CHAPTER - I

ART APPRECIATION IN SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH REFERENCE TO SOME PERSONALITY VARIABLES.

From the Paleolithic to the Space age, art has been an important part of life, woven into the very fabric of existence, almost imperceptibly. Through the centuries art has played its powerful role, sometimes reflecting the problems of life like a true mirror, sometimes foretelling like a prophet what is to come. Art has been a great teacher, "the only one after torture" according to George Bernard Shaw. It has been a powerful aid to propaganda, both religious and secular and in today's commercial world, a great help in advertisement and publicity programmes. Always considered a pleasant pastime, art has been at times a means of escape from reality.

Though art has never been quite understood, its subtle influence has always been felt. It has excited the imagination of the people, aroused their emotions and also calmed them. It has immortalised the mortal feelings and fancies of man and given them a permanent and colourful record.

Art is very much a part of our lives. But we seldom
make an effort to understand why and how we create and respond to these objects which we almost take for granted.

In the world of education, opinions range from one giving central importance to the arts to one willing to concede to it only a marginal status in the curriculum.

But an educational psychologist has a natural interest in exploring the problems of response to art and the mental qualities involved in the process of appreciation. For a highly appreciative person may in course of time blossom art into a creative artist for interest and example often lead to ambition and achievement.

It was this conviction which prompted the present investigation namely Art appreciation in school children with reference to some personality variable. The variables chosen were age and sex, intelligence, imagination, extroversion and neuroticism.

An attempt is made in the present study to understand the problem from the qualitative angle as well as adopt a procedure which would satisfy the scientific requirements of modern research.

The study is confined to Visual arts (and in visual arts only painting) for, they are interesting to the age group chosen (middle and high school children). They are also
somewhat concrete and lend themselves to quantitative treatment.

Some theoretical considerations in Art: The meaning of the word art has been endlessly debated, over the centuries. There has been some confusion also about the meaning of the word and at times it is equated with beauty. But this is not so. There are many things of beauty which are not products of art.

There are many theories of art ranging from the one of Plato that it is imitation (of the ideal form in the higher world) to the one that it is nothing but self-expression. Some of the important concepts of art are that, it is illusion, play, objectified pleasure and significant form.

The modern trend is to criticise the "essentialist fallacy" of philosophic and idealistic conception of art. The artistic situation is 'triadic' involving the artist the object of art and the spectator. Any attempt to reduce it to a 'monadic' situation and define it in terms of a single principle is bound to fail. There is a pluralistic approach in the theory and practice of art today.

2. Schiller
4. Santayana
5. Clive Bell
Morris Weitz has questioned the very relevance of a theory of art. To define art is to close the concept, this is against the very essence of art - its creativity and change. Any definition will have value only "as recommendations of criteria for enjoyment" and not as a complete description of the work of art or its essential quality. For instance, Clive Bell's definition that art is 'Significant form', though it does not solve the problem of definition, served as an educator of public taste, for at that time people were influenced too much by 'content' of the pictures only and did not care for or appreciate abstract forms. This definition came as a timely corrective.

Erich Kalder in reply to Weitz points out that controversies abound in all fields of knowledge including the natural, physical and social sciences, where creative and evolutionary trends are very much in evidence. The concept of the species for instance can not be closed. For every species is constantly evolving to a higher type. But this need not prevent us from seeking tentative definitions and workable concepts.

The Psychological theories of art and appreciation:

While the philosophic theories have attempted to reach the essence of the concepts of art and allied ideas, without much success, the psychological theories have been more practical and have tried to understand the process of the creation of art and its appreciation, in terms of the mental process involved - the underlying motivation the secret of the drives which impel artists to create and the process of perception and enjoyment which are the responses to the stimulus of the object of art.

Aristotle was perhaps the first philosopher who also offered a psychological theory of art in his concept of 'Catharsis'. Witnessing of tragedy according to him had the effect of purging the emotions and relieving the tension caused by them in the mind.

John Locke explained the importance of sensation as a source of true knowledge and pleasure and pain and therefore of moral and aesthetic value. For a long time the word 'aesthetics' was used to mean the study of the sense perceptions alone.

The classical theories of art stressed the rational approach. Art should be in perfect tune with reason. But the Romanticists emphasised emotion and imagination in
creation and appreciation. Thus the centre of aesthetic discussion was shifted from the nature of the object of art to the process of its creation and enjoyment. The Romanticists who emphasised the irrational and the non-rational elements in art perhaps paved the way for the psycho-analytic theory of the role of the unconscious in art.

The psycho-analytic theories have attempted to explain the motivation behind the creative process in terms of 'sublimation' of desires. The libidinal energy according to Freud, when it does not find natural fulfilment, is redirected in artistic expression. This prevents his behaviour from becoming neurotic. Art acts as a refuge from reality.

This theory is not accepted by all. Art is not the only channel through which frustrated desire is diverted.\textsuperscript{1,2,3}

Jung's theory of art throws some light on the occurrence in the objects of art of certain enduring archetypal images. The "mandala" pattern, the "Madonna" theme, the figure of the wise old man are some of the examples of these archetypes which recur in dreams, religion and art. He would attribute this to the existence of the racial unconscious.

\textsuperscript{1} Rudolf Arnheim. Towards a Psychology of Art. FABER. \textsuperscript{2} Edger Wind. Art and Anarchy. Faber and Faber. 1963
\textsuperscript{3} J. Hogg. Psychology and the Visual Arts. 1967
The psycho-analytic theories have been criticised for their unverifiability and their methods of resorting to the unconscious as a trump-card in explaining away difficulties and inconsistencies.

Perhaps it may be argued that verifiability and predictability are not always the criteria of several methods in fields like art and the methods of physical and natural sciences need not be applied 'in toto' to psychological phenomena.

It may be profitable to accept it for what it is worth and supplement it by other more exact methods wherever possible and not entirely rely on its speculative approach.

The Gestalt theory has probably contributed a great deal to the explanation of the process of perception. The Gestalt principle of the whole being something more than the sum of its parts perhaps explains the unique, elusive quality in art which defies definition and explanation. It also explains the nature of visual perception, such as the various ways of seeing relations between the different parts of a picture. The total process of perception is not simply seeing and connecting stimuli. It varies according to desires, attitudes and emotional set in the spectator. Recently Arnheim\textsuperscript{1} Susan Langer\textsuperscript{2} have tried to explain

\textsuperscript{1}Melvin Rader, A Modern Book of Esthetics (1960) 
\textsuperscript{2}Holt, Rinehart and Winston - N Y 1960
aesthetic perception as seeing the total 'expression' or 'character' in a picture or situation, which is a gestalt quality.

Of late, however the Gestalt theory is not universally accepted. According to the Gestaltists, the effects of a 'true Gestalt' are unpredictable from a knowledge of its parts and their relations. This unpredictability is distasteful to the scientific approach in understanding aesthetic behaviour.

The modern view tends to focus attention on the biological foundations of aesthetic behaviour. Burt, Eysenck and others have done work in the field of experimental aesthetics, which point to a general factor in appreciation.

The role of emotion in the experience of art is important. Kate Hawner\(^1\) feels that it cannot however be an intense state of emotion, but only a mood, where the emotional state is very much diluted. For when the emotion becomes too strong, this may lead to the diversion of attention from the object of art to the self and physical activity following a sudden surge of emotion may destroy the experience of art.

1. Kate Hawner: 'Aesthetics' Fields of Psychology. (Edited by Guilford)
The concept of psychic distance has been put forward by Bullough. In order to have maximum enjoyment, according to Bullough, an optimum emotional distance has to be maintained. He prescribes the utmost "decrease of distance without its disappearance".

Hugo Musterberg talks of 'isolation' in the appreciation of art. We find beauty when we isolate the object of art and contemplate it. The spectator is not interested in asking 'why?' or 'when?' but in understanding 'what?'.

Syneaaesthesis is yet another state described as characteristic of the experience of art. It is a state of repose and balance. It is a condition of psychological equilibrium in which the whole self is brought into vigorous and harmonious activity. There is no impulse to act but an awareness of the harmony of the object of art. A work of art is to be judged excellent, if it arouses this sort of rich and harmonious experience.

Empathy (Einfühling or 'feeling into') has been discussed as an important factor in appreciation. In this state, we project our own states of being into objects of art and attribute to them the activities we ourselves are experiencing.

1. Edward Bullough. 'Aesthetics'. Stanford University Press. 1957
First, there is the inner activity. Second there is the external sensuous object or the physical stimulus. The aesthetic object springs into existence as a result of the fusion of these two factors. Empathy means the disappearance of the two fold consciousness of self or object, and the enrichment of experience that results from this fusion. So completely is the self transported into the object that the person may unconsciously imitate the posture of the statue or any other art object he is witnessing.

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