OUSIA AND TRAGEDY
AN ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

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To My Parents

ABSTRACT

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The main idea of this thesis is to suggest a new type of reading on Aristotle's *Poetics*. Commentators of *Poetics* tried to relate it to Aristotle's ethical treatises. However, in this research, It will be argued that *Poetics* should be read under the light of *Metaphysics*.

The interpretation proposed here is based on Aristotle's understanding of *ousia* (substance). The ontological status of artifacts in Aristotle's philosophy will be examined while inquiring the relationships between *Poetics* and *Metaphysics*. Consequently, I will argue that tragedy is an *ousia* and attempted to show that Aristotle's ontological philosophy is applicable to *Poetics*.

Because of the fact that Aristotle treats a tragedy as a partial independent being, I will argue in Aristotelian terms that a tragedy should be judged by its intrinsic values, rather than ethical or rhetorical merits.

Keywords: *Ousia*, Tragedy, Ontology.

ÖZ

OUSIA VE TRAGEDYA

ARİSTOTELES'İN *POETİKA*'SINA ONTOLOJİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Bu tezin ana fikri Aristoteles'in *Poetika* adlı eseri için yeni bir okuma tarzı önermektir. *Poetika* yorumcuları bu eseri Aristoteles'in etik üzerine çalışmalarıyla ilişkilendirmektedirler. Fakat ben bu çalışmamda *Poetika*'nın ilkesel olarak *Metafizik*'in ışığında okunması gerekliliğini vurgulayacağım.

Önerilen yorum Aristoteles'in *ousia* (töz) anlayışına dayanmaktadır. Tezde *Poetika* ve *Metafizik* arasındaki ilişkiler araştırılırken Aristoteles'in felsefesinde sanat eserlerinin ontolojik statülerini araştıracağım. Bununla birlikte, tragedyanın bir töz olduğunu ileri sürecek ve Aristoteles'in ontolojisinin *Poetika*'ya uyarlanabilir olduğunu göstereceğim.

Aristoteles tragedyayı kısmi bir bağımsız nesne olarak ele aldığı için, ben de, Aristoteles açısından tragedyanın etik veya retorik değerlerle değil fakat kendi iç kanunlarıyla yargılanması gerektiğini öne süreceğim.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Ousia*, Tragedya, Ontoloji.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Poetics is one of the major works that has been written about literary theory. The work has been reviewed and commentaries have been written in every stage of western culture. By its content it is a timeless literary work, which inspired many authors in the west, due to its rich content with a powerful objectivism on drama.

1. Traditional Commentaries on Poetics:

Aristotle's *Poetics* stayed as a neglected work until the late Renaissance period in Italy about the sixteenth century. Along with other works of art Greek literary works had been translated and studied. Aristotle's work ranks among one of the most important, it was almost treated as a sacred text; all of its written versions had been studied and criticized. Two major elements that shaped the Renaissance thought when applied on *Poetics* can be summarized *as* such that poetry has strong relationships with rhetoric and literary merits are determined by ethical merits, that is, the ultimate aim of poetry is designated by ethics.[1]

During the Renaissance period Italy played an important role for shaping basic approaches of Neo-Classical movement, later it spread all around Europe. The general characteristic of Neo-Classical movement in Italy was to combine and mix Aristotle's thoughts with Horace's.[2] These two philosophers became twin authorities who wrote the rules of poetry. There were several negative results of this confusion, which lead to some crucial misunderstandings about *Poetics.* The text was regarded as a historical document, which led theoretical problems; basic approach of *Poetics* was

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[1] Halliwell, p. 17.

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not to establish timeless rules but to specify practical precepts, which were not regarded by neo-classicists. Aristotle's ideas were not regarded separately from other ancient authorities, which precluded any separate analysis of his thoughts. As a result, Aristotle's ideas were corrupted for the sake of an assimilation of all authorities.[3]

This concept is well illustrated in Sydney's *Defense of Poetry* in which he attempts to formulate this theory for the first time in England. He threats poetry as one of the finest things of life. He believes poetry's ultimate aim is to teach and delight.[4] He attempted to combine Neo-Platonic ideas of poetry with that of Horatian moralism where he confused Aristotelian ideas with that of Horace. Such approach enabled *Poetics* to have its place in neo-classicism. Sydney shaped other Neo-Classical commentaries with respect to three ways; first was the confusion of Aristotle's ideas with that of other ancient writers; second was to formulate Aristotle's ideas as timeless rules of poetry while bounding the principles of poetry to ethics and lastly to build a relationship with ancient poetical merits with his age.

During the seventeenth century Neo-Classicism was on the peak of French literature with a powerful defense on pseudo-Aristotelian trio of unities. This dogma was borrowed by Thomas Rymer to England and continued to dominate English literary criticism until Jonson and Dryden. By Jonson and Dryden, English critical tendencies began to question classical authorities. Jonson, for instance in his *Discoveries* (1641) tried to use the comments of his own mind, while re-shaping and expending classical authorities:

> I know nothing can conduce more to letters, than to examine the writing of the Ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or to take all upon trust from them; provided the plagues of judging and pronouncing against them, be away (....) For to all the observations of the Ancients we have our own

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[2] Ibid. p 17.
[3] Halliwell, p.18.
[4] Sydney, p.22.

experience; which, if we will use, and apply we have better means to pronounce. [5]

This extract shows his attitude towards authority and tradition. Same line of thought can be observed in Dryden who focused on the differences between ancient and English poets. Dryden tried to show cultural differences between English and Greek while refusing to judge former by the rules of French theorists.[6] In his *Essay of Dramatic Poetry* (1668) he focused on the literature that England has created, answering its own needs, and refused to allow that it is inferior to that of France. While doing this he displayed an important opposition to classical authorities, saying that English literature "perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage, than was known to the ancients or moderns of any nation."[7]

By the Romanticism movement, particularly by German Romanticism, literature became autonomous for the first time. Neo-Classical attitude towards *Poetics* widely lost its effect. The Romantics were non-Aristotelians while defending the poet's individual imagination, emotion and creativity. Their attitude towards lyrism and subjectivity collide with Aristotle's views. However, their liberty towards "rules" of poetry gave rise to innovative interpretations of Aristotle's views. German and English Romantics were displayed more opposition to French notions of Aristotle rather than Aristotle himself.[8] This can be clearly observed in Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare* (1817) where he regarded Aristotle's work as eclectic. In contrast to neo-classical approaches, Coleridge tried to embed Aristotelian views in a more neo-platonic manner. He was a perfect Romantic while he was idealizing and revealing transcendent powers of art.

The object of the debate shifted from the rules of poetry to the concept of beauty by German Romantics. They were investigating the eternal forms of beauty and perfection. These investigations lead to the

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[5] Jonson, p. 18.
[6] Halliwell, p. 21.
[7] İbid., p.27.
[8] Ibid, p.23.

idealistic interpretations of *Poetics*; especially by S.H. Butcher in his *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (1895)*. However, this was also another extremity – perhaps in contrast to neo-classical approaches –with respect to Aristotle's views and could not also grasp the essence of philosopher's ideas. In other words, *Poetics* stayed not fully annotated within it, but rather stayed as an object of external debates.

It was natural that a counter reaction was emerged to this type of excessive idealism. A famous representative of this counter-reaction was T.S. Eliot who focused on Aristotle's objectivity and discovered an important point in Aristotle's thoughts. He showed that Aristotle, while considering poetry did not use external standards rather, he judged poetry with its intrinsic merits.[9] Thus Eliot gave rise to contemporary criticism with his insistence in focusing the *Poetics* itself rather than judging it with the age's values. The set of writers who were called Chicago critics started to analyze in detail and offer effective interpretations on *Poetics.* They turned back to the importance of literary genres and stress on the literary form suggested in the *Poetics* as an autonomous and self-contained kind. From the mid-1930s contemporary literary criticism was so ramified that it prevents someone to mention a single attitude towards *Poetics.*

2. Contemporary Approaches to Poetics:

In contemporary criticism we can observe generally four approaches to Poetics.[10] The first one can be named as textual linguistics or theories of literature.[11] The most important aspect of these theories is to examine literature by its contextual environment shaped by history and culture.

Another area of study with respect to contemporary approaches is denotative commentary or philology, which has two aspects; the first one is

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[9] Eliot, p.viii.
[10] Tzvetan Todorov, *Poetikaya Giris* pp. 24-28.
[11] Ibid., p.24.

linguistic analysis and the second is historical analysis.[12] According to these approaches meaning is contextual and knowledge about the context immediately brings about the meaning of the text. Moreover, these approaches try to analyze the references and syntactic structure of the text.[13]

Thirdly are the allegorical commentaries and criticism that contain several meanings of the text, every reader applies an external meaning to an existing text.[14] Therefore, for these approaches commentaries are neither true nor false, but rather they are rich or poor, explanatory or infertile.[15]

Lastly, there is the history of literature, which takes its object as all texts of literature. History of literature also has a considerable stress on historic context of the texts. Its working area is not as general as textual linguistics and not as narrow as denotative commentaries.[16]

All of these approaches have some aspect to share with *Poetics.* This existing study also uses these approaches, while putting forward its own attitude towards *Poetics.* Here it is attempted to illustrate defective aspects of traditional commentaries that will guide a new type of reading of Aristotle's *Poetics.*

3. Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to read the ancient texts and to comment in its own context. First of all, Aristotle's *Poetics* is a part of the whole, which cannot be separated from the whole. Actually, Aristotle attentively worked on his philosophy, bounding several parts of it to some major principles, presenting these parts in their autonomy with an impressive way and at the

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[12] Todorov, p.25.
[13] Ibid., p.27.
[14] Ibid., p.26.
[15] Ibid., p.26.
[16] Ibid., p. 27.

same time allowing them to produce a general and yet a detailed whole. To express it better, every individual treatise has a distinct subject matter of its own allowing it to be an autonomous part of the whole to a determined degree. Any of the individual treaties with the exception of *Metaphysics* cannot have full autonomy or to put it better, every individual treaty is an incomplete part of the whole. Therefore, it is a reasonable aim to state on individual treatise in the whole Aristotelian corpus. In other words, it would be meaningful to read *Poetics* in the context of his philosophy.

Secondly, it is important to state correct network of relationship while examining individual treatise with the context of others. The contextual errors could easily lead to misinterpretations of the text like the ones that we mentioned above in traditional commentaries. For instance, ethics centered commentaries have tendency to investigate relationship between *Poetics* with ethical treatises, which lead to some misinterpretations of the text. Here this study aims to show the defective aspects of these commentaries, while at the some time arguing that *Poetics* should be read principally under the light of *Metaphysics*. Therefore our second concern in this study is to show the connections between *Poetics* and *Metaphysics.*

While showing these relationships between two treatises, here it is attempted to mention the ontological status of artifacts. Moreover, we have to stress on Aristotle's understanding of being and *ousia* and will try to show that Aristotle understands a tragedy as a composite being in the category of *ousia.* In other words, we try to show an already existing aspect of Aristotelian philosophy, which is the dominance of ontology, and apply this aspect to *Poetics* in order to suggest another type of reading than some earlier commentators have suggested.

Lastly, one of the most important objectives of this study is to show that *Poetics* has a distinctive subject matter of its own which in turn is also closely related with the other purposes. In order to show that a tragedy should be judged in terms of its intrinsic value rather than ethical or

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rhetorical merits we also have to show tragedy's ontological status. Therefore some parts of this study will include polemics with other ethics oriented commentaries.

It would be meaningful now to present the main parts of this argument. There will be three main chapters in the study, which will enlighten three different aspects of the argument.

Chapter 1 displays an *aporia*[17] with respect to *Poetics*, which emerges from the tension between individual tragedies with general theory of tragedy. Aristotle, for the first time, wrote a generalized theory of tragedy, establishing general merits of the art of tragedy beyond individual tragedies while at the same time using these individual tragedies for establishing the ground of his approach. This chapter will suggest a solution for this *aporia* by using Aristotle's understanding of science revealed in his *Metaphysics*. This solution will, in turn, show that Aristotle conceptualizes tragedy as a composite being.

Chapter 2 builds up a relationship between the two treatises; both *Metaphysics* and *Poetics.* This chapter will contain some explanations about Aristotle's philosophy of being, in order to reveal the ontological status of artifacts. Moreover, this chapter will apply Aristotle's understanding of ontological and cognitive priority of object to tragedy. There also will be an application of teleological approach to *Poetics,* explaining formal and teleological causes while also combining Aristotle's general understanding of definition to the definition of tragedy. Lastly, there will be additional arguments such as the one, which concerns unity of tragedy, and the one that will be followed from the priority of tragedy over epic.

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[17] See Appendix A.

Chapter 3 examines parts of tragedy other than *muthos*[18] and locates them into the argument. There will be an additional debate on catharsis, which aims to show the place of catharsis in Aristotle's theory of tragedy.

After all of these we hope to show that *Poetics* should be principally read in the light of *Metaphysics* and also hope to show that a tragedy is defined as *ousia*[19] with a nature of its own which in turn favors the fact that it should be judged in terms of its intrinsic values rather than with some external values defined by ethics and rhetoric.

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[18] See Appendix A.
[19] See Appendix A.

CHAPTER 1

ARISTOTLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE

Although it seems unusual to consider any literary theory as science for a modern reader, Aristotle has no doubt stated *Poetics* under science in his classification of sciences. It is true that we can observe some differences between *Poetics* and other types of sciences. The complexity of the problem leads us to understand Aristotle's notion of science. The aim of this investigation is to show that *Poetics* is a science in its determined independency. This will also help us to locate *Poetics* in the whole Aristotelian corpus.

There is also a more complex problem about the methodology of *Poetics that* is closely related with Aristotle's understanding of science. This problem rose from the tension between two extreme points, which can be named as individuals, and universals. *Poetics* is defined between these two extremes.[20] In other words, *Poetics* stands in a certain generality level, which is narrow than extreme theories and general than any commentary on a certain text. *Poetics* is not a commentary of *King Oedipus* and at the same time it is not completely disjoined with this tragedy. The aim of the

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[20] Todorov, p. 43.

Poetics is not to describe individual tragedies, but to find general practical precepts. From this aspect *Poetics* deals not with actual plays, but with possible plays with their general principles, which can be applied, to individual plays.[21] The tension between individual texts with the general theory of literature is current in contemporary investigations. Therefore it would be meaningful to reveal the causes of this tension.

The problem of the location of individual tragedies in general theory of literature is aroused from Aristotle's understanding of science while he was discussing the possibility of defining individuals in *Metaphysics* VII, Chapter 15 where Aristotle gives a counter argument to Plato, saying that particulars cannot be defined as they are complete unique individuals:

> Therefore when one of those who aim at definition defines any individual, he must recognize that his definition may always be overthrown; for it is not possible to define such things.[22]

The general aim of this part of *Metaphysics* is therefore to show the impossibility of a valid definition of individuals and to show that individuals stand outside the knowledge and science. This conclusion leads us to an *aporia,* which causes the tension with respect to *Poetics'* methodology.

In one aspect, for Aristotle, individual being, a first-degree substance is the only real element, whereas science is about universals. These universals are the objects of a demonstrative science; however, they are, at the same time in lack of any substantial being. From this aspect, one can argue that science's objects are non-beings in Aristotle. However, this argument would not be true according to Aristotle, and by no means compatible with Aristotle's realistic claims about science. The gap between reality and science, individuals and universals has to be covered in order to reach to a meaningful explanation.[23] In other words, indefinable feature of individuals prevents them to be a subject of any knowledge and science. Because individuals contain matter, which is completely alien to rationality

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[21] Ibid. p. 36.
[22] *Metaphysics,* VII, 15, 1040a6.

and knowledge, they cannot be fully defined. On the other hand, science deals with the forms or the rational and determined aspect of being which prevents it to deal directly with individuals.[24]

This problem was discussed by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* XIII, 10, 1087a10 where Aristotle solves the problem by distinguishing two types of science which are potential science and actual science:

> For knowledge, like knowing, is spoken of in two ways as potential and as actual. The potentiality, being as matter universal and indefinite, deals with the universal and indefinite but the actuality, being definite, deals with a definite object, being a 'this', it deals with a 'this'.[25]

Science, then, if it is potential and general, deals with universals and if it is actual and specific deals with real being that are the individuals. Actual science will not content with seeking to find general rules and combining them in the thought but also tries to find a determined specific solution to a definite problem. Since universals cannot be separate beings beyond individuals and they are closely related, actually created by individuals, show us that the problem of reality of science is solved. In other words, universals are formed by individuals and with this idea, science while dealing with universals, indirectly deals with individuals and thus, with reality.[26]

This explanation would be clearer if we closely examine Aristotle's notion of necessity because of the crucial role that necessity plays in Aristotle's understanding of science. Aristotle's world is constructed in a hierarchical structure where matters and forms are stated in a logical order. There is a parallel connection between matter and form, as with genus and species. For instance, considering human being, animal is the genus and "thinking" is the differentia, which formulates a human being.[27]   Last species are the ones that do not have further differentiae. In other words,

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[23] Arslan, pp. 367-363, note 3.
[24] Ibid., p.367.
[25] *Metaphyssics,* XIII, 10, 1087a15.
[26] Arslan, p. 367, note 3.
[27] Parts of definition will be discussed later in this study.

last species are the ones that are indivisible elements.[28] Now, Aristotle refuses to consider genus as beings, whereas he accepts last species as beings. The objects of science are these last species. In other words, when we look at Socrates, what we see is the last species is a human being. Thus, science can catch individuals in a limited way by their species.[29] What is important here is that, science deals with necessary elements. In other words, science can deal with individuals; however, it deals not with contingent parts, but with necessary parts of individuals. For instance, there can be a science, which deals with God even if he is an individual being. Because of the fact that all parts of God are necessary there can be a science, which deals with these parts. This science already exists which is called theology. It is also the same for composite beings. There can be a science or set of sciences, which investigate necessary parts of composite beings. For instance, psychology deals with soul, which is a necessary part of a human being.

After all of these explanations, the relationship between individuals and universals becomes clearer. The objects of science must be necessary parts of individuals. Therefore, for Aristotle, science deals with necessary parts of species and applies this knowledge to the members of the species. No matter how many these members are, the knowledge about them will not change since this knowledge is non-temporal and unchangeable.

Aristotle classifies sciences into three parts, which are theoretical, practical and productive.[30] One of these sciences, the productive one, aims to investigate general principles while making something useful or beautiful.[31] *Poetics,* which is a part of productive sciences*,* deals with general principles of a tragedy. The problem about universals and individuals is also applicable to *Poetics,* which pronounces individual

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[28] *Metaphysics*, VII,12,1038a9-25.
[29] Arslan, p. 368.
[30] *Metaphysics*, VI, 1, 1025b17*; Topics* VI, 145a15; VII,1, 157a10 and *Nicomachean Ethics, VI,2, 1139a27.*

tragedies while formulating general precepts. Because of this reason Stephen Halliwell calls Aristotle's approach to tragedy as *au fond*.

> (...) Aristotle's approach to tragedy is *au fond*, a system of theoretical premises and reasoning, incorporating ideas drawn from observation but essentially relying on and elaborating philosophical convictions about the nature of poetry and the experience which it provides.[32]

As we can understand from above passage that Aristotle used individual tragedies, however, he did not aim to explain them individually and also not aim to formulate a theory deriving completely from individual tragedies. In other words, he was seeking to find intrinsic essence of tragedy, which is independent from individual tragedies. His general understanding of science reflects his approach to individual tragedies. Aristotle was looking forward to find necessary parts of a tragedy that can be applied almost all tragedies. Contrary to contingent parts, his science of poetry deals with necessary elements of a tragedy, which can be experienced, in individual tragedies.

The only real element is an individual tragedy is to seek for necessary parts of it and to reveal these parts to formulate practical precepts for making of the beautiful. Thus, *Poetics* deals with an ideal tragedy and approaches to individual tragedies in a more liberal way provided by its generality level.

As we mentioned before, one of the important aims of this study is to state *Poetics* into whole Aristotelian corpus along with showing *Poetics'* connections with *Metaphysics.* While doing this, we will have to show that a tragedy is conceptualized as *ousia* and stated in Aristotle's philosophy of being. One way to reach this aim is to consider Aristotle's notion of science. The science for Aristotle cannot deal with non-beings; it rather deals with real knowledge of things. Thus, Aristotle's classification of science coincides

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[31] The location of *Poetics* in productive sciences and general classification of sciences will be discussed later in this chapter.
[32] Halliwell, p. 10.

with an ontological division in which several aspects of being are treated by different sciences.

As we stated, the general classification of sciences is discussed by Aristotle in *Metaphysics,* Book VI[33] where he states "all thought is either practical or productive or theoretical." [34] Theoretical sciences are divided into mathematics, physics and theology. The productive sciences can also be divided into two parts, which are artistic *techne*[35] and useful *techne.* Both of these are *mimesis,* however, former one aims to produce an object whereas latter aims to constitute a definite change in an existing patient. In other words, doctor's production is not something original, but rather a certain type of condition in an already existing *ousia*. Artistic *techne* aims to produce something externally with a representational content, such as a tragedy.

Artistic *techne* can also be divided into two sub-parts. This distinction is made by the tools they use while imitating:

> Some people use the medium of color and shape to produce imitations of various objects by making visual images. (Some through art, some through practice) others do this by means of the voice.[36]

An artistic *techne* can also use language while imitating. These can be in the form of prose or in the form of verse.[37] Both of these *techne* are verbal. Therefore, artistic *techne* can be divided into two subparts as verbal and non-verbal.

Verbal or poetical *techne* in itself can also be divided into two parts according to their mode of imitation:

> A third difference between them is the mode in which one may imitate each of these objects. It is possible to imitate the same objects in the same medium sometimes by narrating, (either using a different *persona*, as in Homer's

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[33] together with *Topics,* VI, 145a14; VII, 1, 157a10 and *Nicomachean Ethics,* VI, 2, 1139a27.
[34] *Metaphysics*, VI, 1, 1025b23.
[35] See Appendix A.
[36] Poetics, I, 1447a11.
[37] Poetics, I, 1447b1.

poetry, or as the same person without variation), (---), or else with all the imitators as agents and engaged in activity.[38]

This third separation, which is made according to mode of imitation, formulates two last subparts, which we can call tragic and non-tragic *techne.* An example for a non-tragic *techne* can be Homer's *Iliad* and for a tragic *techne* can be Sophocles' *King Oedipus.*

It would be helpful now to summarize what we have said so far with respect to Aristotle's division of sciences. First of all, there are three types of sciences; practical, theoretical and productive. Productive sciences are divided into two subparts as artistic *techne* and useful *techne.* Artistic techne can also be divided into two subparts as poetical *techne* and non-poetical *techne.* Finally, poetical *techne* is divided into two parts as tragic *techne* and non-tragic *techne.* In this structure, each lower level is the species of a higher level and more determined than its genus, which is the higher level. For example, the genus of a tragic *techne* is poetical *techne* along with artistic *techne.* In the same way tragic *techne* is the species of poetical *techne*, which in turn is the species of the artistic *techne.* Tragic *techne* is the last differentia of the productive science, which is indivisible to its lower species. Aristotle declares that genus is not a separate being beyond the species.[39] It is rather the material and indefinite part of the definitions of objects, on the other hand, last differentia – which is tragic *techne* in our example – is the essence and form of a thing which constitutes its definition and condition of knowledge: "If then a differentia of a differentia be taken at each step, one differentia – the last – will be the form and the substance. (...)"[40]

We can drive from this passage that Aristotle considers last differentia as a being. This will also help us in our aims while showing that Aristotle conceptualizes tragedy as *ousia*. However, there are more important things regarding Aristotle's notion of science that there is a close

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[38] Poetics, I, 1448a17.
[39] *Metaphysics,* VII, 12, 1038a5.

relationship with *Poetics* with the other treatises and especially with *Metaphysics.* Aristotle's classification is so tight that any treatise cannot be read only by itself, as they are subparts of a given science. It is *Metaphysics* is absolutely autonomous and it constitutes the major principles of all sciences.

Aristotelian understanding of science is focusing on objects. In other words, Aristotle's scientific division is determined by ontological division:

> And there are as many parts of philosophy as there are kinds of substance, so that there must necessarily be among them a first philosophy and one which follows this. For being falls immediately into *genera*; and therefore the science too will correspond to these *genera*.[41]

It is clear from the passage that sciences deal with beings and the parts of beings. The categories of being refer to several sciences, leaving them an area of investigation within a related category. Each has several meanings, each of them coincides with different categories that in turn formulates the basis of investigation:

> In general, if we search for the elements of existing things without distinguishing the many senses in which things are said to exist, we cannot succeed, especially if the search for the elements of which things are made is conducted in this manner.[42]

The several senses of being are investigated by several sciences. Aristotle, in other words, is dividing sciences according to their characteristic objects rather than dividing them by methods they use. Scientific investigation goes through real beings with their necessary parts and correspondingly, scientific knowledge is a real knowledge of things. Lastly, there must be sciences for all things, which are beings. "For according to the arguments from the existence of the sciences there will be Forms of all things of which there are sciences (...)."[43]

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[40] *Metaphysics*, VII,12, 1038a25.
[41] *Matephysics*, IV, 2, 1004a2.
[42] *Metaphysics*, I, 9, 992b 18.
[43] *Metaphysics*, I, 9, 990b12.

Hence; the productive sciences are the sciences of production focusing on an external object made by the artist. *Techne* or art is the application of general principles given by theoretical sciences to special conditions[44] as discussed earlier and tragic *techne* is the last differentia that deals with *Poetics.* Therefore, *Poetics is* a science dealing with a determined object and have certain autonomy with respect to its object. Lastly, if *Poetics* is a productive science differentiated by its subject matter from practical and theoretical sciences, it must be dealing with existing objects. These objects are individual tragedies with their own nature enjoying a determined independent existence. Aristotle conceptualizes tragedy as *ousia*; an individual being as a separate science deals with its necessary parts, seeking to find its own principles.

It would be helpful now, to summarize what we have said so far with respect to the objects of science and present our argument about tragedy as an object of *Poetics.* In the first place we manage to show that Aristotle's division of sciences corresponds to an ontological division where every science is investigating an aspect of being. To put it better, several senses of being, namely, the categories of being determinate the division of sciences in Aristotle's philosophy. Therefore, Aristotle's understanding of science, with no doubt, is a realistic and an object centered one by which the principles of the several senses of being is revealed. After all of these, we showed that productive sciences are one of the major three sciences with their own subject matters. From this, we argued that *Poetics* is a science, dealing with a partially autonomous being which is tragedy. We supported our argument by saying that, science can only deal with beings and carried our argument by stating that if *Poetics* is a science then it must deal with a real object – an *ousia.* At the same time we showed by gradual reduction that tragic *techne* is the last differentia that can be dealt by a science; as sciences can deal only with last differentia rather than genus. Lastly, we conclude our argument by saying that tragic *techne* is treated by

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[44] Arslan, p.76.

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a separate object, which is tragedy. From all of these, it is proven that a tragedy is an *ousia* with its own nature and with its own science.

Conclusion

It is now much easier for us to claim that *Poetics* is an individual treatise, which has close connection with the whole Aristotelian corpus. Every treatise, in Aristotle, is dealing with one aspect of being and revealing this part of being by finding the principles of it. Therefore, in Aristotle, no treatise can be read only by itself; rather they should be read under the major principles stated in *Metaphysics.* It is natural for a commentator to investigate relationships of *Poetics* with the nearest treatises such as *Rhetoric* in the first stage. However, *Poetics* should be read principally in the light of *Metaphysics.* Without doing this, first we cannot place *Poetics* in the whole Aristotelian corpus, secondly, we cannot determine the real subject matter of *Poetics* and lastly, we cannot solve some problems emerging from *Poetics* which are vital for literary theory. For the first deficiency it can be stated that *Poetics'* place is accurately determined in *Metaphysics.* Aristotle's general approaches to specific situations will help us to reveal the text of *Poetics* in a more clear and durable way. As a result our commentaries on the text would be trust worthier. For the second one, we can argue that it is crucial to state the right subject matter of *Poetics* as we have seen that any mistake leads to great problems in literary theory. Stating that *Poetics* have separate and determined subject matter of its own is an attempt to prevent any ethically dominated commentary of the text. As we mentioned earlier that neo-classical commentaries had such tendencies, which resulted with a completely fallacious conclusions about literature. Therefore in order to prevent such conclusions, we have to state the real subject matter of *Poetics*. For the third defective result, it is clear that there are unrevealed problems within *Poetics* that oblige commentators to propose solutions. One of these problems is stated in this study, which is

about the generality level of *Poetics.* Now, by understanding the division of sciences, which is stated largely in *Metaphysics*, it would become possible to suggest new types of solutions to such problems. This is especially important in a treatise that has missing parts and that is incomplete such as *Poetics*. Aristotle's general understanding of science, which in turn enables us to reach more accurate conclusions about the text, reveals the location of individual tragedies in Poetics. The generality level is enlightening also for modern investigations with respect to literature. As Todorov emphasizes, *Poetics* remained in a unique generality level that enables to establish a unique type of literary criticism between extreme theories, which do not regard any individual tragedy, and philology, which only considers the literary text itself.[45]

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[45] Todorov, p. 43.

CHAPTER 2

OUSIA and TRAGEDY

It is necessary for us to show that Aristotle conceptualizes a tragedy as *ousia* in order to reach our aim in demonstrating the connections between *Poetics* and *Metaphysics.* This will be done in this chapter by emphasizing several points regarding the ontology of Aristotle. First of all, we will generally point out the ontological status of artifacts together with the ontological and cognitive priority of object in Aristotle's philosophy. After stating these facts we will apply these major principles of Aristotelian philosophy to *Poetics.* There will also be another justification for our claims following from the definition of tragedy. Finally, we will state our last justifications regarding the unity of tragedy and priority of tragedy over epic. We have to remark that so many thoughts in this chapter are parallel with Martha Husain's systematical investigation on Aristotle's *Poetics, which* is called *Ontology and the Art of Tragedy.* However, except the basic idea, the methodology and approach of our investigation is completely dissimilar with her valuable work. Notably, all responsible classical scholarship attempts to display the connections between *Poetics* and other treatises.[46] Before we start, we have to give some explanations about Aristotle's notion of *ousia* as we always have to refer back to this point.

2.1. Category of Ousia:

We will not deal with the details of Aristotle's understanding of *ousia;* however, our investigation requires some explanation regarding this topic. With respect to our aim, it is necessary to state the types of *ousia* stated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*.

In Aristotelian philosophy *ousia* plays the most important role, as it is the reference point of all categories; *ousia* is the main principle and other categories are the predicates asserted to it.[47]It is something to know a thing by its categories like quality or quantity and another to know a thing by itself. Nothing can be a being rather than an *ousia* and our investigations should be about beings rather than non-beings:

> For none of them is either self-subsistent or capable of being separated from substance, but rather, if anything, it is that which walks or is seated or is healthy that is an existent thing. Now these are seen to be more real because there is something definite which underlies them; and this the substance or individual, which is implied in such a predicate; for 'good' or 'sitting' are not used without this. [48]

It is important, then, to stress that any category cannot be a separate being without a reference to *ousia. Ousia* is the actual existing thing to which other categories are applied as predicates. Without this definite *ousia*, the principles of all knowing and investigation will collapse and the arguments of these investigations will be null and void. Being, therefore, in Aristotle's philosophy, stays in the center of all knowing and science.

As there are senses of being, the categories, there are types of being in Aristotle' philosophy, namely the types of *ousia*. In the most general level, there can be two types of *ousia, which* are sensible *ousia* and immovable *ousia*. The sensible *ousia* in itself is divided into two other major parts as perishable and eternal *ousia.* Therefore there are generally three types of *ousia* which are perishable, eternal and immovable:

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[46] One of the good examples of this approach is Dorohea Frede's article "Necessity, Changes and 'What Happens for the Most Part' in Aristotle's *Poetics*" in Rorty, 1992.
[47] *Metaphysics,* VII*,* 1, 1028a10.

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> There are three kinds of substance – one that is sensible (of which one subdivision is eternal and another is perishable, and which all recognize, as comprising e.g. plants and animals), - of this we must grasp the elements, whether one or many; and another that is immovable (…)[49]

The sensible *ousia* is the most important in the thesis, since they are involving the principles like form, matter and privation of their own. Because they involve these contrasting principles, they are perishable and changeable. When Aristotle speaks about sensible *ousia,* he can be speaking of three principles which constitutes the object's very being. First of all, sensible *ousia* can be a material *ousia*. Actually there cannot be pure matter, but rather it is found in connection with form. Matter is subject to a change and it is the substratum of possibilities that a being can be. For instance, stones, bricks and timbers are the matters – that is potentialities – for they're to be a house. In other words, stones, bricks and timbers have the potentiality of being a house.[50] Also we can speak of wood as being a potentiality/matter of a table and a house. Therefore, wood has the possibility to become a house or a table. Thus, matter is obviously an *ousia*, which constitutes the condition of change: "But clearly matter also is a substance; for in all the opposite changes that occur there is something which underlies the changes (…)".[51]

These changes – which Aristotle speaks about, can be numerous. They can be with respect to place, increase in size, alternation etc. [52] All of these changes enabled by matter which is involved in every sensible *ousia.*[53]

The second principle in sensible *ousia* is the form. Form is the determined part of a sensible *ousia.* Referring back to the previous example, form is the house or the table. Form can be separated from matter only by logical means but in the reality they cannot be separated from each

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[48] *Metaphysics,* VII, 1, 1028a22.
[49] *Metaphysics,* XII, 1, 1069a30.
[50] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 2, 1043a15.
[51] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 1, 1042a33.
[52] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 1, 1042a33 – 1042b5.
[53] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 1, 1042a25.

other.[54] For instance, mud is the matter and potentiality of a brick and brick is the matter and potentiality of a house. In the same way, house is the actuality and form of the brick. In other words, brick is in one sense the matter and in another sense it is the form:

> The reason is that people look for a unifying formula, and a difference, between potentiality and actuality. But, as has been said, the proximate matter and the form are one and the same thing, the one potentiality, the other actually.[55]

Therefore, finally, there can be a composite being with matter and form. For instance, Socrates is a composite being with a matter and form. The below passage, therefore, summarizes what we have said so far with respect to sensible *ousia:*

> These are the sensible substances and sensible substances all have matter. The substratum is substance, and this is one sense the matter (and the matter I mean that which, not being a 'this' actually, is potentially a 'this'), and in another sense the formula or form (which being a 'this' can be separately formulated), and thirdly the complex of matter and form, which alone is generated and destroyed, and is, without qualification, capable of separate existence (…)[56]

Now we managed to determine the basic elements of a sensible *ousia* and can move to give some general explanations about the priority of actuality and form over potentiality and matter, as it is also important for our later aims while investigating tragedy.

2.2. Priority of Actuality over Potentiality:

In this immanent form-matter relationship, form and actuality is always prior to matter and potentiality. This is because of the fact that *ousia* and form is the only element that exits independently.[57] Matter exists for the sake of form, which is the actuality of the matter. We can only speak of matter by means of form, which is the definite and intelligible nature of a thing.

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[54] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 1, 1042a27.
[55] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 6, 1045b16.
[56] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 1, 1042a25.
[57] *Metaphysics,* VII, 1, 1028a31.

Now, there are several senses in which actuality is prior to potentiality and these are knowledge, formula, time and *ousia.* For the formula, actuality is prior to potentiality because we define things by the help of their form, rather than their matter. In other words, matter is the indefinable nature of things that contain opposites in it. Also, matter is a universal element in a thing that contains several possibilities, which lacks of any definite individually. We define things by their essence which constitutes the thing's individuality and certainty: "Clearly it is prior in formula; for that which is in the primary sense potential is potential because it is possible for it to become actual (…)[58]

Thus, we first have to know what a thing is, in order to understand its potentiality. For instance, Socrates may have the possibility to become a musician. Unless, he becomes actually a musician, we cannot know whether he has the potentiality to become a musician. At the same time Socrates can have the potentiality to become an architect. Therefore, in the level of potentiality, we cannot define all the potentiality that Socrates has and because of this reason the formula of the actuality is prior to the formula of potentiality.[59] It is because of the same reason that actuality is prior to potentiality in terms of knowledge. The possibility of knowing something is due to the thing's formula. In other words we know things by their definition. Now, if the definition of actuality is prior to potentiality then in terms of knowledge, actuality must necessarily be prior to potentiality. The condition to know something in Aristotle's philosophy is to know its actuality and form. Clearly then after knowing the thing's actuality, we managed to know its potentiality.

Aristotle also shows the priority of actuality over potentiality in terms of time. First of all, actuality is prior to potentiality in terms of time with respect to species rather than number: "In time it is prior in this sense: the

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[58] *Metaphysics,* IX, 8, 1049b12.
[59] *Metaphysics,* IX, 8, 1049b16.

actual member of a species is prior to the potential member of the same species (…)".[60]

The number of potential members of a species can be more than the number of actual members of a species. However, there first must be a one member of species in order to be potential members of that species. For instance, if there are no actually existing human beings then there will be no possibility for the human beings. In all cases, there must be a first mover which is actual, in order to actualize the potential members.

> For from the potential the actual is always produced by an actual thing, e.g. man by man, musician by musician, there is always a first mover, and the mover already exists actually.[61]

Thus, actuality is prior to potentiality in terms of time with respect to the actual members of species rather than potential number of species.

Lastly, actuality and form is prior to potentiality in terms of *ousia.* This means that form is more real than matter. This is because of the fact that form is prior and matter is posterior in terms of becoming.[62] Aristotle's proof for this argument employs teleology. Every being is moved towards a principle and that principle is the *telos*[63]. Therefore, matter move towards its *telos*, and when it comes to actualize its *telos* it stops. In this respect, matter is nothing but only an element which is owed its being to form:

> Secondly, because everything that comes to be moves towards a principle, i.e. an end, for that for the sake of which a thing is, is its principle, and the becoming is for the sake of this that the potentiality is acquired.[64]

Thus, form, as a principle deserves a greater ontological status than matter. Matter is something that exists for the sake of form: "The truth is that what desires the form is matter, as the female desires the male."[65]

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[60] *Metaphysics,* IX , 1, 1049b18.
[61] *Metaphysics,* IX, 1, 1049b24.
[62] *Metaphysics,* IX , 1, 1050a5.
[63] See Appendix A.
[64] *Metaphysics,* IX, 1, 1050a6.
[65] *Physics*, I, 9, 192a22.

Aristotle's second proof for priority of actuality over potentiality employs eternal things.[66] Eternal things are purified from matter and contingency. Perishable *ousia* are those, which have matter in themselves as the principle of corruption. In order words, they have the possibility to be or not to be. If there are no eternally existing things, which are purified from matter, then after some time, noting can exist. This is because of the fact that, perishable *ousia* do not necessarily exist and what is more, there had been, is and will always be existing things which shows that there are actually existing eternal *ousia*. Therefore form/actuality is prior to matter/potentiality in terms of being and *ousia.*

We will be referring to these explanations in later stages of the thesis. These explanations about form and matter are very important in respect to the aim of the thesis, especially presenting that Aristotle conceptualizes tragedy as *ousia*. For now, we will start to examine the ontological status of artifacts clearly because of the fact that a tragedy is an artifact.

2.3. The Ontological Status of Artifacts:

The relationship between *physis*[67] and *techne* is built up by *mimesis* in Aristotle's philosophy. *Techne* imitates *physis* while producing itself. In other words, *techne* is imitating the processes and methods of *physis* at the same time it completes what *physis* do not consummate.[68] By imitating *physis* thus, artistic *techne* produces artifacts.

It is important not to confuse Aristotle's notion of *mimesis* with that of Plato's. Since, according to Aristotle, *techne* can produce originals rather than copies. As Halliwell noted, Aristotle used and changed the notion of *mimesis* in order to defend poetry against Plato.[69] Aristotle, by saying that

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[66] *Metaphysics,*IX, 8, 1050b6.
[67] See Appendix A.
[68] *Physics*, II, 8, 199a18.
[69] Halliwell, pp.178.

artistic *techne* can produce originals; he also emphasizes that poetry cannot be judged by the principles of truth and justice. A tragedy has to be judged by its intrinsic values for it is an original and independent being. Nevertheless, Plato condemned the poets who are using *mimesis* in their poems because he found them perilous for the state.[70] Therefore there is a contrast between these two philosophers in terms of their approach to *mimesis*. Aristotle does not state the products, which are created by artistic *techne*, to third-class ontological status. Artifacts in Aristotle's philosophy are not faulty copies rather they are originals with their own nature. Therefore, for Aristotle, even the *mimesis* of things, which cause distress in human beings, can give delight for they have their own standards of excellence.[71] For instance a picture of corpses can produce delight in human beings since the picture of corpses and corpses themselves are separate things. The picture of corpses becomes an original thing, which has its own nature, and if it satisfies its *telos* according to its inner standards, it may give delight to us. However, according to Plato, the picture of corpses will be a copy of corpses so that it stands as ontologically third-degree defective copy. This low degree being is so far from reality that it is incapable of teaching us anything good, whereas, for Aristotle the *telos* and good of an artifact lie in the actualization of its *telos*.[72] Art is not something that can be judged by ethical merits and moreover, artifacts are not ontologically third-degree defective copies. Now we will examine, in more detail, the ontological status of artifacts in Aristotle's philosophy since it is very important for our aims to state the justifications for the argument that Aristotle conceptualizes a tragedy as an *ousia.*

First of all, there is no doubt for Aristotle that products of *techne* are *ousia:* "(Natural objects and other things are substances.) For things come into being either by art or by nature or by chance or by spontaneity."[73]

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[70] *Republic,* III, 386a-198c.
[71] *Poetics,* IV, 1448b12.
[72] *Physics,* II, 195b22.
[73] *Metaphysics,* Book 12,3, 1070a5.

However there is obviously a difference between natural things and artifacts. The efficient cause of a natural thing is embedded in itself. In other words, natural things are moved by a principle in themselves; however, this is not the case in artifacts which have their efficient causes outside themselves.[74] The efficient cause of an artifact is an artist. As we know from *Metaphysics* I that there are mainly four causes of a thing; mainly material, formal, efficient and final causes.[75] One of these causes –the efficient cause- is the only different one with respect to natural things and artifacts. Aristotle tries to equalize the artifacts with natural objects. Nature is like an artist producing natural things by it. However, unlike the products of artifacts, natural things are not produced by reason; rather they are produced by spontaneity. Nature in itself has the principle of change and it is only because of this reason, artifacts and natural objects differ: "If the ship-building art were in the wood, it would produce the same results by nature." [76]

Secondly, in the first sense the reason for any artifact seems to be the soul of the artist. In other words, artifacts exist only if an artist thought of them. Therefore, the existences of artifacts are in the soul of an artist. For instance, health – that is the form – exists in the doctor's soul and he applies this form to an already existing human being. However, this is partially true with respect to existence of artifacts, because of the fact that this is only applicable to the useful *techne* and to partially non-poetical *techne.*[77] That means a doctor does not produce a material object with its own nature. Rather he applies a thought in his soul to a patient. For the architect, 'the house apart from its matter' means that the house only exists in the soul of the artist:

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[74] *Metaphysics,* XII, 3, 1070a7.
[75] *Metaphysics,* XII, 3, 983a27.
[76] *Physics,* II, 8, 199b29.
[77] The differences between these several types of *techne* are explained in the first chapter.

> Nor is there generation and destruction of these forms, but it is in another way
> that the house apart from its matter, and health, and all things of art, exist and
> do not exist. [78]

Thus, the house apart from its matter does not exist, if an artist does not think about it. The situation changes when we consider a house with its matter. That means any artifact that completed its generation, will be an existing thing with its own nature. In order words, a generated house will exist even if the artist does not think about it. First is the thought of a house followed after by an actually existing house. In the same way, a tragedy – let's say *King Oedipus* – will exist even if Sophocles does not think about it. Before writing the tragedy, *King Oedipus* exists only in the soul of Sophocles. After its completion the tragedy becomes independent from Sophocles' soul, enjoying its own nature. Thus the efficient causes of artifacts are proceeding to the artifacts themselves. In artifacts, efficient cause precedes the effect. Moreover, the formal cause will simultaneously exist as the artifacts exist:

> The moving causes exist as things preceding the effects, but causes in the
> sense of formulae are simultaneous with their effects. For when a man is
> healthy, then health also exists; and the shape of a bronze sphere exists at the
> same time as the bronze sphere. [79]

In artifacts, the soul of the artist exists before the artifact. The formal cause – the shape of a bronze sphere – will exist simultaneously with the artifact, which is the bronze sphere. Correspondingly, the form of a tragedy (which will be considered in detail in this chapter) exists when a tragedy is written.

From all of these, we can now argue that an artifact is a composite being with its efficient cause preceding it. At the same time, after production; it has its own nature with form and matter. An artifact is obviously an existing thing for Aristotle, with its own principles and causes. Lastly, this solution seems so natural, a tragedy if not to be an *ousia* it will be an accidental condition in an already existing *ousia* like health. In other

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[78] *Metaphysics,* XII, 1070a15.
[79] *Metaphysics,* XII, 3, 1070a21.

words, by medical *techne* health is produced in human being by the imitation of nature. Likewise a house is a produced *ousia* that is build by the imitation of the structure of nature, which constitutes the form-matter relationship. [80] If tragedy does not fall into these two categories then what will be its ontological status remains unsolved. A tragedy is an artifact that is produced by a special art; by the poetical *techne.* A tragedy is an *ousia* that comes into being by the poetical *techne.* Because of this reason, tragedy is not an accidental condition in an already existing *ousia* and it is not a natural object. As we mentioned earlier, for Aristotle, "things come into being either by art or by nature or by change or by spontaneity."[81] Any refusal of this solution will immediately be resulted in a contradiction to Aristotle's understanding of artifacts and natural objects. In other words, a tragedy is either an artifact or a natural object. It is obvious that it is an artifact. After this, it must be either an accidental condition in an already existing *ousia* or must be a produced object with its own nature. It has been shown in the first chapter that Aristotle differentiates artistic *techne* and useful *techne*. Now, it is clear that a tragedy is produced by a sub-division of an artistic *techne*, which is tragic *techne.* From all of these, we understand that a tragedy is not an accidental condition that is produced in an already existing *ousia*. It is obviously a being, produced by *techne* with the efficient cause as an artist.

2.4. Priority of Object

Aristotle, while examining both the natural things and artifacts, focuses on the object. He repeatedly mentions the nature of object concentrates on it and shapes the knowledge of object by its own nature. Moreover, he rejects strongly on focusing to the subjective aspect of knowledge.[82] Knowledge, for Aristotle, is not subjective rather the object shapes it. Therefore, objects are the measure of all our knowledge: "It is not

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[80] Husain, p.26.
[81] *Metaphysics,* XII,3, 1070a5.
[82] *Metaphysics,* X, 1, 1053a31-b5.

because we think that you are white, that you *are* white, but because you are white we who say this have the truth." [83]

This object-centered understanding of knowledge will have so many implications regarding our topic. First of all, interpretation here would have no effect on the objective value, existence and truth of a thing. On the contrary, it is constructed by the thing's objective nature. It is important to consider products of artistic *techne;* tragedy has to be judged by its intrinsic nature, rather than by the subjective judgments of the audience. The object itself should determine interpretation of an object of art. The interpretation of a tragedy would not have any power to determine the value of it. The interpretation of a tragedy is to be built up by its own inner principles.

Secondly, this object-centered understanding of knowledge is built up on the belief that all things have certain independent existence. Aristotle appreciates the diversity of things as he appraises the individuality of objects. With respect to our topic here, this type of understanding will also have an important consequence. As we mentioned earlier in this chapter that the artist is the efficient cause of an artifact, which means that, a poet is a maker of plot structures in a tragedy. Now, the object-centered approach will help us to determine the importance of poet while judging a tragedy favors the tragedy itself rather than the maker of it. In other words, the value of a tragedy cannot be determined by the personality of the poet. This approach gives certain independency to a tragedy; freeing it from the subjectivism of poets while also stating the criteria of judging it by its own merits. Therefore it is important to clarify Aristotle's attitude on objects while revealing his methodology and his approach in *Poetics* while determining the status of a product of artistic *techne* in the context of playwright and audience. The form of a tragedy is what makes a tragedy a definite thing. It is not the efficient cause that makes a tragedy *'this'* but rather it is the form, the very nature of itself, enables it to be a definite object: "Therefore what

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[83] *Metaphysics,* IX,10, 1051b6.

we seek is the cause, i.e. the form, by reason of which the matter is some definite thing; and this is the substance of the thing." [84]

The object-centered structure clearly not only dominates all Aristotelian inquiry, especially in *Poetics* but also this approach enables a tragedy to be in a certain independency level, this is to be judged not by audience or playwright, but by the form of the tragedy itself. Aristotle wrote an individual treatise appointed to tragedy for this reason. At the same time, all inquiries have to deal with existent objects, which enable them to built necessary connections with *Metaphysics.* In this structure, *Poetics* is not an exceptional one, which means, it also has necessary connection with *Metaphysics.* However, beyond that necessary relationship, it is important to determine the general claims of Aristotelian philosophy while revealing both the methodology of *Poetics* and the approach of *Poetics* to individual products of artistic *techne.*

So far, we managed to show the importance of two important components of a tragedy, which are the audience and the playwright. As a result, any of these two components can deserve the importance of a tragedy itself. Hence, a tragedy should be judged by not the external criteria such as audience or playwright but by its own intrinsic values.

2.5. What Deserves to be the Form of a Tragedy

After illustrating that a tragedy is an *ousia,* it is necessary for us to inquire the implications of this result. To explain it better, if tragedy is a composite being than Aristotle himself in *Poetics* must also reflect this result. For instance, there must be an identified element corresponding to form in the treatise and there should be a separated inquiry with respect to elements that constitute the matter of a tragedy. Moreover, Aristotle's general approach to tragedy must also reflect this result. In this part we shall inquire if there is an element that deserves to be the form of a tragedy,

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[84] *Metaphysics,* VII,17, 1041b8.

and we will try to show the several aspects of Aristotle's philosophy as they are revealed in *Metaphysics* that are applicable and reflected also in his *Poetics.*

As we mentioned shortly in above passages of this thesis 'form' is the definite part of a 'being.' This means that form is the necessary feature of a thing that constitutes its very being. For the composite beings form is always in composition with the matter. These two elements cannot be separated in reality, but can only be separated by reason alone. Now, can we manage to find an element that deserves to be the form in Aristotle's inquiry concerning tragedy?

Aristotle does not explicitly declare the form of a tragedy. However, when we attentively examine *Poetics,* several passages immediately signify that he conceives *muthos* as the form of a tragedy. In his inquiry, *muthos* is always stressed to be prior to other parts of a tragedy:

> Virtually all tragedians, one might say, use these formal elements; for in fact every drama alike has spectacle, character, plot, diction, song and reasoning. But the most important of them is the structure of the events (…) [85]

Other five constitutive parts of tragedy are not important as *muthos.* The central role of *muthos* in *Poetics* is also reflected in the structure of *Poetics,* in other words, most of the chapters of *Poetics* are appointed to reveal and examine the role of *muthos* in a tragedy. After giving the definition of tragedy in chapter six, Aristotle mentions the priority of *muthos* in the passage, which we cited. After that Aristotle deals with the basic concepts like completeness in chapter seven, unity, in chapter eight, universality in chapter nine which are several features of *muthos*. Chapter ten distinguishes the simple and complex *muthos*, which, in turn, inquired in more detail in chapter eleven. After mentioning the qualitative parts of a tragedy in chapter twelve, Aristotle continues his inquiry on *muthos*, searching for the best kinds of *muthos.* After these, he began to inquire about other parts of tragedy. However, this inquiry is also built up on the

basis of *muthos.* In other words, all other parts are examined with their relative position to *muthos.* These positions will be considered in the third chapter of the thesis. For now, we will content to emphasize that the wording and structure of *Poetics* signifies the importance of *muthos.* The other five parts are inquired in eight chapters and *muthos* itself takes more than that to be inquired which signifies clearly the importance of *muthos* in *Poetics.*

Form is the determined part of a being by which a being is defined and known. We can clearly observe this feature of form in *Poetics.* All other parts of tragedy are determined by *muthos* since it is the form of a tragedy. Other five parts of tragedy need *muthos* to become actualized. In other words, *muthos* has the constitutive primacy, which enables it to determine the other five parts. Consequently, the other five parts can formulate a tragedy only by the help of *muthos.* Hence, if there were no *muthos,* there would be no tragedy at all. As a necessary part, *muthos* deserves to be the form of a tragedy. In chapter six of *Poetics,* Aristotle makes an evaluation concerning the six parts of a tragedy where he states *muthos* as the most important one without which we cannot even think of a tragedy:

> Furthermore, there could not be a tragedy without action but there could be one without character. The tragedies of most modern poets lack character, and in general there are many such poets.[86]

Muthos is the primary part of a tragedy, which shapes the character. Character remains as a secondary important part standing as a potential element.[87] Moreover, *Muthos* is not only the form but also the part by which a tragedy should be judged, for *muthos* is the one which makes a tragedy effective:

> Also, if one were to compose a series of speeches expressive of character, however successful they are in terms of diction and reasoning, it will not achieve the stated function of tragedy; a tragedy which, though it uses these

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[85] *Poetics*, VI, 1450a13.
[86] *Poetics,* VI, 1050a23.
[87] *Poetics,* VI, 1050a39.

elements less adequately, has a plot and a structure of events will do so much more effectively.[88]

The priority of *muthos* is guaranteed by the above passage, which states that the functioning of a tragedy to produce an effect becomes possible by *muthos* rather than character, diction or reasoning. All of these signify what we say about the form and the priority of form in previous parts of the thesis. It is also very helpful in determining the reasons that underlie Aristotle's excessive interest on *muthos*. As Halliwell emphasizes, *muthos* as being is the designed pattern of action that constitutes to the primary significance of poetic drama.[89] Correspondingly, form is the primary element of a being that formulates its very essence and constitutes the possibility of knowledge of that being. This is also applicable to *muthos*, which is the necessary part of a tragedy. Thus as Halliwell puts it, *muthos* should be understood both to be the form and substance of a tragedy staying in the center of Aristotle's inquiry.[90]

There is one more remaining argument by which it becomes obvious that *muthos* deserve to be the form of a tragedy. This argument employs the fact that Aristotle builds up an analogy between tragedy and living animals. In chapter six, Aristotle notes that "so the plot is the source and (as it were) the soul of tragedy."[91] Aristotle here and elsewhere[92] uses analogy in order to show that *muthos* is the most important part of a tragedy. As Husain also emphasizes both analogies are structural or constitutive similarities in the form of A: B=C: D which signifies that analogy here should be taken as seriously as possible[93]. In the other words, Aristotle uses these analogies just as the same way as he uses in *Metaphysics* and in other treatises. Correspondingly in chapter twenty-one Aristotle defines analogy

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[88] Poetics, VI,1050a29.
[89] Halliwell, p. 94.
[90] Halliwell, p. 94.
[91] *Poetics,* VI*, 1450a25.*
[92] In Chapters VII, 145Ob34-36 and XXIII, 1459a 17-21.
[93] Husain, p. 67.

as: "By analogy I mean cases where B stands in a similar relation to A as D does to C; one can then mention D instead of B, and *vice versa*". [94]

From this passage we can easily derive that *muthos* corresponds to the soul of a living organism. Moreover we can carry on arguing by using the same analogy that the other parts correspond to other parts of a living animal. These other parts of animals are the potentialities as stated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics:*

> Evidently even of the things that are thought to be substances most are only potentialities, -e.g. the parts of animals (for none of them exist separately; and when they are separated, then they too exist, all of them, merely as matters) (…).[95]

None of the other five parts of tragedy have the possibility of existing without *muthos,* or they only exist potentially analogously to the parts of animals. On the other hand, living organism, being a composite *ousia,* has its inner constitution by means of potentiality and actuality. The actuality of a living animal is the form, which is the soul of it. In the analogy, soul corresponds to the *muthos* by which it becomes obvious that the form of a tragedy is *muthos* even if Aristotle in *Poetics* does not explicitly emphasize this fact*.* Therefore, by examining *Poetics* and by the help of indirect references, Aristotle clarifies the reason for the dominance of *muthos* in the treatise. The inner constitution of a tragedy is similar with that of a living animal with its own form–matter constitution; m*uthos,* being the form and other parts being the matter or potentiality of a tragedy. Again, from all of these we can easily argue that a tragedy is conceptualized as *ousia* by Aristotle and what is more *Poetics* should be read in the context of other treatises necessarily in the context of *Metaphysics.*

Up to this point we managed to show two causes of a tragedy, the efficient cause and the formal cause. The efficient cause of a tragedy is the poet, who makes the plot structures. Aristotle explicitly declares in chapter nine that the poet is the maker of plot structure rather than of verses that

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[94] *Poetics,* XXI*,* 1457b16-18*.*

shows at the same time, that poet is the efficient cause and *muthos* is the form of a tragedy.[96] For Aristotle announces the fact that efficient causes of artifacts precede the effects however the form of artifacts exists simultaneously with the artifacts themselves.[97] The efficient cause of a tragedy - that is the poet - exists before the tragedy; on the other hand, the form of tragedy - that is the *muthos* - exists simultaneously with the tragedy. After determining these two causes of a tragedy, we will inquire if *muthos* can be understood as also the teleological cause or final cause.

In many of the cases, Aristotle reduces the final cause to the formal cause. This is especially the case in generated *ousiai* where formal cause behaves as final cause:

> E.g. what is the material cause of man? The menstrual fluid. What is the moving cause? The *semen*. The formal cause? His essence. The final cause? His end. But perhaps the latter two are the same.[98]

From this passage we can derive that formal cause can also be understood as final cause for we can conceive *telos* as the ingenerated form. A generated form in a composite being is, at the same time the being's *telos.* The equalization of formal and final cause is comprehensible in Aristotle's philosophy because of the fact that form is implicit in the *ousia*, which can only be separated from that by means of reason. Correspondingly, *telos* is also implicit in an *ousia*. In other words, every *ousia* has its own *telos* and form.[99] This equalization can be observed also in *Poetics* chapter six where Aristotle emphasizes *muthos* as the final cause of a tragedy: "So the events, i.e. the plot, are what tragedy is there for, and that is the most important thing of all."[100]

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[95] *Metaphysics,* VII, 15, 1040b5.
[96] *Poetics*, IX, 1451b27-28.
[97] *Metaphysics*, XII, 3, 1070a21.
[98] *Metaphysics* , VIII, 4 , 10044a33.
[99] We are aware of the fact that in *Metaphysics* XII, 4-5, Aristotle tries to make identical the final causes of all substances by using similarities, however, in these passages Aristotle seeks to find a principle for all being. That means, Aristotle uses final cause in the case of being as a whole; on the contrary, regarding composite individual beings he often emphasizes the formal cause. This explanation is also present in *Metaphysics*, XII, 17, 1041a28.
[100] *Poetics*, VI, 1050a22-23.

In the passage "what a tragedy there for" refers to the final cause for final cause is understood as "for the sake of which" by Aristotle.[101] Tragedy, hence, is there for the sake of achieving its own *ousia*, its form as *muthos*. *Muthos* is, at the same time, tragedy's ultimate aim and its own form, its essence, enjoying a definitive priority with respect to other parts of tragedy. *Muthos*, as being formal-final cause of a tragedy, is the basic nature of tragedy.

There are of course important consequences of this statement. Aristotle, by equalizing formal and final causes and by attributing these causes to *muthos* declares implicitly that a tragedy is an *ousia.* In other words, Aristotle conceptualizes a tragedy as an *ousia* and uses as same categories and principles as he uses in *Metaphysics* while inquiring a tragedy. The efficient and formal-final causes as revealed in *Metaphysics* are present in *Poetics.* Otherwise one can make some mistakes while commenting on the text. Firstly, if the commentator cannot determine the efficient cause as poet, he can attribute more importance to the poet than he deserves in Aristotelian theory of tragedy as we showed that the poet is only the efficient cause. In other words, poet, by imitating nature, generates a new and original artifact with its own form and matter. After poet's making of *muthos*, tragedy becomes ontologically independent object with a specific nature of itself. Secondly, he/she cannot define the real aim of a tragedy. The aim of the tragedy is not to generate some deserved condition on the audience but to realize its own being, by actualizing the parts other than *muthos*. These potential five parts therefore should be actualized in the best way by *muthos*, so that they would formulate a unity. To conclude the first consequence of our arguments, it is necessary for a commentator of *Poetics* to be aware of these facts regarding the nature of a tragedy.

For the second consequence, we can argue that the other five potential parts should be determined by *muthos* for they have no actual

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[101] *Metaphysics*, IX, 8, 1050a6.

existence without *muthos*. For instance, actions of characters cannot be judged by ethical merits since they are determined by *muthos*. It is crucial to judge a tragedy by its intrinsic principles, rather than judging it by external values. For a tragedy has its own objective nature with its own standards of excellence. This is also emphasized by Husain:

> Aristotle takes the objective nature of tragedy as the norm by which all subjective facts should be judged. What playwrights, actors, and producers do and what recipient experiences may or may not be appropriate. The measure of appropriateness is the tragedy itself in its paradigm form: the tragedy that is finest according to the standard of the art.[102]

We will also deal with the implications of this result in the later stages of this thesis. For now, it is important to emphasize that because a tragedy has its own nature, it should also be judged by its inner principles as Aristotle puts it "the best tragedy, in artistic terms, is based on this structure."[103]

2.6. The Definition of Tragedy:

In the previous parts of this dissertation we explained that actuality is prior to potentiality in definition. Now, we will examine if this is also applicable to tragedy, for Aristotle intently gives a definition of a tragedy, which will amplify the implications in this section.

Essence, in Aristotle, is the element by which a thing is defined. Things are defined by their essence, which in turn is the verbal representation of a thing. It is crucial for Aristotle to determine the thing's essence in order to give a definition of it. Now, some of the essences, especially in the case of sensible *ousia*, can contain matter in themselves:

> Now, we must not fail to notice the nature of the essence and of its formula, for, without this, inquiry is but idle. Of things defined, i.e. of essences, some are like snub, and some like concave. And these differ because snub is bound up with matter (for what is snub is a concave nose), while concavity is independent of perceptible matter.[104]

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[102] Husain, p. 66.
[103] *Poetics*, XIII, 1453a22.
[104] *Metaphysics,* VI, 1, 1025 b 27.

Above Aristotle claims that in the formula – definition – of snub, the matter is contained. The matter in this definition is the nose while the form is concavity. In other words, snub is a concave nose, which means that the definition of snub contains matter. Now, up to this point we understand that Aristotle's notion of definition can employ at least two elements, matter and form.[105] Now, we will examine if there are other elements, which are contained in the definition. Now, Aristotle sorts accidentals out of definition in *Metaphysics:*

> But not the whole of this is the essence of a thing; not that which something is in virtue of itself in the way in which a surface is white, because being a surface is not being white.[106]

Being white, in the above passage, is an accident that cannot be involved in the definition and essence for "the essence of each thing is what it is said to be in virtue of itself".[107] And being white is not a necessary virtue of a thing. Thus the accidentals like being white cannot be involved in the essence of a thing.

After excluding accidentals from the essence of a thing, Aristotle declares that only substances can have essence and definition:

> For the essence is what something is; but when one thing is said of another, that is not what a 'this' is, e.g. white man is not what a 'this' is since being a 'this' belongs only to substance. Therefore there is an essence only of those things whose formula is a definition.[108]

This passage is a crucial one as Aristotle here commits that only substances can have a definition. Moreover, he also accepts that only substantial elements can be involved in the essence of a thing. For instance, whiteness is not a substantial element that makes a thing 'this,' but it is only accidental which functions as a mere predicate, predicated to a subject. The substantial elements are those, which make an object "this". There are matter and form by which a thing is defined. However, as we put

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[105] This is at least applicable for sensible *ousia*. The definitions of other types of *ousiai* will not be considered in this dissertation.
[106] *Metaphysics,* VII, 4, 1029b13-16..
[107] *Metaphysics,* VII,4, 1029b14.

earlier, form is prior to matter in definition. In other words, by form, matter becomes actualized and becomes a definite object. Hence, the form of a thing is a necessary element in the definition. That is why, Aristotle claims that the definitions, which involve matter, are only definitions in one sense. Matter, as we know, is an indefinite element in an *ousia* therefore the definitions which contain matter will not be valid in a sense:

> We have stated that in the formula of the substance the material parts will not be present (for they are not even parts of the substance in that sense, but of the concrete substance; but of this there is in a sense a formula, and in a sense there is not; for there is no formula of it with its matter, for this is indefinite, but there is a formula of it with reference to its primary substance.[109]

Because of the fact that matter is indefinite, it can only be involved in definition with reference to form. Form is the principle which makes a thing definite and by which a thing is defined. This is what we stated in previous parts of this dissertation about the priority of form over matter in terms of definition. It is also because of this reason that only composite beings can have definition where matter becomes actualized and definite by form. In other words, the composites –matter and form– enable something to be defined since the parts of definition being genus and differentia coincides with matter and form correspondingly:

> Therefore one kind of substance can be defined and formulated, i.e. the composite kind, whether it be the object of sense or of reason; but the primary parts of which this consists cannot be defined, since a definitory formula predicates something of something, and one part of the definition must play the part of matter and the other that of form.[110]

Thus, the parts of definitions, being matter and form are, in themselves, cannot be defined whereas their composition can be defined. Moreover, it is crucial that only composite beings can have a definition where the composites generate the parts of definition.

Before applying all of these remarks to tragedy we have to inquire shortly about the relationship between being and formula, for this is

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[108] *Metaphysics,* VII,4, 1030a4.
[109] *Metaphysics,* VII,11, 1037a24.
[110] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 3, 1043b28.

extremely important in our aims to show that Aristotle conceives a tragedy as an *ousia.* First of all, Aristotle claims that each thing and its essence is one while criticizing Plato in a famous passage in *Metaphysics.*[111] Moreover, what is crucial here is that, Aristotle equalizes form and essence. That means, he claims that the parts of definition is the parts of being of the defined thing. As we know form is the actualized part of a thing that we cannot doubt for its ontological status. In other words, form is ontologically prior and the essence of a thing is equalized to its form:

> A part may be a part either of the form (i.e. essence), or of the compound of the form and the matter, or of the matter itself. But only the parts of the form are parts of the formula, and the formula is of the universal.[112]

We can derive from this passage that being of a thing and its definition coincides. This is a natural remark that Aristotle had to emphasize as he previously stated that only substances could have definition.[113]

Aristotle's notion of definition needs to be discussed referring to the definition of tragedy. Aristotle carefully elucidates the three differentiae in chapters 1-3 of *Poetics* before giving the formal definition of a tragedy: First differentia is the medium of imitation stated in first chapter:

> Similarly in the case of arts I have mentioned: in all of them the medium of imitation is rhythm, language and melody, but these may be employed either, separately or in combination.[114]

The tools of tragic *techne* are rhythm, language and melody during imitation process. These three constitutive parts will be considered later in the thesis. For now, we can move to the second differentia, which are the objects of imitation. These are *muthos,* character and thought. The third differentia is the mode of imitation. This differentia refers to spectacle because a tragedy imitates by using agents in activity.[115] Now, it is clear that imitation is differentiated in medium, mode and objects by which the

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[111] *Metaphysics,* VII, 6, 1031b17.
[112] *Metaphysics,* VII, 10, 1035b32.
[113] *Metaphysics,* VII, 4, 1030b4.
[114] *Poetics*, I, 1447a12.
[115] *Poetics*, III, 1448a21.

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elements of formal definition in chapter six are determined. One of these six parts must play the role of form and others must be potentialities waiting there to be actualized and defined by form. This is because of the nature of definition expressed in above passages of the thesis. Now, the formal definition of tragedy is as follows:

> Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions.[116]

It is clear that all differentiated parts are mentioned in the definition of a tragedy. However, in order to determine the form in the definition we have to examine the evaluation that Aristotle makes just after giving the formal definition of tragedy. This inquiry on the evaluation of the parts of a tragedy immediately reveals the primacy of *muthos* in terms of form and *telos:*

> But the most important of them is the structure of events: Tragedy is not an imitation of persons, but of actions and of life. Well-being and ill being reside in action, and the goal of life is an activity, not a quality; people possess certain qualities in accordance with their character, but they achieve well-being or its opposite on the basis of how they fare. So the imitation of character is not the purpose of what the agents do; character is included a long with and on account of the actions. So the events, i.e. the plot, are what tragedy is there for, and that is the most important thing of all.[117]

Muthos is what a tragedy is there for, it is the aim; *telos,* and the form of a tragedy. It is "the most important thing of all." As we mentioned earlier, by being the formal element in the definition of tragedy, *muthos* determines the other five potential parts. That is why Aristotle claims that "character is included along with and on account of the actions." Character in a tragedy is determined by *muthos.* By contrast, in life, character chooses how to act and as a result he becomes happy or the opposite. In a tragedy preferences do not have the power to determine character whereas this capacity is given to *muthos.* Therefore, *muthos* clearly is the formal element in the definition of the tragedy by which other parts are defined in their unity with it.

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[116] *Poetics*, VI, 1449b24-28.
[117] *Poetics*, VI, 1450a14.

There are other consequences resulting from the definition of tragedy. First of all, we showed that Aristotle claims that only substance can have a definition.[118] This signifies that a tragedy is an *ousia* with its own nature composed of matter and form. Otherwise, it would not have a definition of its own. Secondly, again as we showed that accidentals couldn't be involved in the definition as Aristotle throws them away from definition.[119] This signifies that none of the elements that are involved in the definition of tragedy are accidentals. That means they are specific to tragedy, forming its constituent parts. It is stated by Aristotle that only composite beings can have a definition where matter and form correspond to the parts of definition.[120] Therefore a tragedy must be a composite being whose nature consists of matter and form where matter corresponds to five constituent parts as style, lyric poetry, character, thought and spectacle and form corresponds to *muthos.*

There is one more important consequence of the definition of tragedy concerning unity of object being defined. Aristotle commits that the object being defined should be one and should be in unity since *ousia* is an individual being:

> But surely all the attributes in the definition *must* be one; for the definition is a single formula and a formula of substance, so that it must be a formula of some one thing; for substance means a 'one' and a 'this' as we maintain.[121]

From this passage we can derive that definition of an object necessitates the unity of that object. After stating that the definition is composed of *genus* and *differentiae*,[122] Aristotle claims that the basic components that enable any definition are the *differentiae*.[123] In other words an object is defined by the *differentiae*, also is included in the definition of tragedy. Objects, mode and media differentiate the *genus*, in the definition

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[118] *Metaphysics,* VII, 4, 1030a4.
[119] *Metaphysics,* VII, 4, 1029b17.
[120] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 3, 1043b28.
[121] *Metaphysics,* VII , 12, 1037b25.
[122] *Metaphysics,* VII, 12, 1037b29.
[123] *Metaphysics,* VII, 12, 1038a4-9.

of tragedy. Now it is important while defining an object to reach a last *differentia* which is the form and essence of a thing since this last *differentia* will include and necessitate the other *differentiae*: "If then a differentia of a differentia be taken at each step, one differentia – the last – will be the form and the substance."[124] Clearly then, only the last *differentia* will be an independent being in Aristotle's philosophy. The actual substance and form of a thing is the last *differentia* declared in the definition. Now we have to show that in the case of a tragedy, the last *differentia* is the *muthos.* Moreover if *muthos* is the last *differentia*, it must also be the element that enables the unity of a tragedy. The other five parts of a tragedy, then should formulate a unity around *muthos*.

First of all, Aristotle states that the unity of tragedy is not dependent on character.[125] Although *muthos* is concerned with a single person, this will not satisfy the unity of a tragedy. It is rather the unity of *muthos* that makes a tragedy unified. Aristotle tries to guarantee the unity of tragedy by emphasizing several restrictions considering *muthos*. By these suggestions on *muthos,* a tragedy comes to be a unified object. One of the most important suggestions is the "wholeness" of a tragedy. Aristotle defines wholeness as having parts in *muthos*, which are a beginning, middle and an end.[126] By the notion of "wholeness", Aristotle guarantees the completion of action. Without this completion, a tragedy would not be unified. Perhaps the most important restriction that Aristotle puts forward in unifying a tragedy is the principle of single action. This principle is emphasized both in *Metaphysics* and *Poetics* "And a definition is a formula which is one not by being connected together, like the *Iliad,* but by dealing with one object."[127]

In order to satisfy the unity of tragedy, Aristotle suggests that it must concentrate on a single action. Hence, both employing a single and a

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124 *Metaphysics,* VII, 13, 1038a25.
125 *Poetics*, VIII, 1451a21.
126 *Poetics*, VII, 1450b29.

whole action unify a tragedy or an epic. In *Poetics*, Aristotle praises Homer since he excludes some events in *Odyssey* even if they are related with Odysseus. In other words, by including only the "necessary" and "probable" action to *Odyssey*, Homer manages to satisfy the unity.[128]

The third suggestion in terms of unity is the magnitude of a tragedy. Aristotle claims that object's beauty lies on its magnitude and its order.[129] Therefore the length of a *muthos* should be ordered in such a way that it can be perceived at once:

> So just as in the case of physical objects and living organism, they should possess a certain magnitude, and this should be such as can readily be taken in at one view, so in the case of plots: they should have a certain length and this should be such as can readily be held in memory.[130]

Aristotle again builds up a similarity between tragedies with living organism now to satisfy the unity of a tragedy. Like the organisms, *muthos* should not be excessively small or large, for otherwise it cannot satisfy a sense of unity, which is obviously a crucial aspect of a tragedy.

Notably, the connection between unity of tragedy and definition of tragedy is crucial since it enables a tragedy to be intelligible. As we stated in the previous parts, definition of object is a necessary condition of knowledge. We know things by their forms stated as essence in definition. Now we have to add to these points that unity is also a necessary condition for knowledge and definition. Actually, if Aristotle would not succeed in showing the unity of tragedy then he could not also have the chance to write an individual treatise concerning tragedy. Since the possibility of science lies in knowledge, it would become impossible to attribute a separate science to tragic *techne.* A tragedy, without unity, would be completely out of the frontiers of knowledge. Therefore, Aristotle defines tragedy in its unity. That unity becomes possible by the last *differentia*, being the form of

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[127] *Metaphysics,* VIII, 6, 1045a12.
[128] *Poetics, VIII*, 1451a29.
[129] *Poetics,* VII, 1450 b 38.
[130] *Poetics,* VII, 1451a4.

a tragedy, as the *muthos.* Again, it is obvious that if the last differentia is *muthos,* then it is also the form of a tragedy, enjoying a certain independent existence by which other five constituent parts are actualized. We can derive all of these facts by analyzing what Aristotle said about the nature of definition in detail. There is, therefore, a complete consistency among *Metaphysics* and *Poetics.*

Aristotle also reflects the importance of unity when he compares epic with tragedy. At the first glance, it sounds strange when Aristotle claims that tragedy is prior to epic. However, after understanding the importance of unity in whole Aristotelian corpus, this fact also will become natural. Comparison between tragedy and epic is first started in *Poetics* 5 where Aristotle differentiates two literary genres by the lengths of *muthos* they have along with the different modes these two genres use while imitating.[131]

Naturally, epic imitates through narrating and tragedy uses agents as engaged in action. However, this fact obviously cannot enable someone to declare that tragedy is prior to epic. This problem is discussed in *Poetics 26* where Aristotle commits that a tragedy is much more capable of satisfying its *telos* than an epic.[132] The underlying factor regarding the priority of tragedy over epic lies in the unity of their *muthos.* First of all, we stated that unity of something is an important condition since it determines whether a thing is intelligible or not. Again it is stated that unity of tragedy is due to the unity of *muthos. Muthos* being the definite part of a tragedy opens the possibility of knowledge and science. The tragedy is prior to epic, if it is more unified than epic. For Aristotle tragedy achieves more actuality than epic. In other words, it is nearer to its *telos* than epic; "(…) clearly, then, because it achieves its purpose more effectively than epic, tragedy must be superior".[133]

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[131] *Poetics,* V, 1449 b9.
[132] *Poetics*, XXVI, 1462b15.
[133] Poetics, XXVI, 1462b15.

This factor obviously can make tragedy prior to epic for a philosopher who lives in a completely teleological world. Unified *muthos,* in other words, enables tragedy to have a greater ontological status than epic. The reason of arguing leads to the definition and ontological status of defined object, as it is noted the definition should define an object in its unity. Also we added that the parts of definition coincide with the parts of being. Now it becomes clear that a unified object has the capability of being defined, if this object can be defined then the knowledge about this object becomes possible. Correspondingly, unified objects while being intelligible, they also enjoy higher ontological status. Therefore, it is natural to claim that these unified objects; i.e. a tragedy, are superior to the ones which lack unification:

> Also the epic poets' imitation is less unified (an indication of this is that more than one tragedy comes from any given imitation). So if they treat a unified plot, either the exposition is brief and appears curtailed, or else it adheres to the length of what verse–form and is diluted (I mean, for example, if it comprises a number of actions).[134]

The priority of tragedy over epic, therefore, is justified by the fact that tragedy has more capability to actualize its aim than epic, for it is much more unified and intelligible. Halliwell, on the other hand, finds Aristotle's position as artificial. Although he committed the importance of unity in Aristotelian theory of tragedy, he blames Aristotle for being awkward as Aristotle declares that tragedy is prior to epic.[135] Halliwell finds Aristotle contradictory since Aristotle in the whole *Poetics* praises Homer and just at the end of the treatise he emphasizes on the priority of tragedy.[136] Halliwell's confusion is because he did not regard the importance of unity in whole Aristotelian philosophy. After noticing the close relationship between unity and being in Aristotle's philosophy, we do not have such confusions about the priority of tragedy over epic. This is why we are insisting on the fact that *Poetics* should be read under the principles of Aristotelian philosophy, revealed especially in *Metaphysics.* In order to prevent such

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[134] *Poetics,* XXVI, 1462a26.
[135] Halliwell, p. 183.
[136] Halliwell, p. 183.

confusions, analysis on the text should be carried to the essential principles stated in *Metaphysics.*

Conclusion

By this lengthy chapter we achieved our goals in showing that a tragedy is an *ousia* and *Poetics* should be read under the light of *Metaphysics.* Our inquiry on Aristotle's notion of artifacts shapes our arguments about a tragedy. Tragedy in Aristotelian terms, no doubt, is an artifact and a composite being, composed of matter and form. By relating *Metaphysics* with *Poetics* we succeeded to articulate several causes of tragedy in Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle in *Metaphysics* declares that the knowledge of a thing can only be possible by knowing thing's causes.[137] Therefore, unless we determine the causes of a thing, the knowledge of that thing is impossible. We showed that this principle is completely observed in *Poetics.* Moreover it is necessary, as we stated, to apply this basic principle to *Poetics* in order to determine Aristotle's approach while examining tragedy. Any commentator should be aware of this principle in order to determine either the status of parts of a tragedy or the role of the poet in a tragedy. For the former one, any commentator, unless he understands that Aristotle conceives *muthos* as form, would have great difficulties in explaining the dominance of *muthos* in Aristotle's inquiry. Moreover; if he were not aware of this fact, he would have confusions in understanding Aristotle's theory as a whole. For instance, in our notion of literature, character and style are so important that so many people can think that these elements are those that make a work literary. However, in Aristotelian terms, *muthos* rather than character and style makes it possible for any product to be a perfect literary work. These contrasting approaches generate problems for a commentator in explaining Aristotle's approaches in *Poetics.* Now it becomes much easier to understand why Aristotle

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[137] *Metaphysics*, I, 1, 981b27.

emphasizes such facts by connecting *Poetics* with philosopher's general claims about the principles of being.

In terms of poet's role it is also necessary to refer to *Metaphysics* in order to reach an accurate solution. From *Metaphysics* we understand that a poet is an efficient cause of a tragedy. He is therefore neither the form nor the aim of a tragedy. This object-centered approach is also justified in *Metaphysics.* Clearly, without understanding the foundations of this approach, one can make several mistakes while commenting on the text. Also we mentioned that there is one more defective result unless one can understand the ontological and cognitive priority of object in Aristotelian philosophy, which is about the interpretations of the audience. Unlike some contemporary theories, Aristotle's approach is not concerned about the interpretations of the audience. The aim of a tragedy, thus, is not to generate an accidental condition in the audience, but to actualize itself as an independent being. All of these facts are revealed in this chapter by relating *Poetics* and *Metaphysics.*

We have stated that it is important to understand Aristotle's thoughts about the nature of definition. Aristotle gives a well-ordered definition of a tragedy in *Poetics.* This is especially important in determining the nature of tragedy. It would be guiding to know what Aristotle says about definitions in *Metaphysics* while revealing his approach in *Poetics.* From the nature of definition it is understood while one part that is mentioned in the formal definition of tragedy corresponds to form and others correspond to matter. That means some parts of a tragedy should be determined by one part of it. By this fact it is understood why Aristotle gives excessive importance to *muthos* and why he groups other potential parts around *muthos.* Moreover, the definition of tragedy signifies that Aristotle conceives tragedy as an *ousia* otherwise he cannot give a definition of it. It is also because of this that, a tragedy should be judged by its inner principles rather than by some external criteria emphasized in treatises concerning ethics.

Lastly, the argument we made following from definition is also helpful in removing some confusion of commentators when Aristotle claims that tragedy is superior to epic. The reasons of this argument lie in the Aristotelian ontology and teleology. The actuality of a tragedy puts it on a higher ontological status, which in turn results with a declaration of priority in its relation to epic.

To conclude, it is hoped that our insistence about reading *Poetics* in the light of *Metaphysics* is justified by the arguments in this second chapter. In addition, the approach here in the two complementary chapters formulates a new path for commentators of the text since their aim is to enlighten what Aristotle says about tragedy.

CHAPTER 3

PARTS of TRAGEDY

After having demonstrated that a tragedy is conceived by Aristotle as an *ousia* we will now spread our inquiry to the parts of the tragedy. We shall examine if our results are reflected in the chapters of *Poetics* considering the parts of tragedy other than *muthos*. In the previous sections of this thesis it is argued that the five constituent parts are potentialities. In this chapter, these parts will be examined one by one and investigate if these parts suit to the Aristotle's notion of matter and potentiality as revealed in *Metaphysics*. In addition to these, there will be a separate section concerning catharsis, even if Aristotle does not regard it as a constituent part of tragedy. This is because of the fact that the majority of modern scholarship is concentrated on this concept. In this section we shall try to determine the place of catharsis in Aristotle's inquiry of tragedy. Before examining the five parts of tragedy, we will now refer to *Metaphysics* and shortly exhibit what Aristotle understands from potentiality.

3.1. Matter/Potentiality

Matter, in Aristotle, is a relative concept. This is true since Aristotle's world is hierarchical where matter and form follow each other. For instance, brick is the matter of a wall. However, at the same time it is the form of a mud. Also, if we consider a house as being stones, bricks, and timbers then, we are talking about the matter of a house whereas, if we define the

same house by its function, being a shelter for bodies then, this will be the expression of the form.[138] Leaving aside this relative position of matter, we will now briefly state the meaning of matter in Aristotle's philosophy.

In its most basic sense, potentiality is the power or capacity of one thing to generate a change in another thing. It is also the capacity of one part of a thing to generate a change in other part of the same thing:

> For one kind is a potentiality being acted on, i.e. the principle in the very thing acted on, which makes it for capable of being changed and acted on by another thing or by itself regarded as other (…)[139]

Potentiality, in this sense, is taken as power to produce change. This sense of potentiality is related more with change. There is one more meaning of potentiality emphasized by Aristotle. In order to enlighten this second meaning of potentiality, Aristotle refers to actuality:

> Actuality means the existence of the thing, not in the way which we express by 'potentially'; we say that potentially, for instance, a statue of Hermes is in the block of wood and the half-line in the whole, because it might be separated out, and even the man who is not studying we call a man of science, if he is capable of studying.[140]

This second meaning of potentiality, therefore, focuses on the existence of possibility since a block of wood has the potentiality to become a statue of Hermes. In other words, the possibility of a statue of Hermes exists in the block of wood. Thus, the second meaning of potentiality refers to a possibility of change of state in a thing to become another thing. Potentiality, in this sense, is equalized with matter. By being the matter of a statue of Hermes, a block of wood involves possibility. In this sense, potentiality is defined also as a tendency to become a definite thing.

To conclude this rather short inquiry about the meanings of potentiality we can say that there are generally two meanings of potentiality in Aristotle's philosophy. One refers to the power and capacity of change and the other refers to the possibility of existence as a definite thing.

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[138] *Metaphysics*, VIII, 2, 1043a15.
[139] *Metaphysics*, IX, 1, 1046a11.

Concerning our aims in this thesis, the second meaning of potentiality is more important than the first one. However, if needed, we will also refer back to the first meaning of potentiality. For now, we shall start our inquiry concerning the parts of tragedy.

3.2. Character/ Ethos

It is important to find the real place of character in Aristotelian theory of tragedy, since this is what so many modern scholars misunderstood. For instance, Halliwell declared that character in a tragedy is essentially determined by standards Aristotle puts in his ethical treatises.[141] However, in a tragedy, character, not essentially but only generally, is determined by *muthos*.

First of all, if Aristotle had judged character in a tragedy by his ethical philosophy*,* he would have been arguing that these characters should be morally excellent. On the contrary, Aristotle argues that the characters in a tragedy should be "intermediate" for otherwise tragedy cannot generate the deserved effect: "We are left, therefore, with the person intermediate between these. This is the sort of person who is not outstanding in moral excellence of justice (…)"[142]

In contrast to intermediate characters, Aristotle, in his two *Ethics,* searches for ethically perfect man. In *Poetics*, however, he seeks to find the best character not in life but in a tragedy. By the best character, he understands the one who suits most to the *muthos.* Therefore, in life, we cannot find tragic characters. We only find them in tragedies since what makes them tragic is the *muthos*. That is the reason why Aristotle explicitly claims that character is not the purpose of a tragedy: "So the imitation of

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[140] *Metaphysics*, IX, 6, 1048a30.
[141] Halliwell, p. 140.
[142] *Poetics,* XIII, 1453a9.

character is not the purpose of what the agents do; character is included along with and on account of the actions."[143]

Several features of action actualize characters in a tragedy. These features are reversals (*peripeteia*), recognitions (a*nagnorisis*) and error (h*amartia*) by which several aspects of character are enlightened.

Either reversal or the error is not a sign of ethical decay of a character. They are rather the parts of action included in *muthos*. The error is not a defective result of a character's deficiency of moral state. In other words, in a tragedy, in contrast to life, characters are not responsible for their choices since they are not the principles of their actions. Character obviously makes some choices, however these preferences are made according to *muthos* to prepare the desired results in tragedy: "on the other hand, the change to bad fortune which he undergoes is not due to any moral defect or depravity, but to an error of some kind."[144]

The error in a tragedy is a part of *muthos* caused by a choice of a character that is not similar to one in life. In life, character is the principle of his actions and his actions are made through consideration and deliberation. In a tragedy, character is not the principle of his actions but the actions and *muthos* determines the character.

> Now, we all admit that of acts that are voluntary and done from the choice of each man he is the cause, but of involuntary acts he is not himself the cause; and all that he does from choice he clearly does voluntarily. It is clear then that excellence and badness have to with voluntary acts.[145]

In a tragedy character is not the cause of his actions but on the contrary, his deeds are shaped by the action itself. Therefore we cannot call character's actions as voluntary actions in a tragedy and hence, cannot call his actions as ethical actions. Moreover, for the second remark we made considering characters in a tragedy, they simply do not choose in

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[143] *Poetics,* VI, 1450a20.
[144] *Poetics,* XIII, 1453a9.
[145] *Eudemian Ethics,* II, 6, 1223a15.

accordance with consideration and deliberation. They are, on the contrary, guided by the action itself. This is because of this reason that we cannot call choices in tragedy ethical choices since consideration and deliberation are necessary conditions for an ethical action:

> For choice is not simply picking but picking one thing before another; and this is impossible without consideration and deliberation; therefore choice arises out of deliberate opinion.[146]

On the contrary, characters in a tragedy act without consideration and deliberation since they usually act in ignorance. This is the reason why Aristotle accepts ignorant actions of characters in a tragedy, the ones that he cannot approve in life:

> Necessarily the agents must either act or not act, either knowingly or in ignorance. Of these, being on the verge of acting wittingly and not doing so is worst; this is disgusting, and is not tragic since there is no suffering.[147]

Therefore it is clear that there are differences between tragic action and ethical action since ethical actions focus on the agent and tragic actions focus on *muthos*. Now, we can conclude that, characters, as the actions in life do not determine actions in a tragedy. Hence, it is also impossible to accept Halliwell who claimed that characters are essentially determined by the merits Aristotle puts in his two *Ethics*.[148]

Characters in Aristotle's theory of tragedy are potential elements of tragedy waiting there to be actualized by action, that is, by *muthos*. As it is mentioned earlier, by being potential elements, they only exist contingently rather than necessarily. The only necessary part of a tragedy is the *muthos,* which is the form of a tragedy, working as a formal-final cause on the potential elements. Aristotle explicitly emphasizes this fact: "Furthermore, there could not be a tragedy without action, but there could one without character." [149]

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[146] *Eudemian Ethics,* II,10, 1226b6.
[147] *Poetics,* XIV, 1453b36.
[148] Halliwell, p. 140.
[149] *Poetics,* VI, 1450a24.

This clearly shows us that characters in a tragedy are only potentialities rather than being necessary elements in a tragedy. Characters involve "possibility" to become tragic, however; they are not tragic by themselves. Only way for a character to become a tragic figure is to be involved in tragic action and to *muthos*. Moreover they are determined by ethical merits only generally but not essentially. That means, they should be "intermediate" in terms of moral status. However, this does not mean that they can be judged by ethical values since their actions are not based on their deliberative choices. Besides, if it is true that a character is a potential element of tragedy, then this remark will also be valid for other parts of tragedy since there can be, by definition, only one form concerning a composite being. In the previous parts we showed that only *muthos* deserves to be the form of a tragedy, which fits perfectly well into, the explanations made by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*. Now we observe that character is also fitting to those explanations made in *Metaphysics* about potentiality. It is therefore necessary to examine the basic principles as they are revealed in *Metaphysics* before commenting on *Poetics*. Aristotle's important concepts are implicitly included in *Poetics* and he is completely consistent with what he says in *Metaphysics*. We shall now examine shortly the other parts of tragedy.

3.3. Thought:

Thought is a part of the tragedy which Aristotle does not give so much attention. He assigns this part of tragedy to *Rhetoric.*[150] A character in a tragedy, through language transmits his thoughts. Therefore, thought in a tragedy has connections with character. However, thought in Aristotle's theory of tragedy, necessarily is bounded to *muthos*. Thought is not the thought of a poet but rather it is determined by *muthos:*

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[150] *Poetics,* IX, 1456a37.

Third is reasoning. This is the ability to say what is implicit in a situation and appropriate to it, which in prose is the function of the arts of statesmanship and of rhetoric.[151]

Clearly, poet should not defense his thoughts in a tragedy but rather he should arrange them in a way that they can suit perfectly to the *muthos.* Therefore, while making the *muthos,* poet also organizes thoughts appropriately. These appropriate thoughts are not the beliefs of the poet, on the other hand, they, like the characters, arranged in accordance with the situations. As Halliwell noted, there is therefore a strong poetic impersonality in Aristotle's theory of tragedy.[152] Aristotle emphasizes Homer to reveal poetic impersonality in *Poetics* 3.[153] The reason that Aristotle reduces poet's authority on thoughts is to show that *muthos* is the principle part of a tragedy which plays a central role in determining the other five constituent parts. We also find the poetic impersonality in Plato's *Republic*.[154] However, Aristotle uses this idea to stress the importance of structural design in a tragedy. Moreover, in contrast to Plato's argument in *Ion,* in Aristotelian theory, poet is not the only authority to determine the thoughts in a tragedy.[155] In other words, poet does not determine the thoughts in a tragedy in a unilateral way, whereas Plato gives this determining authority completely to poet.[156] Therefore, Aristotle replies the objections considering thought by saying that these thoughts are not the poet's thoughts but rather they are arranged in accordance with *muthos:*

When he says that some people make unreasonable prior assumptions and then, although the adverse verdict is one they have reached by themselves, they make inferences from it and if anything contradicts their own ideas they criticize the poet as if *he* had expressed *their* opinion. [157]

Clearly then, one should not judge a poet because of the ideas in a tragedy since they are the thoughts of characters which are shaped by the relative situations. Thought, therefore, is a potential part of a tragedy that

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[151] *Poetics,* VI, 1450b5.
[152] Halliwell, p. 36.
[153] *Poetics,*III,1448a 19.
[154] *Republic*, III,392-6.
[155] *Ion,* 530c.
[156] *Ion,* 530c.

becomes actualized by *muthos*. One cannot judge the thoughts themselves but rather he can only judge the appropriateness of these thoughts to *muthos.*

We stated that Aristotle appoints thought to *Rhetoric.*[158] This is also an indication that thought is not a necessary part of a tragedy. It is neither the form nor the *telos* of a tragedy. It is rather the subject of *Rhetoric* that should be applied to tragedy in accordance with *muthos.* There is, therefore, a difference between thoughts in a rhetorical action and in a tragic action. Tragic action focuses on the tragedy itself while rhetorical action focuses on the audience. *Telos* of each action therefore diverge. This fact is perfectly emphasized by Husain:

> Rhetorical action is patient-centered, because it is defined in terms of its causal effect on the audience, which is its patient in the general categorial sense of being causally affected (*paschein).* The causality involved is transeunt efficient causality, and the effect produced is a new accidental condition (*a pistis)* in an already exiting natural *ousia* (or rather *ousiai).*[159]

Contrary to rhetorical action, the *telos* of tragic action is not to produce an accidental condition in an already existing *ousiai* but rather to produce an artifact that is a new *ousia.* In other words, rhetorical action focuses on the patient and tries to produce an accidental condition on the audience. On the other hand, tragic action focuses on the object and aims to actualize its product as a separate *ousia.*[160]

This difference between two actions is crucial since it signifies that a tragedy cannot be judged by the standards that are emphasized by Aristotle in *Rhetoric.*[161] Tragedy should not be judged in terms of rhetorical standards first because of the fact that thought is not a necessary element in a tragedy and second, there is a crucial difference between tragic and

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[157] *Poetics,* XXV, 1461b1*.*
[158] *Poetics,* IX, 1456a37*.*
[159] Husain, p. 91.
[160] Husain, p. 98.
[161] these standards considering thought and style are given in *Rhetoric*, III, chs. 1-12.

rhetorical action. On the contrary a tragedy should be judged in terms of its intrinsic values revealed in *Poetics.*

To conclude, thought in a tragedy is a potential part that would be actualized by *muthos* therefore it is not a criterion by which one can judge a tragedy. Hence, Aristotle's notion of potentiality is perfectly reflected in his remarks on thought in a tragedy.

3.4. Style and Lyric Poetry:

On the contrary to modern conception of literature, Aristotle does not give much importance to style. He does not expect a perfect language from poets. Like the other parts (character, thought) style is standing in a secondary status. There are justifications for this since Aristotle concentrates on *muthos* repeatedly and conceives tragedy as an independent object.

Explicitly Aristotle appoints style to the art of performance.[162] This is very natural since he conceives poet as the maker of plot structures. Poet, therefore, is responsible for the form of a tragedy and is responsible for using other five material parts as good as possible so that they can form a unity. A poet is not the one who uses language perfectly, but he is the one who makes a tragedy structurally well composed by which it can stand as an independent object in unity. This is the reason that Aristotle excludes style in responsibilities of a poet and attains this feature of tragedy to the art of performance:

> As for diction, one kind of enquiry is into the forms of utterance; knowledge of these belongs to the art of performance and to the person who has that kind of expert knowledge – e.g. what is a command, prayer, narrative, threat, question, answer, and anything else of that kind.[163]

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[162] *Poetics,* XIX, 1456b13.
[163] *Poetics,* XIX, 1460b16.

This is why a tragedy cannot be judged by the criteria of style. A tragedy can only be judged by its *telos* and form, hence by its principle, which is *muthos:* "Knowledge or ignorance of these matters does not give rise to any criticism relevant to the art of poetry that is actually worth taking seriously."[164] Again we observe the fact that Aristotle conceives style as a potential part. The form-matter constitution of *ousia* is implicit in *Poetics.* Moreover, it is hard to understand the attitude of Aristotle towards style since this attitude is somehow alien to our understanding of literature. However, as we mentioned, the principles revealed in *Metaphysics* colours the structure and content of *Poetics.* As we know from *Poetics* 25 that a poet can make errors either essentially or incidentally.[165] Now, his mistakes considering the potential parts are the incidental errors. On the other hand, his mistakes about the form of a tragedy are the intrinsic errors. This is why Aristotle replies criticisms based on style, character and thought by saying that these criticisms are not valid since they do not constitute a criticism of the principles of the art of tragedy.[166] Tragedy therefore, should be judged by its intrinsic values that are generated by the form, the *muthos,* as the principle and definite element in a tragedy.

All that we said about the style in a tragedy is also perfectly applicable to lyric poetry since this part of tragedy is also a potential element that cannot be accounted by it but rather by its relative position to *muthos* again by which it becomes actualized. Thus chorus should also be shaped by *muthos* in a way that enables a tragedy to stand in unity:

> One should handle the chorus as one of the actors; it should be part of the whole and should contribute to the performance – not as in Euripides, but as in Sophocles."[167]

A tragedy is a representation of action in which potential parts should form a coherent and unified object. *Muthos* stands in the centre of this structure by being the form of a tragedy that actualizes what is potential. So

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[164] *Poetics,* XIX, 1456b23.
[165] *Poetics,* XXV, 1456b18.
[166] *Poetics,* XXV, 1460b25.

"part of the whole" means in above passage that chorus should be arranged in accordance with the *muthos.* That is why Aristotle criticizes some poets who do not arrange their songs in a compatible way with *muthos:*

> In the other poets the songs have no more to do with the plot than they do with any other play; this is the reason why they sing interludes. This is a practice which Agathon was the first to start; but what is the difference between singing interludes and transferring a speech or a whole episode from one play into another?[168]

This criticism is based on an intrinsic value of a tragedy since it questions a potential part of a tragedy in its relation with *muthos*. The formal element in a tragedy that makes it intelligible generates the substratum of criticism. It is not the potential elements themselves that constitute a base for a criticism. A tragedy is like a living organism with its own nature in which form is included as a definite part and by which an inquiry should be carried. Again therefore, Aristotle's general understanding on the nature of *ousia* as revealed in *Metaphysics* is completely consistent with his inquiry in *Poetics.* Moreover, his thoughts in *Metaphysics* shape both the structure and content of his inquiry on tragedy. Thus, one should read *Poetics* in the light of *Metaphysics* in order to understand Aristotle's theory of tragedy since this will help to reveal the reasons of the arguments Aristotle makes in *Poetics.*

3.5. Spectacle

Spectacle is the least important element in Aristotle's evaluation of poetic elements. Aristotle in *Poetics* 14 explicitly emphasizes that spectacle is external to the art of tragedy.[169] This is rather interesting for a modern reader since he/she would think that spectacle is a necessary element in a tragedy. However, again Aristotle focuses solely on *muthos* and claims that the effects of tragedy can be satisfied by structure of events itself:

> It is possible for the evocation of fear and pity to result from the spectacle, and also from the structure of the events itself. The latter is preferable and is the mark of a better poet. The plot should be constructed in such a way that, even

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[167] *Poetics,* XVIII, 1456a28.
[168] *Poetics,* XVIII, 1456a30.
[169] *Poetics,* XIV, 1453b5.

without seeing it, anyone who hears the events which occur shudders and feels pity at what happens (…)[170]

Obviously then, spectacle is not a necessary element in a tragedy. It has also nothing to do with the effect of a tragedy since this effect can be satisfied by the organization of the events. As a "possibility", spectacle stands there to arise emotions like pity and fear; however, it does not determine the arousal of such emotions. This role is given necessarily to *muthos*. Aristotle's notion of potentiality fits perfectly to spectacle. In other words, spectacle is a potential part of a tragedy that is not needed by "better" poets. The better poets are those who organize events in such a way that their tragedies would not need to be seen in a stage. Hence, *muthos* again plays a central role because it is conceptualized by Aristotle as the form of a tragedy analogous to soul of a living animal. It is essentially prior to other five potential parts that are the possibilities that can be employed by *muthos*. Any judgment on a tragedy should therefore be made in accordance with this remark. One should not judge potential parts of a tragedy on behalf of themselves since they do not have the capability to produce a tragedy. Rather they become a 'this' by necessary involvement of the form that is *muthos.*

3.6. Catharsis:

Even if catharsis is not involved in the parts of tragedy, we shall emphasize some important notes on it since so many scholars argued that it is the *telos* of a tragedy.[171]

First of all, Aristotle stated explicitly that the purpose of a tragedy is the *muthos* in *Poetics* 6: "So the events, i.e. the plot, are what tragedy is there for, and that is the most important thing of all."[172]

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[170] *Poetics,* XIV, 1453b1.
[171] For instance, such views are stated in Janko's article on catharsis, pp. 346; also in Rorty's article considering psychology of Aristotelian tragedy, pp. 16; also in Kosman's article on *mimesis*, pp. 51, VII, and lastly in Freeland's article, pp. 122.
[172] *Poetics,* VI, 1450a21.

We showed in the previous parts of this thesis that there can only be one form and one *telos* for an individual object. In the above passage, Aristotle attributes *muthos* as the purpose of a tragedy. Therefore a tragedy is not for the sake of generating an accidental condition in audience but for the sake of actualizing itself by means of *muthos*. The organization of events is most important for the art of tragedy. By this organization, a catharsis can be formed in the audience. Catharsis, therefore, is the natural outcome of a tragedy; however, it is neither the aim nor the form of a tragedy.

Second, there is no indication that we have to judge a tragedy by means of its effects on the audience. On the contrary Aristotle repeatedly argues that a tragedy should be judged by its intrinsic values. These values are stated in the whole treatise in which *muthos* is taken to be the major criteria for all criticisms. If catharsis is the aim of a tragedy, then a tragedy must be inquired through catharsis. In other words, catharsis, in this respect, will be the defining factor by which all other parts are determined. However, as we showed in the previous parts, Aristotle gives this role to *muthos*.

Also in the first chapter we said that there is a difference between useful and artistic *techne.* Useful *techne* is the one that tries to generate an accidental condition in an already existing *ousia* whereas; artistic *techne* produces a new *ousia* with a representational content. Now, if catharsis would be the aim of a tragedy then tragic *techne* must be a useful *techne* since catharsis is an accidental condition in an already existing *ousia*. However, it is impossible to argue that tragic *techne* is a useful *techne* as it is differentiated from useful *techne* by its representational content. Tragic *techne* is obviously a subdivision of artistic *techne* that aims to produce a new *ousia*. From this we can argue that catharsis cannot be the aim of a tragedy.

Finally, as we showed, Aristotle tries to find similarities between living organisms and a tragedy. He builds up an analogy between the souls of a living organism with the *muthos* of a tragedy.[173] This indicates that *muthos* is the form a tragedy. Now, in addition to that, Aristotle in *Poetics* 4 also implicitly builds up an analogy between a natural *ousia* and a tragedy where we can understand that catharsis cannot be the aim of a tragedy:

> Then tragedy was gradually enhanced as people developed each new aspect of it that came to light. After undergoing many transformations tragedy came to rest, because it had attained its natural state.[174]

Tragedy stopped itself because it attained its *telos* so it is clear that tragedy's ultimate aim is to actualize itself rather than generating an accidental condition in an already existing *ousia.* Tragedy by "undergoing many transformations", becomes an individual *ousia,* therefore it stopped itself. Hence, Aristotle's general teleology is reflected in this passage where the *telos* of a tragedy is stated as the actualization of its own being. Tragedy is an individual being with the inner constitution of matter and form analogous to living organism.

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[173] *Poetics,*VI, 1450a39.
[174] *Poetics,* IV, 1449a13.

CONCLUSION

Halliwell claims that *Poetics* raised more questions than it satisfactorily answers in the Introduction of his translation and commentary. [175] This thesis was an endeavor to show that Aristotle answered most of the questions satisfactorily, the questions that are found so complicated and insoluble by many of the modern scholars. The reason that they found these questions insoluble is because they have insufficiently taken into account the whole Aristotelian corpus and especially *Metaphysics*, since so many aspects of Aristotle's inquiry are shaped and enlightened by principles which are stated in *Metaphysics.*

Examining Aristotle's general understanding of science largely revealed in Metaphysics VI solves the first question that is about the location of individual tragedies in Aristotle's theory of tragedy. We dealt with this problem in the first chapter of this thesis where we stated that Aristotle's approach to science is clearly a realistic one. Science deals with universals embedded in individuals and the principles of knowledge are not external to individual beings. Thus science can understand individuals by examining their forms and it finds what is necessary in these individuals. By finding these non-changing principles it enlightens a part of reality, correspondingly by pointing out a necessary element in a tragedy, it becomes possible to reach a final universal theory of tragedy.

In addition to these, by examining the division of sciences we managed to state *Poetics* in whole Aristotelian corpus. This is very

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[175] Halliwell, p. 15.

important since it shows that *Poetics* is an individual treatise with its own subject matter. Therefore, *Poetics* is neither a part of *Ethics* nor *Rhetoric* but it enjoys a certain type of independency with its own subject matter and accordingly it becomes obvious that *Poetics* is not to be necessarily revealed by *Ethics* and *Rhetoric.* In addition to these if *Poetics* is an individual treatise, we showed that, it must deal with an independent *ousia* from which we understand that Aristotle understands a tragedy as an ousia. *Poetics* is dealing with artifacts that are produced by artistic *techne.* As we stated, Aristotle in Metaphysics displays the ultimate principles of *ousia*. Therefore, every science, since they are dealing with beings rather than non-beings, has necessary relationship with *Metaphysics* and *Poetics* in this structure is not an exception that means that it also has necessary relationship with *Metaphysics.*

Although we stated these facts about *Poetics,* we do not enlighten this necessary relationship till the second chapter where we examine the reflections of the relationships between the two treatises. In this rather lengthy chapter we first explained the general components and nature of *ousia* by examining several passages in *Metaphysics.* Afterwards we stated that only *muthos* deserves to be the form of a tragedy and we gave justifications for this. In the first place, we observed that *muthos* plays a central role in *Poetics* by which other parts of tragedy is determined. We knew from *Metaphysics* that only form could be an element that actualizes the matter; therefore the formal cause of a tragedy has to be *muthos* since it perfectly suits what is said in *Metaphysics* considering form. Moreover, Aristotle's analogy between souls of living animal with *muthos* notably justifies this position.

We also examined the nature of definition from *Metaphysics* and observed that this also justifies our claim that *muthos* is the form of a tragedy. All definitions are necessarily the definitions of composite *ousiai* where matter and form correspond to genus and species. A tragedy, having

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its own definition, is obviously a composite *ousia* in which form corresponds to *muthos* and matter corresponds to other five parts of a tragedy. Both the technical constitution of definition of a tragedy and the evaluation Aristotle makes in *Poetics 6* justified that the form of a tragedy is *muthos*. Therefore, a tragedy is an *ousia* with its own nature composed of matter and form, analogous to a living organism. Furthermore we stated that definition should define an object in its unity and its form enables the unity of any *ousia*. This was as well the case with respect to tragedy that is unified by *muthos.*

Lastly, in the third chapter we examined the five parts of a tragedy and showed that they are potentialities incapable of generating a tragedy only by them. The passages considering these parts clearly signify that Aristotle's statements about the nature of *ousia* are also reflected in *Poetics.*

These remarks solved the questions that are found insoluble by some commentators of the text. First of all, by applying the general principles of being which are stated in *Metaphysics,* we managed to explain the dominance of *muthos* in Aristotle's inquiry. When we consider *muthos* as form, it becomes so natural that it plays such a role in *Poetics,* since form is the definite, intelligible and defining element in Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle clearly aims to understand a tragedy and naturally he focuses on *muthos* in this aim.

Secondly, although we pay much attention on poet in modern literature by giving all power in creating artifacts, Aristotle's position is not similar to ours. Poet in Aristotle's philosophy is only the efficient cause who should compose by taking into consideration the inner principles of a tragedy. In other words, he does not create unilaterally without noticing the nature of what he creates. The role of poet is understood by examining the arguments of Aristotle about causes in *Metaphysics.* In other words, without

taking into consideration the facts stated in *Metaphysics* one could hardly understand why Aristotle gives little attention to poet in *Poetics.*

Lastly, without considering the explanations that are made in *Metaphysics* about the unity of object one could face problems in determining why Aristotle gives superiority of tragedy over epic. The unity level of a tragedy is more than the unity level of epic since epic has an episodic structure. We know, from *Metaphysics* that only things which are in unity are capable of being defined and the definition is quite necessary in terms of intelligibility of these things. Therefore a tragedy is much more definite than epic and thus much more intelligible than epic. Now, if it is much more intelligible than epic then it deserves to be in a higher ontological level than epic. It is because of this reason Aristotle declares that a tragedy is superior to epic since nothing can be more important than the ontological level of *ousia* in Aristotle's philosophy.

Now, if all these remarks would not be considered by any scholar, then there could be so many problems while commenting on the text. First of all, one cannot determine the right place of *Poetics* in the whole Aristotelian corpus that results in having problems regarding to clarify the real subject matter *Poetics*. Obviously, then he/she will fall in the worst category mistake by thinking *Poetics* as being a subdivision of *Ethics* or *Rhetoric*. It is odd to repeat that Aristotle's aim in *Poetics* is to break the strong ties of ethics that limit the tragedy as he repeatedly argues that a tragedy should be judged by its intrinsic values rather than ethical merits. He separates the tragic action with ethical action implicitly to show that a tragedy has its own nature by which it has to be judged. He himself does not make any ethical judgments on a tragedy whereas in the whole treatise he searches for the criteria to evaluate a tragedy. This is also applicable to *Rhetoric*, which works as a useful *techne* aimed to generate an accidental condition on the audience, in contrast to *Poetics* where Aristotle does not take heed of the judgments of audience and focuses on the object itself.

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As a conclusion, both Aristotle's approach and methodology, and both, Poetics' structure and content are formed by the principles revealed in *Metaphysics* which has to be necessarily taken into account if a reliable commentary on the text is deserved.

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

aporia (aporiai, aporetic): difficulty

arche (archai): principle, beginning

ousia (ousiai): substance, essence

dynamis: potentiality

ethos (ethe): moral character

eidos (eide): form,formal cause

energeia: actuality

episteme (epistemai): science

ergon: work, function

hyle: matter, material cause

katharsis: clarification

lexis: language, delivery

logos: language, speech, account, definition, formula

mimesis: imitation, representation

muthos (muthoi): plot-structure, story

pathos: action, event, emotion

poiesis (poiein, poietes, poietike): making, poetry

praxis: action, act

physis: nature

psyche: soul

rhetor: public speaker

techne: craft

telos: end, purpose, aim, final cause