



POETRY AS AN AESTHETIC AND ETHICAL PHENOMENON

Sabirova Zebo Zakirovna,

National University of Uzbekistan,

Faculty of Journalism and Uzbek Philology

Acting Associate Professor of the Department of

Uzbek Literary Studiyes (PhD), independent researcher

Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 10 th August 2025 Accepted: 8 th September 2025	This article examines the concept of psychologism in Eastern poetics based on the philosophical and aesthetic views of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Poetry is presented as an aesthetic phenomenon that reflects the unity of human thought and emotion, combining beauty, feeling, moral, and educational functions. Beginning with Aristotle's theory of catharsis, the study highlights how Eastern thinkers developed the idea of aesthetic pleasure and spiritual purification. Al-Farabi views poetry as a means to awaken a sense of beauty in the human soul and to inspire moral elevation. Ibn Sina, meanwhile, interprets poetry not only as a source of emotional experience but also as a medium for moral and spiritual healing. The article emphasizes that, in Eastern poetics, aesthetic and didactic approaches are complementary rather than opposing concepts. Poetry, therefore, is seen as an art that influences human psychology, encourages virtue, and unites moral and aesthetic harmony. The discussion further explores how these classical ideas contributed to the formation of artistic psychologism in modern literary theory, demonstrating the continuous relevance of Eastern philosophical thought in understanding the psychological depth of poetic creation.
Keywords: Poetry, psychologism, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, aesthetics, catharsis, spirituality, didactics, morality, artistic thought.	

Poetry is one of the most ancient and enduring forms of artistic expression in human thought. In understanding its essence, two principal approaches have historically prevailed: one centered on aesthetic pleasure, emotional purification (catharsis), and the perception of beauty; the other – on its didactic, moral, and socio-educational functions. In literary theory, these two poles have always existed in a dialectical yet complementary relationship. To interpret poetry from only one of these perspectives is to narrow its artistic scope.

Indeed, poetry is, above all, an aesthetic phenomenon, for aesthetics concerns the processes that awaken in the human mind and heart the categories of beauty, sublimity, tragedy, and humor.

Firstly, poetry enables the perception of beauty: it transports the individual from mundane reality into the realm of imagination and symbols. For instance, in Navoi's lyrical works, the delicate emotions of the human heart are expressed through refined metaphors and allegories that evoke deep aesthetic delight.

Secondly, poetry arouses emotional experience. A core feature of the aesthetic phenomenon is its capacity to engage the reader's feelings. The power of poetry lies in its ability to evoke an entire emotional universe through a single verse.

Thirdly, poetry elevates the human spirit. In Aristotle's Poetics, the notion of catharsis – the purification of the soul through art, particularly tragedy – represents the essence of the aesthetic experience. In the East, philosophers such as al-Farabi and Avicenna (Ibn Sina) developed this idea further.

Fourthly, poetry has an educational and social function. The aesthetic phenomenon not only inspires delight but also possesses moral force. According to al-Farabi, poetry encourages virtuous behavior and noble qualities. Thus, it becomes both an aesthetic and socio-ethical phenomenon.

However, a central question arises: is poetry solely an aesthetic phenomenon, or must it also fulfill moral and social functions? If regarded only as an aesthetic experience, poetry risks becoming a source of private emotional pleasure alone. If treated purely as a didactic instrument, its aesthetic dimension may be diminished. Eastern poetics has traditionally sought a balance: poetry both delights and educates. Therefore, poetry should not be viewed as a purely aesthetic occurrence, but rather as a complex spiritual and social phenomenon that refines both the individual and society.

Poetry is not merely the embodiment of beauty – it is a complex phenomenon that penetrates the soul, influences the intellect, and shapes social consciousness. Thinkers such as Aristotle, al-Farabi, and Avicenna profoundly explored these dual dimensions of poetry.

Aristotle, one of the earliest theorists to interpret poetry as a purely aesthetic reality, emphasized in *Poetics* that the primary function of tragedy is catharsis – the emotional purification of the soul through the aesthetic experience. According to him, the true purpose of poetry is to evoke aesthetic emotion through artistic imagery: "The essence of poetry is to provide aesthetic pleasure; tragedy purifies the soul through the emotions it evokes"¹.

The great Eastern philosopher al-Farabi, in *Ihsa al-'Ulum* ("The Classification of Sciences"), described poetry as an art form akin to music, capable of inspiring the feeling of beauty and spiritual joy in the human heart. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (*Kitab al-Shi'r*), al-Farabi regarded poetry as a tool of imaginative reasoning. Logic appeals to the intellect through proof, while poetry influences the imagination and emotions. "The function of poetry", he wrote, "is to awaken imaginative images in the soul and intensify them through emotional experience"².

For al-Farabi, one of the main purposes of poetry was moral and spiritual education. Poetry not only delights but also inspires courage, patriotism, and virtue. He linked this idea to the Greek notion of catharsis, claiming that poetry purifies the soul and liberates the emotions.

Similarly, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), in his encyclopedic *Kitab al-Shifa* ("The Book of Healing"), viewed poetry as a means of spiritual relief, leading to emotional purification. According to him, poetry does not persuade through logical argumentation but through imaginative and emotional appeal – resonating with Aristotle's idea that "poetry is not logic but an art that awakens emotion"³. Avicenna deepened this idea in the context of Eastern spiritual thought: poetry not only astonishes but also purifies the soul. Heroic poetry inspires valor; love poetry awakens tenderness; elegies evoke inner purification – a poetic catharsis.

For Avicenna, poetry is the mirror of the soul – not merely an aesthetic but a psychological phenomenon. In *Kitab al-Shifa*, he even described poetry as a form of "spiritual therapy"⁴. This generated debate in Eastern aesthetics: does poetry distract from reason through emotional intoxication, or does it elevate the spirit? Avicenna supported the latter view, emphasizing poetry's educational and psychological functions.

Thus, his ideas remain relevant for modern literary studies: aesthetic experience cannot be separated from psychology. Aesthetic pleasure arises not merely from perceiving external beauty but from the emotional responses it awakens. Avicenna also distinguished between "simplicity" and "beauty"⁵ arguing that words without emotional resonance lack aesthetic power, while poetic imagery stirs the soul⁶. Hence, the aesthetic phenomenon is inseparable from psychological processes.

According to Avicenna:

1. The strength of poetry lies in its emotional impact—not in external form but in the inner movement of the soul;
2. Poetry convinces not through logic but through imagination and emotion;
3. The aesthetic phenomenon is, at its core, a psychological one;
4. He shifted the evaluation of poetry from external metrics (meter, rhyme) toward spiritual-aesthetic influence;
5. Modern literary psychology, or artistic psychologism, is built upon these same foundations.

Thus, poetry as an aesthetic phenomenon profoundly affects the human soul. It enables contemplation of life through emotional, musical, and symbolic means. Especially in lyric poetry, personal feelings and psychological states are conveyed through artistic and aesthetic devices such as metaphor, simile, contrast, rhythm, and sound.

At the same time, poetry has a didactic and social dimension. Al-Farabi viewed poetry not merely as a source of pleasure but as an art form that fulfills moral and educational purposes – instilling virtue and deterring vice. Avicenna expanded this view, asserting that poetry shapes not only emotions but also moral character: "Poetry forms the human being through emotional and ethical cultivation"⁷.

Hence, the aesthetic content of poetry awakens the heart through beauty and leads to spiritual purification, while its didactic function imparts moral and philosophical guidance. The synthesis of these two functions elevates poetry to a supreme artistic phenomenon.

In conclusion: The aesthetic value of poetry lies in its imagery, musicality, rhythm, metaphor, and emotional expressiveness, especially in lyrical forms;

Psychologism reflects the inner states of the human soul through aesthetic expression;

Didacticism demonstrates that poetry's educational power operates through aesthetic means rather than mere instruction.

¹ Aristotle. *Poetics*. – Moscow, 1967. – p. 42.

² Al-Farabi. *Ihsa al-'Ulum* (Enumeration of the Sciences). – Cairo Edition, 1968. – p. 119.

³ Al-Farabi. *Sharh Kitab al-Shi'r* (Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*). – Beirut Edition, 1967. – p. 82.

⁴ Ibn Sina. *Kitab ash-Shifa'*. – Tehran, 1954. – P. 276.

⁵ Ibn Sina (Avicenna). *Al-Shifa: Al-Mantiq, Al-Shi'r* (The Book of Healing: Logic, Poetry). – Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, Badawi Edition, 1953. – pp. 43–55.

⁶ Ibn Sina. *al-Shifa. al-Mantiq, ash-Shi'r*. – Qohira: Dār al-Kutub, Badawi nashri, 1953. (s. 43–55)

⁷ Ibn Sina. *Kitab ash-Shifa'*. – Tehran, 1954. – P. 280.

In modern literary thought, these two approaches – aesthetic and didactic – are not oppositional but complementary. Understanding poetry solely as “pure aestheticism” isolates it from human emotion, while perceiving it only as a “moral instrument” neglects its artistic depth.

Ultimately, poetry represents the artistic synthesis of aesthetics and ethics – a bridge connecting art and social consciousness, emotional experience and moral reflection. It is not only an aesthetic event but also a psychological and spiritual reality that guides humanity toward ethical and intellectual maturity. In its essence, poetry embodies beauty, spirituality, intellect, and the reflection of the human heart.

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