**BIGARD MEMORIAL SEMINARY, ENUGU.**

**ASSIGNMENT ON AESTHETICS**

**TOPIC:**

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1. **INRODUCTION**

In the area of the philosophy of art, Hegel’s Aesthetics represents the culmination of bourgeois thinking, of the bourgeois progressive tradition. However, we shall delve into understanding the background of Hegel, his philosophy and Aesthetics that stems from his Knowledge of Art, his Art and Idealization and his Systematic Aesthetics or Philosophy of Arts.

**2.0 BACKGROUND OF HEGEL**

George Hegel, born August 27, 1770, Stuttgart, Wurttemberg (Germany) died November 14, 1831, Berlin. He developed a dialectical scheme that emphasized the progress of history and of ideas from thesis to antithesis and thence to a synthesis.

Hegel was the largest of the great philosophical system builders of modern times. His work, following upon that of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, thus marks the pinnacle of classical German philosophy. As an absolute idealist inspired by Christian insights and grounded in his mastery of a fantastic fund of concrete knowledge, Hegel found a place of everything logical, natural, human and divine in a dialectical scheme that repeatedly swung from thesis to antithesis and back again to a higher and richer synthesis.

1. **HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ART**

Hegel’s philosophy of art proper, however, forms part of his philosophy (rather than phenomenology) of spirit. The systems is divided into three, logic, and philosophy of religion and is set in Hegel’s Encyclopedia of the philosophical Science. The philosophy of spirit is divided into three sections: subjective, objective, and absolute spirit.

Hegel’s philosophy of art or “aesthetics” constitutes the first sub section of his philosophy of religion and his account of the history of philosophy. Hegel’s philosophy of art provides an a priori derivation from the very concept of beauty itself of various forms of beauty and various individual arts. In marked contrast to Kant, however, Hegel weaves into his philosophical study of beauty numerous reference to and analyses of individual works of art to such an extent, indeed, that his aesthetics constitutes, in Kai Hammermeister’s words, “a veritable world history of art”[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. **ART AND IDEALIZATION**

Arts, for Hegel, is essentially figurative. This is not because it seeks to imitate nature, but because its purpose is to express and embody free spirit and this is achieved most adequately through images of human beings. Art’s role is to bring to mind truths about ourselves and our freedom that we often lose sight of in our everyday activity. Its role is to show us the true character of freedom. Arts fulfills this role by showing us the freedom of spirit in its purest form without the contingencies of everyday life. That is to say, art at its best presents us not with the all too familiar dependencies and drudgery of daily existence, but with the ideal of freedom. The ideal of human and divine freedom constitutes true beauty and is found above all, Hegel claims, in ancient Greek sculptures of gods and heroes.

* 1. **HEGEL’S SYSTEMATIC AESTHETIC OR PHILOSOPHY OF ART**

Hegel’s philosophical account of art and beauty has three part, the ideal beauty as such, or beauty proper, the different forms that beauty takes in history and the different arts in which beauty is encountered.

* 1. **IDEAL BEAUTY AS SUCH**

Hegel is well aware that art can perform various functions. It can teach, edify, provoke, adorn, and so on. His concern, however, is to identify art’s proper and most distinctive function. This, he claims, is to give intuitive, sensuous expression to freedom of spirit. The point of art, therefore, is not to be “realistic” to imitate or mirror the contingencies of everyday life but to show us what divine and human freedom look like. Such sensuous expression of spiritual freedom is what Hegel calls the “Ideal,” or true beauty.

* 1. **THE PARTICULAR FORMS OF ART**

Hegal also acknowledges that art can, indeed must, both fall short of and go beyond such ideal beauty. It falls short of ideal beauty when it takes the form of symbolic art and it goes beyond such beauty when it takes the form of romantic art. The form of art that is characterized by works of ideal beauty itself is classical art. These are the three forms of art or forms of the beautiful.

A symbolic art, the content is conceived abstractly such that it is not able to manifest itself adequately in a sensuous visible form. In classical art like by contrast, the content is conceived in such a way that is able to find adequate expression in sensuous, visible form, and yet also ultimately can sense the sensuous and visible.

Classical art is the home of ideal beauty proper, whereas romantic art is the home of what Hegel calls the “beauty of inwardness” (Schonheit der In.nigkeit) or, as Knox translates it, “ beauty altogether. This does not mean that it is simply bad art: Hegel recognizes that symbolic art is often the product of the highest level of artistry. Symbolic art falls short of beauty because it does not yet have a rich enough understanding of the nature of divine and human spirit. The artistic shapes it produces are deficient, therefore, because the conception of spirit that underlie it conception that are contained above all in religion are deficient.

1. **CONCLUSION**

Hegel’s aesthetics has been the focus of often highly critical attention since his death from philosophers such as Heidegger, Adorno and Gadamer. Much of this attention has been devoted to his supposed theory of the “end” of art. Perhaps Hegel’s most important legacy, however, lies in the claims that art’s task is the presentation of beauty and beauty is a matter of content as well as form. Beauty, for Hegel, is not just a matter of formal harmony or elegance; it is the sensuous manifestation in stone, color, sound or words of spiritual freedom and life.

1. Hammermeister,24. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)