INTRODUCTION
The present study is conducted with a view to analyse and critically examine the aesthetic theories of four outstanding thinkers of the twentieth century, viz., Freud, Croce, Spengler, and Sartre. The choice may look odd at the face of it because they do not seem to have anything in common with one another, neither a philosophical outlook nor a common area of interest. Nonetheless, each has had a considerable share in the explorations and experiments in his respective field. And taken together, they touch on some of the most important areas of aesthetics. Thus my choice is largely determined by the diversity of their frames of reference. To be sure, each taken by himself is a representative of a different area — amongst them one is a psychologist (Freud); one philosopher of history (Spengler); a practising literary writer with definite philosophical commitments (Sartre); and only one aesthetician in the technical sense of the term (Croce), though all of them are deeply interested in the problems of aesthetics. And they have revealed the various aspects of art with almost equal ingenuity. This will be clear from the pages that follow. Thus, short of a regular interdisciplinary approach to the problems of aesthetics, I thought this study would provide a kind of multidimensional
approach to the problem with considerable advantage.

The central concept of this dissertation is the notion of aesthetic meaning. Any thorough-going analysis of aesthetic meaning must first concentrate on the problems of aesthetics upon which the notion of meaning appears to be based. These problems are — the nature of art object, its relation to the external world, the impact of tradition on its communication, the attitude of the spectator when confronted by the work of art and lastly, the status of evaluative judgements in the domain of art. However, the central problem which throws light upon the notion of aesthetic meaning is that of the art object. The others are important primarily because they reveal the various aspects of the notion of art object. Unless this notion is clearly analysed, it is difficult to reach any conclusions regarding the nature of aesthetic meaning. Since these four thinkers have focussed upon the problems of art from diverse reference-frames, one can hope to arrive at some new insights into the subject by bringing them together. However, assembling the views of these four thinkers, one cannot arrive at permanently valid conclusions. The possibility of arriving at any absolute conclusions is extremely difficult to entertain in any philosophic contemplation. More so in aesthetics, since as a philosophic discipline it is still in its infancy.
Thus any conclusions which are formulated in the course of this dissertation, have, in the nature of things, to be regarded as tentatively valid — subject to revision with new explorations in the domain of psychology, art criticism, art history and new forms of art activity itself. Some idea of the explorations in these areas is deducible from these four theories. Freud's analysis of the creative process in the light of dreams and phantasies lends a great insight into the nature of artistic creativity. Freud thus looks upon aesthetic meaning entirely from the therapeutic viewpoint. Art, for him, is not meaningful because of its structural coherence or isomorphism with nature, but because of its being an index of the hidden dimensions of human psyche. As symbolic devices for the expression of the hidden folds of man's psyche, art, science and mathematics are equally significant. For, Freud's major interest in aesthetic meaning is not as "aesthetic meaning" — emerging out of the structural qualities of a material artifact but merely as one of the ways of embodying the unconscious. Thus in this sense, neither the aesthetic nor the cognitive is looked upon as it is but as it reveals something hidden.

Sartre's approach towards aesthetic meaning is diametrically opposed to that of Freud. Freud seeks in art works, latent and unconscious meanings — meanings
that are not conclusively intended by the artist. And artistic communication between the artist and the spectator, for him, is a vicarious satisfaction of inhibited impulses with the aid of the art object. Sartre, on the other hand, does not think that the art object communicates any unconscious content. What it communicates is a consciously intended content — the commitment of the artist. There is another point of contrast between Freud and Sartre. For Freud, man's instincts being eternally the same, art is eternally communicable. Thus Sophocles' Oedipus Rex is as communicable to us as Shakespeare's Hamlet or Dostoevsky's Brother's Karamazov. Each in its own way, portrays the dormant and universal incestuous desires. Sartre, however, thinks art to be essentially emerging from its spatio-temporal matrix and thus has significance only within its own milieu. It is because, for Sartre the significance of art does not lie merely in the configuration of sensuous patterns, but in the content as well. This content is the authentically chosen commitment of the artist. Commitment always springs from a definite historical situation; therefore beyond its age an art work loses its meaning and significance. Thus artistic symbols (and symbols of prose literature in particular) are essentially temporal. Art, for Sartre, is essentially a strife for freedom. It is a struggle for authentic existence since
the type of struggle would vary with varied historical situations, art works are meaningful only with reference to certain time events. Thus, beyond the reference frame of their space and time, they are mere cultural artifacts. They may be interesting so far as they reveal the sentiments, feelings, customs and conventions of a people but beyond this they do not communicate anything.

This temporal view of aesthetic meaning is also shared by Spengler. However, Spengler adds to it the notion of cultural prime-symbols. For him every art work acquires meaning from its cultural prime-symbol. Like the Platonic universal it runs through every creation of a given culture. Since all the varied forms of human knowledge and creativity equally manifest the prime symbol, there is nothing peculiar about art. Aesthetic meaning is not in any way different from that derived from scientific statements expressive of discursive knowledge. Thus, Spengler looks upon aesthetic meaning from a very unique angle — that of the Destiny of Cultures. An aesthetic object is not universally significant for him. In fact it is essentially temporal: going with the growth and decay of cultures, art-symbols also lose their meaningfulness after a certain period of time. Spengler's originality lies in his peculiar theory of "art history without names" and the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous artistic
creations. Thus he freed aesthetic meaning from individuality and subjectivity and gave it an objective status (as objective as science and mathematics) within the reference frame of a culture.

Croce does not think that the aesthetic can ever be submerged in the non-aesthetic. His whole treatise on the Aesthetic is a vindication of its autonomy and uniqueness. As a distinct form of knowing, it has its own criteria of significance, valid for all times to come. The criteria of significance in art do not vary with new techniques and varied beholders. In spite of their apparent difference, the aesthetic and the linguistic, as forms of expression, are essentially one. Both aim at uniqueness and individuality. Thus rules have the same status in both art-symbols and verbal-symbols. The mere knowledge of the rules of language does not enable one to create a language, just as a knowledge of artistic techniques cannot make one an artist. Language is essentially the living speech and not a dead script. Thus Croce derided the significance of rules in both linguistic and artistic expression since he never thought any significant difference between the two. For him the syntax and grammar of verbal-symbols do not make them different from art-symbols. Consequently, Croce denies the possibility of synonymity of two verbal symbols, thinking them to be essentially unique and untranslatable. This is a very
interesting point and needs greater attention. It will therefore be taken up again in the chapter on "Art Symbols and Aesthetic Meaning".

A glimpse of these divergent points of view shows how the problem of aesthetic meaning has been discussed from so many different angles. Perhaps no single viewpoint can be taken as absolute. However, one can build up a more comprehensive notion of aesthetic meaning by picking up the relevant issues from these divergent theories and synthesising them. But the present work cannot be regarded as a mere synthesis of these four theories. Attempts have also been made to freshly formulate the problem of aesthetic meaning. Thus in Chapter VIII, I have tried to look into the nature of art-symbols and aesthetic meaning and have tried to discuss it without references and cross references to these four thinkers. Nonetheless, I have also tried to relate my discussion of aesthetic meaning to these four thinkers. This has been done by a recapitulation of the contribution of these four theories in building up the present notion of art-symbols. In this context Wittgenstein's discussion of meaning in Philosophical Investigations seems very significant to me and therefore I have drawn on that with great advantage.

A passing reference may here be made to the analysis of meaning given by him: "in a large class of cases",
meaning, he holds, is the use of a word in a language.\footnote{See Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (N.Y., 1957) No. 43, p. 20e.} Applying this notion of meaning to the domain of art, aesthetic meaning would be the use of art-symbols; this "use" would be seen to be as complicated (or perhaps even more complicated) as the use of symbols in a language-system. Like the saw, the hammer and pliers of Wittgenstein's tool-box, which have different functions to offer,\footnote{"Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, glue, nails and screws. — The functions of words are as diverse as the function of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities)." Ibid., No. 11, p. 6e.} art-symbols too perform diverse functions which vary from referential to emotive and cultural symbols. An attempt will thus be made to discuss their varied nuances.

Furthermore, an effort has also been made to look upon some of the important problems of aesthetics which stem out of the discussion of aesthetic meaning. Chapters IX and X are devoted to these. Thus the present analysis begins with these four theories which provide the focus of this discussion. The first section is therefore purely expository. There, an attempt is made to elucidate impartially the aesthetic theories of Freud, Croce, Spengler, and Sartre.
The second section is devoted to a comparative assessment of these four theories on the nature of the creative art; the art object and; the criterion of aesthetic judgement. The problem of the creative act is primarily discussed to elaborate the status of imagination as a 'constituent' of creativity, and the possibility of its independence from cognition in the creation of art. Thus any psychological analysis of the various stages in the process of creativity has been avoided here. Attention, on the other hand, has been directed towards the role of imagination in the creation of art. And we shall see that these observations regarding the autonomous role of the imaginative activity have an impact upon the subsequent analysis of aesthetic meaning. Attention has also been directed upon the causes behind creative activity. In spite of their varied approaches towards the origin of creativity, all these four thinkers look upon the creative activity as a result of man's desire to express, symbolise, and unite the amorphous impressions of the external world. Thus, all the four treat art works as symbols.

Since the nature of the art object and its relation to the external world is one of the most important problems to be discussed in the context of an analysis of aesthetic meaning, Chapter VI is concentrated upon it. Another related problem which helps to reveal the
nature of art works from the evaluative point of view is that of the criterion of aesthetic judgement. An analysis of the nature of aesthetic consciousness which accompanies the appreciation of art works, lends interesting insights into the nature of artistic communication. Once again the problem of aesthetic evaluation is looked upon as an independent and autonomous domain and not originating as an activity parasitic upon the moral, intellectual or the metaphysical. All these problems are discussed with cross-references to these four thinkers. The comparative assessment of the views of these thinkers and the conclusions reached therefrom would come to light in the course of this dissertation. A study of these four thinkers has not limited the present analysis to a discussion of their views only. Section three would bear this out. There the analysis is directly concentrated on aesthetic meaning and the further implications that can be derived therefrom.

There is a general difference in the treatment of problems in the two sections. In Section Two, the problems are discussed directly in the context of these four theories. The analysis in Section Three, on the other hand, is slightly abstracted from any direct reference to these thinkers. The chapter on "Art-symbols and Aesthetic Meaning" builds up a case for the uniqueness and individuality of art-symbols. To save this advocacy
of uniqueness from a chaotic relativism (stemming out of a complete denial of the possibility of value judgements on art works) I have argued in Chapter IX that the unique and the universal as aesthetic categories are not mutually exclusive. For, in spite of their uniqueness and untranslatability, art symbols have a universal communicability in potentiality. We have already denied the possibility of an essential definition of meaning, this has an impact upon all general aesthetic concepts. Thus, viewing the logic of the term "art", it is stated that it also does not lend itself to any essential definition that can cover all its necessary properties. If this be the status of aesthetic concepts, the problem worth discussing in this context is the possibility of aesthetics and the various avenues open to it. Thus our last chapter is devoted to it. Strictly speaking this chapter can be regarded as a discussion of meta-aesthetical problems which originate from our analysis of aesthetic meaning. It is my belief that any aesthetic theory to be clear and well defined must be supported by an analysis of aesthetic discourse. In other words, there must be an interaction between the analysis of the problems of aesthetics and the discussion of their status in the domain of language. We can thus avoid the confusions arising out of a mixing up of the varied levels of language in our analysis.
For any understanding of contemporary problems, it is best to turn to the history of ideas on the subject under discussion. This would caution us of the errors of history on the one hand, and provide a direction for further analysis on the other. All the same, these remarks on the history of aesthetics cannot be exhaustive for want of space. This is the reason why many important thinkers of the past have not been discussed. Since it is not possible to discuss the entire history of aesthetics, and it is not even the aim of the present study, it is more beneficial to choose those aesthetic theories of the past which have paved the way for the contemporary discussion of aesthetic concepts.

Aesthetics as an independent discipline is of a very recent origin, though speculations upon the nature of art and beauty date back to almost the same time as the early cosmological speculations of ancient civilisations. Out of the plethora of information available about man's reflections on beauty and art, much can be dispensed with as naive and thus of no consequence to contemporary problems. Until the eighteenth century, aesthetics was evaluated with reference either to morality or to philosophy and religion. If we look at Plato's analysis of aesthetic concepts, this linking of the aesthetic with the moral and the cognitive becomes very evident.
Regarding art as an imitation of imitation, Plato gave it an inferior place as compared to the eternal and unchangeable ideas on the one hand and the sensible world on the other. Art, for Plato, had only a borrowed value: borrowed either from morality or the transcendental realm of ideas. Thus for him the criterion of aesthetic evaluation was either moral, i.e., the promotion of the ethics of the people of his ideal Republic, or the imitation of the sensible world. The role that Plato reserved for art was primarily that of injecting values into the dutiful citizens of his ideal state. And to fulfill this role he could admit very limited types of art into his Republic. He, for instance, had no place for tragedies and tragedies were not the sole exception since many more art forms were banned from entering the threshold of his state, lest they pollute the minds of the ideal citizens. Plato's assessment of art from the cognitive point of view is evident from his contrast between art and philosophy: the former being the outcome of the irrational and the emotional as against the latter which represents man's rational knowledge. He regards artistic creation and appreciation as the result of creative frenzy of the moment of inspiration. In the moment of creation man is captured by the muse and thus is

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3See *The Republic of Plato*, trans. with introduction and notes by F.M. Cornford (Oxford, 1955), See Books II, III and X.
not aware of what he is doing. This imposition of cognitive and moral norms upon art, denied art its autonomy and made it a handmaid to morality on the one hand and metaphysics on the other.

Plato further continued this cognitive evaluation of art by remarking about poets that, "... if their compositions are based upon knowledge of the truth, and they can defend and prove them, when they are put to the test, by spoken arguments, which leave their writings poor in comparison of them, then they are not only poets, orators, legislators, but worthy of a higher name." ¹

Art, being essentially similar to language, shares with language its expression through imitation. However, unlike art, language does not work on imitation of the external world. The true knowledge of reality is neither attainable through language nor through art. For language and art pursue the changing; and thus aesthetic and linguistic meanings are merely the products of convention and verisimilitude of artistic forms with the changing forms of external reality. Thus, they are essentially at a remove from truth. ² But by making this distinction

Plato does not accord any aesthetic autonomy to the arts. He rather admits the same criterion of knowledge and truth and thus finds both art and language inadequate. And it is this criterion of knowledge of reality and its concern which makes an art work good:

"... if I can assign names as well as pictures to objects, the right assignment of them we may call truth, and the wrong assignment of them falsehood .... And he who gives all gives a perfect picture or figure; and he who takes away or adds also gives a picture or figure, but not a good one.... In like manner, he who by syllables and letters imitates the nature of things, if he gives all that is appropriate will produce a good image, or in other words a name; but if he subtracts or perhaps adds a little, he will make an image but not a good one;...." 5

Aristotle, on the contrary was comparatively able to free himself from the peculiar prejudices that Plato nurtured against art. He has been much more systematic in providing a treatise on the art of dramatic tragedy. This has been of immense value for literary criticism. For aesthetics, however, the primal contribution of Aristotle lies in his analysis of the aesthetic response. To him the value of art (particularly dramatic art) emanates from its ability to engender a cathartic effect — it purges both the creator and the spectator of that excess of emotion which, if nourished, is likely to create

a disequilibrium of personality. Tragedy brings about this cathartic effect by first intensifying and ultimately purging the emotions of pity and fear, while comedy creates a similar effect through exciting vulgar emotions. Thus the function of art is essentially therapeutic. This therapeutic role of art was later highlighted by Sigmund Freud and his followers.

Aristotle shares with Plato his analysis of aesthetic meaning in terms of mimesis. In other words, for him too, the meaning of art lies in its imitation of the external reality. But while Plato thought art to be "a copy of a copy", Aristotle thought it to be manifesting the reality through a copy of its sensible appearance. Artistic manifestation and its significance is closely associated with the moral problems for both Plato and Aristotle.

The period which followed Aristotle, till the late eighteenth century when Kant wrote his famous treatise on aesthetic judgement, the so-called dark age, is conspicuous in the history of aesthetics. Even a quick glance at this period would make this fact evident to us.

Among the classical thinkers that followed Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus is significant for his remarks upon the nature of beauty. Plotinus shares with Plato his contempt of the so-called external reality which has no stability and is hence constantly in a flux. Thus
true beauty transcends the domain of the sensible.

"He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away forever from the material beauty that once made his joy. When he perceives these shapes of grace that show in body, let him not pursue; he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows, and hasten away towards That they tell of."6

Furthermore, Plotinus too, like Plato and Aristotle, holds beauty to be closely connected with good. Thus he formulates his famous dictum: "Beauty is the authentic existents".7 And authenticity is nothing but the realisation of the essential divinity and goodness of man that originates from God.

Plotinus thinks that what lends beauty to art and nature is not its materiality but its form. He does not agree with Plato's contempt towards arts as essentially concerned with imitating appearances. The arts, instead of merely imitating natural forms, go back to the principles on which nature is created. Here, perhaps, Plotinus is more near to Aristotle. He thinks of the ideal beauty in terms of the good and that is why to visualise this ideal beauty the spectator himself must become beautiful. "There can be no vision unless in the sense of identification with

7Ibid., p. 46.
the object."⁸ Therefore the aesthetic attitude, as Plotinus conceives it, is not different from the moral. For "The Primal Good and the Primal Beauty have one dwelling-place...."⁹

All this is in no way different from what Plato and Aristotle have said. However, Plotinus differs from Plato in his assertion that beauty has no necessary relation to proportionality and symmetry. But here again the reasons offered by Plotinus seem to stem more from moral concepts than from aesthetic ones. This is perhaps because he never really thought any difference between the moral and the aesthetic concepts. This is evident from the following remark:

"Again since the one face, constant in symmetry, appears sometimes fair and sometimes not, can we doubt that beauty is something more than symmetry, .... What symmetry is to be found in noble conduct, or excellent laws, in any form of mental pursuit?... all the virtues are a beauty of the Soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of these others; but how does symmetry enter here?"ⁱ⁰

The domination of metaphysics on art is nowhere more prominent in the history of Western aesthetics, as

⁸Ibid., p. 178.
⁹Ibid., p. 50.
in the Middle Ages. The problems of aesthetics were only side issues for the thinkers in this age. For their maximum energy was spent in discussing theological and metaphysical issues like the nature of God, Universe, and man's relation to God. Thus, aesthetics was important only to the extent that it helped to pursue certain theological issues. St. Augustine is one of the most representative thinkers of this period.

Augustine looks upon beauty in nature and art as the manifestations of the principle of reason. Beauty pleases the sense of reason. What creates the effect of beauty is design and composition representing a sense of proportion and symmetry:

"...reason... realized that nothing pleased it but beauty; and in beauty design; and in design, dimensions; and in dimensions, number."\(^{11}\)

Without an awareness of the meanings of numbers, no artistic creation is possible. For all the arts follow this principle of design without which no pleasurable composition is possible. For what pleases the faculty of reason is form which is intrinsically valuable. Augustine distinguished the animal skill from that of human creativity in this context. While both the "works"

\(^{11}\)Augustine, "DeOrdine" in Philopogies of Art and Beauty, p. 180.
of animals and man display order and symmetry, the difference lies in man's understanding of the nature of numbers. This, he thinks, is what makes a musician's song different from the song of a bird. The proportion and harmony of sounds in the bird's song are not a product of rational knowledge while in the case of the musician they are.

Thus it appears that Augustine did not think that arts are very different from other forms of knowledge. All forms of knowing are based on reason. The artist intentionally creates an order based upon a symmetrical proportion of elements. Unlike Plato, all artistic creation for Augustine is rational and not intuitional.

The aesthetic and the moral are closely related for Augustine. He says that beauty can of course be pursued by both the virtuous and the sinful. But with its association with the sinful its beauty lessens. For to be beautiful, all forms must be ordered and "be like nature" which means that they must be good. For all nature is good:

"Where there is any measure, any form, any order, there is some good and some nature; but where there is no measure, no form, no order, there is no good, no nature."12

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In spite of all this talk about the proportion and order, it appears that the concept of beauty is ultimately a metaphysical notion for Augustine. For he thinks that the acquisition of the beauty of the soul is the end of all life. The beautiful soul with its harmony is the fittest to visualise God. Thus, for him beauty does not really lie in corporeal things. All corporeal things derive their beauty from this supersensible beauty. Before the beauty of the soul the objects of the world of sense dwindle into insignificance:

"... to us is promised a vision of beauty - the beauty of whose imitation all things are unsightly."  

It is strange that in the Renaissance which is marked by its creativity and originality in artistic activity, there was hardly any contemplation of aesthetic problems. The free and scientific spirit of the Renaissance is very well represented by Leonardo da Vinci's *Philosophical Diary*. However, even this cannot be called a systematic work on the problems of art. Leonardo does not admit of any knowledge which has come through the mould of sense experience. Thus he says:

"... to me all knowledge is vain and fraught with errors unless it is born of experience... unless in the beginning, in the intermediate stage, or at the end it passes through one of the five

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senses. And if we entertain doubts about the certainty of each thing that passes through the senses, how much more ought we to doubt things hostile to the senses, such as the essence of God and of the soul...."14

The above passage contrasts Leonardo with his predecessors - the Classical as well as the Medieval thinkers. While they started with the eternals like soul and God and explain the corporeal things through them, Leonardo reverses the process of inquiry. For him all knowledge starts with perceptual experience.

Leonardo, himself a painter, has given some very interesting remarks upon the nature of painting and its relation to the external world. He regards sight as the most superior sense. He repeats Augustine's emphasis on proportion as a necessary category of beauty. He likens the painter to the divine creator:

"The divine element in the art of painting changes the painter's mind into a likeness of the divine mind, giving him the power to evoke the manifold forms of different animals, plants, fruits...."15

Furthermore, Leonardo also thought painting and philosophy of nature to be similar in their pursuits. Both pursue nature, one in terms of the imitation of its visible forms and the other in terms of a study of its

15 Ibid., p. 54.
various aspects through the varied scientific inventions and discoveries. Leonardo agrees with the classical thinkers to the extent that he, too, regards painting an imitation of nature. Apart from his general remarks on the nature of painting, he has also given hints to practising artists regarding the imitation of nature. He stresses on perspective and holds that it can be created by diffusing the colours of distant objects. All this is to help an artist create the illusion of the third dimension. However, he does admit that artistic imitation is always keeping in view the idea of composition and order. That is why a painter is not merely duplicating nature. Thus he says:

"The painter... must select the quintessence of whatever he sees. He must act as a mirror that changes into as many colors as there are things placed before it; if he does this, he will be a second Nature.

The painter who copies with his hand and his eye but without reason is like the mirror which mechanically reflects everything placed before it."^17

Going through Leonardo's diary, it seems that he gives art the status of knowledge. He thinks that for a painter knowledge of mathematics and anatomy is absolutely

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16 "Painting embraces surfaces, colors, and forms of everything created by nature; philosophy penetrates these same bodies and considers their characteristic qualities." Ibid., p. 55.

17 Ibid., p. 56.
necessary. The artist uses this knowledge of anatomy and mathematics to create the requisite proportions and semblance of reality. Between art and Philosophy, the difference does not lie in that of the irrational and the rational, as Plato had conceived, but only of their different objectives. Thus Leonardo says about the poet:

"... if he speaks of heavens, becomes an astronomer; and if he speaks of the things of nature or God, he becomes a philosopher."¹⁸

There are many other works by Leonardo's contemporary artists like Alberti, Durer, etc., which can be relevant in this context, but for lack of space they are not being discussed.

It is a fact of history, too well known to repeat that the whole trend of modern Western Philosophy is set by Descartes' Meditations wherein he seeks to formulate the principles of clear and indubitable knowledge.

Descartes did not write any treatise on aesthetics excepting his Compendium Musicae. And since Descartes' main interest was in epistemological problems, his Discourse on Method does not contain any discussion of the problems of aesthetics. However, if one relates his views on sensation and imagination to art, one can read between the lines that his attitude towards art does not

¹⁸Ibid., p. 59.
seem to be very sympathetic. In the quest for clear and distinct knowledge of mathematics, Descartes even denies clarity to sensuous knowledge. If such be his view regarding sense perception, he could scarcely be appreciative of art, of which he thought only in terms of an imitation of nature. And in this sense he seems to find dream images and artistic creations similar. ¹⁹

Though it may appear to be a wild presumption, it looks to me that if Descartes had written a treatise on aesthetics, it would have been typical in the sense of treating art as significant only because of its fulfilling the goal of our knowledge of clear and distinct ideas. In no sense would he have accorded art a significance for its own sake.

The eighteenth century is rich with speculations upon the problems of aesthetics. In fact aesthetics got its name only in this period by Alexander Baumgarten.

¹⁹Thus Descartes says about paintings: "... the things which are represented to us in sleep are like painted representations which can only have been formed as the counterparts of something real and true, and that is this way those general things at least.... For, as a matter of fact, painters, even when they study with the greatest skill to represent sirens and satyrs, ... cannot give them natures which are entirely new, but merely make a certain medley of the members of different animals; or if ... something so novel that nothing similar has ever before been seen, ... it is certain all the same that the colours of which this is composed are necessarily real."

However, Baumgarten does not get the credit of fixing the domain of aesthetics. This perhaps is still not definite; we find numerous levels of discussion in treatises on aesthetics, viz., analyses of the nature of beauty, of the particular arts, and sometimes even a discussion of the biographies of particular artists!

A few of the thinkers who have made an important contribution to the analysis of the problems of aesthetics are Shaftsbury, Addison and Burke. Shaftsbury's remarks on aesthetics can be classified into two parts — one would be his remarks on art and the other on beauty in general. Perhaps it will be more useful if we start with his analysis of beauty. This will put his remarks on art in the right perspective.

Shaftsbury looks upon beauty essentially as an expression of the moral truth, and this moral truth is nothing but the authentic existence of natural objects:

"And thus, after all, the most natural Beauty in the world is Honesty, and moral Truth. For all Beauty is TRUTH. True Features make the beauty of a Face; and true Proportions the Beauty of Architecture; as true Measures that of Harmony and Musick." 20

The above passage shows that Shaftsbury did not make any essential distinction between the aesthetic and

ethical qualities. Furthermore, in spite of his talk of proportion and unity, true beauty, for him, does not lie in the material and sensible but essentially in the mind. For it is the mind which essentially forms and unifies; matter without the mind is formless and chaotic and hence lacks beauty:

"... the Beautiful, the Fair, the Comely, were never in the Matter, but in the Art and Design; never in Body itself, but in the Form or Forming Power.... 'Tis Mind alone which forms. All which is void of Mind is horrid: and Matter formless is Deformity itself." 21

Regarding beauty as essentially an attribute of the mind, however, does not imply that Shaftsbury denies it to the nature and art. He thus creates degrees or levels of beauty. At the first level are the "dead forms". These forms, whether art works or natural creations, are inert and do not have the potentiality to create. The second level displays forms which have potentiality to create. The third level displays the highest order of beauty. For this forms and creates the first two types of beauty. In a sense all beauty owes its origin to this.

Thus Shaftsbury repeats Plato's censure of the material objects. To know true beauty one must transcend the material. What applied to beauty, equally applies to art. All art, for Shaftsbury, acquires its effect from

21 Ibid., p. 405.
design, form and unity and not from its material medium. And this unity and form is essentially in tune with natural forms. Thus he regards art to be an imitation of nature. However, Shaftsbury nowhere thinks an artist to be merely a duplicator of nature. For this one-to-one correspondence with nature is neither possible nor desirable.

"A Painter, if he has any Genius, understands the Truth and Unity of Design; and knows he is even then unnatural, when he follows Nature too close and strictly copies Life. For his Art allows him not to bring All Nature into his Piece, but a Part only... if it be beautiful and carries Truth, must be a Whole, by it-self, compleat, independent, and withall as great and comprehensive as he can make it."

The above passage clearly marks out the views of Shaftsbury. He very brilliantly clarifies the notion of artistic imitation. While he does not regard art as an imitation of nature, in contrast to his predecessors, he clearly points out that art cannot be regarded as a slavish duplication of nature. Thus, a true artist is a "second creator" for through its harmony and unity, his composition parallels nature. This type of "simple imitation of nature" is preferred by Shaftsbury to all other styles in art. For it has an effect of effortlessness and ease.

Shaftbury's prescriptions to practising artists furthermore break down the distinction between the aesthetic

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22 Ibid., pp. 142-43.
and the moral. Thus he formulates his famous "method of soliloquy". He says that any artist, to portray human character, must first know himself. He must create a duality in his own self and thus evaluate himself dispassionately. For only then can his gaze become penetrating:

"He who deals in Characters, must of necessity know his own; or he will know nothing."\(^{23}\)

Thus for Shaftsbury, for an artist it is absolutely essential to know his authentic self. For he reveals the world to others and since his art provides the spectators with a "looking glass" to know the world, his work must be a non-pragmatic and detailed portrayal of reality. Thus the genuine artist is completely indifferent to the whims and fancies of the public. It is only the fake artist who caters to the needs of the people. An authentic artist, on the other hand, cultivates the taste of the people through his artistic adventures.\(^{24}\)

This brings us to another relevant point -- the nature of taste -- the faculty of aesthetic enjoyment. Shaftsbury thinks that taste can be cultivated. However, 


24 Thus Shaftsbury says: "This is Virtue! real Virtue, and Love of Truth; independent of Opinion, and above the World.... One wou'd expect it of our writers, that if they had real Ability, they shou'd draw the World to them; and not merely sute themselves to the World, in its weak State." *Ibid.*, p. 261.
he at the same time thinks that potentially the sense of beauty is universal in all human beings. It is only not properly recognised by every-one. Nevertheless, it appears that Shaftsbury does not think that one cannot differentiate the fake from the authentic beauty. A pursuit of genuine beauty would be born of a detached, non-pragmatic and rational enjoyment as against the sensuous gratification and irrational venting of emotions, which marks the pursuit of unauthentic beauty. This is what differentiates a "true" from "false" taste. This true taste is realizable without realization of our true being. Thus Shaftsbury emphatically states:

"I like! I fancy! I admire! How? By accident; or as I please. No. But I learn to fancy, to admire, to please, as the subjects themselves are deserving, and can bear me out. Otherwise, I like at this hour, but dislike the next... Judgement in it be from no other Rule than that single one, because I please... But is this pleasure right? And if I expect the Knowledge shou'd come to me by accident, or in play; I shall be grossly deluded,..."25

This passage clearly explains the viewpoint of Shaftsbury. He is very clear that human beings tend to gratify themselves by the baser pleasures and forget about the authentic beauty. Thus he thinks his method of soliloquy to be useful in this context. For it makes one realize one's true nature and thus impels one to pursue

the authentic beauty which lies beyond the sensory framework and is essentially in harmony with the moral and the truthful. As such, Shaftsbury thinks the cultivation of moral values an essential element of the cultivation of taste. "To be a Judge in one, requires a Judgement in the Other. The Morals, the Character, and Genius of an Author must be thorowly consider'd...."\(^{26}\)

It is this essential identity of the moral and the aesthetic which creates a difficulty. Shaftsbury thinks the attainment of the moral truth nothing but the realisation of one's authentic being, which again is nothing but the recognition of one's rational faculties. This would be imposing the norms of rationality upon art, which would ultimately give rise to a kind of didacticism in art. And nothing is more damaging to arts than this kind of moral inhibition. This point will be picked up and discussed in detail in the chapters to follow. However, it suffices to say that the identity of the aesthetic and the moral domains completely damages the autonomy of the former.

This association of the moral with the aesthetic is also shared by Addison. The same concern for moral values is evident when Addison says that a writer must be careful in choosing his themes and words for he is not only communicating to his own age but to posterity as well:

\(^{26}\)Ibid., p. 146.
"If writings... pass from Age to Age throughout the whole Course of Time, how careful should an Author be of committing any thing to Print that may corrupt Posterity, and poison the Minds of Men with Vice and Error? Writers of great Talents, who employ their Parts in propagating Immorality, and seasoning vicious Sentiments with Wit and Humour, are to be looked upon as the Pests of Society and the Enemies of Mankind: They leave Books behind them... to scatter Infection and destroy their Posterity."27

The above passage echoes the moral sermon of Plato that art must serve the ethos of the people otherwise it is no art. Addison shares with Plato his belief in the supremacy of reason. Thus, he thinks that fancy and imagination must be effectively controlled by man's rational faculties.

Addison, however, is more important for his remarks on taste and imagination. He defines taste as "... that Faculty of the Soul, which discerns the Beauties of an Author with Pleasure, and the Imperfections with Dislike."28 This faculty of soul, however, is not arbitrary and capricious. Rather it is the end product of a great labour. It is only by confronting oneself with great works of art that one develops it. Addison seems to think taste as both acquired and innate. Though taste is largely acquired by the development of one's sensibility, there is, however, something innate also. For there must be some potentiality


which is later on developed by training and education. However, Addison does not explain the nature of this norm of taste by following which we could know if $X$ is a good work of art or not. He seems to take some art works of antiquity for granted, and regards their enjoyment for the cultivation and refinement of taste. At the same time he also seems to believe in the test of time -- a good art work transcends the limitations and compulsions of space and time and thus has eternal value.

Imagination is the primal faculty which makes us enjoy and appreciate beauty. This activity of enjoying beauty is born out of a confrontation with two types of objects -- natural and artistic. To natural forms are related the "primary pleasures of imagination" and to art the "secondary" ones. In the appreciation of beauty, art and nature both assist each other. For, an art work that looks like nature is more effective and likewise, a natural sense that has the unity and coherence of art works creates a greater impact upon the beholder. However, as means of aesthetic enjoyment, it is not clear whether Addison prefers nature or art. In this context some of his statements are expressive of contradictions that are difficult to reconcile. On the one hand he says:

"If we consider the works of Nature and Art, as they are qualified to entertain the Imagination, we shall find the last very defective, in Comparison of the former; for though they may sometimes appear as Beautiful or Strange, they
can have nothing in them of that Vastness and Immensity, which afford so great an Entertainment to the Mind of the Beholder."29

And at the same time Addison also says:

"... because the Imagination can fancy to it self Things more Great, Strange, or Beautiful, than the Eye ever saw, and is still sensible of some Defect in what it has seen; on this account it is the part of a Poet to humour the Imagination... by mending and perfecting Nature where he describes a Reality, and by adding greater Beauties than are put together in Nature..."30

These two passages are certainly expressive of an ambivalence in the mind of Addison.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that being a writer himself and deeply involved in the "pleasures of the imagination", even Addison ultimately seems to regard it inferior to understanding. He seems to share with the rationalists their approach to imagination as a form of knowing.31 It is here that the contribution of Kant appears to be most significant, for he clearly marks out the domain


31Comparing imagination, sense perception and understanding, Addison says, "The Pleasures of the Imagination, taken in the full Extent, are not so gross as those of Sense, nor so refined as those of the Understanding. The last are, indeed, more preferable, because they are founded on some new Knowledge of Improvement in the Mind of Man.... Besides, the Pleasures of the Imagination...are more obvious, and more easie to be acquired." Ibid., III, No. 411, p. 277.
of knowledge and makes it distinct from the realm of pleasure and displeasure, which is the concern of a judgement of taste.

Contrasted to Kant, whose views we shall discuss shortly, Addison makes the imagination completely subservient to knowledge by thinking all the adventures of imagination as relevant because they help to reveal the truth:

"The final cause, probably, of annexing Pleasure to this Operation of the Mind, was to quicken and encourage us in our Searches after Truth,..."32

Regarding aesthetic autonomy, it seems that Burke has maintained it much more than Addison and Shaftsbury. Burke, who is more known for his analysis of the sublime and the beautiful, has given some very interesting remarks regarding the nature of aesthetic objects. What marks out Burke as different from his contemporaries is his blatant sensationalism. He wants to directly link the aesthetic concepts with physical phenomena, the awareness of which is directly got from sensations. Thus he gives his elaborate list of categories that are productive of the sublime and the beautiful in nature and art. Yet at the same time he does not think that aesthetic appreciation by being linked with sensational qualities is relative. Thus

32Ibid., III, No. 416, p. 292.
he says:

"... what is called Taste, in its most general acceptation, is not a simple idea, but is partly made up of a perception of the primary pleasures of sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty, concerning the various relations of these, and concerning the human passions, manners and actions... the whole ground-work of Taste is common to all, and therefore there is a sufficient foundation for a conclusive reasoning on these matters." 33

The above passage shows that unlike his predecessors who sought the aesthetic qualities in the transcendental and metaphysical entities or the mathematical constructs, Burke saw them in physical objects. He denies proportion and fittingness the status of necessary constituents of beauty. For he believes that no particular proportion is necessarily productive of any aesthetic quality. Thus he thinks that "The true opposite to beauty is not disproportion or deformity, but ugliness,..." 34

Furthermore, by this independence of beauty from proportion, Burke makes the domain of the aesthetic distinct from that of the cognitive, since proportion for him is the product of understanding and beauty that of the imagination and sensation. It is for this distinction

34 Ibid., p. 104.
that Burke is important. For he gives the aesthetic an independent status and also saves himself from comparing the imagination with the understanding. On the other hand he thinks that mixing up the aesthetic with the moral and the cognitive is confusing issues.

"The general application of this quality to virtue, has a strong tendency to confound our ideas of things; and it has given rise to an infinite deal of whimsical theory; as the affixing of the name of beauty to proportion, congruity and perfection,... This loose and inaccurate manner of speaking, has therefore misled us both in the theory of taste and of morals; and induced us to remove the science of our duties from their proper basis... to rest it upon foundations altogether visionary and unsubstantial."35

However, from the above statement it does not imply that contrasted to the systematic character of morals and knowledge, the aesthetic is capricious and disorganized. Though they display different realms of experience, yet the aesthetic too is equally objective and universal. However, what gives unity, coherence and system to the aesthetic is understanding. And the cultivation of taste implies nothing but a gradual dissociation of mind from any pragmatic interest or desire and thus an effort to respond to the pure form of the aesthetic object. Thus Burke says:

"...whenever the best Taste differs from the worst, I am convinced that the understanding operates and

35Ibid., p. 112.
nothing else;... Taste... is improved exactly
as we improve our judgement, by extending our
knowledge, by a steady attention to our object,
and by frequent exercise."36

This norm for the cultivation of taste is similar
to the idea of aesthetic consciousness and distance developed
later by Kant and Bullough respectively. Burke thus refers
to the purity of the aesthetic pleasure which makes it
different from immediate sensuous gratification.

Burke regards art as essentially an imitation of
reality and the pleasure of imitation is the major motivating
force of all artistic activity. The primal pleasure of art
owing its origin to imitation, Burke seeks the standards
of aesthetics in nature rather than in art.37 And nature,
too, is not the supersensible but that which the external
world impresses on us through the senses. Thus, unlike
his predecessors, Burke spends most of his time in analyzing
the physical categories that contribute to the visualisation
of the sublime and the beautiful. He bases the two aesthetic
qualities upon mutually exclusive emotions -- pleasure and
pain. Burke repeats Plato's association of the beautiful
with the loved and the intrinsically pleasurable, while the


37 Thus Burke remarks: "... art can never give the
rules that make an art.... The true standard of the arts
is in every man's power; and an easy observation of the
most common, sometimes of the meanest things in nature,
will give the truest lights,..." Ibid., p. 54.
e is the awe inspiring and reveals painful and aring aspects of nature. Thus the ideas of beauty blime have nothing in common for him. However, both e products of the essential detachment and indifference gmatic value which mark an aesthetic response.

It is to Burke that Kant owes many of his ideas, alarly to his analysis of the psychological aspect lime and beauty -- the nature of the mental state ompanies the confrontation of the sublime and the ful. In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant attempts to up a strong thesis for the autonomy of aesthetics, it from morality on the one hand and epistemology other. Keeping in view their autonomy and independence, evoted the critique to an analysis of the judgements he beautiful and the sublime. Kant's contribution to tics, which is valuable also for the contemporary tics, lies in his clear-cut analysis of aesthetic nt and the aesthetic consciousness that accompanies is assigning of the three realms of cognition to the mental faculties created a landmark in the history of tics, for he was the first to define the domain of tics and establish its autonomy.\(^3\) He assigned the of imagination to aesthetics, thus linking it with

understanding and will. Thus even though both under-
ing and reason play an important role in the 
liation of the beautiful and the sublime respectively,
the free play of the imaginative faculty that marks 
gement of taste. Kant has given a very brilliant 
ysis of the aesthetic judgement. Analyzing the nature 
sthetic judgement, he holds that it is subjective 
lar in nature: it manifests the feeling of 
re and displeasure. This feeling which is associated 
aesthetic enjoyment is not of a personal kind but has 
versal application. Its universality emanates 
its a priori character and not from inductive 
lisation. Besides, this universality is also not 
ed from concepts, for then the disputes about taste

39 Kant has discussed the universality of pleasure 
ference to his definition of the beautiful. He 
"When the form of an object (as opposed to the 
 of its representation...) is, in the mere act of 
ing upon it, without regard to any concept to be 
ed from it, estimated as the ground of a pleasure 
representation of such an Object, then this 
re is also judged to be combined necessarily with 
resentation of it, and so not merely for the 
prehending this form, but for all in general 
ss judgement. The object is then called beautiful...." 
, p. 31.

40 Kant categorically asserts that "There can be no 
ive rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be 
ed by means of concepts. For every judgement from 
ource is aesthetic, i.e. its determining ground is 
eling of the Subject, and not any concept of an 
. It is only throwing away labour to look for a 
le of taste that affords a universal criterion of 
autiful by definite concepts; because what is sought 
ing impossible and inherently contradictory."
, p. 75.
uld be settled by proofs. Kant traces this universality — a common sense — an identity of mental faculties in all human beings. This universality is untainted by the relativism of responses because of the following two reasons:

(a) What is generally held by relativists to be aesthetic response is often a mere passing fancy; and

(b) To distinguish between a mere approval of object and an aesthetic response, properly so called, it qualified the latter by its detachment and disinterestedness towards any involvement, whether of utilitarian or personal kind. It is a pure activity of the imagination, coupled with reason and understanding, that goes into the visualisation of aesthetic objects.

Bullough, in his discussion of psychical distance\(^41\) of artistic appreciation, continued the analysis of the nature of aesthetic response initiated by Kant. Art appreciation has to be saved from both the dangers of over distancing" and "under distancing"; over-distancing the result of indifference on the part of the spectator which makes him completely incapable of responding to the

work. Under-distancing too, creates a similar effect
the opposite means, for it is caused by an undue inter-
ing of art objects into daily life situations -- so
art works cease to be art works. Thus for both Kant
Bullough, aesthetic enjoyment is valuable not for an
aneous cause; it is a value in itself -- "a purposiveness
ut a purpose." If any extra-aesthetic reason motivates
joyment of aesthetic objects, then this enjoyment
ot deserve to be called an aesthetic response.

This peculiarity of the aesthetic response has been
lucidly marked by the following remarks of Clive
. He says:

"... to appreciate a work of art we need bring with
us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas
and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions.
Art transports us from the world of man's activity
to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment
we are shut off from human interests; our anticipa-
tions and memories are arrested; we are lifted
above the stream of life."

This doctrine of the "estrangement" of art from
external world has been adhered to by all those who
upon the primacy of form over content in art. It
imes emanates from a belief in the illusory nature
of that art is essentially a "semblance" of reality,
thus to appreciate it we need to free our perception
the mundane world of here and now. The illusory

\[42\]

acter of art was first emphasized by Schiller through the concept of "Schein" and has been later developed into aesthetic theories of particular arts by Sartre and Langer. Another thinker of interest in the history of aesthetics is Hegel. It is difficult to decide whether his contribution to contemporary aesthetics has more negative value or positive. On the one hand he has played a rare acumen for grappling with the details

Thus Schiller says: "... where imagination eternally des from reality and yet never goes astray from the licity of Nature -- here alone will sense and spirit, active and creative power develop in the happy equilibrium is the soul of Beauty.... Only in so far as it is (expressly renouncing all claim to reality), and in so far as it is self-dependent (dispensing with assistance from reality), is appearance aesthetic." Schiller further adds: "... to despise appearance is despise all fine art whatsoever, since appearance is very essence." Friedrich Schiller, On Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters, trans. Reginald (London, 1954), pp. 124-25; 128; and 126).

See S.K. Langer, Feeling and Form (London,
of art history, and on the other hand he creates his idealistic dialectic which forces every element of the universe to reduce itself to a pre-conceived system. And since the various ways of knowing have originated only through the dialectical development of the Absolute Idea which culminates in philosophy, art has no independent and autonomous place in the system of Hegel. Art is the sensuous manifestation of the Absolute Spirit. The dissolution of art into philosophy is caused by its gradual movement towards higher and higher abstraction until a stage comes when it ceases to be art. This hierarchical growth is manifested in Hegel's analysis of the various art genera; the order of arts is as follows: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry. This shows how art evolves from the gross medium of architecture to the abstract images of poetry. Parallel to this is the hierarchical development of art history from Symbolic art to Classical and finally to the Romantic one. The negative value of the Hegelian system is very well felt in the writings of both Spengler and Croce. Spengler reacted to Hegel's uni-linear concept of art history, reducing itself to three stages -- symbolic, classical, and romantic. He thus developed his Copernican approach towards history which aimed at looking upon events and situations, not from one reference frame but many. Croce, too, reacted to the Hegelian portrayal of
art history and art by denouncing the imposition of religion and philosophy upon it. Art, being independent and autonomous, there is no question of dissolving it into religion or emphasises the autonomy and independence of art. However, not all what Hegel says has merely a negative value. Hegel is one of the few aesthetic thinkers who have given such a detailed analysis of the various art forms. He boldly rejects the imitation theory and holds that the purpose of art is not a duplication of the natural forms but the expression of the inward being of the artist: the spirit. This inwardness is not personal to the artist himself but embodies the universal feelings and emotions. And the spirit, in order to unfold itself, undergoes a dialectical process of development. This dialectical growth is manifested in the evolution of various art forms and styles. In the order of art styles Hegel gave the supreme place to Romantic art which embodies the triumph of spirit over matter — an attempt to manifest abstract ideas through the sensuous forms, imagery and metaphor. Thus the goal of all art forms is to reach the abstraction

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45 Hegel says: "In summing up, then, what the particular arts realize in particular works of art, are according to their fundamental conception simply the universal types from which constitute the self-unfolding Idea of beauty. It is as the external realization of the idea that the wide Pantheon of art is being raised, and the architect and builder thereof is the spirit of beauty as it gradually comes to cognition." See G.W.F. Hegel, Philosophy of Fine Art. Four Vols. (London, 1920) Vol. I, p. 122.
of philosophical ideas — a stage, the achievement of which annihilates art itself. But the primary stir that Hegel created was because of this basic postulate of his system and not because of his encyclopaedic details of art history. The fundamental postulates and categories of his system engendered a sharp reaction from all the three: Spengler, Sartre and Croce, with the exception of Freud who was indifferent to the problems raised by Hegel. This would be clear in the chapters that follow. And equally clear, I hope, would be the contribution of these four theories to the understanding and analysis of aesthetic meaning. I have already maintained that an analysis of aesthetic meaning, to be significant, must be based upon an examination of the phenomena of art from multiple angles. The more we look at the art work from various points of view, the more comprehensive our analysis would be. And a better opportunity would be provided for arriving at coherent ideas.