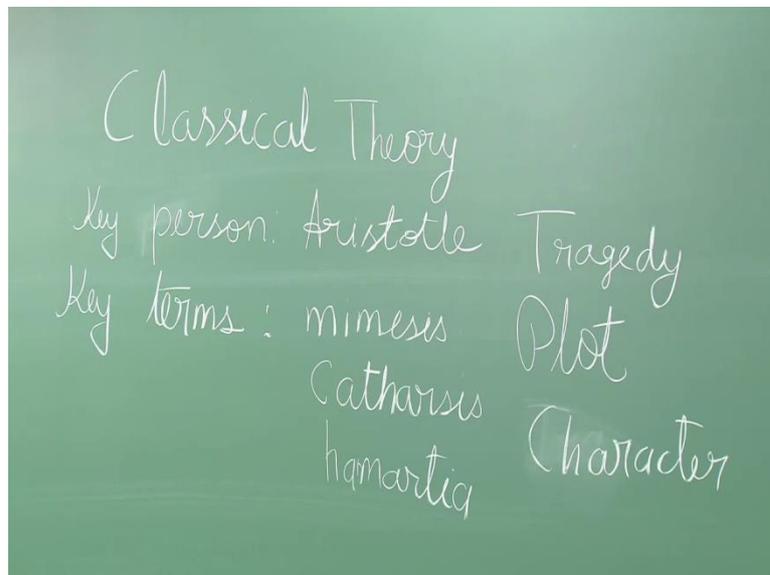


**Literary Theory and Literary Criticism**  
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**Lecture - 05**  
**Part - B**  
**Classical Theory**

Welcome back, in our earlier class we were talking about Plato and his concept of mimesis and his opinion about poets, poets in the republic and how they should be banished for various reasons.

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So, today we will be talking about Classical Theory will be continuing what is classical theory in terms of particularly with reference to the Greek classical theory keep us in here is Aristotle, we will be discussing Aristotle and his theory of poetry and tragedy particularly with reference to his poetics. So, key person is Aristotle and key terms are mimesis, catharsis of course, Aristotle concept and theory of tragedy plot character and what is meant by hamartia.

So, what is the mimesis let us continue with a little more discussion of mimesis. So, mimesis is a critical and philosophical term that carry is a wide range of meaning including imitation and representation, it imitates, it represents, it also mimics. And you can look at mimesis from all these perspectives, from all these angles, mimesis as a

concept tries to make sense of representational art and its values for Plato literature was near shadow of reality and truth belong to the philosopher king and not the poet, this is imported philosopher as important as a king and not the poet.

So, the idea of mimesis was emphasized by Aristotle in his poetics, he refuted Plato and points out the literature is unfettered by the accidents of history and can articulate eternal or higher truths. Now, we have seen that Plato's negative view of art is temporary from the fact that poetry is mimetic and is cut off from reality. He believes that artistic mimesis addresses itself, essentially to the emotional rather than the intellectual.

Aristotle also distinguishes poetry from other arts and then makes distinctions between the various poetic kinds, such as drama, tragedy, epic and comedy, now at this point let me quote and excerpt from Aristotle poetics.

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## Aristotle's Poetics

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 of 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, Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm, metres 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.

This is what Aristotle has to say about poetry, 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.

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forms of the most ignorable animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosopher's, but to men in general; whose capacity; however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing the likeness is that in contemplating it they find them themselves learning or inferring and saying perhaps.

Imitation, then is one instinct of our nature, next there is the instinct of harmony and rhythm, meters being manifestly section of the rhythm. Persons, therefore, is starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to poetry. So, in other words he talks about her poetry is an art and how we enjoy the art of imitation, which is something extremely universal and not particular to any individual.

For Aristotle mimesis describe the process involving the use by different forms of different means of representation and different levels of moral and ethical behaviors as object of the artistic representation. Aristotle thus distinguishes between tragedy and comedy, essentially on grounds that tragedy appeals to the noble while comedy depicts ignorable characters and also appeals to the baser instinct.

Aristotle also suggest that art moves us and that is one of it is primary reasons for existence. He knows that Athenian women had been known to miscarry and boys to faint when watching tragedy, but the emotion that the tragedy generates according to Aristotle is cathartics. So, there here we come to his concept immortal concept cathartics, in fact the word cathartics which has it is roots in medicine.

But, it has been brought into literature by Aristotle of consider for example, how Shakespeare in *midsummer night's dream* proclaim, the lover the united poet are of imagination and all compact, idea that the poet and united are quite similar it has been there, it has been there in existing is the classical times and was carried forward by Shakespeare. Remember, also how hamlet in the play of the same name, advises the players who come to his castle and he advices them to be real, to be true to life. In other words, Shakespeare also referring to imitation to mimicking life representing life as it is. So, let me quote you a few lines from Shakespeare hamlet also had this point.

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## Shakespeare's Hamlet

- for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

This is what hamlet advises, this is his advice to the players for anything so over then is from the propose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now was and is, to hold as it were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature is scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. So, in other words to be as realistic as possible, the key literary works or critical works the deal with the idea of mimesis.

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## Bibliography

- David Macey, Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory.
- Russell, DA & Winterbottom, Michael. Classical Literary Criticism;
- Eric Auberbach's *Mimesis*;

Let me point your attention towards the bibliography, so most important work that has been done on mimesis is, Eric Auerbach's book is called mimesis. And other two books that I would like to draw your attention to are David Macey, Penguin dictionary of critical theory and Russell and Winter bottom classical literary criticism. So, you will get a familiarity will understand what mimesis in greater depth, if you look at these works.

Now, let us move on to talk about Aristotle, Aristotle the great Greek philosopher writer he lived between 384 to 322 BC, he was Plato's student at the academy. Academy as we already talked about was a school of learning founded by Plato, Aristotle made contributions in the areas of metaphysics, logic, ethics, politics, literary criticism and most importantly in the field of natural sciences.

Later on Aristotle started his own school called Lyceum in Athens, he has given us ten categories through which we can view the world and you will understand how important these categories still are to understand the way we live to understand the world around us, these categories are what Aristotle called the ten categories which means the substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state and action and affection. So, these are the categories Aristotle is interested in.

And these are the categories through which we understand the world around us Aristotle's greatest contribution to philosophy lies in the area of logic, where he uses syllogism as the basis. However, are interested in this particular lecture his immortal work poetics. So, in his work poetics Aristotle expresses his view on tragedy, for Aristotle poetry and philosophy had the status of productive science, these domains had the place in a hierarchy of knowledge.

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## Definition of Tragedy

- “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; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its *katharsis* of such emotions. . . . Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Melody.”

Let me quotes from Aristotle I have poetics and his concept of tragedy and here is the after repeated definition of tragedy by I start with, tragedy then, is a imitation of an action that is serious complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament. The several kind being found in separate part of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with incident arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish it is catharsis of such emotion.

Every tragedy, therefore must have six parts, which part determine it is quality, namely, plot, characters, diction, thoughts, spectacle, melody. So, according to Aristotle tragedy is the imitation of an action the... So, again we come back our concept of mimesis and he indicates that the medium of tragedy is drama, not narrative. For Aristotle the subject matter of tragedy is the cause of action, which is morally serious, presents a complete unity and occupies a certain magnitude.

Since, a tragedy is essentially dramatic rather than narrative, it represents main in action and a well construct a tragedy provides catharsis of various emotions, particularly pity and fear. So, what is catharsis, catharsis for Aristotle suggest purification of purgation of the emotions, as already discussed the term is derive from the medical word catharsis, which means purgation or cleansing. Aristotle to use the term to describe the effects of true dramatic tragedy on the spectators.

As we know for Aristotle the purpose of tragedies to arouse terror and pity and thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions. Aristotle it is meaning has been the subject of critical debate over the centuries, many critics saw tragedy as a moral lesson in which the fear and pretty excited by the tragic heroes' feat, serve to on the spectator not similarly to tempt faith.

The interpretation generally accepted is that through experiencing fear vicariously, the spectators on anxiety are directed outward. And through sympathetic identification with the tragic protagonist his inside an outlook are enlarged, the keyword here are sympathetic identification and purgation and cleansing. So, we have to understand here that for Aristotle though plot is extremely important, but so is the character.

Because, one has to identify with the character, especially the protagonist and then there for we will go on to discuss his concept of the ideal tragic hero as well. So, for Aristotle tragedy has a humanizing effect on the audience and as a modern scholars, we should also understand that a tragedy should have humanizing influence not just on audiences. But, also on the readers, treasury like comedy originates in mimeses as it is expressed as die tram which is a hymn sung to Dionysus.

Now, this we have to understand the Dionysus and Greek mythology is the god of fertility and vain later consider the patron of the arts. We have two concepts, apollonian and Dionysian. So, the apollonian is based on reason and logical thinking by control the Dionysian is based on chaos and appeals to the emotions in instinct. So, tragedy is a song is a hymn to the two Dionysus.

So, tragedy for Aristotle is a domain of the more serious poets on the other hand, the less serious represent low sentiments. Let us move on to talk about plot now, the tragic plot for Aristotle plot is the imitation of a whole action. A tragedy must be based on a certain structure of events or incidents to which the specific action of the characters contribute, according to Aristotle the most important feature of the plot is unity, for him the component incidents must be so arrange that if one of them transposed or the removed the unity of the whole is dislocated and destroyed.

We already know that for Aristotle a plot is a whole that has a beginning and middle and end. A beginning causes something else a middle both follows from something else and results in something else while and end is what necessarily follows from something else,

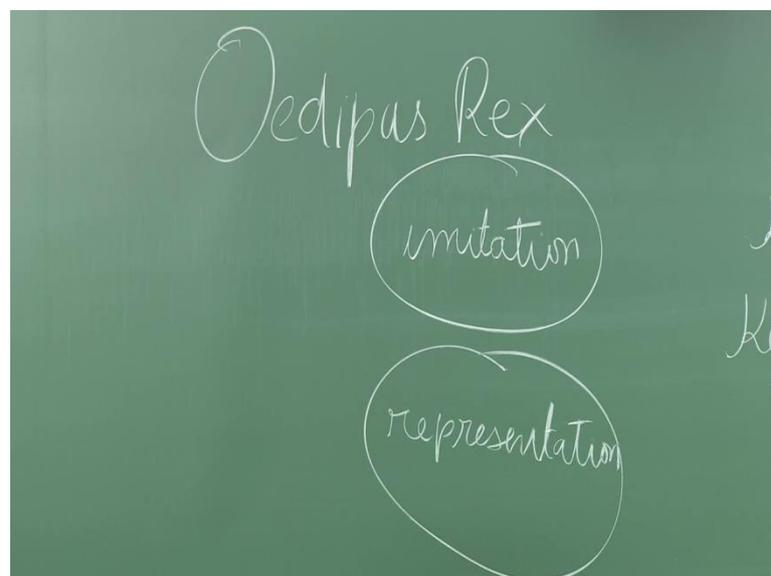
but does not produce a further results. So, end is an end in itself that cannot is not open ended in other words and writers followed this construction, this plot construction for several centuries, the unity of the plot is based on a notion of causality.

So, therefore, we have a term like cause effect relationship something happens and as result of that something happens. So, cause and effect Aristotle is interested in plots such as Sophocles, Oedipus Rex. So, this is a play that he keeps going back to for Aristotle this is one of the best and most tightly constricted lots ever, the action here is marked by an movement through reversal recognition and suffering.

Aristotle explains that pity is aroused by undeserved misfortune, fear is arrows when we realize that the man who suffers such misfortune is like ourselves and think Oedipus in this context, whose faith whose suffering is largely undeserved and we fear his feet. Because, we fear that such misfortune can it be fall people like as well. Aristotle's main focus in the poetics , in general on tragedy.

But, he also later on makes important comes in comedy and epic for him tragedy is superior epic, because of it is much more competitive structure. Aristotle considers some much greater length of ethics with it is plot and emphasis on sub plot as well as a hindrance to the lucid and folding on the poem theme. So, let us move on to talk about tragic hero, who is a tragic hero according to Aristotle, for Aristotle a tragic hero is a man of eminence is a man of stature.

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I keep going back to Sophocles Oedipus Rex and I urge you to read Oedipus it is a trilogy. However, to understand Aristotle's concept of a perfect tragedy, it is important to have some acquaintance with Sophocles Oedipus. So, Oedipus does he fit the bill of an ideal tragic hero, well you say he is a man Eminem's and that is what is one of the key requirements of an ideal tragic hero according to Aristotle he is a man of stature.

So, after all he is the king and he has also a wise ruler, just ruler his people love him and they trust him, he is also the one who has solved the riddle of the sphinx. So, he is no ordinary man, he is a man of eminence for Aristotle and ideal tragic hero should also be a good man and yes Oedipus is a good man. Because, he rules the kingdom wisely and justly. So, German to this idea is that a Villon cannot be the hero a person who is basically weekend or vileness are bad cannot be the hero.

The concept of anti hero came in literature much later that here we still talking about the concept of an idealized hero, who has to be essentially good and a man of stature. So, remember people of lower ranks, especially slaves they do not have any place in tragedy. So, they cannot be the hero, they cannot be the idea that a common man can also be a subject for a tragedy, this ideas are much more recent.

But, for Aristotle an ideal tragedy hero must essentially be a man of stature and eminence. He should also be consistent, consistent means there should be the kind of consistency in his character. So, there cannot be sudden shifts in the way, he acts or speaks or behaves, so for Aristotle these are the key ideas of an ideal tragic hero, you can apply this concept to other great heroes, as well consider hamlet is he manner of stature he is the prince Denmark is a good man.

Yes, you cannot debate that is essentially a good man is he consistency by enlarge his consistency and even his tendency to procrastinate that is also consistent. So, yes great character to a large extent. So, yes a great character should essentially puzzle these attributes, this brings us to the concept of Hamartia.

Now, what is Hamartia, Hamartia for Aristotle is an error of judgment which may arrives from ignorance or some moral short coming. So, while discussing the ideal tragic hero Aristotle points out that the tragic hero or to be a man, whose misfortune come to him, not through any depravity, not through any moral error or sin. But, by some follow

and that is called his fatal flaw or tragic flaw and that is what Aristotle means when he says *Hamartia*.

So, let us go back to Oedipus, so Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother out of ignorance. And this killing of father happens out of sheer impulse, now another great tragic character Antigone again by Sophocles Antigone as we know Antigone is Oedipus' daughter. So, Antigone resists the law of the state, because of sheer defiance, so while Oedipus' fatal flaw is his impulsive nature Antigone's is her tendency to define the law of the state.

Hamlet as we all know procrastinates too much and yet another great Shakespearean hero Othello he is too impulsive. So, these are the examples of tragic flaws in literary characters. So, essentially good people, people of high status, but there is a kind of fatal flaw in the character which leads to their downfall. So, all these are related to Aristotle's concept of tragedy and plot and character.

Aristotle also gives us two important concepts, one is *peripeteia* that is a reversal of fortune which is brought about, because of the hero's error in judgment. Another concept is *anagnorisis* which is the discovery or recognition that the reversal was brought about by the hero's own action. So, *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. Now, what is Aristotle's legacy, the *poetics* is generally regarded as the most influential treatise in the history of literary criticism.

I am talking essentially of Aristotle's legacy in terms of literary criticism. Of course, we know he has made a contribution in other fields also. But, we are concerned for this course literary criticism, so his legacy continues in the form of the *poetics*, poetry according to him does not express what is unique about individuals. But, rather than universal characteristics.

Aristotle compares poetry to philosophy, because it deals in general truths unlike history, which merely records what happens. With *poetics* we move away from poetry as ethics towards poetry as aesthetics and much of the literary criticism that we do today for all that we are indebted to Aristotle. So, that is going to be my talk on Aristotle we will continue with the discussion of Roman philosophers and critics in our next lecture, now coming to quiz an assignment.

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## QUIZ

- What do you understand by the term mimesis?
- What advice on play acting does Shakespeare's Hamlet give to the players ?
- What is Dionysian?
- What does Aristotle mean by *catharsis*?

So, here there is quick quiz for you to do and please submit the answers by the deadline. Question one, what do you understand by the term mimesis? What advice on play acting does Shakespeare's hamlet give to the place? Third question, what is the Dionysian and what this Aristotle mean by catharsis? Will continue in the next class.

Thank you very much.