The essential principle for discriminating the kinds of epic poetry depended on whether the substantive material to be portrayed in an epic was expressed in its universality or related in the form of objective characters, deeds and events. 

Lyric, conversely, is divided into a series of different modes of expression by the degree and manner in which the subject-matter is more loosely or more tightly interwoven with the person whose inner life that subject-matter reveals. Dramatic poetry, finally, makes central the collisions between characters and between their aims, as well as the necessary resolution of this battle. Consequently the principle for distinguishing its genres can only be derived from the relation of individuals to their aim and what it involves. The specific character of this relation is also what decides the particular manner of the dramatic conflict and outcome and so provides the essential type of the whole course of events in its living and artistic presentation.

As the principal points for consideration in this matter we must, in general, emphasize those features which in their harmony constitute the essence of every true action: (i) what is in substance good and great, the Divine actualized in the world, as the foundation of everything genuine and absolutely eternal in the make-up of an individual's character and aim; (ii) the subject, the individual himself in his unfettered self-determination and freedom. In whatever form dramatic poetry brings the action on the stage, what is really effective in it is absolute truth, but the specific way in which this effectiveness comes on the scene takes a different, and indeed an opposed, form according to whether what is kept dominant in the individuals and their actions and conflicts is their substantive basis or alternatively their subjective caprice, folly and perversity.

In this connection we have to examine the principle for the following genres:

(a) for tragedy, taken in its substantive and original typical form;
(b) for comedy, in which the mastery of all relations and ends is given as much to the individual in his willing and action, as to external contingency;
(c) for drama, i.e. for a play in the narrower sense of the word, as occupying a middle position between these first two kinds.

(a) At this point I will make brief mention of only the most general basic characteristics of tragedy; their concrete particularization can come into view only in the light of the stages in tragedy's historical development.

(aa) The true content of the tragic action is provided, so far as concerns the aims adopted by the tragic characters, by the range of the substantive and independently justified powers that influence the human will: family
love. Between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters; political life also, the patriotism of the citizens, the will of the ruler; and religion existent, not as a piety that renounces action and not as a divine judgment in man's heart about the good or evil of his actions, but on the contrary, as an active grasp and furtherance of actual interests and circumstances. A similar excellence belongs to the genuinely tragic characters. Throughout they are what they can and must be in accordance with their essential nature, not an ensemble of qualities separately developed epically in various ways; on the contrary, even if they are living and individual themselves, they are simply the one power dominating their own specific character; for, in accordance with their own individuality, they have inseparably identified themselves with some single particular aspect of those solid interests we have enumerated above, and are prepared to answer for that identification. Standing on this height, where the mere accidents of the individual's purely personal life disappear, the tragic heroes of dramatic art have risen to become, as it were, works of sculpture, whether particular or essential, providing the motive for truly human action. Yet in this actual appearance it does not lose its substantive character, nor does it see itself there as inverted into the opposite of itself. In this form the spiritual substance of will and accomplishment is the concrete ethical order. For if we take the ethical order in its direct ideality as abstract morality, then it is the Divine. If, however, we bring the ethical order into its actualization in reality and its appearance in the mundane sphere, Owing to the nature of the real world, the mere difference of the constituents of this ensemble becomes pervaded into opposition and collision, once individual characters seize upon them on the territory of specific circumstances. Only from this point of view can we be really serious about those gods who dwell in their peaceful tranquillity and unity solely on Olympus and in the heaven of imagination and religious ideas, but who, when they now come actually to life as a specific 'pathos' in a human individual, lead, despite all their justification, to guilt and wrong owing to their particular specification and the opposition to which this leads.

In general terms, therefore, we may say that the proper theme of the original type of tragedy is the Divine; not, however, the Divine as the object of the religious consciousness as such, but as it enters the world and individual action. Yet in this actual appearance it does not lose its substantive character, nor does it see itself there as inverted into the opposite of itself. In this form the spiritual substance of will and accomplishment is the concrete ethical order [das Sittliche]. For if we take the ethical order in its direct genuineness and do not interpret it from the point of view of subjective reflection as abstract morality [das formelle Moralische], then it is the Divine made real in the world and so the substantive basis which in all its aspects, whether particular or essential, provides the motive for truly human action, and it is in action itself that these aspects develop and actualize this their essence.

Everything that forces its way into the objective and real world is subject to the principle of particularization; consequently the ethical powers, just like the agents, are differentiated in their domain and their individual appearance. Now if, as dramatic poetry requires, these thus differentiated powers are summoned into appearance as active and are actualized as the specific aim of a human 'pathos' which passes over into action, then their harmony is cancelled and they come on the scene in opposition to one another in reciprocal independence. In that event a single action will under certain circumstances realize an aim or a character which is one-sidedly isolated in its complete determinacy, and therefore, in the circumstances presupposed, will necessarily rouse against it the opposed 'pathos' and so lead to inevitable conflicts. The original essence of tragedy consists then in the fact that within such a conflict each of the opposed sides, if taken by itself, has justification; while each can establish the true and positive content of its own aim and character only by denying and infringing the equally justified power of the other. The consequence is that in its ethical life [Sittlichkeit], and because of it, each is nevertheless involved in guilt.

The general reason for the necessity of these conflicts I have touched upon already. The substance of ethical life, as a concrete unity, is an ensemble of different relations and powers which only in a situation of inactivity, like that of the blessed gods, accomplish the work of the spirit in the enjoyment of an undisturbed life. But the very nature of this ensemble implies its transfer from its at first purely abstract ideality into its actualization in reality and its appearance in the mundane sphere. Owing to the nature of the real world, the mere difference of the constituents of this ensemble becomes pervaded into opposition and collision, once individual characters seize upon them on the territory of specific circumstances. Only from this point of view can we be really serious about those gods who dwell in their peaceful tranquillity and unity solely on Olympus and in the heaven of imagination and religious ideas, but who, when they now come actually to life as a specific 'pathos' in a human individual, lead, despite all their justification, to guilt and wrong owing to their particular specification and the opposition to which this leads.

In this way however, an unresolved contradiction is set up; it does appear in the real world but cannot maintain itself there as the substance of reality and what is genuinely true; its proper claim is satisfied only when it is annulled as a contradiction. However justified the tragic character and his aim, however necessary the tragic collision, the third thing required is the tragic resolution of this conflict. By this means eternal justice is exercised on individuals and their aims in the sense that it restores the substance and unity of ethical life with the downfall of the individual who has disturbed its peace. For although the characters have a purpose which is valid in itself, they can carry it out in tragedy only by pursuing it one-sidedly and so contradicting and infringing someone else's purpose. The truly substantial thing which has to be actualized, however, is not the battle between particular aims or characters, although this too has its essential ground in the nature of the real world and human action, but the reconciliation in which the specific individuals and their aims work together harmoniously without opposition and without infringing one another. Therefore what is superseded in the tragic denouement is only the one-sided particular which had not been able to adapt itself to this harmony, and now (and this is the tragic thing in its action), unable to renounce itself and its intention, finds itself condemned to total destruction, or, at the very least, forced to abandon, if it can, the accomplishment of its aim.

In this connection Aristotle, as every one knows, laid it down [Poetics, 1449b 26] that the true effect of tragedy should be to arouse pity and fear and accomplish the catharsis of these emotions. By 'emotions' Aristotle did
not mean mere feeling, my subjective sense of something corresponding with me or not, the agreeable or disagreeable, the attractive or the repulsive — this most superficial of all criteria which only recently has been proposed as the principle of dramatic success or failure. For the only important thing for a work of art is to present what corresponds with reason and spiritual truth, and if we are to discover the principle of this, we must direct our attention to totally different considerations. Even in the case of Aristotle's dictum we must therefore fix our eyes not on the mere feelings of pity and fear but on the nature of the subject-matter which by its artistic appearance is to purify these feelings. A man can be frightened in face of, on the one hand, something finite and external to him, or, on the other hand, the power of the Absolute. What a man has really to fear is not an external power and oppression by it, but the might of the ethical order which is one determinant of his own free reason and is at the same time that eternal and inviolable something which he summons up against himself if once he turns against it. Like fear, pity too has two kinds of object. The first is the object of ordinary emotion, i.e. sympathy with someone else's misfortune and suffering which is felt as something finite and negative. Provincial females are always ready with compassion of this sort. For if it is only the negative aspect, the negative aspect of misfortune, that is emphasized, then the victim of misfortune is degraded. True pity, on the contrary, is sympathy at the same time with the sufferer's ethical justification, with the affirmative aspect, the substantive thing that must be present in him. Beggars and rascals cannot inspire us with pity of this kind. Therefore if the tragic character has inspired us a fear of the power of the ethical order that he has violated, then in his misfortune he is to arouse a tragic sympathy he must be a man of worth and goodness himself. For it is only something of intrinsic worth which strikes the heart of a man of noble feelings and shakes it to its depths. After all, therefore, we should not confuse our interest in a tragic denouement with a naive sense of satisfaction that our sympathy should be claimed by a sad story, by a misfortune as such. Such miseries may befall a man, without his contribution to them and without his fault, merely as a result of the conjunction of external accidents and natural circumstances, as a result of illness, loss of property, death, etc., and the only interest in them by which we should properly be gripped is our eagerness to rush to the man's help. If we cannot help, thenSpec-tacles of wretchedness and distress are only harrowing. A truly tragic suffering, on the contrary, is only inflicted on the individual agents as a consequence of their own deed which is both legitimate and, owing to the resulting collision, blameworthy, and for which their whole self is answerable.

Above mere fear and tragic sympathy there therefore stands that sense of reconciliation which the tragedy affords by the glimpse of eternal justice. In its absolute sway this justice overrides the relative justification of one-sided aims and passions because it cannot suffer the conflict and contradiction of naturally harmonious ethical powers to be victorious and permanent in truth and actuality.