

In *Poetics*, Aristotle talks about poetry in general and specific poetry, and he also talks about the impact of poetry on the people who consume it and how one should properly build a poetic plot. He breaks down each part of poetry separately and answers any questions that may arise during this process. Aristotle begins by talking about the principles of poetry, which he states is only “natural.” He lists the various types of poetry, which include epic, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and music of pipe or lyre. In addition to this, he states that all poetry is a type of imitation, which only varies in three ways: its medium, its object, and/or its mode of imitation. The medium of imitation is dependent on the type of art (painter or sculptor uses color or shape as a medium), but a poet uses the medium of rhythm, language, and melody, which can be used alone or in combination to produce a certain effect.

The object is the thing that is imitated in a work of art—in this case, a poem. Objects, which are people, things, and events, can be either admirable or inferior, meaning that objects are either morally good or morally bad. Lastly, the object’s mode of imitation is the way in which an object is imitated. In epic poetry, an object is imitated through narration; however, in tragedy, an object is imitated via actors on a stage.

Aristotle believes that human beings have a natural tendency to imitate, and since human beings learn through imitation as children, he believes that human beings have a natural tendency to imitate people and things. Moreover, human beings also take pleasure in viewing painful images from a safe distance, such as a stage. The pleasure that human beings take in viewing an imitation is in large part due to understanding.

A person views an imitation, recognizes the thing being imitated, and finds pleasure in this understanding. Aristotle further argues that human beings also have a natural proclivity for

rhythm and melody, so it is no wonder they tend to create imitations like poetry, which relies on language that has both rhythm and melody. Tragedy was born from dithyrambic poetry, which incorporates both poetry and dance. From there, tragedy evolved into what it is in Aristotle's time—which he refers to as tragedy's "natural state."

An individual observes an imitation, recognizes the thing imitated, and derives pleasure from this recognition. Aristotle also goes on to state that human beings have a natural tendency towards rhythm and melody, and thus it is not surprising that they produce imitations such as poetry, which is based on language that has rhythm and melody. Tragedy was developed from dithyrambic poetry, which involves both poetry and dance. This then developed into what it is today, which Aristotle refers to as the "natural state" of tragedy.