

## **The Artistic and Philosophical Foundations of the Fable Genre in the Age of Classicism: Order, Reason and Morality**

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**Abstract.** *This article examines the artistic and philosophical foundations of the fable genre in the age of Classicism, with particular emphasis on the principles of order, reason, and morality. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Classicism established a rational and normative aesthetic system grounded in the ideals of harmony, clarity, and discipline derived from antiquity and Enlightenment philosophy. Within this framework, the fable emerged as one of the most effective literary genres for moral instruction and philosophical reflection. Applying the IMRAD structure, the study analyzes how Classical aesthetics shaped the structure, imagery, and didactic function of the fable genre. The article demonstrates that the Classical fable functioned not merely as a literary form, but as a philosophical instrument aimed at rationalizing human behavior, promoting ethical norms, and reinforcing social order.*

**Key words:** *Classicism, fable genre, poetics, reason, morality, order.*

### **1. Introduction**

Classicism represents one of the most influential literary and philosophical movements in European cultural history. Emerging in the seventeenth century and reaching its full development in the eighteenth century, Classicism was deeply influenced by the revival of Greco-Roman aesthetics and the rise of rationalist philosophy. The Classical worldview emphasized reason, clarity, harmony, and adherence to established norms, considering literature a disciplined art form governed by universal principles.

Philosophers of the Enlightenment asserted the supremacy of reason as the primary means of understanding reality and human behavior. These philosophical ideas profoundly affected literary creation, leading to the formation of a normative aesthetic system that rejected emotional excess and subjective expression. Instead, literary works were expected to demonstrate balance, logical coherence, and moral clarity.

Within Classical aesthetics, literature was assigned a clear social and educational function. Writers were expected not merely to entertain readers but to instruct and morally improve society. This belief was institutionalized in France through the establishment of the Académie Française in 1635, which sought to regulate language, style, and literary genres. As a result, genres were strictly classified, and each genre was expected to fulfill a specific function within the literary system.

In this intellectual and cultural environment, the fable genre gained renewed importance. Traditionally associated with ancient authors such as Aesop and Phaedrus, the fable was transformed

during the Classical period into a refined literary form capable of expressing universal moral truths through concise and rational narratives. Its brevity, allegorical structure, and explicit moral conclusion made it particularly suitable for Classical ideals.

The allegorical use of animals and symbolic characters allowed writers to represent human behavior in an abstract and generalized form. This abstraction corresponded to the Classical preference for universality over individual experience. Rather than focusing on unique personal emotions, Classical fables depicted typical human vices and virtues such as pride, greed, hypocrisy, and wisdom. Through rational observation and moral judgment, the fable encouraged ethical self-reflection.

The aim of this article is to analyze the artistic and philosophical foundations of the fable genre in the age of Classicism. Special attention is given to the principles of order, reason, and morality and their manifestation in the structure, imagery, and social function of the fable.

## **2. Methods**

The present study is based on a combination of literary-historical and analytical methods commonly employed in literary scholarship. The historical-typological method is used to trace the evolution of the fable genre within the broader context of Classical aesthetics and Enlightenment philosophy.

This approach makes it possible to identify the historical and cultural conditions that contributed to the genre's development.

A comparative literary method is also applied to examine the fable genre in different European literary traditions, particularly French and German Classicism. This method allows for the identification of shared poetic principles such as structural order, rational clarity, and moral didacticism, while also recognizing variations in emphasis and style.

In addition, textual and philosophical analysis is employed to explore the internal organization of Classical fables. Narrative structure, allegorical devices, character typology, and moral conclusions are examined in order to reveal how Classical rationalism shaped both the form and content of the genre.

## **3. Results**

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the fable genre in the age of Classicism is characterized by strict structural organization and logical coherence. Classical fables typically involve a limited number of characters, a single central situation, and a clearly articulated moral conclusion. This compositional economy reflects the Classical belief that clarity and order enhance the effectiveness of moral instruction.

Order functions as a fundamental poetic principle in Classical fables. The narrative structure is carefully regulated, with no superfluous details or emotional digressions. Each element of the story contributes directly to the moral lesson, ensuring that the reader's attention remains focused on the ethical message.

Reason serves as the primary criterion for evaluating human behavior in Classical fables. Characters embody rationally defined moral qualities rather than complex psychological traits. Through allegorical representation, human actions are abstracted and generalized, allowing moral truths to be perceived as universal rather than situational.

Morality remains the central function of the genre. Classical fables consistently promote virtues such as moderation, wisdom, honesty, and self-control, while criticizing vices such as arrogance, greed, and hypocrisy. The moral lesson is either explicitly stated or clearly implied, reinforcing the didactic purpose of the genre.

## **4. Discussion**

The findings of this study correspond closely with Classical aesthetic theory, particularly the principles articulated in Classical treatises on poetics. Classical theorists emphasized that literature must follow reason, order, and established rules in order to achieve artistic perfection and moral effectiveness.

Compared to medieval allegorical narratives or later Romantic forms, Classical fables avoid emotional excess and subjective expression. Instead, they prioritize universality, abstraction, and rational judgment. This confirms the genre's alignment with the broader philosophical goals of the Enlightenment.

The allegorical nature of the fable also enabled indirect social criticism in societies characterized by rigid political and social hierarchies. By presenting moral lessons through symbolic narratives, authors were able to critique social behavior without direct confrontation, making the fable a subtle yet powerful medium of ethical and philosophical discourse.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the fable genre in the age of Classicism embodies the fundamental principles of order, reason, and morality. Through its disciplined structure, allegorical imagery, and explicit ethical orientation, the Classical fable functioned as both a literary and philosophical genre.

The enduring relevance of Classical fables lies in their ability to combine artistic simplicity with profound moral reflection. As a result, the fable occupies a significant place in European literary history and continues to serve as an important object of scholarly analysis.

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