VII. THE CRITERION OF AESTHETIC JUDGEMENT
In this chapter the task before us is to analyse the domain of aesthetic judgements and their relations to evaluative norms. The important problem in this context would be to examine the possible objectivity of aesthetic judgements. To fulfil this task, a clarification must be made regarding the nature of aesthetic judgements. We may adhere to the definition given by Stefan Morawski which is as follows:

"By aesthetic judgement... I mean a psychical act of an intellectual character which results in a proposition expressing an esthetic experience and formulating an appraisal based upon certain reasons."¹

The above definition is constituted of three elements: (1) A psychical act of a certain type; (2) An evaluative judgement or an appraisal; and (3) A single or a set of norms that go into the making of appraisals. Let us take up the psychical act first. The nature of aesthetic consciousness has already been discussed (in Chapter V) in the context of creative act. In this chapter an effort is made to extend this concept of aesthetic consciousness to the level of art-appreciation. Therefore, it must be

marked at the very outset that the analysis of aesthetic judgement is confined to the appreciation of art-works as done by connoisseurs. There are judgements and evaluations, formed even in the process of artistic creation when the artist rejects certain forms and images and selects certain others. This rejection and selection is done with reference to certain implicit or explicit norms. But for the sake of clarity we would not include such evaluation in the aesthetic judgements properly so called. Thus the discussion of aesthetic judgement would be explicitly limited to those appraisals of art-works that result from the communication between the artist, art-work and audience. The following are the elements that comprise a psychical act that is marked by an aesthetic attitude:

a) Imaginative participation in the visualization of the form of the art-work:- this is the pre-requisite for any aesthetic judgement to be possible. Form, in this context refers to the total effect of the art-object, including in it both the structure and content.

b) Detached mental attitude:- this is characterized by the following three elements:

1) Indifference to moral purpose.

ii) Freedom from desire:- no particular desires of man excite him to an aesthetic response. This marks the distinction between aesthetic judgements and
autobiographical statements of likes and dislikes. Furthermore, it shows that aesthetic judgements are not guided by personal prejudices.

iii) Detachment from pragmatic value: no concern for practical benefit excites one to a proper aesthetic response. Even pleasure will not be regarded as the proper mental attitude which characterizes an aesthetic response;

c) Indifference towards the existence and non-existence of the imagined object.

An evaluative judgement or appraisal is what differentiates an aesthetic judgement, properly so called, from various other judgements regarding art works. There are, for instance, historical judgements, classifying an art work according to its technique: a particular handling of a certain medium; e.g. the statement, 'Degas' "Dancer" is an impressionistic painting'. There is another type of aesthetic judgements which classifies art works according to their time of execution. Judgements of these kinds belong to one level of discourse about art. Furthermore, there are judgements about the work of individual artists relating to their lives, e.g., 'Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" represents the artist's incestuous relations to his mother that he developed in early childhood'. Contrasted to this there are two others: 'Shelley's "Adonais" is a sad poem', 'Turner's "Snowstorm" is a good painting'. It
is obvious that all these judgements do not belong to the same level. The first is an attempt at a historical classification of an art-work, the second, a psychoanalytical explanation of a certain portrait. The third cannot be properly branded as to which genre it belongs. For the statement 'Adonais is a sad poem' has two meanings: (i) technically it is written in the form of an elgey; and (ii) it evokes an anguish in the reader's mind. But here too, like the other two cases there is no evaluation involved. It is only in the last judgement ('Turner's "Snowstorm" is a good painting') that evaluation is involved, for here in this case an appraisal is made. This judgement does not convey any information about the technique and medium of the art-work concerned. But here the concern is primarily with grading and evaluation with reference to (explicit or implicit) norms.

Grading has reasons and every evaluative judgement must be assessed along with the reasons that are given in support of it. The moment the judgement 'X is a good painting' is passed, one demands the qualification of the use of good by asking, "why"? And there are various types of reasons given. On analysis these reasons too are found to belong to different levels. Some are merely descriptive of the technical elements of the art-work e.g., the rhyme of a poem, the peculiar handling of spatial relations in a painting. These are properties that characterize the
manner in which a certain medium is handled. Further, there are reasons that are based on qualities of another level: qualities like harmony and balance etc. These qualities in order to be demonstrated are parasitical upon the first order properties of the art works already mentioned. Thus, upon analysis one finds a hierarchy of properties, the levels vary regarding the nature of the qualities attributed to the art-object. They start from the properties of the medium to the properties of these properties; and so on. Thus, every judgement directly or indirectly refers to facts—facts about the art-work itself. However, the word 'fact' will have a peculiar connotation here, it refers to the empirically demonstratable qualities of the art object, and the judgements stating these would be critical judgements. Thus, an aesthetic judgement is concerned with two things, on the one hand it concentrates on facts, on the other, it is concerned with the evaluation of these facts in the light of certain norms.

Let us turn now to the nature of aesthetic judgement as looked at by Spengler, Sartre, Croce, and Freud; and its relation to the norms that are conceived by them operative in the aesthetic judgements.

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For Spengler all aesthetic judgements are relatively absolute, they are relative to their particular culture. What holds as the concept of beauty in Greek culture will not be tenable for the Western but the criteria are absolute within the reference frame of a single culture. Aristotle's principles of tragedy are valuable for Greek drama, but cannot be likewise applicable to Shakespeare. Even if the aesthetic norms of one culture are followed by another, they are given a different interpretation. This variation of interpretation occurs automatically with the variation in culture.

Like every aspect of a culture, all aesthetic judgements are expressive of the prime-symbol of a culture, only their manifestations are varied. Thus, all aesthetic judgements are temporally and spatially oriented. Spatial orientation implies that they spring from the soil of their respective cultures and Time is their primary governing factor. While making aesthetic appraisals what is of primary concern is Time -- the cyclic phase of the culture to which the artifact belongs. Therefore, we find that for Spengler the judgement, 'X is a good work of art' means 'X belongs to the cultural spring-time'. Furthermore, aesthetic judgements, Spengler holds, do not aim at dissecting and categorizing the art work with respect to its material medium and technique. But on the other hand, they seek to evaluate the total art object (both its form and content) in the light of the cultural
cycle and the prime-symbol.

Norms have a direct relation to aesthetic judgements. For Spengler, all norms are culturally conditioned, therefore, there cannot be any culture-free norms that can be universally applicable to all art works. Though within their own culture, norms have a universal bearing, yet apart from their respective culture, they do not have any significance. In spite of their immense variation in content all norms have a striking similarity in form, this is because they have similarly arisen from their respective space and time and they hold a similar relation to the various cultural products. Thus within a given culture, there are two types of norms, the specific norms or principles developed by every art, e.g., 'the principles of tragedy' (as laid down by Aristotle), 'the Classical concept of harmony in music', 'the principles of light and shade in Impressionist painting' etc. And contrasted to these are the generic norms that every culture develops and this embodies itself in all the aspects of a culture. This generic norm is the prime-symbol; and it is only this which is of any consequence. The specific norms are merely reflections of this generic norm. From the point of view of generic norms, the mathematical proposition 'three angles of a triangle are equal to two right-angles' and the definition of Tragedy 'as the imitation of an action...' are on the same level. Both embody the same world-image of the sensuously immediate and the tangible.
The embodiment of the prime-symbol of the perpetually present and sensuously immediate is the norm which every aspect of Classical culture is aiming to achieve. And norms are set up prior to the individual's manifestation of them in a certain concrete form.

The above discussion shows that for Spengler there is no inter-cultural communication of art-works. Artistic creations and their norms remain tied down to their respective cultures. But the difficulty arises about one thing: if one cannot visualize the possibility of having a universal norm (or a set of norms) applicable to all the manifestations of a single culture, there is no sufficient reason to suppose that every culture has its self-assigned (but not consciously chosen) prime-symbol which it follows in the course of its lifetime. Factually this can easily be falsified, but perhaps that would not be the right way to understand Spengler. Moreover, proving or disproving in terms of empirical facts is not the concern of a philosophic inquiry. Our concern therefore, is with the norms developed by Spengler: how far he is justified in holding certain norms as a priori and universal for a culture. Spengler emphatically subscribes to the view that no two people belonging to two cultures can visualize anything alike. Their perception of physical phenomena, their images and memory, their entire behaviour is different. But once we start apprehending this relativism of reactions, there is no limiting ground to it. Every
individual perceives colour in his own manner and there is no justification to hold that the colour red (simply because it is called red) is seen alike by everyone. Thus, if relativism is accepted, one cannot at the same time hold to universal norms even though they are relative to a specific culture. If no norms are absolute, no cultural prime-symbol can be regarded as absolute either; every art work is a unique creation and it is not there to execute the plan of a 'mysterious must' or a 'Destiny'.

Furthermore, for Spengler, the criterion of judgement is not individual excellence, but Time — the value of a work of art depends upon the cultural cycle to which it belongs. This is an unwarranted assumption that all art works in the spring-time of a culture would necessarily be excellent simply because of being in the spring-time. This imposes on art works an extra-aesthetic norm: their position in the cultural cycle. Thus we find that Spengler has not been able to supply an adequate criterion for aesthetic judgements, for he does not take into account all the aspects of art works. Instead of starting from the first order qualities of the art-object itself — its technique and medium etc., he starts with a preconceived hypothesis and attempts to fit the suitable facts into it and neglects the rest.

Unlike Spengler, who does not attribute any special nature to aesthetic judgements, Croce's whole theory, we have seen, starts with systematic elaboration of the four
activities affiliated to the spirit. Thus, aesthetic judgement has a specific character, peculiar to itself. Let us first probe into the process behind aesthetic judgements that makes the aesthetic judgements possible. All aesthetic judgements presuppose the confrontation of the art object by the observer. Artistic communication occurs by the observer's imaginative reproduction of the art works. The act of communication results in the evaluative judgements about art works. However, for Croce the aesthetic appraisal will not be of the form, 'X is a good art work' but 'X is an art work', for him there are no degrees in grading. Either X is or is not an art work. Thus, the aesthetic judgement does not involve any comparative assessment of artistic creations.

Aesthetic judgements are singular judgements, involving the attribution of qualities to individual works of art. They are subjective, yet not personal, they have the potentiality of being universalized. Just as there are no degrees in art works, similarly, there is no relativity in responses. Every aesthetic judgement, being born out of a single response is at the same time a potential universal. It acquires its universality from the universality of imaginative faculties.

Aesthetic judgements are non-cognitive, non-moral, non-pragmatic and non-hedonistic in character. In other

3Carritt holds that Croce cannot on the one hand subscribe to the identity of intuition and expression and on the other deny the degrees in beauty. Intuition and expression being one, and expression being beautiful, no
words they are not guided by any extra-aesthetic norms.

This, we have seen earlier in our exposition of Croce's aesthetic theory, thus, it suffices to say that for Croce aesthetic judgements are absolutely autonomous and free from any external compulsions.

Coming to the relation the aesthetic judgements hold to their norms, we find that Croce does not admit of any a priori norms, valid for all artistic creations. He ascribes uniqueness and individuality to art works; all artistic creations evolve their own norms. But this does not imply that since there are no specific standards, valuable once for all, anything can go in the name of art. Expression and art are synonymous terms. Therefore, that which cannot be coherently and significantly concretized through sensous symbols cannot be regarded as an art work. But the problem is how to judge what is expressive and what is inexpressive? The concept of expression requires proper qualification and Croce has primarily tried to explain it in a negative manner by stating all that expression is not. The only positive meaning he attributes to it is by equating expression with intuition. But this does not help, it merely postpones ugly object can be intuited. And such a belief Carritt thinks as mere wishful thinking. See E.F. Carritt, "Croce and His Aesthetic" *Mind*, Vol. 62 (1953); and *The Theory of Beauty*, pp. 124-148.

*And now, to resume the question which gave occasion to this indispensable prologue (that is, indispensable for removing from my discussion any trace of pretentiousness*
the problem; one immediately asks: 'What then is intuition?'
Another method which Croce has adopted is by explaining the process of expression, but unfortunately an analysis of the process does not explain the nature of the product. In responding to the created product, the observer, seldom tries to examine the process of its coming into being. Because, for an assessment of the created product no amount of insight into its process of creation can be of any direct help. The result of the analysis is that one fails to know anything about the norms for the evaluation of art objects.

Regarding the nature of aesthetic judgements, there is a striking similarity between the views of Croce and Sartre. Like Croce, Sartre holds that aesthetic judgements are free from any concern for pragmatic, moral, cognitive and hedonistic value. If there is any guiding line for aesthetic judgements, it emanates from the art object itself as well as the taint of its uselessness) -- the question as to what art is -- let me answer it immediately and in the simplest manner: art is vision or intuition. The artist produces an image or picture. The person who enjoys art turns his eyes in the direction which the artist has pointed out to him, peers through the hole which has been opened for him, and reproduces in himself the artist's image. "Intuition", "vision", "contemplation", "imagination", "fancy", "invention", "representation" and so forth, are words which continually reappear as almost synonymous in discussions on art. All of them give rise in our minds to the same concept or to the same set of concepts -- a sign of universal consent'. Benedetto Croce: *Guide to Aesthetics*, p. 8.
and not from any extraneous compulsions. Furthermore, Sartre also holds that aesthetic judgements are born out of a subjective and singular response. There are certain peculiarities of an aesthetic response. Apart from its negative aspect of being free from extraneous compulsions, it is a detached and disinterested response. In this context, Sartre refers to the 'generosity' of the observer. The observer, when confronted with a work of art, must free himself from any personal bias in favour or against the object visualized. In other words, he must have a minimum amount of 'psychical distance'. This detachment is necessary if art is to be 'an enterprise in freedom' (which Sartre time and again asserts that it is), for any kind of involvement annihilates freedom. In the context of literature Sartre maintains that "Freedom is alienated in the state of passion; it is abruptly engaged in partial enterprises; it loses sight of its task, which is to produce an absolute end.... The reader must be able to make a certain aesthetic withdrawal." It appears that for Sartre a proper aesthetic attitude involves the constant awareness of the unreality of the art object and yet in spite of its unreality the observer wilfully chooses to respond to this unreal object. Since this choice is not born out of any external compulsion, it marks the freedom of man.

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So far as the aesthetic attitude is concerned, it can be objectively stated prior to the actual confrontation with the art object. But the norms for the evaluation of art objects cannot be similarly stated. Every art-work creates and adheres to its own norms which can never precede its actual creation. Therefore, any norms, which one may associate with Sartre's concept of criticism and aesthetics are open norms -- open to the change and modification as required by the particular art object being assessed. This much is quite clear, but the confusion arises when Sartre attempts to attach social norms to aesthetic judgements. With his assertion of aesthetic autonomy, he is equally assertive of the social commitment of the artist, which acts as a primary element in the formation of value judgements about art works. Sartre emphatically holds that the artist cannot evade his social responsibility. Thus he says:

"A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus, however you might come to it,... literature throws you into battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom: once you have begun, you are committed, willy-nilly."

The above passage shows very clearly that Sartre did not think art to be independent and autonomous in the sense of being separable from its social context. On the contrary he held it to be the primary commitment of an artist to evaluate and comment upon his social structure. This

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 47.}\]
commitment seems to contradict Sartre's incessant emphasis on aesthetic autonomy. For if autonomy be emphasized, no necessary social commitment can follow from it.

Another important factor which guides aesthetic judgements is authenticity. Sartre holds that a work of art (properly so called) must be an outcome of the authentic choice of its creator. Now, authenticity is very difficult to prove and it can be proved only if we turn to non-aesthetic elements, namely, the biographic history of the artist, which can be open to question. Moreover, even if authenticity can be proved, there is no causal connection between authenticity of choice and artistic excellence, for artistic excellence also requires the ability of wielding the medium and this has no necessary relation to authenticity.

Contrasted to the other three thinkers, Freud has conspicuously ignored the problem of aesthetic judgement and its criterion. As Louis Fraiberg has very aptly put it,

"What Freud did was to establish the principle that evaluations of art fall within the purview of psycho-analysis only as they reveal the psychic needs out of which art arises, the psychic materials which it uses, and the psychic purposes it serves."

Freud seems to take preferences and gradings of artworks for granted and does not think himself obliged to

scrutinize these evaluations. For him a successful art-work would be that which can bring about an effective catharsis of man's inhibited urges. Thus the art object qua art object is not his concern, his concern is with the therapeutic effect that art can manage to produce. And this criterion, if it is made the criterion of the assessment of art, leaves one absolutely cold to the art object. The observer transcends the art object and makes it merely a vehicle for the channelization of his suppressed and unfulfilled desires. Yet Freud, occasionally does seem to dabble into the evaluation of art-works. The following is one of such evaluative judgements:

"The Brothers Karamazov is the most magnificent novel ever written; the episode of the Grand Inquisitor, one of the peaks in the literature of the world, can hardly be valued too highly."

But the above judgement does not stem out of any definite reasons, emanating from the formal qualities of the novel Brothers Karamzov and thus ceases to be more than a mere exclamation of approval. And such remarks, since they are emotive expressions, cannot be admitted into the realm of critical discourse. This shows that Freud has nothing to contribute to the understanding of the nature and criterion of aesthetic judgements.


9 "...Freud was forcibly aware of the psychological
A retrospective glance at the conclusions offered by these four thinkers makes it evident that the problem of evaluation of aesthetic objects needs greater amount of clarification than what has been done by them. Thus, the following points need to be kept in mind when the nature of aesthetic judgement is being analysed.

a) The disagreement and diversity regarding the evaluation of art object is often due to the varied meanings that are given to the evaluative terms like harmony, beauty and tension etc. Furthermore, since the terminology and concepts of criticism are not univocal, the variation of meaning must be specified. Not only the artists but the critics also give varied interpretations to key concepts related to art-works. This variation in interpretation goes on with every new experiment at expression and evaluation. For instance, the term perspective has different meanings for a Cubist and an Impressionist. To this extent the terms

significance of the historical Moses; an artist who ventured to give expression to this significance was touching Freud on the quick. For that psychological reason the Moses of Michelangelo held him in its grip. 'How often', he says, 'have I mounted the steep steps of the unlovely Carso Cavour to the lonely place where the deserted church stands, and have essayed to support the angry scorn of the hero's glance! .... Emotive language, but not, allow me to insist, the language of art criticism'. Cf. Herbert Read's remarks on Freud's analysis of the Moses of Michelangelo.

employed in criticism have to be open — open to experimen-
tation and fresh interpretations. This, however, does not
imply that anything can mean anything. Since to a large
extent the context determines the meaning, any attempt at
evaluation and interpretation must at the same time specify
the meanings of the tools of criticism. And within its
restricted context the specified meaning must be held absolute.
If the language of criticism and evaluation is properly
analysed according to its various levels, it would clear
much of the confusion that prevails in the grading and
assessment of art works. For often, instead of being a
difference of evaluation it is merely a difference in the
use of terminology. Aesthetic judgements must be clearly
differentiated from propositions stating facts of art history;
personal preferences; and lastly case-histories of creative
artists.

b) No extra-aesthetic (moral or cultural etc.) norms
ought to be imposed on aesthetic judgements.

c) A proper aesthetic judgement can be qualified by
the reasons that are given in its support. The reasons
ought to emanate from the first-order properties of the art
object. Such reasons can be objectively demonstrated.

d) No criterion (or set of criteria) can be held
absolute for all times to come. Every art-style evolves
its own norms and should be evaluated with reference to
these norms. This denial of absolute norms speaks for the uniqueness of art works. However, uniqueness also has a meaning only in a limited sense. No art work can be wholly unique, it owes largely to the artistic creations preceding it. And to that extent, even in spite of being a reaction to it, an artistic creation is still within its tradition. Tradition here refers to certain ways of handling artistic media e.g. the Indian tradition of painting is exemplified through the particular technique of tempera and fresco painting, the choice of subject matter -- the themes of Krishna and Radha, Buddha and the various Gods and Goddesses. Every painter learns to perceive objects and images from the attempts of his predecessors (as concretized through art works) and to that extent, he lives in a tradition. Yet, if he has to contribute anything he must add to that which is already given in the past. In this sense an art work transcends its past and evolves its own norms and values and herein lies its uniqueness and novelty. Further, an authentic experimentation in art forms can be distinguished from the spurious ones if we go to the first-order properties of the art object itself and see whether the particular trend in art has managed to contribute what it has claimed to do. For instance, one may see whether a certain painting by Gris or Braque is an effective portrayal of cubist style and along with this one may also examine whether cubism has been able to contribute to our perception of space.
e) Comparative assessment of art works is possible only in a limited way — within the context of a certain common technique like that of the Impressionist, Surrealist and Cubist etc. But Rembrandt's 'Self Portrait' cannot be compared with Henry Matisse's 'Lady in Blue', for the two are expressive of absolutely diverse approaches towards light and shade, colours and human figures.