
UNIT 4 THEORY OF AESTHETICS - POSTMODERN

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit— is to present the concepts in aesthetic thought that continues to influence till today. The two great thinkers of the 18th century, Kant and Hegel who devoted special treatise and delivered lectures on aesthetic, their works are taken up for discussion. We shall be acquainted with the arguments and reasons of Kant from his *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* followed by Hegel’s *Lecture on Fine Art*. The 18th – 20th centuries saw a great number of thinkers in the west who put forth views on aesthetic which also witnessed the artists voicing out their opinions. It is difficult to deal with all of them and the impact of the movement in this unit so we shall summarise the thought from the ancient to modern as seen by Croce and the movement then taken forward by Croce in his *La Aesthetica*. We close this unit by enumerating some of 20th century thinkers on aesthetic.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of the contribution of Baumgarten
- to understand the thought of Kant and Hegel
- to understand the all-comprehensive character of philosophy of art in history
- to appreciate the contribution of Croce.
- to able to examine the works and development of ideas of the 20th century thinkers

4.1 IMMANUEL KANT

Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762) in his *Reflections on Poetry*, introduced the term “aesthetic” as the name of a special science. He was a pupil of Christian Wolff, the Rationalist philosopher who had created the orthodox philosophy of the German Enlightenment based on the metaphysical ideas of Wilhelm Leibniz into a system. Baumgarten argued that poetry is cognitive that it provides insight into the world of a kind that could not be conveyed in any other way. At the same

time, he held that the poetic insights are perceptual (“aesthetic”) and hence filled with the distinctive character of sensory and imaginative experience. He proposed a theory of the value of art as ultimately cognitive. In a few decades, Baumgarten’s coinage of “aesthetics” in this sense took a philosophical diversion that formed the founding work of Modern Aesthetics (Part 2). Following the thought of Baumgarten next in line emerged the revolutionary break through provided by Immanuel Kant in his magnum opus *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*. We shall begin this unit with an analysis of the work of Kant.

Kant’s *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* is divided into two sections. The first section is titled *Analytic of Aesthetic Judgement* and the second section is titled *Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgement*. Both the sections contain two parts each. We shall survey the two parts, viz., *Analytic of the Beautiful* and the *Analytic of the Sublime* of the first section.

Analytic of the Beautiful

Kant arrives in stages which he calls *moment* at the nature of judgement of *taste*. He clarifies the term *taste* as the faculty of estimating the beautiful and what is required for calling an object beautiful is termed as *judgement of taste*. Kant engages in an enquiry into the *judgement of taste*. He categorises the first moment of judgement of taste as moment of Quality from which he derives that *the judgement of taste is aesthetic*. He rules out the possibility of judgement as taste as cognitive judgement or logical judgement. He confirms that it is *aesthetic* – that is its determining ground is subjective. He shows that both pleasure and displeasure from an object is the affection in the subject by that representation and this belongs to a separate faculty of discriminating and estimating, and it does not contribute anything to knowledge.

Kant then states that the delight which determines the judgement of taste is independent of all interest. He defines ‘interest’ as the delight which is connected with the representation of the real existence of an object. In the case of artistic representation, he considers that interest is not the determinant for judgement of taste. He goes a step further and says a judgement on the *beautiful* which is tinged with the slightest interest is partial and not a pure judgement of taste. Kant then enumerates the factors in delight that are coupled with interest – that is, delight in the *agreeable* and delight in the *good*, both of which he says involve a reference to the faculty of desire. Delight in agreeable depends on sensation; delight in good depends on a definite concept. He draws that the *agreeable*, the *beautiful* and the *good* denote three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure and the corresponding expressions which indicate one’s satisfaction in them are different. Like the *agreeable* is what *gratifies* a person; the *beautiful* what simply *pleases* one; and the *good* is what is esteemed or approved. Of these three kinds of delight, Kant shows that the taste in the beautiful alone is disinterested and *free* delight. He segregates thus the delight in these three cases as is related to inclination, to favour or to respect. He presents the idea derived so far as: “Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest. The object of such a delight is called beautiful.”

Kant then begins with his proposition that the beautiful is that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the object of a universal delight. It derives that the judgement of taste detached from all interest with a claim to subjective

universality. He shows that with *agreeable* the axiom ‘every one has his own taste’ holds good but not with the *beautiful* since it would be equivalent to say there is no such thing at all as taste, that is, no aesthetic judgement capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all people. On the contrary, the *good* is represented as an object of universal delight by means of a concept. He argues further that in the judgement of taste the universality of delight is only represented as subjective. He divides the *agreeable* judgement of taste as taste of sense and the judgement of taste in beauty as taste of reflection. Both are aesthetic judgements (not practical) about an object in respect of its representation on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Kant further classifies judgement of taste as singular judgements from the standpoint of logical quantity. That which is of sense is the aesthetic quantity of universality, that is, validity of everyone from the judgement of the agreeable. Thus, he says there can be rule to recognize anything as beautiful. The judgement of taste does not postulate the agreement of everyone, looking for confirmation not from concepts but from the concurrence of others. But this universal voice is only an idea which is contemplated in the judgement and hence is meant to be judgement of taste. From this, the definition follows, that the *beautiful* is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally.

Kant presents the sole foundation of the judgement of taste as the *form of finality* of an object which is different from an end. Kant identifies two types of ends, subjective end and objective end. In both cases, the judgement of taste does not operate. He argues further that the judgement of taste depends upon *a priori* grounds placing it in the same stand as derived from the practical reason. He further shows that pure judgement of taste is independent of charm and emotion. He classifies aesthetic judgement into empirical and pure. The empirical aesthetic judgement is those by agreeableness and disagreeableness and is judgement of sense material whereas; the pure aesthetic judgement is those by which beauty is predicated of an object or its mode of representation and it is judgement of taste proper. He asserts therefore that the judgement of taste is pure only when it is not tainted by empirical delight. Kant cautions that such a mark is always present when charm or emotion has a share in the judgement by which something is to be described as beautiful. He argues at length that the judgement of taste is entirely independent of the concept of perfection.

In this line of argument, Kant identifies two forms of beauty, one he calls is free beauty and another as beauty which is merely dependent. Free beauty is described as those that is self-subsisting beauty which are not confined to any object defined with respect to its end, but please freely on their own account. For instance, the beauty of flowers, birds etc., Kant classifies under free beauty. The estimate of the free beauty is by pure judgement of taste. In cases where there is a presupposition of a concept of the end that defines a thing and consequently a concept of its perfection, is known as dependent beauty. Like beauty of a man, woman, child, building etc. Here, the judgement of taste is not pure.

In determining the ideal of beauty, Kant observes that there can be no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concepts since every judgement from that source is aesthetic, that is, the determining ground is the feeling of the subject and not any concept of object. In arriving at a principle of taste a universal criterion of the beautiful is to be validated by definite concepts. Kant establishes the taste must be an original faculty. He says, taste is an idea that one must get in one’s own consciousness, and accordingly form an estimate

of everything that is an object of taste or as the critical taste and even as universal taste. He determines the ideal of the beautiful as,

“Hence this archetype of taste which rests, indeed, upon reason’s indeterminate idea of a maximum, but is not, however, capable of being represented by means of concepts, but only in an individual presentation may more appropriately be called the ideal of the beautiful.” Here he concludes that beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from the representation of an end. Finally, Kant shows that beautiful is that which apart from a concept, is cognized as object of a *necessary* delight.

Analytic of the Sublime

Kant begins by bringing out the similarities in the *beautiful* and the *sublime*.

- Both are pleasing on their own account
- Both presupposes reflection
- Both have the same of kind of judgement, that is singular

But, it is shown that both have striking differences.

<i>Beautiful</i>	<i>Sublime</i>
The object of enquiry is in the form of the object and this consists in limitation.	Is found even in object devoid of form but involves representation of limitlessness, with a final added thought of its totality.
It is a presentation of an indeterminate concept of understanding	It is a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason
Delight is coupled with the representation of <i>quality</i>	Delight is coupled with the representation of <i>quantity</i>
Directly attended with the feelings of life, thus compatible with charm and playful imagination	It is a pleasure that arises only indirectly with no emotion or imagination , does not much involve positive pleasure as admiration or respect
Objects of nature as beautiful is an expression more perfect	Objects of nature as sublime is an inaccurate expression
The pleasure is of mere reflection	The pleasure is one of rationalising contemplation

Kant then analyses the nature of *sublime*, where he says the objects lends itself to the presentation of sublimity discoverable in the mind. Sublime, he says strictly cannot be contained in any sensuous form but only in ideas of reason. Even though an adequate presentation of reason is not possible, this inadequacy itself that admits sensuous presentation forms the basis for reason. In sublime, the mind is incited to give up sensibility and employ itself on ideas involving higher finality. He observes that the nature excites the ideas of the sublime chiefly by

the signs of magnitude and power. He contrasts that the concept of sublime in nature is less important but with rich consequences when compared with *beauty*. Kant adds that the beautiful in nature requires an external ground, but in sublime it is the self with the attitude of the mind that introduces sublimity into the representation of nature. This is the principle remark that Kant identifies, which separates sublime from that of the finality of nature. Thereby the theory of sublime is an aesthetic estimate of the finality of nature with an imagination.

Based on this Kant draws the same principle to analyse the sublime as was seen in the judgement of taste. Since it is an aesthetic reflective judgement, the delight in the sublime must be as that of the beautiful, viz., in *quantity* it is universally valid, in its *quality* independent of interest, in its *relation* subjective finality, in its *modality* necessary. Kant adds that division which is not required in the beautiful is the *mathematical* and *dynamical* which are founded in the sublime. Mathematical, he identifies as the mental movement combined with the estimate of the object and dynamical as the affection of the imagination.

After laying down the basic principles now Kant proceeds to define *sublime* at each level refining the definition.

- Sublime is the name given to what is absolutely great.
- That is sublime in comparison with which all else is small
- Sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense.

Kant maintains that a pure judgement upon the sublime must not have object as the determining ground, if it is to be aesthetic and not to be blemished with any judgement of understanding or reason. While assessing the quality of delight in the sublime, Kant states that, “The feeling of the sublime is, therefore, at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason, so far as the effort to attain to these is for us a law.” “...the object is received as sublime with a pleasure that is only possible through the mediation of a displeasure.”

In the discussion with regard to the dynamically sublime, Kant points out to the aspect of *might* in nature which challenges the strength, he remarks that this is improperly called sublime and it is only under presupposition of this idea within us that the idea of the sublime is attained with regard to that Being which inspires deep respect in us, not by the mere display of its might in nature, but more by the faculty which is planted in us of estimating that might without fear, and of regarding our position as exalted above.

In his general remarks to the exposition of aesthetic reflective judgement, Kant surmises, that In relation to the feeling of pleasure an object is to be counted either as *agreeable*, or *beautiful*, or *sublime*, or *good* (absolutely). Based on this Kant gives the brief definitions,

“The beautiful is what pleases in the mere estimate formed of it (consequently not by intervention of any feeling of sense in accordance with a concept of the

understanding). From this it follows at once that it must please apart from all interest.” “The sublime is what pleases immediately by reason of its opposition to the interest of sense.”

He draws from the above discussion that the reflection of aesthetic judgement is from the point of adequacy of reason, but there is no determined concept of reason, but it still forms a representation of the object as subjectively final, even in the presence of objective inadequacy of the imagination in its demand for meeting the reason. This is the lead to attend to the Transcendental Aesthetic Judgement which is pure judgement. He reiterates that the delight in the object depends upon the reference which we seek to give to the imagination, subject to the free activity of the mind, since according to Kant, aesthetic finality is the conformity to law of judgement in its *freedom*.

Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgement

Kant in the beginning lays the fundamental principle in the deduction of aesthetic judgement which is upon the objects of nature that is not directed to the sublime in nature but only to the beautiful. Kant sets into a search for Deduction of judgement of taste, that is, of judgements about beauty of things of nature, and that he considers will dispose of the problem for the entire aesthetic faculty of judgement. In order to distinguish the judgement of taste from all other cognitive judgements Kant illustrates and brings out the characteristic properties of *taste* as various peculiarities,

- The judgement of taste determines its object in respect of delight (as a thing of beauty) with a claim to the agreement of every one, just as if it were objective.
- Proofs are of no avail whatever for determining the judgement of taste, and in this connection matters stand just as they would were that judgement simply subjective.
- An objective principle of taste is not possible.
- The principle of taste is the subjective principle of the general power of judgement.

Kant then remarks, Deduction in aesthetic judgement does not have the determinant of necessity of having to justify the objective reality of a concept. Beauty is not a concept of the object, and the judgement of taste is not a cognitive judgement.

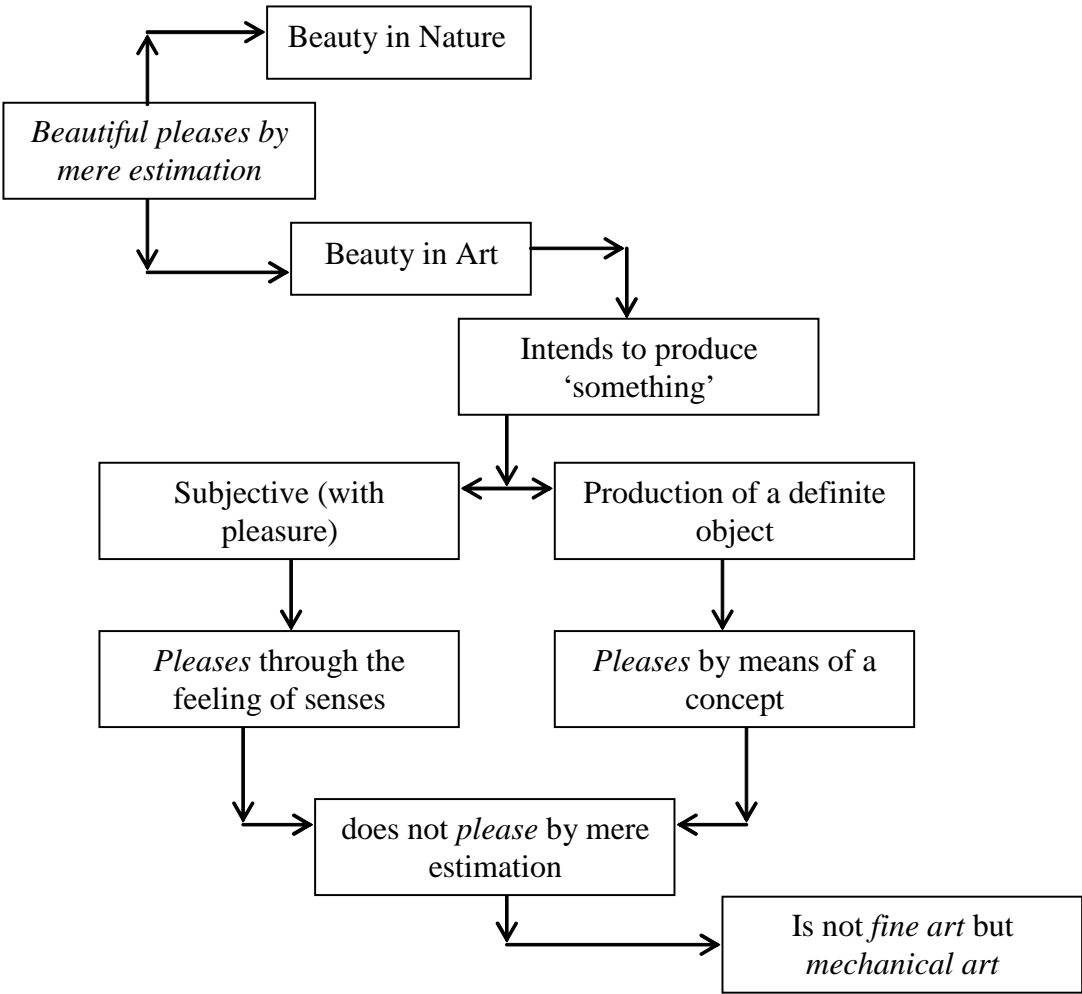
Art

Kant enters as it were to the next phase of his analysis beginning with the question as to ‘What is Art?’ He provides his answer,

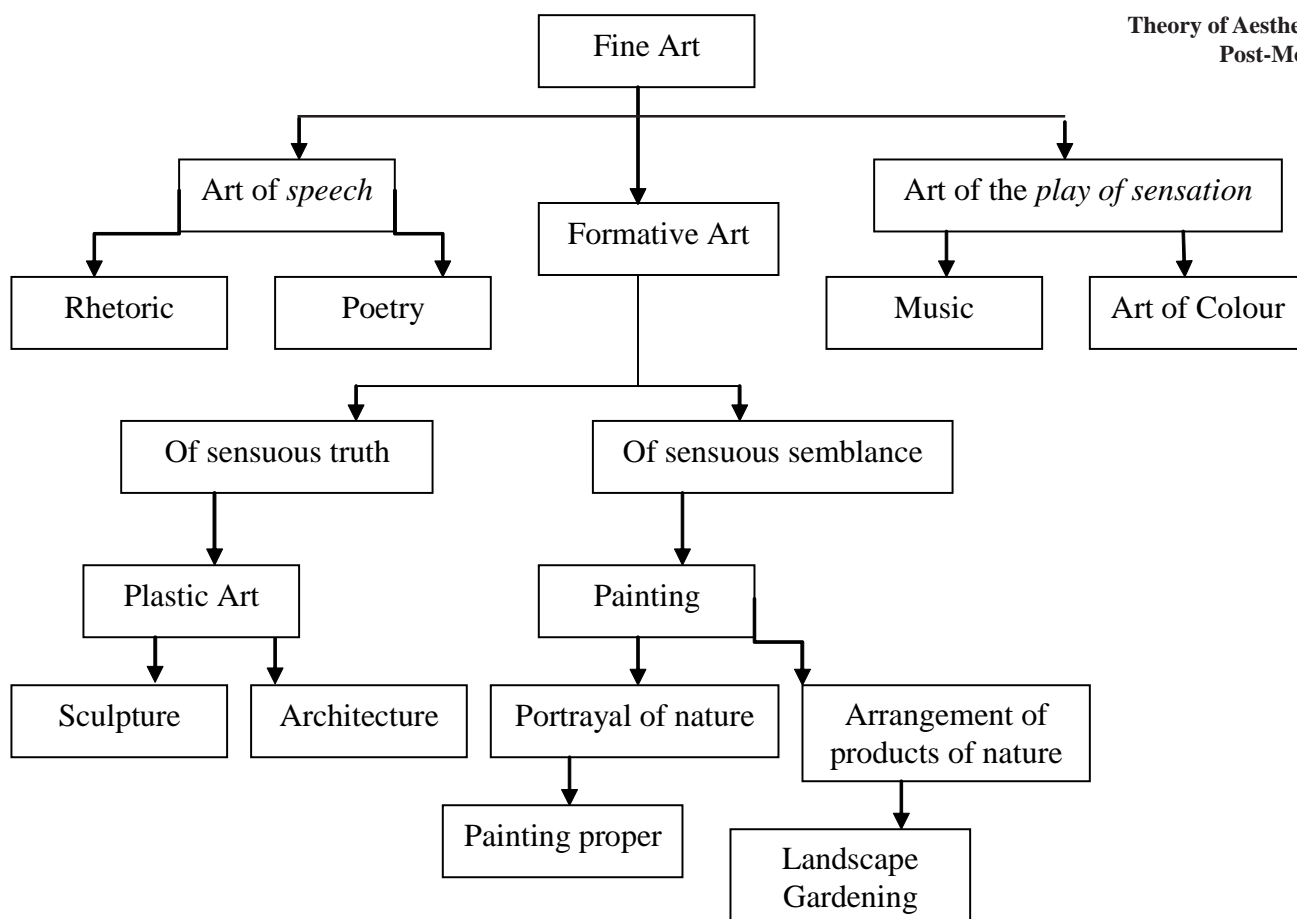
- Art is distinguished from nature and the product of these is referred to as work and effect respectively.
- Art as human skill is distinguished from science (as ability from knowledge)
- Art is different from handicraft. Art is called *free*, handicraft is industrial art.

He remarks there is no science of the beautiful but only a Critique. Again, there is no elegant science but only a fine art. He defines fine art as “Fine art, on the other hand, is a mode of representation which is intrinsically final, and which, although devoid of an end, has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication. The universal communicability of a pleasure involves in its very concept that the pleasure is not one of enjoyment arising out of mere sensation, but must be one of reflection. Hence aesthetic art, as art which is beautiful, is one having for its standard the reflective judgement and not organic sensation.”

He then brings out the basic principle in determining a fine art - that a product of fine art must be recognised to be art and not nature. The finality of the form of fine art should appear as a product of nature, free without arbitrary rules.



Kant lays down the requisite for fine art, as *imagination, understanding, soul and taste*. Further Kant identifies three kinds of fine art:



In another mode of classification, Kant shows the possibility of the combination of fine arts in one and the same product. In his comparative estimate of arts, he places poetry as the foremost. Then in the descending grade comes art of tone and music. In the formative art, he gives priority to painting.

Taste

Kant positions *taste* as the communicative tool of art. In order to prove this, he first defines sensation. “SENSATION, as the real in perception, where referred to knowledge, is called organic sensation and its specific Quality may be represented as completely communicable to others in a like mode, provided we assume that every one has a like sense to our own.”

In communication of *sense*, Kant shows the judgement with *taste* imputes subjective finality; which means the delight in the object, is universally communicable, without the mediation of concepts. Thus he arrives at *taste* as a kind of *sensus communis*. It is to be understood as idea of *public sense*. It is a critical faculty that takes account *a priori* of the mode of representation and judges with the collective reason of mankind thereby avoiding subjective and personal conditions.

Genius

Kant derives that fine art is the art of genius. He defines genius,

- 1) that it is a talent for art not one for science
- 2) being a talent in the line of art, it presupposes a definite concept of the product as its end. Hence it presupposes understanding, in addition to a

representation, i. e. of the intuition, required for the presentation of that concept. So there is a relation of the imagination to the understanding.

- 3) the imagination is represented by it in its freedom from all guidance of rules, but still as final for the presentation of the given concept.
- 4) the unsought and undesigned subjective finality in the free harmonizing of the imagination with the understanding of conformity to law presupposes a proportion and accord between these faculties that it cannot be brought about by any observance of rules, whether of science or mechanical imitation, but can only be produced by the nature of the individual.

Relation of Genius to Taste

Kant draws the relation between genius and taste in art. He states, “For estimating beautiful objects, as such, what is required is taste; but for fine art, i. e. the production of such objects, one needs genius.”

Based on the above definition, Kant derives that if genius is taken as the talent for fine art then there requires a necessary differentiation between beauty of nature and beauty of art. While beauty of nature requires taste to estimate, beauty of art requires genius for its possibility. A beauty of nature, he suggests is a beautiful thing; the beauty of art is a beautiful representation of a thing. Fine art is seen as superior to nature since it can bring out the beautiful of things in nature that would be otherwise ugly or displeasing. Ugliness, Kant considers in art does not destroy aesthetic delight but is seen as artistic beauty that which excites disgust. Thus, he concludes here that beautiful representation of an object is only the form of presentation of a concept, and the means by which it is universally communicated. Kant opines that to give this form what is required is merely taste. Taste is according to Kant a critical faculty and not productive and this conforms only to the work of fine art.

In this background, Kant records his view on the artist, “..... the artist, having practised and corrected his taste by a variety of examples from nature or art, controls his work and, after many, and often laborious, attempts to satisfy taste, finds the form which commends itself to him. Hence this form is not, as it were, a matter of inspiration, or of a free swing of the mental powers, but rather of a slow and even painful process of improvement, directed to making the form adequate to his thought without prejudice to the freedom in the play of those powers.”

Thus, in the analysis of the beautiful and the sublime, Kant has taken a different position and brought in elements of *taste*, *genius* and other factors underlying his basic theme of *judgement* of aesthetic ideas.

4.2 HEGEL

Hegel argues his position regarding art, rather Fine Art, recorded as ‘Lectures on Aesthetic’. In the very beginning he rejects the use of the very word ‘Aesthetic’ in the field of Fine Art. For *Aesthetics* he says stands for the science of sensation, of feeling that does not accurately reveal the science of the *beautiful* but it caters simply to the beauty of art. It can be seen as a new science or a branch of Philosophical discipline. Pointing out to such a drawback, Hegel prefers to set

aside the word *Aesthetic* and he identifies his concept with regard to Art as the *Philosophy of Art*, and he says more definitely, the *Philosophy of Fine Art*. This is the prefatory remark found in the 'Lectures on Aesthetic' (a three volume work in German) that records the original ideas of Hegel. After Kant, this work of Hegel has opened up a new avenue in the thought of Philosophy of Art.

Aesthetics confined to Beauty of Art

We shall now briefly survey the contents Philosophy of Art as found in the work of Hegel titled '*Lectures on Aesthetic*'. At the outset he shows that by the use of the terms 'Philosophy of Fine Art', the *beauty of Nature* is excluded. Hegel takes what we may call as an 'aesthetic leap' and states 'artistic beauty stands higher than nature'. He justifies this stand with his logic that beauty of art is twice-born. The elements in nature are not considered for their own sake and hence not beautiful but the same when processed through the human mind is perceived as beautiful. Hegel tries to show that since the elements of nature is seen beautiful through the human mind, the beautiful which is the art is placed higher than the nature. In this analysis, he arrives that the sense of beauty in nature reveals itself only as a reflection of the beauty which actually belongs to the mind. His main argument is that the realm of nature has not been arrayed or estimated under the aspect of beauty by the thinkers so far. Hegel's starting point thus is the beauty of art excluding beauty of nature.

Problems in Fine Art

Hegel from the analysis of the History of development of thought on Art identifies two major issues to be addressed, Does Fine Art come within the fold of Scientific treatment? Is Scientific treatment appropriate to Fine Art?

Ontology of Fine Art

Even before addressing the above two major concerns, Hegel first gives his position on the concept of art and establishes the ontology of art. Firstly, he clarifies his position on Art as which is *free* in its end as in its means. Art is capable of serving other aims even though it is not real. Hegel identifies Fine Art as a mode of revealing to Consciousness and leading to Divine Nature and thus places Fine art in par with Religion and Philosophy. He argues that fine art is the key to the understanding of wisdom of other nations. The attribute of art that is shared with Religion and Philosophy, Hegel claims as it peculiar feature to represent the highest ideas in sensuous forms. He considers mind as key element which generates work of art reconciling the finite actuality in nature and the infinite freedom of the mind. Secondly, Hegel deals with question of his predecessors that art is *unworthy* being only an *appearance* and hence *deceptive*. He rejects the very idea of appearance and counter-argues thus, "Art liberates the real import of appearances from the semblance and deception of this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of mind. The appearances of art, therefore, far from being mere semblances, have the higher reality and the more genuine existence in comparison with the realities of common life."

In this line of argument, Hegel finds the ontology of art. But he carefully then re-states that art is either in content or in form is not the highest mode in bringing the mind's genuine interests into consciousness. He admits that only a certain grade of truth can be represented in the medium of art. He thereby distinguishes

a deeper form of truth that is not available to be expressed through the medium of art.

Art Requires Scientific Treatment

Hegel presents the material required for artistic productions as a living creation, in which the universal is present not as law and maxim but with a sensuous phenomenon. Also, the artist is always surrounded by opinions and judgements from the external world. In such a context, a change which Hegel observes as from that of the Greek art and artists, he says, art remains as a thing of past. In the current works of art, Hegel finds what is aroused is immediate enjoyment and judgement in connection with the intellectual consideration. Thus, he presents his thesis here, "...the science of art is a much more pressing need in our day, than in times in which art, simply as art, was enough to furnish a full satisfaction. Art invites us to consideration of it by means of thought, not to the end of stimulating art production, but in order to ascertain scientifically what art is."

Appropriate Scientific Treatment

Hegel objects the view that though art is a suitable subject for philosophical reflection in the general sense, but still it does not match a systematic and scientific discussion. He states this very idea is found in the earlier thinkers is because that there is a prevalent notion that philosophical considerations are unscientific. Hegel opines that the pursuit of philosophy can never exist without a scientific procedure. He holds that since Art involves the most complex presuppositions, partly of the content and partly of the medium, so the scientific instruments must be relaxed. Based on his Philosophy of Mind, he asserts that in the work of art the thought alienates itself thus belonging to the realm of comprehending thought thereby the mind and hence it subjects itself to scientific considerations. In fact, Hegel advances and states art is not the highest form of mind but receives its true ratification only from science. In this introductory passage, he concludes his thesis that neither is fine art unworthy of a philosophical consideration nor is a philosophical consideration incompetent to determine the essence of fine art.

Applicable Methods of Science

In his attempt to identify a suitable scientific method in the field of art, Hegel identifies two contrary positions. 1) One is the science of art that focuses on the artistic productions that sketches out theories to govern criticism and artistic productions. 2) The other is the science that ignores the particulars of the art leading to an abstract philosophy of the beautiful. Hegel points out that one is with an empirical starting that surmounts to universal criteria and rules with a formal generalisation as *Theories of Art*. He quotes the example of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Longinus's *Treatise on the Sublime*, etc., as the works of theorising art. Hegel remarks that the prescriptions set by these theorists based on which the work of art is to be produced has been less successful. He criticises the narrow range of art that these works confine them to. Hegel then directs his critical review of the *forming taste* set by his predecessors. He gives the examples of Home's *Elements of Criticism*, the writings of Batteux, and Ramler's *Introduction to the Fine Arts*, that tried to define *taste* which actually catered only to the external aspect of art. Based on empirical observation these theorists also added the psychological content into the principle of *taste*. Hegel observes that one judges work of art according to the measure of one's insight and feelings.

Hegel's approach is to first criticise the various definitions of *beautiful* not as a historical interest but to arrive at the modern views on what involves the *beautiful*. Hegel first assesses Hirt's definition of *beautiful* (in *Horen*, No.7, 1797) "*beautiful as the perfect, which is or can be an object of eye, ear, or imagination*". In his analysis, Hegel brings out the following criticism against Hirt's definition: "Hirt's definition, of course, gives no more precise information as to what is to be characterized and what is not, in the artistically beautiful, or about the content of the beautiful, but it furnishes in this respect a mere formal rule, which nevertheless contains some truth, although stated in abstract shape."

Further by analysing the definitions provided by Meyer, Goethe and others, Hegel observes that the work of art that departs from the theory of abstraction led to the recognition of a peculiar kind of art which is *romantic art* and hence it becomes necessary to apprehend in a deeper sense the nature of *beautiful* that could not be touched upon by these theories. Hegel then traces the concept of *beautiful* from the ancient Greek works onwards. He remarks that Platonic idea which was merely abstract was a mere beginning of the Philosophic study of beauty. He concludes that philosophic conception of the beautiful must contain the two extremes (mentioned above) reconciled by combining the metaphysical universality with the determinateness of real particulars.

Further Hegel takes up the discussion on the conception of artistic beauty. We shall analyse some important concepts that brought about a break-through in the history of philosophy of art. Hegel records his thought on need for a human being to produce a work of art as, "The universal need for expression in art lies, therefore, in man's rational impulse to exalt the inner and outer world into a spiritual consciousness for him: self, as an object in which he recognizes his own self,"

His other popular view is that the work of art presents itself to sensuous apprehension. At the same time he shows that it addresses the mind by which the mind is affected and finds some sort of satisfaction. This is reasoned out by Hegel that art is no way a natural product to possess a natural life. The very existence of art thus is because of the mind. In dealing with the question of the purpose of art, Hegel takes the stand from reflective consideration of matter and that the idea of art is to be apprehended in its inner necessity.

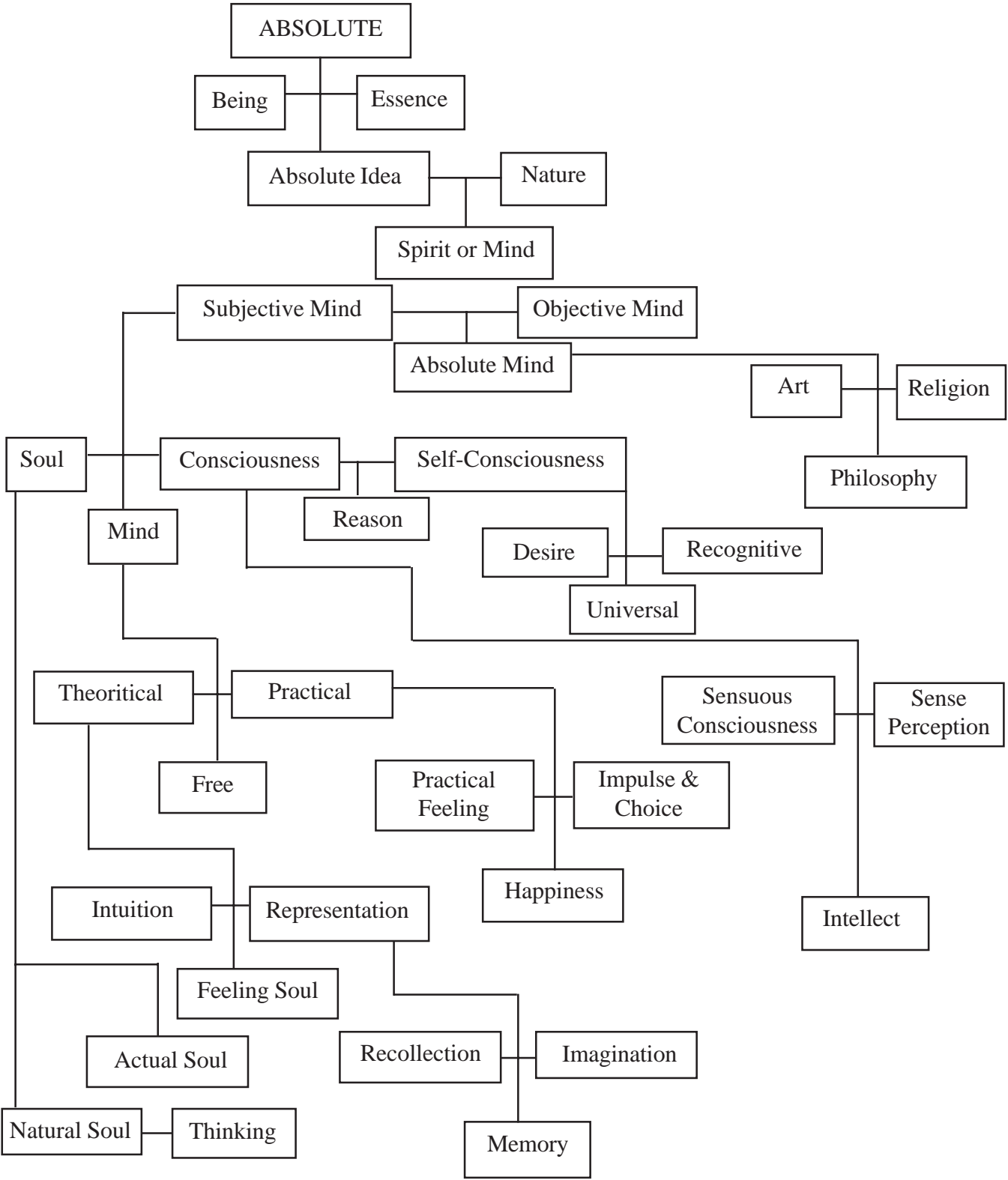
The Triad

For Hegel, the beautiful is when the mind sees the *Absolute* shining. The first of the triad where Absolute manifests is Art, Religion and Philosophy. Art constructs sensuous images of the divine; religion forms super-sensuous conceptions of the divine; philosophy attains to absolute demonstration of the divine. The aim of art, according to Hegel is to represent in sensuous form the various phases of the Idea; that is, of the concrete creative principle of the world, viz., Spirit. Thus, art belongs to the sphere of the Absolute mind. The successive and interlocking triad forms an organized whole centering on the Absolute.

The Philosophy of Art according to Hegel is classified into three principal divisions :

- 1) The first of these divisions is of a general character. Its purpose is to set forth the universal idea of the beautiful in art as the Ideal. The focus is also to trace inner relation of the Ideal to nature and the production of art.

- 2) The second of the division is a particular part the concentrates on the essential distinctions. This consists of various forms of art.
- 3) The third and final division has for its object the consideration of the individualization of the beautiful in art. Art progresses to the sensuous realization of its images, and develops into a system of the particular arts, with their divisions and subdivisions. The highest function of art, for Hegel, is bringing to consciousness the Divine, the spiritual truths and ideas through its modes and forms. Following is a graphic representation of Hegel’s triads.



Hegel traces the development of art historically in three phases.

- 1) Symbolic Art, it seeks a perfect unity of the idea with the external form;
- 2) The Classical Art finds it, for the senses and the imagination, in the representation of spiritual individuality;
- 3) Romantic Art transcends it in its infinite spirituality, which rises above the visible world.

Classification of Art

Hegel establishes a triadic relation while classifying various forms of art. He divides poetry into three, namely, epic poetry, lyric poetry and drama. Then he states that, drama or the art of acting, by means of facial expressions, bodily movements, postures, is the highest form of poetry since it uses human voice as the medium of expression. Drama represents to vision the poetical work. Hegel further substantiates his position of claiming drama as the highest form of art by drawing a synthesis, where the thesis is ‘drama is elaborated both in form and substance, into a complete whole’, the anti-thesis being ‘since it combines in itself the objectivity of Epic and subjectivity of Lyric’. The epic narrates, according to Hegel, the greatest exploits and events in the history of the nation and the lyric presents the subjective life experience, which is concerned with individual emotion. Drama is an amalgamation of epic and lyric that combines action and emotion giving rise to self-realising individual. To communicate to this finite and changing reality a true independence and substantiality, to represent it in its conformity to the Idea, is the mission of Art. Hegel gives the example of fear and pity in depiction of tragedy. Hegel divides the types of dramatic poetry as tragedy, comedy and social play. Based on the Aristotelian tragic *Katharsis*, he states, tragedy is that it excites and purifies fear and pity. Fear is a resultant of confrontation with terrible and finite object and excited by the visualization of the ethical power. The object of fear is not a terrible external object presented on the stage, but it is the absolute, eternal ethical entity. In this mode of human mind, there is the identification of the subject with the object, in which the differences are overcome and mind revels in its freedom and infinity. This is the stage of Absolute spirit.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Art according to Kant and trace the basis of his classification of art forms.

2) What is Philosophy of Art for Hegel?

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4.3 AESTHETIC THOUGHT: A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Hegelian thought serves as a window to the rise of a great turn witnessed in the 20th century. Benedetto Croce, an Italian Philosopher, carefully scrutinizes the origin and development of the idea of aesthetic and identifies a range of error in each thinker. He then proceeds to present his proposition with regard to aesthetic thus establishing a distinct ontological review not seen before. In this juncture, it is more appropriate to see the critical review of aesthetic thought from the Ancient Greece to culminate in Croce. This we shall present based on the ‘Historical Summary’ by Douglas Ainslie in his English translation of Croce’s work.

Ancient

In Greece, the problem of art and artistic faculty arose for the first time after the sophistic movement, as a result of the Socratic polemic. The aesthetic problem as such arrived after Socrates. In Plato, one finds the negation of art. He stated the first aesthetic problem with the questions, ‘is art rational or irrational?’ ‘In which region does it reside – soul or senses?’ When Gorgias remarked that tragedy is a deception this further prompted Plato to ask ‘what is the place of tragedy in philosophy and in the righteous life?’. He arrived that art was a shadow of shadow (imitation of imitation) and thus art belongs to the irrational, sensual sphere of the soul. Since art serves sensual pleasures and obscures the art and the artists should be excluded from the Republic. Plato observed that imitation does not arise to the logical or conceptual sphere but he failed to observe that there could be any form of knowledge other than the intellectual. Later, Aristophanes, Strabo and above all Aristotle dwelled upon didactic and moralistic possibility of poetry. Plotinus brought in the *mystic* view of art. The mystical view of Aesthetic reaches above philosophy. The dialogue in *Gorgias*, *Philebus*, *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium* on the *beautiful* is the cause for such a misunderstanding. The *beautiful* that occurs in the discourses of Plato has nothing to do with the *artistically beautiful*, nor with mysticism of the Neo-Platonians. Plato provides vacillating ideas on the *beautiful*, sometimes as Utilitarian, at times as Hedonist. In the *Hippias Major*, the dialogue begins with ‘what is beautiful?’ but is left unanswered. Thus, the *beautiful* is never identified with art, and the artistic fact is always clearly distinguished from beauty, mimetic from its contents. Aristotle too provides various definitions revealing his uncertainty. He was satisfied in his attempt to define Aesthetic as the science of representation and of expression than in his definitions of the *beautiful*. For him it was the synthesis of matter and form. Although Aristotle restated and re-examined the problem with marvelous acumen he failed to discern the true nature of aesthetic.

Medieval

In the middle ages, the attention diverted in the work of Pseudo-Plotinus was severely felt. God took the chief place of the Good. Aquinas following Aristotle distinguished beauty from good and applied the doctrine of imitation. The views emerging from the Church was either hedonistic with rigorist hypothesis. This implies that in the middle age the ideal state was celibacy, which means pure knowledge is discriminated from art. Duns Scotus was occupied with the problem of speculative grammar, Abelard defined sensation as *confusa conception* etc., such thoughts appeared in this period of dispute between thought and speech.

The medieval period to Renaissance age flooded with treatises did not provide an aesthetic science. The Renaissance of the Italy, France, Spain, England, and Germany closed with a sense of mystery yet to be revealed.

Modern

The words ‘genius’, ‘taste’ was greatly analysed during this period of 17th and 18th centuries. *Taste* was held to be a judicial faculty, directed to the beautiful, and thus to some extent distinct from the intellectual judgement. Baltasar Gracian, defined *taste* as a special faculty or attitude of the soul. The use of the word *taste* strictly in the aesthetic sense occurred in last quarter of the 17th century in France. The French definition was adopted by England, later by Italian and German writers. The words *imagination* and *fancy* also was primarily used in the field of art and thus attempts were made to define.

Haurte maintained that eloquence is the work of imagination, not of the intellect. Bacon identified poetry to imagination or fancy and assigned its place between history and science. While he called history as epic poetry, he termed science as ‘parabolic’ poetry. Hobbes described the manifestations of imagination and Addison explored the pleasures of imagination. He reduced the pleasures of imagination to those caused by perceptible objects. Du Bos of France held that feelings are the factors for the production of art. England followed with the idea of emotion in the work of art. Thus, terms like *imagination*, *taste*, *feeling*, *wit* etc., were almost used in the same sense. But, the divergence of opinion with regard to *taste* and intellectual judgement was made. Kant reinforced *taste* in the 18th century. But Voltaire and others opposed Kant’s idea and took to intellectualism. Further, as regards to feeling or sentiment, there was a strong tendency to sensualism. The new words and new views of the 17th century have great importance for the origins of aesthetic, which demanded a theoretical justification for aesthetic but they were unable to provide it.

Shaftesbury observed taste as a sense of the beautiful, or order and proportion identical with the moral sense. Hutcheson identified ‘internal sense of beauty’ that lies somewhere between sensuality and rationality. The same view dominated the English writers of 18th century. The period of Leibnitz witnessed speculation on language with a determined intellectual attitude where grammar was held to be an exact science.

In distant land of Berlin, was the young Baumgarten who first coined the word ‘Aesthetic’ in the sense of a special science. According to Baumgarten, Aesthetic is the science of sensible knowledge. Its objects are the sensible facts. He held rhetoric and poetic as the special cases of aesthetic, which is a general science. He demarks Aesthetic from that of psychology and identifies it as an independent science, which gives the rule for knowing sensibly, and is occupied with the perfection of sensible knowledge, which is beauty. The contrary of this he considered as ugliness. He arrived that the judgement of sensible and imaginative representations is *taste*. But he could free himself totally from the monads of Leibnitz nor the scholastic thought.

Vico’s *Scienza nuova* in 1725 is seen as the revolutionary idea on the nature of art and poetry. He discovered the creative imagination and showed that aesthetic is an autonomous activity. In the following period, the idealists of German philosophy brought out the romantic conception of art which was the conception

of Schelling, Solger and Hegel. Later, aesthetic took the shape of hedonistic, moralistic, utilitarian and so on. In the lengthy theories of aesthetic Croce finds certain errors which he claims to have addressed and thereby given rise to a new thought.

4.4 BENEDETTO CROCE (1866-1952)

Benedetto Croce having pointed out the defects as it were of the row of aesthetic-philosophical thinkers presents his thesis in a series of articles in journal *La Aesthetica* (Italian) or *Aesthetics as Science of Expression*. His classification of the work 'Philosophy of the Spirit' in three volumes consists of the first on *Aesthetic*, second related to *Logic* and the third the *Philosophy of the Practical*. In *Aesthetic* he gives his line of argument by re-defining aesthetic in art revealing that which was overlooked by the lineage of his predecessors.

Croce begins with the classification of human knowledge into two – intuitive knowledge and logical knowledge. Intuitive knowledge is independent of logical or intellectual knowledge. He shows that the result of work of art is an intuition. He arrives at the following by a series of argumentative analysis:

- Intuitive knowledge is expressive knowledge
- It is independent and autonomous in respect to intellectual function
- It is indifferent to discriminations like
 - Posterior and empirical
 - Reality and unreality
 - Formation and perceptions of space and time
- Intuition is representation
- Is different from form from what is felt and suffered
- Is different from the flux of sensation
- Is different from psychic material
- Taking possession of this form is expression
- Intuition is expression
- Intuition is nothing but to express

Croce examines his finding that intuition or expressive knowledge is identified with aesthetic or artistic fact, by taking works of art as examples of intuitive knowledge and attributing to them the characteristics of intuition, and vice versa. He arrives at a general proposition that Art is an expression of impressions and not the expression of expressions. He explicates artist as one who have a greater aptitude, a more frequent inclination to fully express certain complex states of the soul and art for Croce is the achievement of very complicated and difficult expressions. He critically points out that the earlier theories of Aesthetic that could not convey the true nature of art, is because of its separation from the general spiritual life and made exclusive of the aristocratic circle. Croce declares that there is only one intuition that is Aesthetic, which is the science of intuitive or expressive knowledge. He considers aesthetic as the true analysis of logic. Croce by equating the word *genius* as artistic genius argues that genius is only a

quantitative difference and not that of quality. While he criticises the genius of the romantic period, Croce states that the wanting factor of artistic genius is the reflective consciousness. He analyses some of the disputed concepts in the field of art:

- 1) The relation between content and form
- 2) *Interesting* as the Aesthetic content
- 3) Art as the imitation of nature so an appearance
- 4) Is Aesthetic a theoretical fact?
- 5) Art is *sentiment*
- 6) Theory of *aesthetic senses*

Likening to the Hegelian triad, Croce states that the old expressions must descend to the state of impressions in order to be synthesized in a new single expression. The function of art he says is liberating and purifying function based on the character of its activity. He shows that activity is the deliverer since it drives away passivity. He categorises an artist as both sensible or passion and serene.

Croce mentions that intuitive and intellectual forms exhaust all theoretic form of the spirit and now he identifies another form of spirit that is practical form which is the *will*. Understanding of things is based on theoretical form. Changes are brought about in the practical form, while by the former the universe is appropriated, with the latter there is creation. He identifies *will* that is able to act as a distinct moment of the aesthetic activity. He says that one cannot will or not will the aesthetic activity, however one can will or not will to externalize it, or better, to preserve and communicate, or not to others. He states that volitional fact of externalization is preceded by a complex of various kinds of knowledge which are known as *techniques*. Thus, there is an artistic technique which he defines as the knowledge employed by the practical activity engaged in producing stimuli to aesthetic reproduction.

Croce observes that the possibility of this technical knowledge, at the service of artistic reproduction, has caused the error of imagining an existence of aesthetic technique of internal expression, that tantamount to say, *a doctrine of the means of internal expression* which is inconceivable. The word *technique*, Croce states is at times used to designate certain defect or good in work of art. Croce then divides the collection of technical knowledge into groups entitling as *theories of the arts*. Stating that Art has no aesthetic limits, Croce shows that any attempt for an aesthetic classification of arts is absurd. He enumerates the kind of classification so far found in the tradition of writing arts:

- 1) Arts of hearing, sight and imagination
- 2) Arts of space and time
- 3) Arts of rest and motion
- 4) Oriental, classic and romantic
- 5) Art that can be seen only from one side – painting
- 6) Art that can be seen from all sides – sculpture

Croce also criticises the contrary view on the union of arts. Refuting various such ideas he arrives that art is independent with an intrinsic value with an

existence. Croce then warns that the moment the intuition is expressed externally then it is to be confined with the concept of *utility* and *morality*. That is, there is the concept of *selection*, of *interesting*, of *morality*, of an *educational end*, of *poupopularity* etc.

In keeping with the above line of argument we now shall state the nature of art as given by Croce in another work *Essence of Aesthetic* (an inaugural lecture by Croce). He first takes up the question ‘What is Art?’ He defines art as *vision* or *intuition*. He then shows those factors that are denied by such a definition.

- a) It denies that art is a *physical fact* because physical facts do not possess reality and is supremely real. Physical facts, Croce identifies as construction of the intellect for the purpose of science. He derives that art cannot be constructed physically.
- b) Art cannot be a utilitarian act since utilitarian act aims always at obtaining a pleasure and therefore keeping off a pain, art, says Croce has nothing to do with the useful, pleasure or pain. He refutes the hedonistic aesthetic.
- c) Art cannot be a moral act. Art does not arise as an act of will and hence escapes all moral discrimination.
- d) Art is not of the character of conceptual knowledge. Conceptual knowledge aims at establishing reality against unreality on the other hand, intuition is non-distinction of reality and unreality.
- e) The concept of art as intuition excludes the conception of art as the production of classes, types, species etc.
- f) Croce reiterates that the above definition negates art as philosophy, religion, history, science or mathematics.
- g) Art as intuition = art as a work of imagination or expression.

Thus, Croce marks the beginning of Expressionism, the 20th century phrase, in the Philosophy of Art by proving that Aesthetic is *the science of expressive activity*.

In a lecture delivered before the Third International Congress of Philosophy, at Heidelberg, 1908 he outlines his theory of aesthetic lucidly. He shows that the theories of Aesthetic of centuries bring out five main aspects

- *Empirical Aesthetic*
- Aesthetic as *practicism*
- As *intellectualistic*
- Aesthetic as *agnostic*
- Aesthetic is *mystic*

He states that these five aspects are eternal stages for the search for truth. He establishes, raising above all these, the theory of art as pure intuition and expression as the actuality of intuition.

4.5 20TH CENTURY AESTHETIC THINKERS

The Philosophy of Art thus evolved as distinct branch slowly recognised by its ontological disposition by various philosophers. We now see, how the word

‘aesthetic’ has taken shape and only after the Renaissance period it came to be associated with art and much later identified with the experience of art. However, to the present day, the word *aesthetic* is loaded with various connotations and it is the philosophical outlook that digs into its employment and application in art by defining and re-defining it. Here, we shall just enumerate the bounty works by other thinkers who has made a mark of difference in the line of thinking on art and aesthetic. Some of the influential works of the 20th century are:

The Sense of Beauty of George Santayana, *Principles of Art* of R.G. Collingwood, John Dewey’s *Art of Experience*, Alain’s *System of the Fine Arts*, *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays* of M.C. Beardsley, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: a Philosophy of Art* (in Mass) by A.C. Danto, *Art and the Aesthetic : An Institutional Analysis*, by G. Dickie, *Languages of Art: an Approach to a Theory of Symbols* by N. Goodman, Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*, *Contemporary Aesthetic and the Neglect of the Natural Beauty* of R.W. Hepburn, J. Levinson’s *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Wollheim’s *Art and Its Objects* and *On Art and the Mind* and other such works and articles.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Trace the various views on representation of ‘terror’ in art forms.

2) Bring out the essential contribution of any one of the 20th century Aesthetic Thinkers.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In our journey to the second phase of modern aesthetic thought we have to some extent justified the position of Kant and Hegel by analysing their original works. We consider both Kant and Hegel as the strong platform of the 18th century in whom culminates the ancient thought and from whom arises the modern thought. Kant we saw influenced by the work of Baumgarten presented his concept of *taste* and *judgement* in his *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*. In his precise division of work into the analytic of the beautiful and the analytic of the sublime he established his concept of *judgement of taste*. He laid the foundation in the

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classification of arts and built on the concepts of *genius* and *taste* in the field of art. Hegel in his *Lectures on Fine Art* showed the difficulty in the term ‘aesthetic’ and appropriated it in the scientific treatment. He employed the triad system of explanation on the role and position of art. He took further from Kant on the classification and ontology of art. In this unit, we marked Hegel as the stop-gap of thought of modern era and then proceeded to give a brief outline of the Historical Summary as seen by Croce. Croce the most influential thinker of the 20th century classified as *Expressionist* found ‘errors’ in the earlier theories and established his concept of *intuition*. We then briefly enumerated the thinkers and their works (texts and articles) of the 20th century who influenced the aesthetic thought.

4.7 KEY WORDS

- Taste
- Genius
- Aesthetic Judgement
- Intuition

4.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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