V. NATURE OF CREATIVE ACT
Creative activity refers to man's capacity for discovering and originating new and meaningful forms. A capacity does not merely mean an unfulfilled potentiality, rather one may say that a capacity without achievement is meaningless. This capacity to create is reputed to manifest itself in various ways: artistic creations; scientific and mathematical theories, and so on. Anyone acquainted with the literature on creative process can scarcely leave unnoticed the analysis of creative process in terms of the following four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, and elaboration or verification respectively. But since the purpose of this chapter is not to undertake a psychological study of the process of creativity, howsoever important this four-fold analysis, it is not relevant for the present inquiry. Marking the domain of this inquiry, it may be said that the following analysis of creative activity is undertaken with a view to discuss and relate it to the problems of art. To be more precise, our concern would be with that aspect of creative activity which results in the production of art-works. It is not our intention to go into the appreciation and evaluation of art, howsoever creative this activity might be. The scope of this chapter is confined to an analysis of the causes and constituents of the creative activity that result in the creation of art.
works. And the various problems arising in this connection would be discussed in the context of the theories of Freud, Spengler, Croce, and Sartre (already analysed in the First Section).

Let us begin with an analysis of the constituents of creative activity. The use of the term 'constituent' may be held objectionable in this context, since creativity is not an object that can be dissected into its constituent elements. Thus the term constituent can be applicable to creativity only if it is taken loosely to include all those mental processes that go into its making. Taken in this broad sense the first constituent of creative activity is imagination. Imagination, however, plays a very important role in every mental activity, but it operates in artistic creativity in a peculiar manner. It is peculiar in the sense that images in artistic creativity are autonomous: they are visualized and entertained for themselves. They are not guided by any extraneous considerations.

Let us turn to Sartre since he has given a detailed analysis of the nature of imagination. It has already been seen that his basic postulate is that imagination is a particular type of consciousness, which, in order to operate, presupposes a transcendence from the real.

"For a consciousness to be able to imagine it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature, it must be able by its own efforts to withdraw from
the world. In a word, it must be free."

How imagination acquires a peculiar function in the creation of art-works, becomes evident when they are compared to other imaginative creations like dreams and hallucinations. Of the two, dreams are more akin to art-works. Being imaginative creations, both dreams and art works presuppose a transcendence from the real and thus constitute worlds by themselves; enclosing their respective space, time and events. However, there is a difference between the two: the awareness of reality brings an end to the dream while this does not have any effect upon the creation of art. Rather, the awareness of reality as against the characteristic unreality of art, facilitates the creation of art, for it psychically distances the artist from his creation. Furthermore, the awareness of unreality is constant in the creation of art while in dream it is momentary. Thus, Sartre holds that dreaming is like reading a novel, the imaginative participation in both activities is directed, the reader is directed by the artist and the dreamer by his dream which he has not voluntarily created. For both the dreamer and the novel reader the events have a fatality about them, there are happenings which they can only observe but never control. This is one main reason why dreaming can never be akin to the process of artistic creation, since.

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Thus an artistic creation is an induced dream, for, unlike the dream it is a wilful transcendence from reality. Apart from its freedom from pragmatic purpose which artistic creativity shares with all imaginative activity, here even the psychic involvement of the artist is missing. This is not so in dreaming. And it has already been made clear that for Sartre artistic creativity, being an imaginative consciousness, is free from the impact of the perceptual and conceptual consciousness. But this must be marked that even though Sartre holds the imaginative consciousness to be completely autonomous, knowledge has still to play a part in the formation of an image. Evidently, knowledge here does not refer to conceptualization. To make this clear Sartre draws a distinction between "imaginative knowledge" and "pure knowledge". Pure knowledge as against the imaginative one is consciousness of relations of things apart from their particular qualities, it aims at exploring

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2 All anticipation at a given moment of a story derives from the very fact that the anticipation appears as an episode of the story. I cannot entertain, conceive another ending, I have no choice, no recourse, I am compelled to narrate the story to myself: there is no "blow for nothing". Ibid., p. 246.

3 The pure knowledge is pre-objective, at least when not associated with a word. That is, that formal essence and objective essence are undifferentiated in it.... Imaginative knowledge, on the contrary, is a consciousness which seeks to transcend itself, to point the relation as an outside.... Let us return to the consciousness of the
essences and universals. Imaginative knowledge aims at visualizing the object as an image; as a particular as against universals of pure knowledge. Thus '... as knowledge enters into the constitution of an image it undergoes a radical modification. This it undergoes even before the image is built up. There are consciousnesses of a special type that are empty, altogether like consciousness of pure meaning.... They present themselves as "something visual or conceptual but of such a nature that it could give rise to a visual impression".... It is still knowledge which is involved, but knowledge that is debased.'

It is evident that the debasement of knowledge in the creation of an image does not imply a hierarchy: holding concepts as superior to images; the two are merely different. Similar to the relation of images and knowledge is that between images and perception. Without perception no imagination can be possible, however the perceived objects acquire entirely different forms in the process of imagining. Since both imagination and perception presuppose the negation of one another, only one of them can be intended at one time -- either the object as an image or as a perception.

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Ibid., p. 94.

Ibid., pp. 84-85.
This shows that for Sartre the creative act is a spontaneous activity: spontaneous not in the sense of being motivated by an unconscious inspiration. Sartre is not a Platonist who would regard artistic creativity the result of divine frenzy which even the creative artist is unable to explain. He does not believe in the formation of latent images, born out of the unconscious activity of the human psyche. Thus, spontaneity for him is freedom: freedom from the bindings of desire and intellect. The psychic distance of the artist is possible only through putting himself "out of gear" with practical needs and this is the pre-requisite of artistic creativity. The concept of psychic distance makes it clear that spontaneity does not imply a sudden outburst of an artist's emotions, on the other hand, artistic creativity presupposes a controlled and calculated expression of emotions. Every element of a work of art is born out of the conscious intention of its creator and this is what makes it different from a natural object:

PThus Bullough remarks:

"Distance, as I said before, is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends.... Distance does not imply an impersonal, purely intellectually interested relation of such a kind. On the contrary, it describes a personal relation, often highly emotionally coloured, but of a peculiar character. Its peculiarity lies in that the personal character of the relation has been, so to speak, filtered." E. Bullough, "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle", in Aesthetics: Lectures and Essays. (London, 1957), pp. 96-97.
"... the most beautiful disorders are effects of art, that is, again order,... the beauties which appear in the book are never accidental. In nature, the tree and the sky harmonize only by chance...."

Croce also holds art to be spontaneous, his meaning of spontaneity is similar to that of Sartre. For him the process of artistic creativity is spontaneous because one cannot will it. Sartre also excludes willing from creativity because he holds the imaginative creation to be free from desire, but he does subscribe to the intentionality of consciousness. Croce's emphasis upon inspiration in the process of artistic expression seems as if he is siding with the unconscious theory. But for him inspiration implies what Sartre means by spontaneity: freedom from pragmatic value. Thus it does not refer to any latent activity of the human imagination. He emphatically holds that,

"Intuitive or artistic genius, like every form of human activity, is always conscious; otherwise it would be blind mechanism. The only thing that can be wanting to artistic genius is the reflective consciousness,...."

Furthermore, it has already been seen that no one has been more emphatic than Croce regarding his assertion of the autonomy of artistic creativity. To free it from


7B. Croce, Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic, p. 15.
extra-aesthetic involvements Croce equates artistic expression to intuition. And through his classification of the four moments of the human spirit, he emphasizes the peculiar autonomy and independence of the Aesthetic as compared to the other three modes. On this point one finds here a striking similarity between the views of Sartre and Croce; though the two arrive at these conclusions from different presuppositions, both emphasize the role of imagination in the creative act and regard it as independent of the will and intellect. Creative act, for them, is a conscious imaginative process but it is free from the impact of human volition. Knowledge and perception, for both Sartre and Croce, play an important role in the formation of images but images neither follow the dictates of percepts, nor of concepts.

Spengler shares with Croce his emphasis upon the intuitive character of artistic creativity. Unlike scientific theories which dissect Nature systematically, art works imitate the living aspect of the external reality. Artistic

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8"A work of art may be full of philosophical concepts; it may contain them in greater abundance and they may there be even more profound than in a philosophical dissertation, which in its turn may be rich to overflowing with descriptions and intuitions. But notwithstanding all these concepts the total effect of the work of art is an intuition; and notwithstanding all those intuitions, the total effect of the philosophical dissertation is a concept." Ibid., pp.2-3.
creativity is different from scientific and discursive thinking because while the former intuites the world-image (as given through its particular culture), the latter dissects in terms of systematic and universal laws. In this sense, the creative act as related to artistic expression is akin to History -- it works on intuition and imagination rather than cognition. Since for Spengler the distinction between the 'systematic' and the 'physiognomic' is not rigid, there are no strict boundaries between scientific and artistic activities. For all Nature is bound by the limitations of Culture and History. Thus, for Spengler the distinction between science and art is only on a superficial plane. Ultimately it is the intuitive that is primary. This primacy of intuition obviates the apparent distinctions between the divergent forms of creativity. Perhaps the only conceivable difference is, that unlike science, art does not pursue and formulate an illusory objectivity and universality.

Freud also does not draw any rigid boundaries between the various forms of creative activity. He shares with Sartre the view that escape from reality is the prerequisite of creativity. But for him the creative act is not a conscious act, engendered by the intentionality of human consciousness. He, on the other hand, regards it to be an activity which is controlled by unconscious agencies. And it has already been seen that for Freud artistic
creativity is a disguised and imaginary fulfilment of the unfulfilled instinctive urges. Since the phantasies are objectified through art works, the process of artistic creation which indirectly satisfies these phantasies is a detached fulfilment as compared to the fulfilment sought by the dreamer, neurotic and the psychotic. As contrasted to the artist, all others are involved with their phantasies. The formalized structure of the art-work (even if it is visualized at the mental level as was conceived by Croce), disinfects it from the personal involvement of the artist. Thus the art work becomes a stimulant for purging and exciting the inhibited instinctive urges of human beings. For the instinctive urges, when concretized in terms of art works, acquire an objective character which is lacking in the case of dreams and other attempts at phantasy-making.

The analysis of creative act would be incomplete without a reference to its relation to tradition. Tradition in this context would be a set of art forms and canons of artistic evaluation that have withstood the passage of time. Tradition acquires varied overtones of meaning according to these four thinkers. For Spengler tradition is the soul of a culture that is inherited by every man belonging to it. Every human being in his life-time undergoes the various stages of development analogous to his respective culture. And thus he inherits the "form-language" of his culture without being really aware of this inheritance. Thus the
inheritance of tradition is not a matter of choice, it is almost an unconscious process which every artist picks up from his particular culture. Freud also believes in the inheritance of the various forms of expression. This unconscious process of picking up traditional expressions: myths, idioms etc. is given the name of unconscious knowledge by Freud. Dreams and artistic creations embody in themselves archaic and primitive symbols that have their roots in the abysmal past. The artist uses these symbols without any conscious awareness and choice. Thus we find that for both Freud and Spengler this inheritance and adherence is a latent process. The artist is not free to choose his tradition. For freedom can be possible only if it is a conscious act.

Sartre and Croce, however, hold the contrary view: for both of them the creative act is the result of a conscious intention. And for Sartre, a tradition apart from the individual is meaningless; it acquires its value and significance through the conscious commitment of an individual. Thus norms and traditions are not a priori, they follow and do not precede an artistic creation. It is the very nature of human consciousness to be free from any extraneous determinants; it is its own determinant. And the creation of art being a free act has no external agencies to determine it. Therefore, Sartre would interpret
the desire to be branded as the follower of a certain tradition as an act of "bad faith" on the part of the artist; it implies that he wants to escape his responsibility of creating his own form-language by calling himself the follower of a certain tradition without really understanding it. To adhere consciously to a tradition one must live it in each act of choice, it should not be merely a plea to escape one's freedom.

Croce also thought on similar lines; for him every art work is a unique creation and no traditions and norms can have an a priori significance for it. The art works of the past are meaningless and dead without their imaginative fulfilment by the man who wants to bring them to life. This much Spengler also concedes, but he takes for granted the participation in the creation of a certain type of imaginative forms by men belonging to a Culture. Here it seems that there are two standpoints that are taken by these thinkers: on the one hand Spengler and Freud take the existence and impact of tradition for granted and for them it is the tradition that dictates the individual; on the other hand, for Sartre and Croce the independent existence of tradition is meaningless. A tradition can be a tradition only if the individual regards it to be so. In the sense in which there is no necessary determinant of artistic creativity, Sartre and Croce are justified in denying the existence of tradition. But if tradition is taken in
a wider sense; comprising of all the possible influences to which an artist is exposed in his life-time, it does seep into the artist's creations. And to this meaning of tradition perhaps Sartre and Croce may also concede. But all along they both emphasize that extraneous influences cannot determine the artist's creativity. Croce elaborates this point by showing the independence of expressions from impressions; Sartre by emphasizing the spontaneity of the imaginative consciousness. In this sense Croce and Sartre seem to be on a firm ground because the deterministic hypotheses of Spengler and Freud are not able to account for the various adventures in artistic creativity. For both Spengler and Freud, the artist cannot help being dictated either by his Cultural cycle (Spengler) or by his unconscious that has its roots in the archaic racial symbols (Freud).

This brief analysis of the nature of creative act makes it clear that art activity for all these four thinkers is a freedom from the practical, moral and intellectual involvements. The main distinction arises in the causes they attribute for this creative activity. For Sartre and Spengler dread and longing play a very important role in man's creative adventures. Dread and longing arise out of the insecurity that man feels because of his inherent finitude. Man is perpetually haunted by the fear of death and thus he yearns to fulfill his potentialities, and this yearning expresses the peculiar longing of man against
the perpetual finitude that threatens him. Thus, Spengler looks upon all attempts at expression — of communication in terms of set of symbols like colours, sounds, words etc., as devices of familiarizing and conjuring the unknown aspect of the world. That is why the creation of art derives its impetus from imitation: of bridging the gulf between man and nature. Fear, as looked at by Sartre, is associated with the peculiar existential situation of man: of being alone in the world with the constant threat of finitude that haunts all his plans and possibilities. The uncertainty born of the process of unending change heightens this feeling of impermanence in man's consciousness. And this finitude of man motivates him to fulfil himself through creative activity. Creativity being an enterprise in freedom, and freedom being realizable only amongst others, artistic creativity originates in the being-for-others. Without the others there is no freedom and consequently no impetus for the creation of art.

Croce and Sartre, in spite of sharing common views regarding their analysis of the constituents of the creative act, attribute different causes to it. For Sartre, the impetus of creativity comes from a process of active communication with others while for Croce others are of no consequence. Since art is the expression and fulfilment of the spirit, it is complete even before it is communicated to others. For Croce creative activity of the imagination
is self-explanatory; it does not need any extraneous causes to explain it. Thus the reason for artistic creativity is the aesthetic adventure itself and nothing beyond it; no moral, intellectual, psychological and social causes can be held responsible for it. Freud has emphasized and explored the unconscious causes motivating artistic creativity to the extent that he seems to forget that art is the product of the intentional creation of the artist. Intention is what makes artistic creativity different from dreaming, Spengler's system also suffers from a similar weakness: his belief in the formation of latent images, shareable by all those who belong to a certain culture leaves no scope for the artist's intention. For him, that which the artist thinks as his intentional creation is actually the execution of an already laid-out plan of the culture. Thus, for both Spengler and Freud there is no artistic style in the sense of being a creation of the individual's conscious intention.

It is difficult to say which one of these theories explains most adequately the mystery of the creative process. For none of these hypotheses is wholly satisfactory for explaining all the multiple dimensions of artistic creativity. Spengler's concept of world-fear excludes the possibility of individual differences in reactions; everyone is confronted by the world-fear but why do only few people take recourse to artistic creativity? Perhaps this diversity of responses can be explained in terms of genius and talent — that some
human beings are endowed with an extra-ordinary imagination and they acquire training to concretize their images through works of art. But this too is difficult to entertain in Spengler's case. For we have already seen that according to him it is the cultural epoch and not the individual that is creative. The individual merely is an agent to execute the plan of his culture. Thus to talk about genius and talent in the context of individual would be a meaningless venture. Spengler seems to aim at reconciling two opposed ideas -- he wants, on the one hand, to retain the criterion of creativity on the level of individual skill and ability; and on the other hand he emphasizes the inevitable growth and decay of creativity that accompanies the growth and decay of cultures. His theory of cultural cycles amounts only to this that all art works at the cultural spring-time are masterpieces and those at the threshold of civilization are necessarily inferior. The artists are merely agents to embody the cultural creativity. On the other hand Spengler seems to think that there can be creative artists even in the period of cultural decadence. Spengler's belief in the supremacy of cultural epoch\(^9\) does not appear to be compatible with individual talent and genius. Like Spengler, Freud also is unable to account for individual differences. For him the creative activity draws its impetus from the overwhelming

\(^9\)See footnote 17 Ch. III.
unhappiness that man faces because of the deprivation of instinctive satisfaction. But why and how this inhibition of instinctive urges results in neurotic symptoms in one man and artistic creativity in another is a problem that challenges the Freudian analysis of creative activity. Freud admits his inability to account for this variety of reactions to the environment. His explanation of Leonardo's ability (to paint), in terms of his early desire for looking, has already been discussed. But this explanation, ceases to be more than a conjecture since it is not exhaustive. Freud has ignored the negative cases; there are cases where people with similar environment do not take recourse to artistic creativity. Freud emphatically states that only a person with Leonardo's childhood could have painted Mona Lisa, but he does not explain why a person in spite of having a childhood similar to Leonardo's may not take recourse to expressing himself through painting. It is the prerequisite of a scientific explanation that it must exhaust all the possibilities in a given situation; it must lay down the conditions of its falsifiability. Freud's hypothesis, unfortunately, is unable to fulfil this requirement. It can neither be proved nor disproved because there are no definite conditions which falsify it. And furthermore a theory can be operationally valid only if its fundamental constructs can be empirically definable. For a further discussion of the psycho-analytical principles, see the following papers:
model of psychic apparatus has no parallels in neurophysiology.

Sartre, through his explanation of creativity as being-for-others, seeks to solve the problems of both communication and self-expression. For, unlike Croce who ignores communication and emphasizes only the expressive aspect of creativity, Sartre takes both into account. The artistic creation is an act of commitment and self-expression — an affirmation of freedom and this freedom is essentially realizable in communion with the other. Croce, however, appears to be very rigidly consistent in his assertion of artistic autonomy. He is preoccupied with the analysis of the process of creation rather than the reasons behind it. But regarding the process of creativity, Croce's views do not seem to be novel. His analysis of the creative process into four stages of "impression", "expression", "hedonistic accompaniment" and "externalization" do not betray a keen insight into the process of artistic creation. Croce does not attempt to explain in detail the psychic process by which expressions are elaborated from impressions. Perhaps

B.F. Skinner, "Critique of Psychoanalytic Concepts and Theories";
it is here that Freud is at his best. His analysis of
dream-work lends a keen insight into the process of the
emergence of art forms: the processes of "condensation",
"displacement", "visual representation" and "secondary
elaboration". However, this does not imply that all of
what Freud says can be treated like a gospel. His analysis
of the dream-work and creative process has deep-rooted
relation to the Eros and the Death instinct. And this
basic hypothesis is open to question. But in any case
it is a viewpoint worth considering. It seems that his
concern for marking out definitely the domain of aesthetic
activity prevented him from concentrating attention upon
the non-aesthetic causes that can be associated with the
creative act. However, the recent researches in physio­
logical psychology show that in the context of creativity
no hard and fast distinction can be made between the
aesthetic and non-aesthetic. For instance in an analysis
of imagination, the neuro-cerebral processes that explain
its working cannot here be ignored. And if the exact
neuro-cerebral basis for creativity is discovered, it would
bring a drastic change in the hypotheses about the creative
process. Thus, it is evident that about the problem of
creativity nothing final can be said at this stage. Fresh
information on this subject is constantly pouring in.