

Poetics gaat over de vraag 'wat is een kunstwerk?' en werkt dat uit door een analyse van wat je zou kunnen zien als het antieke 'Gesamtkunstwerk': de Tragedie.

[spraak, dans, muziek, zang, beeldend werk in maskers en decors, ...]

Kunstwerken vallen onder de 'zijnden' (ta onta), komen niet spontaan uit de natuur voort (phusikos), maar zijn menselijke maakzels ('artificials', techne), die niet bedoeld zijn als gebruiksvoorwerpen, maar om uitdrukking te geven aan het menselijk karakter, hartstochten en handelen.

τεχνη

art or craft, i.e. a set of rules, system or method of making or doing, whether of the useful arts, or of the fine arts

μίμησις

imitation (mimesis 1), representation (mimesis 2)

mimesis 1 both in useful and fine arts

mimesis 2 only in fine arts (?)

[anthropocentric paradox of nonrepresentative art]

Tragedy consists of:

μυθος (as end (τέλος) of a tragedy)

plot, the imitation of an action [and life] (πράξεώς [και βίου] μίμησις)

the proper structure [composition, constitution] of the Plot (σύστασιν των πραγμάτων)

ηθος

nature, disposition, character

ascribed to the artist, the artwork (incl performers) and the recipients

Thought (διάνοια)

Diction (λέξις)

Song (μελοποιία)

Spectacle (οψις)

Martha Husain, *Ontology and the Art of Tragedy. An Approach to Aristotle's Poetics* 2002

link download boektekst:

<http://archive.org/details/OntologyAndArtOfTragedyAnApproachToAristotlesPoetics>

hinkstapsprong door de tekst:

My guiding heuristic principle is von Trendelenburg's celebrated

dictum: *Aristoteles ex Aristotele* [read A in the context of his philosophy].

The study embodies a proposal to read

the *Poetics* as having a distinctive subject matter of its own, whose location

in the *corpus* is such that it should be read principally in the light of

the *Metaphysics* rather than of the *Ethics-Politics* or *Rhetoric*.

Chapter 1 sets out the author's approach to the *corpus* as a systematic

doctrinal whole, marked as Aristotelian by a core of pervasive

substantivemethodological

conceptual constants. These are: the concept of being, the categories of being, the categorial priority of *ousia*, immanent causal formmatter constitution in the category of *ousia*, and the ontological and cognitive priority of the object. These comprise Aristotle's distinctive philosophy of being, as primarily elucidated in the *Metaphysics*. The *Poetics* is to be read in this context.

Chapter 2 locates the subject matter of the *Poetics* within this distinctive philosophy of being by gradual adumbration, successively narrowing it down from the full extension of being (*panta ta onta*), through the craft-nature disjunction, the artistic craft–useful craft disjunction, the literary arts–visual arts disjunction, to the tragic literary art.

Chapter 3 shows that Aristotle conceptualizes a tragedy in terms of his distinctive philosophy of being, because the pervasive substantivemethodological conceptual constants are either explicitly or implicitly [mostly...] present in the text of the *Poetics*. The chapter distinguishes and evaluates different kinds of direct and indirect textual evidence and concludes that Aristotle understands a tragedy as a *synolon*, a composite being in the category of *ousia*, with all that that entails for him.

Chapter 4 contrasts tragic, ethical, and rhetorical action in terms of the *synolon*, on which each one is centered. Tragic action in the *Poetics* is object-centered on the tragedy, ethical action in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is agent-centered on the ethical agent, rhetorical action in the *Rhetoric* is patient-centered on the audience. The three modes of centering are mutually exclusive, from which it follows that the *Poetics* cannot be read either in the light of the *Ethics* or of the *Rhetoric*. It must instead be read in the light of the *Metaphysics*, which sets out the object-centered structure of natural and man-made *ousiai*.

Aristotle's *Poetics* is well integrated into, and consistent with, his distinctive philosophy of being. A tragedy is categorized and defined as an *ousia* with an intrinsic definitory nature of its own, hence *katharsis* in the formal definition cannot be in the tertiary category of *pros ti*. Two distinct *mimetic* levels (*mimesis* 1 and *mimesis* 2, respectively) connect a tragedy with nature and with human life. The tragic (*to*

tragikon) is art-specific for Aristotle, it is the specific nature of a tragedy (*tragike mimesis*), and the *mythos* functions as its compositional principle or “soul.”

handelen (praxis in politiek en ethiek) verschilt van produceren/maken (poiein, poiesis, *techne*); *techne* can produce *ousiai*

the relation between *physis* and *techne* is *mimesis*: All *techne* imitates *physis*.
mimesis is not epistemic *logos*

Techne-Physis (Mimesis 1 - useful (*chresimon*) *techne*)

Aristotelian *techne* imitates the methods and processes of *physis* rather than the descriptive content of the products of *physis* – while Platonic *techne* imitates the descriptive content of the products of *physis*. Therefore, the products of *techne* are not copies of natural things for Aristotle—while they are copies for Plato. A painting of a bed is a *painting* for Aristotle—while it is a *bed* for Plato.

This stunning difference is due to the fact that Aristotle’s notion of *mimesis* is much more restricted than, and lacks the pejorative overtones of, that of Plato.

Mimesis relates *physis* and *techne* asymmetrically, since *techne* imitates *physis*, never *physis techne*.

Aristotle discusses *mimesis* most extensively in *Physics* II, though there are scattered remarks in other texts. *Mimesis* means that *physis* and *techne* are similar in terms of the methods and processes by which they bring their respective products into being.

Techne imitates *physis* (also prescriptive force): in order to produce what is good (*agathon*) and the end (*telos*) of all coming to be (*geneseos*) and change (*kineseos*) (*Met.* I 983a31-32).

the good of each thing is simply to be itself as a viable normal individual of its kind (..) the form as determinant actualizes and makes determinate the matter which as potentiality is determinable (..) both *physis* and *techne* must follow the same ordered stages in the process of production (..)

Aristotle’s general notion of *mimesis* might well be called constitutive or structural *mimesis*, because it grounds the constitutive and structural similarity of the things that are and come about by nature and by *techne*,

the analogy of *physis* and *techne*.

Artistic *Techne* (*Mimesis* 2)

all and only works of art have representational content

I propose to designate the more general notion as *mimesis* 1 and the more restricted notion as *mimesis* 2, characterizing the former as constitutive or structural and the latter as representational. While *mimesis* 1 imitates the constitutive functioning of a natural *eidos* in relation to its matter, *mimesis* 2 imitates its descriptive content, such as being a man or an action or an emotion, etc.

two different sorts of metaphysical *logos*, the first functional and the second definitional. A functional *logos* is an account of an *ousia*'s intrinsic form-matter (actuality-potentiality) constitution. A definitional *logos* is an account of the descriptive content of an *ousia*'s substantial nature (*eidos*), listing genus and differentia and is a recurrent theme.

tree schema:

		all beings (<i>panta ta onta</i>)	
		<i>techne</i> (<i>mimesis</i> 1)	<i>physis</i>
artistic <i>techne</i> (<i>mimesis</i> 2)		useful <i>techne</i>	
poetical <i>techne</i>		nonpoetical <i>techne</i> (nonverbal)	
tragic <i>techne</i>		nontragic <i>techne</i>	

a tragedy is not the imitation of a tragic action but the tragic imitation (*tragiki mimesis*) of an action – a tragedy is a new substantial being (*ousia*)

The house and the tragedy are ontologically independent (*choriston*) from an owner and from a recipient (..)

The products of *techne* that have the categorial status of an *ousia* emancipate themselves both from their makers and from their recipients. As a result they are definable in their own being (*haplos*) independently of either, and they can be self-referential, self-significant, and self-worthy.

If a tragedy is an *ousia*, the *Poetics* has to be read principally in the light of the *Metaphysics* and only secondarily in the light of the *Rhetoric* and of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (with the *Politics* in the background of either).

Levels within the Poetics

First level: *ousia*

Second and third level: *mimesis* 1 & *mimesis* 2

A tragedy has to be understood as a product of *techné*.

That means that in its own being it relates to the products of nature in terms of structural or constitutive imitation (*mimesis* 1), which is the basis of analogy.

life is focused on an individual person

(*peri hēna*) but art on an individual action (*peri mian praxin*). The action functions as the tragedy's compositional principle, which Aristotle expresses by calling it the tragedy's final cause (*telos*) and *arche*.

mimesis 2 is the definitory generic nature of all works of art.

An *aporia* is the relationship of *mimesis* 1 and *mimesis* 2.

For a tragedy must imitate nature both structurally-constitutively and representationally, it must imitate both the inner constitution and *ousia*-hood of a living animal and the descriptive content of human life.

How can a copy be an original? How can an artist be an imitator in his generic definition (*mimētes*) and yet a maker (*poiētes*)? Yet the formula *poiētes mimētes* pervades the *Poetics* as a foundational conceptualization.

art is [has to be] realistic. *Poiētes* refers to what he [the artist] may and must do within these parameters, *mimētes* refers to the parameters themselves.

Mimesis 2 is a relationship between two *onta*, while *logoi* relate to *onta* by correspondence. This is why *logoi* can be true or false, but *onta* cannot.

an ethical action is derivative from the agent functionally, categorially, and in descriptive content, while a tragic action is not.

In ethical living, actions are in character both ethically and noetically from the perspective of the agent as *arche*. In a tragedy,

the action must still be in character ethically and noetically (*toi poioi ta poia atta symbainei legein e prattein kata to eikos e to anankaion*; *Poetics* 9.1451b6–10)—but from the perspective of the action as *arche*. “Being in character” remains under the reversal of perspective.

My polemical contribution to the mirror-of-life didactic exegesis is the reminder that Aristotle differs from Plato. A good painting of a bed is not an ontologically third-rate *bed* but an ontologically first-rate *painting*. an artistic object is not a teaching aid, it has a definitory artistic nature of its own, its own integral being and *ousia*-hood.

Rhetorical action is patient[audience]-centered

Tragic action is object-centered

A work of art has an intrinsic definitory *telos*, an intrinsic standard of excellence, and it is a self-referential, self-significant, and self-worthy analogue of a living animal.

My polemical contribution

to the *Poetics-Rhetoric* debate is, in short, that object- and patientcentering are strongly mutually exclusive, so that a tragedy as a whole must be definitorily one or the other, but not both. And it is the former definitorily, the latter only accidentally.

conclusion

The three modes of centering (agent, patient, object) are ways in which Aristotle’s world is ordered. Both constitutive principles (*archai*) and accidents (*symbebekota*) must be centered on *synola*, individual entitative *ousiai*, since neither can be separately and independently. His recognition of three different modes of *ousia*-centering gives his worldorder a richly differentiated texture and integrates human agency into it.

ethical actions – agent-centered

rhetorical actions – patient[audience]-centered

tragic actions – object-centered

The *Poetics* emerges as a text that understands art as object-centered, as definitorily centered on the work of art itself. Its subordination of both human agency and patiency to the tragedy itself as the focus of prescriptivity allows works of art to take their place as genuine substantial beings, *ousiai*, alongside those that nature produces.

It is *mimesis* 2 which gives the adjective “artistic” conceptual content.

That conceptual content lies in the objects of imitation (*mimesis* 2):

praxis, ethe, dianoia. They provide the generic descriptive qualitative content of works of art, analogously to animal (*zoon*) for human beings.

In the sense that we today

rightly consider it a desideratum for a theory of art to encompass both representational and nonrepresentational works, Aristotle’s theory is dated. *Mimesis* 2 ties art thematically to human life, which we would find intolerably restrictive.

Kandinsky’s theory of art is able to preserve all three functions at that level, by giving the painterly means or materials definitory significance, so that the content of art is art for representational and nonrepresentational works like. The link of works of art with human life is that only human beings can bring them into being.

The key lies in giving the distinctive materials or means of each species of art definitory significance.

An intrinsic art-specific compositional principle must give a work a distinctively artistic constitutive structure and qualitative descriptive content.

mimesis 1 usefull artefacts [gebruiksvoorwerpen]

mimesis 2 artistic artefacts [kunstwerken]

With Aristotle’s recognition of the need for a compositional principle went the recognition of the need for art-specific standards of rightness and excellence (*orthotes* and *he kata ten technen kalliste tragodia*). He thereby achieved some of the perennial desiderata of any theory of art: to account for the integral being of works of art; to resist *hetero-telic* definitions; to resist reduction of the art-specific to what is not art-specific; to

distinguish what is essential and definitory from what is not; to resist obscurantism; to account for our distinctive engagement with art. And finally, to extend Ockham's Razor: like entities, senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity. Aristotle's theory does without postulating a special aesthetic sense, a conceptual and ontological economy worthy of emulation.

appendix

A poet is not a teacher, and a tragedy is not a teaching aid. A poet is not a *rhetor*, and a tragedy is not a rhetorical means of persuasion. A poet is not a doctor, and a tragedy is neither a homeopathic nor an allopathic course of treatment. A poet is not a priest, and a tragedy is not a ritual of purification. A poet is a maker, and the product of his making is a tragedy, a *tragike mimesis*.

review book Martha Husain by Stephen Halliwell:

<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23201-ontology-and-the-art-of-tragedy-an-approach-to-aristotle-s-poetics/>

Stephen Halliwell, University of St Andrews

author of

Aristotle's Poetics, London, 1986/1998

The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems, Princeton, 2002

Husain:

Every tragedy is a substance with its own ontological imperative, independent of both its maker and its audience.

mimesis 2 = representation (but unfortunately H uses imitation as stock translation)

arguments for a more subtle relations between the works of art and (ethical) agents and audience, tragic action in art and ethical action in life.

Halliwell critical regarding 3 points:

1 catharsis as process of causal 'clarification' within the dramatic action, not the psychological effect of a play on an audience [cf Politics 8.6-7, 1341a-2a]

2 the agent-centered viewpoint of the Ethics is irrelevant to the interpretation of tragedy

3 clear separation between mimetic art and life: the standards of poetic art are entirely 'autotelic' and 'objective'; only art, not life, can for Aristotle be 'tragic'

ad 2

Husain is justified in believing, like many previous interpreters, that the emotive properties of tragedy are, for Aristotle, 'objectively' constitutive of its nature, but wrong to reason that emotive content is somehow self-sufficiently intrinsic to the artwork rather than a function of its normatively stipulated effect on a recipient.

cf Politics 8.5, 1340a (A about music, its structure and effects) > for Aristotle there need not, indeed cannot, be an intrinsic/extrinsic dichotomy, of the kind Husain postulates, between the emotive properties of artworks and their experience by suitably attuned audiences.
cf Poetics 14.1453b1-7 (never discussed by Husain), where the emotive properties of a plot-structure are explicitly cashed out in terms of the relevant response on the part of an auditor – precisely parallel to the case of music in the Politics.

ad 3

Aristotle insists on a unified praxis as a 'single object' of poetic mimesis (Poetics 8.1451a30-32) and treats action in this depersonalized sense as the formal essence of a tragedy without thereby excluding ethical human agency from the domain of poetic representation.

The play remains a mimesis of ethical agents and action(s) (plural praxeis at e.g. 1450a22, 1453b16).

ethos and dianoia are expressly coupled at Poetics 6.1449b36-50a2 (an important passage never discussed by Husain), which also shows that the mimesis of praxis in the Poetics actually implies the mimesis of agents, and agents, furthermore, who are, in the finest works, ethically characterized.

Aristotle a carefully nuanced position; the distinctive poetic standards of Poetics 25 are not entirely severed from those of 'life'.

Husain's 'self-referential' in particular flatly contradicts the Poetics' notion of mimesis as the representation of 'life'.

art can help its audiences to comprehend the forms and possibilities of the human world a little better (Poetics chapter 4)

Husain ends up being more 'Aristotelian' than Aristotle himself. By insisting on the supposed purity of certain methodological and conceptual principles, she misses the realistic suppleness of thought that is just as vital to Aristotle's cast of mind as any individual doctrine.

cf Plato about Poetics & Rhetorics

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/>

the quarrel between poetry and philosophy is finally, in Plato's eyes, about the relative priority of making and discovery. The making/discovery distinction chimes with a number of the dichotomies upon which we have touched: imagination vs. reason, emotion vs. principle, becoming vs. being, artifacts vs. Forms, images vs. originals.

Ion's characterization of poetry as inspired ignorance.

claim that rhetoricians do not know or convey knowledge, viz. that it is not an art or craft (techne) but a mere knack (empeiria, or experience)

Politics is the art that cares for the soul; justice and legislation are its branches, and the imitations of each are rhetoric and sophistry.

Callicles presents himself as a no-holds-barred, bare-knuckled, clear-headed advocate of Realpolitik, as we would now call it. Telling it like it is, he draws a famous distinction between nature and convention, and advances a thesis familiar to readers of Republic books I and II: "But I believe that nature itself reveals that it's a just thing for the better man and the more capable man to have a greater share than the worse man and the less capable man. Nature shows that this is so in many places; both among the other animals and in whole cities and races of men, it shows that this is what justice has been decided to be: that the superior rule

the inferior and have a greater share than they" (483c8-d6). This is the "law of nature" (483e3; perhaps the first occurrence in Western philosophy of this famous phrase). Conventional talk of justice, fairness, not taking more than is your share, not pursuing your individual best interest—these are simply ways by which the weak seek to enslave the strong. The art of rhetoric is all about empowering those who are strong by nature to master the weak by nature.

The quarrel between rhetoric and philosophy, thus understood, ultimately addresses a range of fundamental issues. "Rhetoric" is taken here to constitute an entire world view. Its quarrel with philosophy is comprehensive, and bears on the nature of nature; the existence of objective moral norms; the connection (if any) between happiness and virtue; the nature and limits of reason; the value of reason (understood as the rational pursuit of objective purpose) in a human life; the nature of the soul or self; and the question as to whether there is a difference between true and false pleasure, i.e., whether pleasure is the good.

from Socrates' standpoint the ultimate philosophical question at stake concerns how one should live one's life (500c). Is the life of "politics," understood as the pursuit of power and glory, superior to the life of philosophy?

In essence, Socrates argues that someone who is going to speak well and nobly must know the truth about the subject he is going to discuss.

Rhetoric is the art of "directing the soul by means of speech" (261a8). Popular rhetoric is not an art, but a knack for persuasion. Artful rhetoric requires philosophy; but does philosophy require rhetoric?

Socrates indicts rhapsodes on the grounds that their speeches proceed "without questioning and explanation" and "are given only in order to produce conviction"

when Socrates comes to classify kinds of lives a bit further on, the poets (along with those who have anything to do with mimesis) rank a low sixth out of nine, after the likes of household managers, financiers, doctors, and prophets (248e1–2)! The poet is just ahead of the manual laborer, sophist, and tyrant.

[make artwork with greek words related to art]