says that for the creation of a great piece of literature, two factors must combine the power of man and the power of the moment.

Creative activity is possible only when there is a fresh current of ideas and a suitable intellectual environment. It is the function of criticism to create such an atmosphere and such a current of ideas. The critic in all branches of knowledge theology, philosophy, history, art, and science should see the object as it is in itself, or as it is. A critic by acquiring a wide knowledge, not merely of literature; but also other subjects can create an intellectual environment in which a creative artist can flourish. Criticism can establish a current of ideas and out of these new ideas creative epochs would emerge. In Arnold's opinion, criticism can prepare the ground for the effort of creativity to be successful.

Arnold thinks that a poet needs to have great knowledge of the world and human life if he has to produce a work of significance and this requires a great deal of critical effort. Although it is possible to acquire this knowledge from books, Arnold suggests that it can be best acquired from the current ideas as they exist in the intellectual atmosphere. As an example, Arnold points out the outburst of activity in England during Shakespeare's time and in Greece during Pindar's time. In both these ages, society was saturated with fresh and new ideas and this intellectual atmosphere was congenial for the production of great creative works. This atmosphere can be cultivated by men of culture and free thought. And it was because of the existence of such men, that Goethe's works have so enduring qualities whereas Byron's do not, although both had immense

productive power. In other words, Goethe's productive power was nourished by great critical effort.

Arnold points out that in England, the burst of creative activity in literature during the first quarter of the 19th century was somewhat premature. It had proceeded without proper data or material to work with. There was no national growth and stir of intellect, nor there was the culture and force of learning and criticism as there had been in the Germany of Goethe. There was in the first quarter of 19th century England, a dearth of the current fresh ideas which are necessary for a successful creative effort. As a result, English poetry of this period had plenty of energy and plenty of creative force but did not have enough knowledge to reinforce it. In other words, it lacked critical effort. There was no current of the best ideas, the very material of poetry. It is what, according to Arnold, "makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety." Hence due to the dearth of a current of fresh ideas, there is a lack of thorough interpretation of life in the poetry of this period.

Arnold says that some people might point out that there was plenty of stir and activity in the sphere of intellect in the early 19th century brought about by the French Revolution. But Arnold points out that the French Revolution took on a political and practical character and did not for long remain a purely intellectual movement. The Renaissance and Reformation were purely intellectual and spiritual movements and thus were productive of the current of great ideas which could benefit the literature created in that period. No such benefits could come out of the French Revolution for this was a movement of political and practical nature. The result of the Revolution in France was to create an epoch of concentration in England. England withdrew into herself, away from any foreign ideas, fearing that a similar revolution might come about in England.

Arnold then goes on to speak about the essential qualities of criticism. Criticism, says Arnold, should follow the path of disinterestedness. Only then it would prove to be useful. Criticism must be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. It should reject any ulterior or political or practical considerations which might make it biased. Real criticism, Arnold says, is the "free play of the mind on all subjects to know the best that is known and thought in this world, without any political considerations." Criticism should know what is best in the thought and knowledge in the world and make it known to others and in this way, create a current of new

and fresh ideas and this should be done with inflexible honesty and ability.

Talking about the contemporary scenario, Arnold finds that the disinterested search for knowledge and the bringing about a current of ideas was lacking in contemporary criticism. Practical considerations weighed heavily and guided the criticism. Arnold says—"Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them, those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind second: so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of this practical end is all that is wanted." However, the pitiable state of English criticism does not make Arnold lose hope. He finds it reassuring that an era of penance following the bloody revolution had made England more receptive to ideas from the outside. The epoch of concentration was giving way to an epoch of expansion. Further, the advancement in science and technology had given the Englishmen more leisure time for the free play of the mind without taking into account practical considerations.

According to Arnold, criticism in England had not kept itself to the purely intellectual field because its self-satisfaction and complacency are retarding and vulgarising. Real criticism would have the ability to lead away from self-satisfaction towards perfection by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself. As instances of self-satisfaction, which would prove very harmful for the people and nation, Arnold quotes the speeches of two members of Parliament, Adderley, and Roebuck. Arnold disapproves strongly of such complacency because while these speakers made hollow and baseless claims for superiority, reports were there in the newspapers regarding child murders caused due to extreme poverty. Arnold thinks that the critics should have brought together the radically contrasting aspects of contemporary times to shake man out of their complacency. Only then can the human spirit take a step forward towards perfection. Criticism thus had a great function to bring the best ideas and knowledge of the world to everybody and take man towards perfection by making him realize the absolutely beautiful and perfect and thus conscious of his imperfections. Criticism should therefore enlarge the horizon of man both mentally and spiritually.

Idea vs. Reality

Arnold starts his essay by saying, "*Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now, many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in*

itself it is." and adds, "false and malicious criticism had better never been made." Here Arnold explains the basic task of any critic. According to him, a critic must perceive any object (work) as it is, without thinking about the other conditions. Thus for him, the text should be the whole and a critic should never take the help of any other text for its explanation. In the next line, he condemns the false criticism (which is not original and is biased). Arnold believes that the creator of a text is greater than its critic because "*creative activity is the true function of man*", however, it is the critic who draws the true meaning of that particular work of literature.

According to Arnold, for a production of a great literary work, "*the power of man*" and "*the power of moment*" i.e. climate of great ideas must concur. If anyone of them is absent then a great work of literature will never be produced. To explain this, Arnold takes the example of two poets- Goethe and Byron. Both Goethe and Byron had great productive power yet the work of Goethe is more productive than that of Byron because the former had a rich cultural background which the latter lacked. Similarly, Shakespeare was not a deep reader. His fame and glory were only because his age had a climate of great ideas. Next, he says that the French Revolution, with its writers like Rousseau and Voltaire, was more powerful than the English Revolution of Charles (of great ideas of the Renaissance). However the English Revolution is though practically less successful than the French Revolution yet it is better than the latter as it "*appeals to an order of ideas which are universal, certain permanent*".

French Revolution quit the intellectual sphere and rushed into the political sphere, thus losing its universal application. French Revolution was followed by the "Epoch of Concentration" (period of single-mindedness) which could not live long and was followed by the "Epoch of Expansion" (period of creative ideas). The works written on the French Revolution (like that of Burke) are great and well appreciated yet they are biased as they combine politics with thought.

Use of Disinterestedness

Having explained this Arnold moves towards the nature of criticism, his thinking, and his work. According to him, a critic must maintain a position of "*disinterestedness*," i.e. keeping aloof from "*the practical view of things*" to "*know the best that is known and thought in the world, and in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas*." Here in these lines, he explains the task of a critic in a 3-fold way:

1. First, a critic must know about life and the world before writing anything and seeing things as they are.
2. Second, he should promote his ideas to others and make the best ideas prevail in society.
3. Third, he must create an atmosphere for the creation of the genius of the future by promoting these noble, Honest and true ideas.

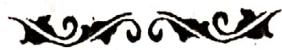
Arnold criticizes the literature produced during the Victorian age. According to him, there is a failure of criticism due to the division of society and intellectuals into small political and religious groups that make them incapable of seeing things in their true states. On the other hand, he also criticizes the "constructive" suggestions for living presented by Bishop Colenso and Miss Cobbe. For him, they have religious influence in their writings which is again against the spirit of true criticism. He also tells that the common man lacks creativity.

Obligation of Criticism

Arnold says that criticism must maintain its independence from the practical spirit and its aims. It must express dissatisfaction even with well-meant efforts of the practical spirit if in the sphere of the ideal they seem lacking. It must be patient and not hurry on to the goal because of its practical importance, know how to wait, and know how to attach itself as well as withdraw from things.

Arnold talks about a person who regrets the loss of zeal that once existed but is no longer present in contemporary society due to the influence of politics and religion on ideas. Thus he gives voice to commoners' views to enhance the glory of the past. He advises the critics to adopt disinterested behaviour towards criticism. They should take into consideration foreign thought as well. Their judgments should be from their mind without any biases and should communicate fresh knowledge to their readers. The criticism is capable of making progress in Europe taking it towards perfection. In the end, he defends his views on criticism and says that he won't change his opinion of any person who deviates from his theory of criticism. According to Arnold, the critic should not only be a scholar, a well-read man, a propagandist, and a culturist but also should be impartial, detached, and disinterested. Criticism should keep him free from personal, ulterior, political, and economic considerations. The critic's judgment should never be swayed by any kind of prejudice. It must shun provincialism which may take the forms of excess,

ignorance, or pathos, and endeavour to be "in the contact with the mainstream of human life." The critic must be disinterested in the sense that he should pursue only the ends of cultural perfection, and should remain uninfluenced by the coarser appeals of the Philistine.



IMPORTANT QUESTION

- Analyze the virtues and defects of the three societal classes presented by Mathew Arnold.

