III. RESTORE CO-CULTURAL RELATIVISM AND ART: AN EXPOSITION OF SPENGLER'S AESTHETIC THEORY
Any discussion of Spengler's philosophy must start from his concept of Culture, since this for him is the reference frame from which any form of knowing proceeds. What then, is Culture? Spengler does not attempt to formulate any systematic definition of culture. He cryptically calls it a soul that sets out in the course of its life to fulfil and actualize its inherent potentialities. From this metaphorical saying it can be gathered that the term 'culture' in Spengler's connotation refers both to its potentialities as well as the sensible forms that embody these potentialities. The totality of traditions and beliefs, comprising of ways of knowing the world, language, religion, art-forms and moral and political laws are the sensible forms through which a culture manifests itself. This actual aspect of culture is distinguishable from the former one which refers to its potentialities;¹ they together

¹"I distinguish the idea of a Culture, which is the sum total of its inner possibilities, from its sensible phenomenon or appearance upon the canvas of history as a fulfilled actuality. It is the relation of the soul to the living body, to its expression in the light-world perceptible to our eyes. This history of a Culture is the progressive actualizing of its possible, and fulfilment is equivalent to the end." Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, authorised trans. with notes by Charles Francis Atkinson, One Vol. Ed. (London, 1959), pp. 104-105.
constitute the body and soul of a culture.

A culture is actualized by the people of a given space and time. 'People', for Spengler are not marked by geographical boundaries. "A people is an aggregate of men which feels itself a unit. The Spartiates felt themselves a people in this sense...."\(^2\) This unity of the soul emerges as a resultant of historical events.\(^3\) It is not the people that create history, but history creates a 'people'.

Historical events shape a common soul, a common 'world-image'; the way of looking upon the world and these are the features that mark the people in a culture. Thus, the phrase 'people in a Culture' does not refer to isolated individuals, juxtaposed in a certain geographical background but it is the march of historical events that writes a certain set of individuals into a 'people'. Cultures are entities, their respective peoples are their products and not their creators.

To explain the process of cultural growth and decay Spengler draws his analogy from Biology -- of growth and development of an organism. All cultures, like organisms have a specific period of life assigned to them and thus


\(^3\)For me, the "people" is a unit of the soul. The great events of history were not really achieved by peoples; they themselves created the peoples'. Ibid., p. 165.
actualize their possibilities in the course of their life-cycles and finally die down. "Every Culture passes through the age-phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age." A culture evolves from its rudimentary stage of existence to its full bloom which is its youth: the highest peak of its development. From the spring-time of youth it gradually starts decaying until it becomes as crude as its earliest stages, after this it dies. In its 'early period', a culture is fumbling to express itself and is in search of a suitable form-language. It is in the 'late period' that it discovers its form-language and fulfils its latent potentialities. Having exhausted its inherent possibilities, it lingers on for some time and finally dies down. From the debris of a dead culture springs another which runs a similar course of development and this too, like its predecessor finally falls prey to decay and death.

"A Culture is born in the moment when a great soul awakens out of the proto-spirituality... of ever-childish humanity, and detaches itself, a form from the formless, a bounded and mortal thing from the boundless and enduring. It blooms on the soil of an exactly-definable landscape, to which plant-wise it remains bound. It dies when this soul has actualized the full sum of its possibilities in the shape of peoples, languages, dogmas, arts, states, sciences, and reverts into the proto-soul.... The aim once attained — the idea; the entire content of inner possibilities, fulfilled and made externally actual — the Culture suddenly hardens, it mortifies, its blood congeals, its force breaks down, and it becomes Civilization...." 


^Ibid., p. 106.
This is in brief, the whole process of cultural growth and decay.

Since every culture is born in particular space and time situation, therefore, there is a deep-rooted link between the two. Space and Time for Spengler are not the objectively quantifiable concepts of the sciences, they have a peculiarly cultural connotation. It is because for him no concepts can be culture free to be objectively and universally valid. Thus Space is the extension from which a culture emerges and Time is the direction and Destiny to which it points. Space is the thing 'become' and actualized while time refers to 'becoming', something which has yet to fulfil itself. Space and time though opposed to each other are yet inter-related. Space is based on time, for, the 'become' can be conceived only as an end product of the process of 'becoming', and yet the 'become' necessitates the annihilation of any further 'becoming'. Therefore, the become is becoming made static and similarly space is time made rigid. Extension flattens the temporal sequence of events and makes them static. "Time gives birth to Space, but Space gives death to Time." Becoming cannot be dissected and categorized because it points to something yet to be fulfilled — possibilities which have yet to be actualized. That which is in a constant state of flux

6Ibid., p. 173.
cannot be grasped by systematic thought. Only that which is already made static and actualized can be dissected and understood through scientific principles. In the growth of culture the awareness of time comes later than the awareness of space, for space is actually 'there' — it surrounds man, while time has to be discovered by human consciousness and thought, it is not given in the very act of perception as space is.

Corresponding to Space and Time is the opposition of Causality and Destiny or Nature and History. These together constitute our knowledge about the external world. Reality can be known in two ways: through the stiff and rigid symbolism of the extended or that which is actually there (Nature) and through the idea of Destiny: the directionality of time (History). The terms 'History' and 'Nature' have a peculiar meaning in this context — denoting ways of

7 "Becoming has no number. We can count, measure, dissect only the lifeless and so much of the living as can be dissociated from livingness. Pure becoming, pure life, is in this sense incapable of being bounded. It lies beyond the domain of cause and effect, law and measure." Ibid., p. 95.

8 'For primitive man, the word "time" can have no meaning. He simply lives, without any necessity of specifying an opposition to something else. He has time, but he knows nothing of it... Space "is" (i.e. exists, in and with our sense-world) — as a self-extension while we are living the ordinary life of dream, impulse, intuition and conduct, and as space in the strict sense, in the moments of strained attention. "Time", on the contrary, is a discovery, which is only made by thinking." Ibid., p. 122.
knowing the external world. Nature refers to the totality of knowledge attained by systematic and discursive reasoning. This systematic knowledge about the world works on strict laws that are universal and 'anti-historical'. It deals with the timeless and directionless or what has been earlier called the 'become'. History bases its knowledge about the world on the concept of time. Therefore, both these forms of knowing are mutually opposed to each other.\footnote{Lastly, the words \textit{History} and \textit{Nature} are here employed... in a quite definite and hitherto unusual sense. These words comprise possible modes of understanding, of comprehending the totality of knowledge -- becoming as well as things-become, life as well as things-lived -- as a homogeneous, spiritualized, well-ordered \textit{world-picture} fashioned out of an indivisible mass-impression in this way or in that according as the becoming or the become, direction ("time") or extension ("space") is the dominant factor.' \textit{Ibid.}, p. 55.}

The reality known as extended can be strictly categorized in terms of mechanical laws while the idea of Destiny points to something beyond: that which cannot be laid down in terms of cause and effect. Reality as Nature is independent of the idea of Destiny; it aims at formulating the universal laws about the nature of the external world. Thus, it is concerned with cognition. Nature aims at discovering 'truths' which are professed to be universally applicable, while history reveals 'facts' which are essentially...
Based upon time, Spengler has explained this dual aspect of world-image through the following paradigm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soul (potentiality)</th>
<th>Fulfilment (Life)</th>
<th>World (actuality)</th>
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<tr>
<td>becoming</td>
<td>the become</td>
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<td>direction</td>
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<td>organic</td>
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<tr>
<td>symbol, portrait</td>
<td>number, notion</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<td>Rhythm, form</td>
<td>Tension, law</td>
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Soul is the potentiality of all existences. This potentiality is fulfilled through man's life in the form of the world. There is a basic opposition between the soul and the world, the soul being the potential; having the power to actualize itself and the world is the actual and the fulfilled. Life is akin to becoming; it points to a constant movement towards fulfilment and completion. It indicates towards a direction, a future, a Destiny.

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10 "It is one of the tacit, but nonetheless firm, pre-suppositions of nature-research that "Nature" (die Natur) is the same for every consciousness and for all times. An experiment is decisive for good and all; time being, not precisely denied, but eliminated from the field of investigation. Real history rests on an equally certain sense of the contrary; what it presupposes as its origin is a nearly indescribable sensitive faculty within, which is continuously labile under continuous impressions, and is incapable therefore of possessing what may be called a centre of time." Ibid., p. 103.

11 Ibid., p. 102.
The world is the end product of this process of becoming. Hence it is the become, the idea actualized and concretized. 'Becoming' defies all dissection and analysis because it follows the logic of the organic, while all 'become' can be analysed into its constituent parts as it follows mechanical principles. Everything dead can be dissected, but a living organism refuses to be dissected for the sum-total of its parts do not give us the living organism, its value lies in the peculiar relation that the parts hold to the whole. The becoming cannot be manifested through scientific and logical concepts like number and notion, it can only be concretized through symbols — through art, religion and ways of living. And these symbols which are derived from life-experience can be visualized only through feeling and intention and not through cognition. The art of portraiture captures the idea of Destiny — the incessant movement towards future. Portraiture is 'physiognomic' as against 'systematic', it aims at capturing the soul behind the outward appearance of the individual whose portrait is made. World-history the 'collective biography of cultures', aims, like the art of portraiture, at portraying the souls of cultures. This is how the World-as-History is distinct from the World-as-Nature which aims at representing the world through systematized and quantified principles. Thus we find that human existents, through their consciousness
weave out an image of the world and this world-image is of two types — History and Nature. World-as-History looks at the world as a totality of 'uniquely occurring facts' (and 'facts' here do not imply scientific facts) which is necessarily moving towards its own fulfilment, its own Destiny. The World-as-Nature, on the other hand, is the totality of universal and systematic principles — 'truths' that can be universally established and known through the cognitive faculties. History reveals the cosmic 'rhythm' and 'form', which is incessantly fulfilling itself and is never in the state of completion; and since the world when looked upon by history incessantly on the move to fulfil itself, it cannot be reduced to static laws. However, Spengler thinks that this dualism of History is ultimately demolished, for the universal principles of physics and mathematics are only apparently universal. This point can be exemplified by taking the mathematical law, 'three angles of a triangle are equal to two right-angles'. This aim at universal application. But actually this too is the expression of a cultural 'prime symbol' of the here and now — perceivable through senses. Euclidean Geometry represents the space-feeling of classical man of the perpetually present as against the spirit of Western-mathematics which tries through number to capture the infinite. This shows that there is no strict dichotomy between history and nature, both are related — of the two
history is the primary, it forms the basis for the world-as-nature. "No "Nature" is pure — there is always something of history in it". 12 These mathematical laws, in spite of their claims of universal applicability, are no more than the expression of cultural styles. All scientific and mathematical theories are the products of their respective cultures, they represent their cultural prime-symbols.

Here in this context the meaning of 'prime-symbol' needs clarification. It has already been seen that every culture has its peculiar attitude towards space and time which together constitute the world-image of a culture. This attitude towards space and time is symbolically expressed in all the sensible manifestations of a culture, and it is the distinguishing mark between one culture and the other. It is this attitude that becomes the prime-symbol of a culture:

"... we shall consider the kind of extension as the prime-symbol of a Culture. From it we are to deduce the entire form-language of its actuality, its physiognomy as contrasted with the physiognomy of every other Culture... the prime-symbol does not actualize itself; it is operative through the form-sense of every man, every community, age and epoch and dictates the style of every life-expression. It is inherent in the form of the state, the religious myths and cults, the ethical ideals, the forms of painting and music and poetry, the fundamental notions of each science — but it is not presented by... words, for language and words are themselves derived symbols."

12 Ibid., p. 389.
13 Ibid., pp. 174-175.
The prime-symbol can be grasped by feelings and not by understanding. Every individual, in the course of his life, experiences once again the same world-image which is peculiar to his own culture. In his own life he experiences all those stages of development that took place in the growth of his culture. The Greek, Western and Arabian cultures have their own prime-symbols of the perpetually present, the infinite and the cavern respectively. These prime-symbols are expressed in the entire life of the people of these cultures. Thus we find that there is a plurality of prime-symbols representing their respective culture, for what has once died can never be brought back to life. Renaissance was not a revival of the classical culture, only some of the outward characteristics of Renaissance art appeared to be similar to the Classical. Raphael, Leonardo and Michelangelo tried to capture the effects of classical painting, but they failed because the prime-symbol of their culture is entirely different from that of the classical.\(^1\)

We have seen that space and time correspond to 'become' and 'becoming'. To the become and becoming are

\(^1\)\text{If we look closely enough we shall have no difficulty in convincing ourselves that no one art of any greatness has ever been "reborn".} \text{Ibid., p. 223.}
associated the feelings of dread and longing.¹⁵ Man finds himself extremely lonely in the vast universe — the enormous space that stretches before him fills in him a deep sense of insecurity. The greater the mystery of the surrounding universe, the more insecure man becomes. The alien elements of the universe loom threateningly upon him. This 'world-fear' of man is the cause of the desire to know, for to know is to bind the mysterious in terms of an intelligible whole.¹⁶ This world-fear which grips man from the very birth, is the root-cause of all creative activity. All creativity, in one form or the other, originates in man's adjustment with his surroundings. To be sure, world-fear is a very complex mental state: on the one hand it is the loneliness and insecurity which man faces in an alien and mysterious universe. On the other hand, it is the overpowering dread of finitude. Among all the living beings it is only man who can visualize

¹⁵ As the longing attaches itself to that impalpable something whose thousand-formed elusive manifestations are comprised in, rather than denoted by, the word "time", so the other prime feeling, dread, finds its expression in the intellectual, understandable, outlinable symbols of extension; and thus we find that every culture is aware (each in its own special way) of an opposition of time and space, of direction and extension, the former underlying the latter as becoming precedes having-become. It is the longing that underlies the dread, becomes the dread, and not vice versa.' Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁶ 'To bind, to bridle, to placate, to "know" are all, in the last analysis, the same thing.' Ibid., p. 80.
death. For it is man alone who is capable of thinking in abstraction — of visualizing contrary-to-fact states. Animals die when the time comes, they cannot have an attitude towards death. Man, on the other hand, can imagine himself and his fellow beings dying. It is with death that man realizes his loneliness in the world, his existence being absolutely separate from his fellow-beings. The awareness of this basic mortality results in an extremely painful mental state. Coupled with this feeling of fear is the feeling of longing — man looks towards the future and with every thought of the future he longs to fulfil himself. He yearns to see his hopes and desires actualized. It is this longing which again gives rise to the feeling of dread — the dread of mortality, of not being able to actualize one's potentialities. This is the mental state which is the cause of man's creative adventure. However, this creative adventure of man is not isolated, it is an expression of his cultural epoch. The individual apart from the culture is a misnomer. He is only there to actualize the possibilities of his culture — and this need for actualization is fulfilled by a few talented minds who have the capacity to execute this (unconscious) plan of culture.

Spengler regards the individual as the direct manifestation of his cultural epoch. Creativity would refer to that stage of cultural development when a culture has
evolved its complete form - language which is expressive of its total potentialities. It is in the spring-time of a culture that it is matured and its various sensible expressions have acquired their clear-cut significance. As against the spring-time, the first and the last stages of culture both lack vitality of expression. When the civilization stage comes, 'The sign of all living art, the pure harmony of "will", "must" and "can", the self-evidence of the aim, the un-self-consciousness of the execution, the unity of the art and the Culture — all that is past and gone. In Corot and Tiepolo, Mozart and Cimarosa, there is still a real mastery of the mother-tongue. After them, the process of mutilation begins, but no one is conscious of it because no one now can speak it fluently.... In the time of Rembrandt or Bach the "failures" that we know only too well were quite unthinkable. The Destiny of the form lay in the race or the school, not in private tendencies of the individual.

Under the spell of a great tradition full achievement is possible even to a minor artist, because the living art brings him in touch with his task and the task with him. To-day, these artists can no longer perform what they intend, for intellectual operations are a poor substitute for the trained instinct that has died out.'

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17Ibid., pp. 291-292.
The above passage makes it evident that the source of creative expression is not the individual but the cultural epoch. An artist in the age of cultural decadence, howsoever he might try, can achieve very little as compared to an artist in the spring-time of a culture. Thus, the talk about creative freedom becomes meaningless for Spengler, for the impetus for creativity comes from the culture. The culture dictates the expression-forms to the individual artists. The individual cannot help but speak in the language of his cultural epoch and as such his mastery in handling the various art-forms is also limited. Therefore, what the artist might think as self initiated and willed is really not willed by him. He is merely a tool in the hands of the culture that is fulfilling itself in the course of its wave-cycle.

From what has already been discussed about culture it is evident that, like science and mathematics, art too is a sensible manifestation of its respective cultural epoch. Spengler obviates the common sense distinction between science and art, i.e. of science being objective as against the so-called subjectivity of art. As cultural symbols they cannot be subsumed under any hierarchical order and are therefore equally valuable. And neither can science and art be understood in abstraction -- apart from the context of their specific cultures. Thus, art as a general concept is meaningless; one can only meaningfully talk about Classical art, Western Art etc., referring to
the various styles of cultures. All these different art-forms are representative of their cultural prime-symbols. And anything that can be significantly said about art is only in the context of cultures. "There is not one sculpture, one painting, one mathematics, one physics, but many, each in its deepest essence different from the others, each limited in duration, and self-contained, just as each species of plant has its peculiar blossom or fruit, its special type of growth and decline."\(^18\)

Similar to the duality of world-image of Destiny and Causality is the dual aspect of art.\(^19\) The causal and systematic side of art belongs to the 'taboo' in art: artistic skills which can be acquired through practice. The 'totem' aspect of art refers to that element in art which cannot be acquired by training. From the side of


\(^{19}\) 'To the fear, to the Causal, belongs the whole "taboo" side of art — its stock of motives, developed in strict schools and long craft-training, carefully protected and piously transmitted; all of it that is comprehensible, leamable, numerical.... But the other side, opposed to the "taboo" as the directed is to the extended... comes out in genius (namely, in that which is wholly personal to the individual artists; their imaginative powers, creative passion, depth and richness, as against all mere mastery of form) and, beyond even genius, in that super-abundance of creativeness in the race which conditions the rise and fall of whole arts. This is the "totem" side,...' *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.
the individual it refers to genius: his innate and inborn artistic and creative ability. Further, there is an influence of the race upon the various arts belonging to it. The individual's source of creativity is his cultural epoch, it shapes the individuals according to its need to express itself. Individuals are only the vehicles for the self-expression of a Culture. The 'totem' side of art therefore, refers to the inheritance of a common 'soul' which cannot be acquired through training. It is given to the artist from his birth. Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael could acquire the 'taboo' side of classical art, its outward manifestations, but not its soul. Corresponding to the 'totem' and 'taboo' of art are its imitative and ornamental aspects. Imitation is a basic trait which man shares with animals, it is born out of the basic need to bridge the gulf between the opposing cosmic elements. It is, therefore, born out of the inherent nature of living being: their desire to adjust with their surroundings. Imitation is born out of a situational context and thus cannot be repeated and reproduced. The process of imitation always implies a duality between the 'I' that is imitating and the 'other' which is being imitated. Ornamentation on the other hand, is an independent process, it can be reproduced whenever desired. It does not involve anything alien, here 'The "I" overwhelms the "Thou".'

Ibid., p. 192.
It is 'become' and the extended, time has therefore no concern with ornamentation. Imitation is possible only of the individual while ornamentation transcends all individuality and grasps the generalized form. Imitation refers to all that is living in art, it represents the vital aspect of a culture, which dies with its respective culture. Only the ornamental aspect is left over. Of the Greek tragedies, only the written scripts are left, of the musical symphonies merely the score, these no more have the vitality of living artworks, they are merely dead forms. "Every imitation possesses beginning and end, while an ornament possesses only duration, and therefore we can only imitate the destiny of an individual (for instance, Antigone or Desdemona), while by an ornament or symbol only the generalized destiny-idea itself can be represented (as, for example, that of the Classical world, by the Doric column). And the former presupposes a talent, while the latter calls for an acquirable knowledge as well."  

Ornament can be dissected and discussed in terms of

21 Imitation is only a speaking with means that are born of the moment and un reproduceable — but Ornament employs a language emancipated from the speaking, a stock of forms that possesses duration and is not at the mercy of the individual." Ibid., p. 192.

22 Ibid., p. 193.
its technical aspect — its material medium and its structure. But imitation cannot be dissected for it is the living aspect of art, it can be grasped only through intuition. Therefore, an ornament can only be 'significant' as a symbolic residue of a culture and not 'beautiful'. Beauty and ugliness are meaningful only in the context of imitation because they indicate towards the feelings of love and hate. Love and hate are reactions of living organisms towards living forms — living in the sense that both the art-works and the people reacting towards them occupy the same spatio-temporal reference frame. Secondly, 'living' is also an evaluative term, it refers to the art-forms, which coherently represent their cultural prime-symbols. In the spring-time of a culture there is maximum coherence between the art-forms and the prime-symbols; after this the art-forms gradually start hardening. Therefore, imitation does not merely refer to temporal coincidence, for an art can be dead even to the people of the same age. At the Civilization stage art becomes merely a stock of dead forms. It is the stage when ornamentation enhances and imitation wanes out. As the becoming gives rise to the become similarly imitation gives birth to ornamentation. "To Imitation and Ornament, the same applies that has been said already of time and space. Time gives birth to space, but space gives death to time."

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23Ibid., p. 197.
Ornamentation annihilates imitation for it no longer has the living aspect of the latter. In architecture the castle and the cathedral represent the imitative and ornamental arts respectively. The castle indicates life while the cathedral is symbolic of pure ornamentation and death. The former develops around human life — man's basic need for a home while the latter develops upon symbols of death, and evolves purely decorative forms.

It has been seen that art-works represent their particular cultures and beyond the context of their cultures they have no meaning. Here the problem of artistic communication needs careful consideration. Art, for Spengler is expression-language. Expression-language arises with man's basic urge to fulfill himself before others. In expression-language, the others are taken merely as spectators while the communication-language presupposes the participation of others in the act of understanding one another.

Communication-languages in the process of their development, evolve a rigid set of signs and this rigidity is heightened by the development of written script as distinct from the spoken-language. Art is not a communication-language in the sense that an artistic creation is not a totality of rigidly established signs, clearly systematized in their usage, for the primary element in artistic creation is an image and not a concept and an image cannot be laid down in terms of rigid signs.
Art in its earliest stages of development was purely born of the individual's urge to express himself. At this stage the concern with others as spectators was entirely absent from the mind of the creative artist. The artist was completely unconscious of the audience; the participation of the entire group of people in the songs and dances of the earlier times confirms that the role of audience was not recognised at that time. Art at that stage was more akin to the group activities of animals. It was much later in the history of cultures, when the various arts were formalized that there was felt a necessity to have a collaboration between the artist and the audience. Even at this stage of collaboration art is not a communication-language. However, this does not imply that there is nothing communicable through art. Communicability in this context would imply the possibility of an identity of mental content between the artist and the spectator. Thus every art-work is potentially communicable. Further, art being an expression-language the response of the spectator in the act of artistic communication is not an active one as is the case in communication-languages. It is not an active collaboration of conversation, but a passive one of witnessing. However, it must be marked that even witnessing implies a participation through imagination. Without this imaginative participation, a work of art would be like any other piece of wood, paper or a jumble of sounds. To
discover that the piece of wood is a Madonna, the paper smudged with colours a landscape and the jumble of sounds, a pastoral symphony, is to transcend one's initial perception of wood, paper and sound and unify one's sensations according to the intention of the artist. And this is possible only with the help of imagination. This peculiar communicability of a work of art is limited to a particular space and time — the cultural epoch. The potentiality of communicability is not there for all times to come but only till its respective culture is alive. No alien people can follow the art of another culture for man's ability to imagine is limited to his own style of culture. No Westerner can appreciate classical sculpture as the two Cultures have entirely different types of world-images. Thus a Greek sculpture is for a Westerner a mere fossil, dead and meaningless. For there is no art which is eternally meaningful; like its respective culture, art too is vulnerable to decay and death.

'All art is mortal, not merely the individual artifacts but the arts themselves. One day the last portrait of Rembrandt and the last bar of Mozart will have ceased to be — though possibly a coloured canvas and a sheet of notes may remain — because the last eye and the last ear accessible to their message will have gone. Every thought, faith and science dies as soon as the spirits in whose worlds their "eternal truths" were true and necessary are extinguished.'

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 168.
This brings the discussion to another important point concerning art: the aesthetic judgement and its criterion. It has already been seen that an art-work is only intelligible to the people of its respective cultural epoch and never beyond that. This implies that there cannot be any universal criterion for judging artistic creations. Every criterion is culturally conditioned. Aristotle's principles of Tragedy and Kant's concept of Aesthetic judgement are not eternally true; they are true only with reference to their respective cultures. No truths are eternal, every culture evolves its own set of truths and the fact that there are people adhering to similar forms does not prove universality but universality only with reference to a certain culture. Thus to talk about the 'principles of tragedy' and the 'laws of perspective' as universally valid for all times to come would be a meaningless and futile adventure, for the classical concept of tragedy as evolved by Sophocles is different from the Western concept of tragedy concretized in Shakespearean drama. The adherence to the unities of space, time and action in the Greek tragedies represents the prime symbol of the classical culture — the classical man's concern for the perpetually present to the senses, while on the other hand, the Western drama represents the idea of Destiny — the Faustian prime-symbol of infinitude.\(^{25}\)

\(^{25}\) ... consider Western tragedy; observe how the same feeling leads it to prefer "historical" material-meaning
Shakespeare, in order to portray this particular prime-symbol, chose the themes of distant lands and remote times. This relation with the cultural prime-symbol is not peculiar to drama, but is found in every art-form.

Thus, it is clear that every aesthetic norm emerges from its respective cultural soil and dies with it. This plurality of aesthetic norms emanates from Spengler's concept of reality; for him there is no single absolute reality, every culture has its own image of reality. The commonness of the reality-image only implies the commonness of cultural epoch. Spengler vehemently holds that, "There are no eternal truths. Every philosophy is the expression of its own and only its own time, and... no two ages possess the same philosophic intentions." This plurality of norms emanating from the plurality of cultures makes it evident that each norm is absolute with reference to its own cultural epoch. Every culture has a point of maximum creativity after which it decays and hardens. This is the

thereby not so much demonstrably actual or even possible, but remote and crusted subjects. That which the Faustian soul wanted, and must have, could not be expressed by any event of purely momentary meaning, lacking in distance of time or place, or by a tragic art of the Classical kind, or by a timeless myth. Our tragedies, consequently, are tragedies of the past and of the future — the latter category, in which men yet to be are shown as carriers of a Destiny, is represented in a certain sense by "Faust", "Peer Gynt"...! \textit{Ibid.}, p. 255.

\textit{26 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.}
point when a culture reaches nearest to its particular norm. The norm varies according to its respective culture so far as its content is concerned, but there is one formal similarity in all the varied norms. That art is creative which directly expresses the prime-symbol of a culture. It is the art where there is no conflict between 'will', 'can', and 'must' — where the artist is expressing only that which he is compelled from within to express. Here the desire to express does not emanate from extraneous motives. It is what the artist's individual will in harmony with the soul of his culture is forcing him to express. So far as the artist is concerned, equally important is the cultural epoch — an artist can only achieve this harmony between his expression and the cultural prime-symbol if he is in the spring-time of a culture. At the stage of civilization art no longer remains creative, for it ceases to express the prime-symbol of its culture. Here the main purpose for pursuing art is not self-expression but the desire to accumulate wealth. With the inroads made by money in all sectors of life, art becomes commercialized — it is pursued for a living. Art, then, is no more valued for its own sake, it is valued for the extraneous results it brings about. To achieve this aim, the artist either tries to imitate art-forms and techniques of alien cultures and thus causing his art-works to cease to conform to the cultural prime-symbol; or he clings to the traditional forms of expression. These
traditional forms no more express his soul but are mere ornaments. This stage comes in the life of all cultures, it is the stage when a culture has nothing more to express and fulfil.

"The final result is that endless industrious repetition of a stock of fixed forms which we see to-day in Indian, Chinese, and Arabian-Persian art. Pictures and fabrics, verses and vessels, furniture, dramas and musical compositions — all is pattern work.... So it has been in the Last Act of all Cultures."27

Thus we find that even though there is a plurality of aesthetic norms and each art-form is judged with reference to its particular norm, there is a deep-rooted structural equivalence between the norms of various cultures. This structural equivalence of norms emanates from the contemporaneity of cultures themselves. Every culture goes through its phases of development in almost the same passage of time. There are striking similarities between two cultures in the same epoch; the spring-time of Classical and Western cultures are contemporaneous in this sense. It is clear that this unique notion of contemporaneity does not imply a single temporal reference frame as is generally understood by contemporaneously occurring events. To explain this concept of contemporaneity, Spengler takes the help of the term 'homology' from Biology which implies structural equivalence as against analogy that refers to functional

27Ibid., p. 295.
equivalence. Spengler holds,

"I designate as contemporary two historical facts that occur in exactly the same -- relative -- positions in their respective Cultures, and therefore possess exactly equivalent importance." 28

It is clear that contemporaneity as conceived by Spengler has no concern with the scientifically explanable meaning of time. It is related only to time as history and destiny. It is the contemporaneity of the otherwise non-contemporaneous events. Similar to this contemporaneity of cultural epochs is the homology between the various aesthetic norms. The aesthetic norm of all art-forms is the complete harmony between an art work and its cultural prime-symbol, the maximum approximity to this norm is reached in the spring-time of all cultures. This norm is common to all cultures.

Art history must, therefore, be re-written in the light of the above conclusions. Firstly, there cannot be a linear study of art-history — Classical, Renaissance and Romantic or Ancient, Medieval and Modern. 29 These terms are meaningless because every art has to be studied

28 Ibid., p. 112.

29 I have,... exposed the shallowness of the notion of a linear progression of "mankind" through the stages of "ancient", "medieval", and "modern", a notion that has made us blind to the true history and structure of higher Cultures. The history of art is a conspicuous case in point.' Ibid., p. 222.
in the context of its own culture. Between the arts of two cultures there is no point of comparative assessment as there are no universal aesthetic norms which can apply to art-forms of all cultures.

Every culture has its particular style of art and to express this style, it chooses the genre of art which is suited to its prime-symbol. All the art forms of a particular culture tend towards this chosen genre of art. This is exemplified by the domination of music in Western art, sculpture in Classical art and architecture in Egyptian art.

Secondly, between the various art-forms there are no rigid boundaries of material medium. It is absurd to divide arts on the basis of senses like the divisions into visual and temporal arts etc. The only boundaries that the arts succumb to are the boundaries of history and culture. It is the cultures that mark the styles in art and not their material media. Thus even in spite of their different media, the various art-works of a culture represent the same style. The Classical drama has the plasticity of sculpture because the Classical art represents the constantly present, while on the other hand, the architecture and painting of the West embody musical effects. Therefore, arts should not be classified according to their media but their cultural styles.
Lastly, Spengler aims at an 'art history without names' — for him the proper method of writing art-history is in terms of the cultural styles and not individual artists. Every style is unique and culturally bound. Thus, no style which is once dead can ever be revived. It is always a new style mistaken to be the revival of the old. Renaissance, e.g. taken to be a revival of the classical tradition is an example of such fundamental misunderstandings. And it is by his criticism of unilinear historical interpretations and its substitution by his own style of culturally oriented history that Spengler regarded himself to be creating a Copernican revolution.