

Hegel was an art lover and a student of the arts, and developed a more complete philosophy of art than most philosophers before him. In keeping with his emphasis on the historical development of ideas and of consciousness, he claimed that:

- 1) Art expresses the spirit of particular cultures, as well as that of individual artists and the general human spirit.
- 2) There is progress in art (no surprise here, as Hegel thought that history in general was moving forward to a climax).

When he first began thinking about the philosophy of art, Hegel was influenced by the ideas of Kant, Schiller and Schelling.

He was inclined to think that

- artistic expression and artistic consciousness were a kind of climax of the history of the human spirit, and
- that art reveals truth in a direct, intuitive way.

Lectures on Fine Art

The introduction to Lectures on Fine Art may be referred to as a bundle of contradictions. Initially, Hegel suggests that since a work of art is a product of human activity it might be something that can be known and expounded, and learnt and pursued by other. He further tells us that these works of art produced as result of certain rules can only be something formally regular and mechanical for which a purely empty exercise of will and dexterity is required.

However he has a desire to reject this view for it does not throw light upon what he considers the spiritual nature of art. He believed that the spiritual in art cannot be taught by formal rules. Hegel suggests the opposite scenario i.e. that perhaps the work of art is a work of an entirely specially gifted spirit. He claims that the work of art is a product of talent and genius and emphasizes on the natural element in talent and genius. This, too, he finds limited in its applicability.

He says that even if the talent and genius of the artist has in it a natural element, yet this element essentially requires development by thought, reflection on the mode of its productivity, and practice and skill in producing. For, the work of art has a purely technical side to it which needs to be developed through practice and not through inspiration. And so we see the concern that, Art cannot be produced either through gross manipulation of material, nor through pure spiritual abstraction, but must combine elements of both. The manipulation of the object is tempered by the spirit, and likewise the spirit is informed by the artists skillful (i.e., practiced, formal) manipulation of the object.

He then goes on to discuss why Art is necessary. Hegel has little interest in Art for the viewer, for the critic who would judge a work of art. For him, art is essential to man in its capacity to help him gain self-consciousness, an aspect that fulfills its set purpose.

On the other hand, perfect harmony is the limit of Greek art, which cannot thoroughly express the depth and unconditioned freedom of the spirit. According to Hegel, the

highest form of romantic art (and of art in general) is poetry, considered as the art of words, which expresses itself in a conceptual form.

Hegelian dialectic, usually presented in a threefold manner, was stated by Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus as comprising

Three dialectical stages of development:

Thesis refers to an idea, usually an intellectual proposition. Antithesis refers to the refutation of the idea. Synthesis is the moulding of the idea and its refutations into a new idea.

Man's art cannot be corrected in terms of technicality.

I. The Idea of the beauty of art or the Ideal *God's art is perfect and not*

The absolute is the Idea as such, but the Idea as the beauty of art needs to be objectified into individual works. In artworks, truth should not be confused with technical correctness: defects in art can flow from content as well as from form. Hegel criticises the art of 'the Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians':

They could not master true beauty because their mythological ideas, the content and thought of their works of art, were still indeterminate, or determined badly, and so did not consist of the content which is absolute in itself.

In the best art, the Idea (content) and its presentation (form) are in conformity – are 'adequate to one another' (p74).

How spirituality has been brought in art forms throughout years.

ii) Development of the Ideal into the particular forms of the beauty of art

The forms art takes through history are 'the different relations of meaning and shape' for grasping the IDEA.

and art history is created by the 'unfolding' and 'reconciliation' of particular works. Hegel outlines three stages for the development of fine art:

- 1) Symbolic
- 2) Classical
- 3) Romantic

These stages are three relations of the Idea (content) to its configuration (form). Each is a higher form than its predecessor. Hegel later calls them 'the universal moments of the Idea of beauty' (p90). This staged approach led Gombrich to consider Hegel, rather than Winckelmann, the 'father' of art history.⁴

Symbolic art

Art begins when people start making the Idea the content of artistic form. This is the first, fermenting, mysterious form of art. The Idea is still obscure, abstract and indeterminate:

- disunity b/w form & ideal.

[Art] does not yet possess in itself that individuality which the Ideal demands; its abstraction and one-sidedness leave its shape externally defective and arbitrary.

Art in this stage is still struggling to find a form. The Idea is imposed on objects when a correspondence is not yet possible – it staggers around in the form, distorting and exaggerating it, because it is as yet unshapeable and persists sublimely above all these inadequate representations. Such art, says Hegel, is typical of the 'early artistic pantheism of the East', which

on the one hand ascribes absolute meaning to even the most worthless objects,)

Hegel's objection is that these mysterious conceptions of the divine cannot be clearly manifested in concrete, individual forms.

So, for example, the Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians, in their artistic shapes, images of gods, and idols, never get beyond formlessness or a bad and untrue definiteness of form. They could not master true beauty because their mythological ideas, the content and thought of their works of art, were still indeterminate, or determined badly, and so did not consist of the content which is absolute in itself. (p74)

With such means, the Idea and its configuration remain incompatible.

2) Classical art

- Sensuous representation of a Divine Ideal.

Classical art corrects the failings of symbolic art.

- unity b/w form & ideal.

god idea, man portrait.

It is the free and adequate embodiment of the Idea in the shape peculiarly appropriate to the Idea itself in its essential nature. With this shape, therefore, the Idea is able to come into free and complete harmony.

Classical art at last actualises the Idea: concept and reality successfully conform to one another. Hegel says that the original Concept (which probably means God) invented the shape for concrete spirit (human beings, through whom spirit is expressed), which the spirit of art finds as the most appropriate form for free, individual spirituality. Thus classical art takes the human body for its subject. But it is not the human body as merely sensuous, contingent and finite; it is purified to be adequate for the spirit.

- to give temporal representation that is purely spiritual.

The weakness in classical art is that spirituality has to be of a sort that can be expressed in the human form. 'The spirit is at once determined as particular and human, not as purely absolute and eternal'. Spirit is therefore not represented according to its true nature. This brings about the dissolution of classical art and its replacement with the third, higher form.

3) Romantic art

The Romantic form of art goes beyond and above classical art. In classical art the concrete content of the artwork is implicitly the unity of divine and human, and is expressed in an

immediate, sensuous way. A higher state is when the **unity of divine and human is known, not implicit. This difference is significant:** humankind becomes conscious of itself as an animal and attains knowledge of itself as spirit. This goes hand in hand with Christian religion, as opposed to the Greek religion 'most appropriate' to classical art. Unlike with the Greek gods,

Christianity brings God before our imagination as spirit, not as an individual, particular spirit, but as absolute in spirit and in truth.

The known unity of divine and human nature is realised in spirit, i.e. it is not tied to sensuous presentation but is freed from immediacy. Thus **Romantic art is 'the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself.'** The subject matter of art is now **'free concrete spirituality'**. Art must work for subjective, inward depth, and therefore can no longer have an adequate union with the external medium of the artwork.

The sensuous externality of shape is... accepted and represented, as in symbolic art, as something inessential and transient... The aspect of external existence is consigned to contingency and abandoned to the adventures devised by an imagination whose caprice can mirror what is present to it... just as readily as it can jumble the shapes of the external world and distort them grotesquely. For this external medium has its essence and meaning no longer, as in classical art, in itself and its own sphere, but in the heart which finds its manifestation in itself instead of in the external world and its form of reality.

As in symbolic art, Idea/content and shape/form are inadequate to each other, but in Romantic art the Idea is perfected in itself 'as spirit and heart', in a higher perfection.

Thus the symbolic, classical and Romantic art forms consist respectively in the striving for, the attainment of, and the transcendence of the Ideal as the true Idea of beauty.

iii) The system of the individual arts

The final section of the Introduction discusses types of art which correspond to the forms or stages of fine art explained above. Hegel thinks:

the general forms of art must... be the fundamental principle for the articulation and determination of the individual arts; in other words, the kinds of art have the same essential distinctions in themselves which we came to recognise in the general forms of art.

Each form of art (Symbolic, Classical, *spirit sensuousness* Romantic) corresponds to a kind of art (sculpture, painting, etc) most adequate to it. Helpfully, Knox adds in a footnote:

No form of art is wholly actualised in one kind of art alone; it requires the others, even if they take a subordinate place. Thus while one kind of art may belong par excellence to one form of art, it also appears to some extent in the other forms and may be said to present them all.

(p82)

Symbolic art: Corresponds to architecture. 'The inorganic external world has been purified, set in order symmetrically, and made akin to spirit.' But in the heavy, immediately external matter of buildings, the Idea cannot be realised.

Classical art: Corresponds to sculpture. Through sculpture, spiritual individuality is made to stand before us. The material is organised as an ideal, three-dimensional human figure.

Romantic art: Corresponds to painting, music and poetry. Spirit is dispersed into the community; art shows itself 'particularised in itself and appropriate to subjective inwardness'.

Form/stage of art	Relation to the Idea	Art form
Symbolic	Striving	Architecture
Classical	Attaining	Sculpture
Romantic	Transcending	Painting, poetry, music

The external material the works are made of becomes progressively less important across the stages of art. **Poetry emerges as the most universal art.**

poetry is adequate to all forms of the beauty and extends over all of them, because its proper element is beautiful imagination, and imagination is indispensable for every beautiful production, no matter to what form of art it belongs.

However, at this highest stage, art now transcends itself and passes from the poetry of the imagination to the prose of thought. Hegel concludes the Introduction grandly:

Now, therefore, what the particular arts realise in individual works of art is, according to the Concept of art, only the universal forms of the self-unfolding Idea of beauty. It is as the external actualisation of the Idea that the wide Pantheon of art is rising. Its architect and builder is the self-comprehending spirit of beauty, but to complete it will need the history of the world in its development through thousands of years. (p90)

Summary:

- A product of art is by talent and genius and emphasizes on the natural element in talent and genius.
- Art is essential to man in its capacity to help him gain self-consciousness, an aspect that fulfills its set purpose.
- Spiritual in art can't be taught by formal rules.
- W.F. Hegel claims that;
 - 1- Art expresses the spirit of particular cultures, as well as that of individual artists and the general human spirit.
 - 2- There is progress in art.

* God's art is perfect and not flawed / Man's art cannot be concerned or corrected in terms of technicality.

* Development of the concept of ideals throughout the years in form:-

1. Symbolic:- (first, fermenting, mysterious, vague)
Idea is still obscure, abstract and indeterminate. (did not match the idea with the form)

- Mythological concepts were not concepts of the absolute.
- Corresponds to architecture.

2. Classical:- (corrects the failings of symbolic art.)

- takes the embodiment of human beings to shape the idea of the Absolute and the Ideal.
- The human body isn't shown as sensuous however, as it is purified appropriately. But again, it does not as a form completely line up with the idea.
- Corresponds to sculptures.

3. Romantic:-

- (corrects the failings of all of the above)
- Goes with Christian religion (Christianity before us, brings God to our imagination as a spirit.)
- Romantic Art is the 'self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself'
- It is not tied to sensuousness presentation but is freed from immediacy.
- Romantic art corresponds to poetry, paintings and music.