

THE NATURE OF AESTHETIC CONTEMPLATION
AND AESTHETIC JUDGMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
James Barclay Hartman
May 1951

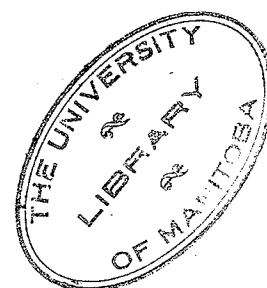


TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. AESTHETIC CONTEMPLATION	5
1. Characteristics of Contemplation	5
2. The Nature of the Experiences Involved	
in Contemplation	14
Sensation	14
Emotion	17
Mood	19
3. The Role of the Imagination	22
4. Pleasure	24
5. Other Contemporary Theories	29
Empathy	30
Psychical distance	33
III. AESTHETIC JUDGMENT	38
1. Preliminary Distinctions	38
2. Beauty	42
Form and content	46
Beauty and value	52
3. Aesthetic Value -- Objective, Subjective,	
Relative	54
4. Aesthetic Value -- Extrinsic, Intrinsic	60
Intrinsic value: immediate	61
Extrinsic value: inherent and	
instrumental	68

CHAPTER	PAGE
Measurement of aesthetic value	75
Summary	78
Criteria of inherent aesthetic value .	84
IV. CRITICISM	88
1. Preliminary Distinctions	88
2. Standards of Criticism	91
Qualifications of the critic	97
V. CONCLUSION	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this study I propose to review and discuss contemporary developments in aesthetic theory. In its broadest sense, the field of aesthetics is primarily a study of our experiences of the various arts and other related types of experience. It is not concerned exclusively with the fine arts, for our perception of natural phenomena and non-artistically created objects may occur in a manner which closely approximates our aesthetic apprehension of works of art. This discussion, however, will be limited to an investigation into the nature of the aesthetic experience in the fine arts generally.

I think that the problems of aesthetics may be classified, for the purposes of analysis, into those that are psychological and those that are more purely philosophical. The psychological problems of aesthetics may be divided into two groups: the first pertaining to the process of artistic creation, and the second to the processes involved in the "consumption" of works of art. With regard to the process of artistic creation, our interest lies in a description of the creative process, and in the motives which prompt and govern the activity of the artist in his production of works of art. As for the consumers of art, psychological investigation can reveal significant features of the nature of the mental

processes involved in the apprehension of aesthetic objects, for without this investigation no account of the aesthetic experience could be given at all. This analysis of the experience takes one no farther than psychology, wherein we would be merely describing our states of mind, attitudes or feelings towards art.

While the philosophical interest in the aesthetic experience resides, in part, in the data presented by the psychologist, it is mainly concerned with a description and analysis of aesthetic value-judgments and the function and principles of criticism. Every example of art is made up of a complex number of artistically related and unified parts, and while these can be described to some extent in non-aesthetic terms, the philosopher is primarily concerned with the analysis of statements regarding the "beauty," "goodness," or "value" of aesthetic objects, and how these qualities are judged. It is therefore one of the more important functions of the philosophy of art, and it will be one of the aims of this study, to clarify, by analysis, the usage of these and other concepts.

In this essay I shall treat of the nature of art and of the aesthetic experience from the point of view of the consumer and the critic. For this reason, I have chosen to limit the scope of the discussion to a consideration of the nature of the mental processes, feelings and emotions involved in the apprehension of works of art, and to an analysis of the nature of aesthetic values and the principles of art criticism. Finally,

I shall attempt to evaluate the contribution of recent theories in these fields to an adequate theory of aesthetics.

The organization of the material presented in the following chapters was suggested by the distinction, made by C. J. Ducasse,¹ between the effective, receptive and judgmental attitudes. While the effective or practical attitude may apply to the process of art-creation, it is a non-aesthetic attitude from the consumer's point of view. It is in contrast to the peculiarly aesthetic attitudes: the receptive attitude -- "a throwing oneself open to the advent of feeling" -- and the judgmental attitude which is evaluative and critical. Therefore I believe that the aesthetic experience has two aspects which may be separated, at least for theoretical purposes. In order to make these clear, I shall order the material into two main chapters entitled "Aesthetic Contemplation" and "Aesthetic Judgment." To complete the study, I shall also consider briefly some of the problems and principles of art criticism.

In the following chapters, there is nothing introduced which can be called "new" material. The value of future studies lies, I think, in the order which will be imposed on the material which is already available. Here the main objective is to consider both psychological and philosophical theories of aesthetics, and to relate their contribution to an adequate theory of aesthetics. The present problem confronting aesthetic

¹ C. J. Ducasse, Philosophy of Art (New York: The Dial Press, 1929) pp. 134 ff.

theory is summed up in this statement:

Personally, I think it is probably quite unlikely that any very startlingly new facts about aesthetics are yet to be discovered. We know as much as we ever shall know, broadly speaking, about the nature of the media of the particular arts. . . . Further investigation will no doubt lead to further precision and detail of knowledge in these and in other aspects of the subject, but not, I think, to anything of a revolutionary nature. In any case, pending the discovery of such revolutionary facts, it seems to me urgent to try to understand the significance of the facts which we already know. Anyone, I think, who reads much of what has been written on aesthetics must be struck by the accumulation of facts, on the one hand, and by the lack of finality in the conclusions drawn from the facts, on the other. For this reason it seems to me that the most fruitful problems for aesthetics at the moment are problems of method. We need to discover, that is, what are the right questions to ask about the facts which we know.²

² E.M. Bartlett, Types of Aesthetic Judgment, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937) p. 10.

CHAPTER II

AESTHETIC CONTEMPLATION

1. Descriptive Characteristics of Contemplation.

This chapter is concerned with psychological aesthetics. I am not undertaking a description of the processes of artistic creation in the mind of the artist here; rather, the discussion will be limited to a description of the mental processes involved in the apprehension of aesthetic objects, in so far as that may be possible. That state of mind which we are about to study may also be called the aesthetic attitude or the aesthetic response; the word "contemplation," however, will be most useful in denoting that receptive attitude which is peculiarly aesthetic.

On one point, all modern theories of art and the aesthetic experience seem to agree. They insist, if only implicitly, that a work of art is made to be contemplated. The artist, although perhaps he would not admit it, desires to produce an object of sufficient merit to warrant its exhibition in some public place. The work of art, which is an imaginative use of the artistic materials, is made available to critics and others who may affirm or deny the aesthetic value of the finished product. Judgments of beauty or the lack of it necessarily follow upon the act of contemplation, and cannot be made legitimately without first experiencing the work

of art as an object of contemplation. But this does not mean to imply that the artist creates for public consumption alone, for

If he is creating for anyone else and not himself, his art is bound to be pap which is meant for popular consumption or at best propaganda, which has the intent of influencing a person for ulterior purposes.¹

The work of art is a means to the aesthetic experience in general, and it may be the case that the fine arts are specially designed to evoke the contemplative attitude. Some of the factors which determine their success in doing so will be surveyed in the chapter entitled "Aesthetic Judgment."

The primary stage in the experience of aesthetic contemplation is that of perception, the apprehension through the senses of immediately presented objects. In general, the fine arts are apprehended through sense-perception and involve specially devised materials which are organized by the artistic imagination into vehicles of aesthetic expressiveness. This may not be equally true of all the arts. Music and painting, for example, make their appeal primarily to sense-perception, while poetry or the novel does not seem to make a direct appeal to the senses, but rather to the imagination. When we look at a painting or a piece of sculpture, or listen to music, we are perceiving through the senses of vision and hearing, and this primary activity may be distinguished from the critical

¹ Bertram Morris, The Aesthetic Process (Northwestern University Studies in the Humanities, Number Eight. Bloomington, Illinois: The Pantagraph Press, 1943) p. 44.

attitude which involves imagination and recollection. In perception, the external data are given and no amount of perceiving will alter them. Thus the perceiving subject is helpless before the given object. When the spectator looks at a portrait, he is compelled to see it for what it is unless he chooses to look elsewhere. If the painting, for example, is not sufficiently pictorial, he may be unable to identify it as a portrait, but nevertheless he continues to receive the primary sense-data as long as he attends to the object:

He must receive them so long as, and to the extent which, he chooses to attend to them. The power of the perceiving subject lies in his ability to select what he shall attend to, not in what he can make of the objects which finally do receive his attention.²

Some contemporary aesthetic theories seem to suggest that the interests of the artist find expression in the creation of aesthetic objects and that they may accompany our experience of the objects. If the reference is to artistic and aesthetic interests, it may be the case that the spectator is often as much concerned as the artist with the arrangement of color, line and form in the work of art. However, our appreciation of a work of art takes place without particular reference to the artist's non-aesthetic interests, that is to say, the motives and circumstances prompting the artist's creation, such as the nature of his inspiration or his desire for fame, wealth, etc. In this sense, then, aesthetic contemplation may be characterized as disinterested:

² James K. Feibleman, Aesthetics (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949) p. 142.

Discriminating perception focussed upon an object as it appears directly to sense, without ulterior interest to direct that perception inward to an understanding of the actual forces or underlying structure giving rise to this appearance, or forward to the purposes to which the object may presage, or outward to its relations in the general structure and the moving flux -- such free attentivity may fairly be said to mark the situation in which beauty is felt.³

Disinterestedness, however, does not preclude the presence of activity, for contemplation is selective, and whatever is irrelevant to the object apprehended must be suppressed. Thus activity and disinterested contemplation will always be found to coexist.⁴ But within the field of activity relevant to the aesthetic object, the impulses and feelings peculiar to the aesthetic response are permitted free play in order to be resolved into some sort of balance:

The equilibrium of opposed impulses, which we suspect to be the ground-plan of the most valuable aesthetic responses, brings into play far more of our personality than is possible in experiences of a more defined emotion. We cease to be orientated in one definite direction; more facets of the mind are exposed and, what is the same thing, more aspects of things are able to affect us. To respond, not through one narrow channel of interest, but simultaneously and coherently through many, is to be disinterested in the only sense of the word which concerns us here.⁵

This distinction may be brought out more clearly by contrasting the disinterested aesthetic apprehension with practical interests. If we hold a practical interest in an object, we conceive it to be instrumental to some further end,

³ D.W. Prall, Aesthetic Judgment (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1929) p. 57.

⁴ Morris, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵ I.A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1928) p. 251.

while the disinterested interest is an appreciation of the present order on its own account. In one case the means and the end are separated in that the object of action is not immediately achieved; and further, there may be several alternative courses of action by which the end may be attained. But in the aesthetic object, the means and the end are inseparably related; they are in fact one.⁶ Or, as this argument has been employed in value-theory:

Values which inhere in the nature of the object in this sense of being realizable through presentation of it, contrast with the instrumental values of things, which are potentialities for conducing to some positive value quality not disclosed in the presence of that object to which the value is attributed but through presentation of some other object to which it may lead.⁷

The distinction between the practical and the aesthetic attitudes has also been developed in the theory of Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance,"⁸ where the criterion of aesthetic contemplation consists of "a putting of the object out of gear with our practical needs and ends," whatever these may be.

Other writers, however, have not insisted upon a strict division between aesthetic and practical interests. The protest of John Dewey, for example, rests upon the usage of the word "aesthetic," which refers, he says, ". . . to experience as appreciative, perceiving, and enjoying. It denotes the consumer's rather than the producer's standpoint." (i.e., not

⁶ Morris, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁷ C.I. Lewis, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, The Open Court Publishing Company, 1946) p. 432.

⁸ See below for an extended discussion, p. 33 ff.

practical).⁹

Munro distinguishes the aesthetic experience as

. . . lacking, or comparatively lacking, in the element of active problem-solving, of thinking out means to ends which we personally desire. . . The essential point is that in responding aesthetically to an object, one pays more exclusive attention to its nature as a perceptual form, or as a form suggested to one's imagination; and less to thinking about how the object might be used, altered, or avoided so as to achieve one's own desires.¹⁰

C.J. Ducasse¹¹ describes the state of aesthetic contemplation as resembling an attempt to understand in that it is a throwing oneself open to the advent of feeling. The phrase 'listening' or 'looking' with our capacity for feeling,' he suggests, is adequately descriptive of the attitude of directed but contentless receptiveness. Thus the state of aesthetic contemplation is not attention alone, but presupposes a content of attention:

It is to that content that our attention is directed, but it is for the feeling import of it that we "listen," i.e., make ourselves receptive. This essential point is made clearer still if we note that, given attention to the very same content, we might have "listened" not for feeling, but instead for meaning or will-impulse. The fact of rapt attention is thus not peculiar to the aesthetic attitude. . . That contemplation is something more than attention is obvious in the case of reading. Attention to the words on the page is necessary, but in addition, a throwing oneself open to their meaning has to take place (and constitutes lectical or logical contemplation of them, as distinguished from aesthetic).¹²

⁹ John Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 47, cited by Thomas Munro, The Arts and Their Interrelations, (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949) p. 97.

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 98.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 140.

¹² Ibid., p. 141.

In successful contemplation our attention is directed to the aesthetic materials of a work of art (forms, colors, sounds, words), while our interest resides in the feeling import. If, at any point in this contemplative experience, our interest should have regard to anything other than the feeling import (as in the case of explanatory notes accompanying the performance of "program" music), then the feelings we experience are not relevant to aesthetic contemplation.

The contemplative situation is not to be confused with the critical apprehension of a work of art, as evidenced by the distinction made above between the receptive and judgmental attitudes.¹³ A knowledge of the principles of criticism is of little help in attaining the contemplative attitude, in fact it may be a hindrance to the attainment of the aesthetic response by distracting the attention away from the total feeling import of the object to the more formal structural aspects. The critical attitude is not appropriate, for example, when delight is taken in nature. Writes Santayana:

A sunset is not criticised; it is felt and enjoyed. The word "criticism" used on such an occasion, would emphasise too much the element of deliberate judgment and of comparison with standards. Beauty, although often so described, is seldom so perceived, and all the greatest excellences of nature and art are so far from being approved of as a rule that they themselves furnish the standard and ideal by which critics measure inferior effects.¹⁴

Illustrations from studies in the psychology of music reinforce

¹³ See Introduction.

¹⁴ The Sense of Beauty (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896) pp. 13-14.

this argument. Describing individual differences in listening to music Charles S. Meyers says:

The purely pragmatic and objective aspects in which the art material is considered in relation to its use and to the person's standard of values are in themselves incapable of inducing the aesthetic experience.¹⁵

Meyers claims that the "objective" attitude towards music occurs most frequently among those technically trained in music or in highly sensitive laymen, whose critical attitude tends to inhibit the purely contemplative attitude.

Since the contemplative attitude is one which has little utility in practical every-day life, it is not surprising that its occurrence should be brief and often pass unnoticed or unidentified as such. It is, however, a state that is experienced on many occasions by persons of normal sensibilities, even in the most elementary discriminations in matters of personal taste and preference:

To judge, for instance, whether the color of a given necktie "goes with" that of the suit with which it is to be worn, is to judge whether the feeling obtained in the aesthetic contemplation of the color combination is pleasant or not. . . . To observe for oneself the nature of that [contemplative] state, one but needs to report oneself to the moment when one was giving one's attention to the color combination, but had not yet obtained from it the inner experience (viz., the feeling) which, when obtained, was judged, as the case may have been, pleasant or unpleasant.¹⁶

An experience is aesthetic only when the experience is marked by the characteristic pause of contemplative release

¹⁵ Max Schoen, (ed.), The Effects of Music (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1927) p. 29.

¹⁶ Ducasse, op. cit., p. 143.

and an absorption in the presented content on its own account and a lack of response to action.¹⁷ However, experiences other than the apprehension of works of art may embody something of the aesthetic. Where there is the absence of the practical relation between ourselves and the object the contemplative state may be experienced. This condition is one of the chief sources of pleasure of travel to distant places.

Ducasse suggests that

The fact that the possibility of taking the aesthetic attitude depends to so great an extent upon the absence of practical relation between ourselves and the object, explains why the terms "detachment" and "psychical distance" are sometimes used in accounts of the nature of the aesthetic attitude.¹⁸

See below for an account of these theories.

While elements of the aesthetic may appear in experiences other than the fundamentally aesthetic apprehension of works of art, we are seldom "purely aesthetic" in attitude or experience. The most common type is of an intermediate kind,

. . . where practical reasoning is present but subordinate. Comparatively speaking, an aesthetic experience is one containing little or no active effort to solve practical or theoretical problems -- one in which the ordinary processes of scheming and planning, weighing evidence, adapting means to ends and testing hypotheses are suspended. . . It may be a single, momentary response or a sustained attitude, as in listening to a symphony. It may be a confirmed habit, as in the aesthetic type of personality as contrasted with the practical or intellectual. It often involves suspension and quiescence of motor-muscular activities, except those required in active perceiving. Selected perceptual and mental functions tend to be hyperactive; so it is incorrect to call the aesthetic experience

¹⁷ Lewis, op. cit., pp. 439 ff.

¹⁸ Ducasse, op. cit., p. 145.

"passive" without qualification.¹⁹

Thus, while much of our experience is tinged with aesthetic overtones, the aesthetic attitude is present exclusively only occasionally; for it is rarely that the experience becomes so intense as to exclude all else from the field of consciousness.

In the foregoing analysis aesthetic contemplation has been variously described as receptive, disinterested, non-practical, presupposing a content of attention, non-critical, free from ulterior interests or ends, and as a detached absorption in presented content. However, little has been said regarding the nature of the feelings or emotions experienced within the limits of this description of aesthetic contemplation. It is to this problem that we shall now direct our attention.

2. The Nature of Experiences Involved in Contemplation.

The primary element to be considered in a study of the nature of the feelings obtained in the aesthetic experience is sensation. The basic nature of sensation in aesthetic theory is often overlooked. Even in our routine perceptions we are rarely interested in colors and shapes in themselves, but only in their relations with one another whereby objects possessing them may be recognized and identified. "Outside of art, sensation is a mere transparent means to the end of communication and recognition."²⁰

¹⁹ Munro, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

²⁰ Dewitt H. Parker, The Principles of Aesthetics, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. Second Edition 1946) p. 21.

Without the primary element of sensation, the aesthetic experience could not occur.

In attempting a classification of sensations, a common method is to think in terms of the sense organs which perceive them.²¹ Thus we think of visual and auditory qualities, tactile, olfactory and gustatory qualities. Of these, the sense of vision and hearing alone have come to be thought of as pre-eminently aesthetic senses, since they provide the basis of all the arts.²² The so-called "lower" types of sensation are not, at least for the present, equally fit to enter into the aesthetic experience. There are several reasons for this division between "higher" and "lower." Vision and hearing, the aesthetic senses, are particularly suited as media of communication and expression while taste and touch are primarily practical.²³ Moreover, smells and

²¹ T.M. Greene, The Arts and Their Interrelations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947) has distinguished at some length what he calls the primary media of the arts, e.g., "The distinction between the primary raw material and the primary artistic medium can be illustrated most simply in music. The primary raw material of pure instrumental music is sound and silence as such. But the composer does not start with sound and silence "in the raw." His primary medium consists of readily producible sounds organized into a system of musically related tones expressible in a scale." p. 40.

"The primary sensuous medium of pure or absolute music consists of musically related tones and rests . . . the sensuous medium of sculpture is a three-dimensional solid, that of painting a two-dimensional surface . . . The primary medium of literature is words in meaningful relation." pp. 35-37.

²² Parker, op. cit., p. 45.

²³ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

odors do not fall into any order or arrangement, and any variation in them cannot be classified as can variations in color, sound and shape,

Hence our grasp of them, while it is esthetic very clearly, since they may be felt as delightful, is the grasp in each case upon just the specific presented non-structural quality, which is as absolutely different, unique, simple, and unrelatable to further elements intrinsically through its being, as anything could be.²⁴

A useful distinction in determining the role of sensation in the aesthetic experience is that of presented and suggested factors (sometimes called sensory and expressive).

In terms of the psychology of perception, a work of art consists of certain stimuli to sensory experience, and also to association and interpretation on the basis of memory and past experience. A painting stimulates visual experiences such as those of linear shape, color, lightness and darkness. It presents visual images directly to the eyes. In addition, it has the power to suggest other images and concepts to a brain which has been conditioned through experience and education. Thus a painting can be analyzed into certain presented factors -- the shapes and colors which are directly visible -- and certain suggested factors -- the other objects and events such as trees, persons, battles, which it tends to call up in imagination; and also, in some cases, more abstract conceptions such as moral ideals and religious doctrines. Presentation and suggestion are the two modes of transmission by which a work of art is conveyed to the apperceptive mechanism of the observer or percipient.²⁵

With regard to the presented factors, they are easily verified and agreed upon, although this is not always the case with the suggested factors. The main interest in the presented factors is that they make up a large part of the total form of art, particularly in abstract visual art. The attributes linear shape or line, surface shape and solid shape, hue, lightness,

²⁴ Prall, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁵ Munro, op. cit., p. 355. *Italics in the original.*

darkness and saturation are concepts devised to describe objects perceptually, and are the elementary components of aesthetic form.²⁶

Pure sensation is impossible. Perception is actually a complex process involving both sensation and conceptual interpretations of sensory data:

It is psychologically impossible to have a sensation without consciously or unconsciously interpreting it in some way. We are bound to relate it to other sensations and to set it in a perceptual frame of reference.²⁷

Another element in the aesthetic experience is that of emotion. It may be that Tolstoy and other exponents of expressionism in art have laid too much stress on feeling and emotion, but the fact that the emotional factors have received so much attention will justify a brief survey of their part in the total experience. Among the specific emotions which art may suggest are joy, despair, grief, and so on. According to the James-Lange theory ". . . an emotion is simply a cluster of sensations psychically fused into a single quality which is taken as the quality of the emotion."²⁸ With the exception of moods²⁹ everything ordinarily denoted as an emotion may be described as a fusion of sensations.

These fusions are classes as those made up of external

²⁶ Ibid., p. 359.

²⁷ Green, op. cit., p. 246.

²⁸ S.C. Pepper, Principles of Art Appreciation, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949) p. 118.

²⁹ See below, p. 33.

sensations, called sensory fusions, and those made up of internal sensations which are feelings of instinctive drives, called drive emotions. The sensory fusions operate as organizing principles, while the instinctive drive emotions enter the field of art as aesthetic materials to be organized. Sensory fusions cannot be named, since each spectator must experience them for himself. An example of a sensory fusion would be any musical chord. The overall "effect" of any painting is the quality of its sensory fusions, and to grasp this character of the work is to react emotionally. This should be distinguished from the analytic approach which, in the case of the musical chord, would evaluate the effect of each tone separately. Upon this description, ". . . it follows that the emotional quality of each work of any great degree of complexity is unique."³⁰

Drive emotions, on the other hand, "consist of rather definite sets of sensations correlated with the sets of actions and readinesses to act which characterize the instincts."³¹ Consequently they can be named and classified, unlike sensory fusions. Familiar emotions like pity, grief, jealousy, hate, scorn, disgust and reverence are feelings which result from the frustration or conflicts of drives.³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

³¹ Ibid., p. 121. These drives are listed as hunger, thirst, sex, maternal, nurturance, nesting, rest and sleep, elimination, aggression and fright.

³² Ibid., p. 122.

There are, however, no names for many of the emotional feelings that accompany each of the basic drives:

Only a few feelings, such as those already alluded to, -- love, anger, fear, jealousy, anxiety, etc., -- have names. They are feelings which are closely connected with typical recurrent situations in life, and are usually accompanied by overt and easily recognizable modes of behavior. The terms "the emotions" and "the passions" designate principally those standard labelled feelings, and indeed those feelings primarily as out of the aesthetic status, that is to say, as mere accompaniments or incidents of practical endeavor of one sort or another. But to one such named feeling, there are a thousand that have received no name, but which are none the less real experiences of the very same general sort, viz., emotional.³³

Failure to recognize that the realm of feeling contains not merely love, fear, anger, and so on, but a vast wealth of other unnamed but just as truly emotional experiences, is I believe the principal explanation of such opposition as there has been to "emotionalist" theories of art . . . form is important in aesthetic objects for the very reason that it itself, in contemplation, is the source of certain aesthetic emotions which nothing else can objectify.³⁴

The third element of contemplative feeling is mood. A difficulty here is in gathering sufficient material for an adequate discussion of the nature of moods. In most writings on aesthetics, the subject is introduced casually, and the term is often used synonymously with feeling or emotion. However, S.C. Pepper, following the suggestion of Josiah Royce and Wilhelm Wundt, suggests that "moods (or at least one of them) might be second or third dimensions of affection -- affection signifying the pleasure-pain series."³⁵ In this view, moods

³³ Ducasse, op. cit., pp. 195-196.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 197-198.

³⁵ Op. cit., P. 123.

are not fusions of sensations, but are simple states which run in two series: the excitement-to-calm series, and the strength-to-delicacy series. Stimuli for the excitement-to-calm series in color, for example, run from bright colors to grays and neutral colors, while in the strength-to-delicacy series the range is from dark colors to tints.³⁶ The fact that moods are more or less stable in their attachment to their basic stimuli renders them capable of being communicated in art.

Writers in the field of the psychology of music have stressed the importance of mood at the expense of the purely emotional effect. Studies have reported that, among those most sensitive to music, emotions have little or no part, but

. . . the aesthetic effect is of the nature of a general condition of a mood. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that vocal music has a tendency to arouse well-defined emotional effects far more often than instrumental music, the probability being that the specific emotional effect is due in the main to the words. Even such effects as love, longing, reverence, and devotion result primarily from vocal music, while such general effects as rest, restlessness, and peace are mentioned most often in connection with instrumental music.³⁷

Aside from the numerous specific moods -- the cheerful and the melancholy, the anticipatory and the reminiscent, and others -- there are two fundamental moods, namely, exaltation and depression:

Feeling, as emergency action, is related to ends. The successful achievement of the end is accompanied by

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 123-124.

³⁷ Max Schoen, (ed.), The Psychology of Music, (New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1940) p. 91.

"exaltation", the lack of success by "depression". Both moods are "images" of internal stimuli.³⁸

Unlike instinct and emotion, mood is "emergency action," as opposed to overt action. In music, for example,

. . . a sound stimulus awakens not only a sensory process in the ear, the correlative of which is a sensation, but also incipient motor reactions, which if carried out, would be an emotion, but which, being too slight and diffuse, produce only what we call a mood. . . In ordinary experience, there are objects present to which the organism may actually respond, but in the aesthetic experience there are no real objects towards which a significant reaction can take place; in music, the source of the sound is obviously of no practical importance, while in such arts as painting and sculpture where interesting objects are represented, the objects themselves are absent; hence the reaction is never carried out, but remains incipient, a vague feeling which, finding no object upon which it may work itself off, is suffused upon the sensation. These sense feelings are the subtle, but basal, material of all beauty.³⁹

This is perhaps less true of the other arts than of music, where the various moods are the result of more or less definite associations: the stirring nature of trumpet tones, the excitement of high and loud tones generally, and so on. In literature, for example, while it is more difficult to locate the exact source of the stimuli, the general effect of mood is recognized as being present in many cases. For the purposes of aesthetic theory, however, the chief difficulty is that the nature of the psychological mechanism through which the moods are aroused is largely unknown.

The artist is enabled to produce a work of art that will

³⁸ M.C. Nahm, The Aesthetic Experience and Its Presuppositions, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946) p. 463.

³⁹ Parker, op. cit., p. 129.

induce a mood because in the process of creating he may be able to control both the number of stimuli which affect the observer and the frequency of repetition of the same stimulus (under the rules of rhythm, proportion, harmony, etc.). For example, in drama, comic and tragic scenes may alternate with one another in order to avoid too great concentration upon any one emotion. This may be a reason for assuming that a mood, rather than an instinct or emotion, is induced by what is called a "moving" work of art.⁴⁰

The fact that moods, unlike instincts or emotions, are not conducive to overt action, places them in a position of importance in any attempt to describe the nature of the feelings experienced in the disinterested, receptive attitude which characterizes the experience of aesthetic contemplation.

3. The Role of the Imagination.

In some ways, the role of the spectator's imagination in the act of apprehending a work of art is more limited than that of the artist in creating it. While the artist was free to interpret what he found of interest in the external world, the spectator must grasp the completed work of art and employ his imagination only on the given object.⁴¹

In the representational arts, the ease with which a work will be understood depends on the plausibility with which

⁴⁰ Nahm, op. cit., pp. 474-476.

⁴¹ Feibleman, op. cit., p. 147.

the content (an object depicted or described) is made recognizable. But the non-representative, symbolic or abstract arts require an additional measure of collaboration on the part of the observer, hearer or reader, because the apparent content is not the measure of the importance of the work:

Here the artist's attitude of mind is not adequately communicated to us until in our own responding imagination there arises a new creation which may bear profound significance but need not resemble any apparent content. Indeed where pattern and form supersede apparent content the latter may be trivial or nonsensical . . . For response is aroused more by the manner than the matter in this kind of art.⁴²

It has been suggested above that music, rather than communicating an emotion, almost invariably evokes a mood. Also in poetry the aim is not to express, objectify or communicate emotion, but to convey an imaginative idea or object:

It may be that the conveyance is accompanied by the occurrence of emotion; but such emotion is incidental to the main end of poetry, which is the expression and communication of an object or objects as they are present to the imagination of the poet.⁴³

But this does not mean to say that there are no other specifically aesthetic values than moods or imaginative ideas.⁴⁴

The workings of the imagination in the process of contemplation may easily flow over into an irrelevant play of fancy. Genuine imagination is a process of organizing and

⁴² M. Johnson, Art and Scientific Thought, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1944) p. 20.

⁴³ D.G. James, Scepticism and Poetry, p. 30, cited in J. Hospers, Meaning and Truth in the Arts, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1946) p. 20.

⁴⁴ See below under Aesthetic Judgment.

synthesizing experience.

It is an activity whereby the world is prehended, and, in that prehension, at once dissolved and remade . . . when the imagination withdraws itself from this conscious labor of creation into the contemplation of a world to the reality of which it is indifferent, and when it exercises its processes for their own sake, it is no longer imagination, but fancy.⁴⁵

As a work of the imagination, an aesthetically valuable poem has, as one of the criteria of its success, the power of evoking a feeling or mood, true to experience, which enhances the imaginative vision of the reader:

This "truth-to" [experience] seems . . . to be the criterion of whether a poem is the work of the imagination (as opposed to the fancy); the two are the same thing clothed in different words.⁴⁶

Creation and full appreciation are but different aspects of the same process. The part of the artist is somewhat greater in that his task was the ordering of materials into a whole that did not previously exist, while the spectator is guided by the presented content:

Both actively enter into the feeling tensions of the materials, both imaginatively work these up toward an organic structure for the satisfaction of all elements in a total mutual fulfillment. . . The artist creates, the spectator recreates.⁴⁷

4. Pleasure.

It is not the intention of this essay to reconstruct or to survey at length any hedonistic theory of aesthetics. How-

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 201.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴⁷ S.C. Pepper, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945) p. 88.

ever, the frequency with which the word "pleasure" is used justifies a consideration of the relevancy of the usage of this term as a description of the feelings obtained in aesthetic contemplation.

A distinction can be drawn between ordinary pleasurable experiences and aesthetically enjoyable ones. Pleasurable non-aesthetic experiences in general, like the taste of honey or physical exertion in sports, contain an element of conscious personal participation. The aesthetic experience, on the other hand, is usually characterized by an impersonal activity of the feelings and the imagination. Perhaps the outstanding feature of the appreciation of works of art is this detached, impersonal attitude. One writer describes the experience as follows:

We are simply and solely gladdened by the spectacle of the efflux which emanates from the perfect relations of the parts to a whole within a given actual object, and we do not feel called upon in any way to do anything about it for ourselves. . . . The aesthetic emotion lives in the golden and reflected glow of superfluous caring.⁴⁸

It cannot be denied, however, that many experiences classed as aesthetic do have an element of personal participation, as theories of empathy seem to suggest, and that non-aesthetic experiences may be impersonal to some extent.

Nevertheless, the dissimilarity between ordinary pleasurable experience and the aesthetically enjoyable experience may be indicated by referring to ordinary pleasure as a feeling experienced at "lower" (physical and chemical) levels, while the feeling of aesthetic enjoyment is the same, but felt

⁴⁸ Feibleman, op. cit., p. 151.

at the "higher" levels (psychological and biological). "This aesthetic emotion" as Feibleman calls it, "differs qualitatively from cruder types of enjoyment but there is no sharp dividing line distinguishing the one from the other, only an imperceptible shading."⁴⁹

The distinction between "ordinary" and "aesthetic" pleasure may be made clear in another way. In many practical situations, pleasure is derived from the elimination of a state of displeasure, such as eating when hungry, resting when tired, and so on. In such cases we are motivated by an unbalanced state of affairs which requires some action on our part to restore normal functioning. These pleasures are not of a lasting nature and the action on our part to restore this normal equilibrium must be taken repeatedly. The pleasure or enjoyment of art, however, is a different matter:

Aesthetic enjoyment, on the other hand, is without any risks, encumbrances, or liabilities. No one is driven to art by any specifiable need. There is nothing particularly wrong which art sets right, for it is sought only when one is well in mind and body. So aesthetic pleasure is not a restoration of the self to its natural condition of balance by the removal of the cause of unbalance; it is a recreation of an already wholesome self into a still higher wholesomeness by the process of transforming the focus of attention from oneself, where it usually is, to the object that is being attended to.

. . . Such experience is enjoyment by being experience that is entrancing, that enhances living with a moment of respite from the self that must be everlastingly preoccupied with itself in the interest of keeping alive.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 150.

⁵⁰ M. Schoen, (ed.), The Enjoyment of the Arts, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), pp. 13-14.

This enjoyment experienced in the contemplation of works of art may be characterized by a diffusion and a disinterestedness which is not common to the cruder types of pleasure. In the aesthetic experience "pleasure is secondary and diffused: it is extensive rather than intensive."⁵¹

I would offer the suggestion that aesthetic enjoyment is a measure of the success with which the attitude of aesthetic contemplation is achieved. If the terms "pleasure" and "pain" can be used as descriptions of the aesthetic experience at all, their place is limited to use as partial synonyms for the fundamental moods of "exaltation" and "depression" which have already been considered.⁵²

In the hedonistic description of beauty as objectified pleasure, the terms "beauty" and "objectified pleasure" appear to be roughly equivalent. In spite of any demerits of a hedonistic system, it is most certainly true that the contemplation of works of art does give some kind of pleasure to most people; if this were not the case, art would be avoided instead of welcomed. Among any other values art might have, it is, to a large extent, directly satisfying. Contemporary writers have avoided the use of the term "pleasure" because of the false psychological implications accompanying its

⁵¹ Feibleman, op. cit., p. 437.

⁵² This analysis may appear to have some resemblance to Santayana's version where "Beauty is an emotional element, a pleasure of ours, which nevertheless we regard as a quality of things." The Sense of Beauty, pp. 37 ff. But objectified pleasures are no longer pleasures simply, thus the contemplation of objects should be spoken of as enjoyable.

narrow interpretation:

If pleasure is understood as a specific emotion or feeling-tone associated with sensuous gratification, joy, happiness, mirth, amusement, and the like, then it is untrue to say (as some early hedonists do) that everyone seeks his own pleasure. People often choose pain and sadness, as in war and religious sacrifice. Art, especially tragedy and serious religious art, is full of these graver, more negative feelings.⁵³

One way out of the difficulties surrounding the use of the term "pleasure" as descriptive of the feelings obtained in the aesthetic experience, suggests Munro, is to define pleasure so as to cover all experiences which people welcome, desire and accept:

By this definition, the feelings aroused by contemplating tragic or painful art can be pleasant, just as religious and moral art . . . give their own kind of serious pleasure.⁵⁴

The use of synonyms for the word "pleasant," such as "aesthetically valuable," "delightful," "agreeable," "satisfying," "gratifying," "effective," and so on, may avoid the misconceptions and wrong interpretations of hedonism, but the task of defining the new terms in a specific manner is too often ignored.⁵⁵ The employment of some general descriptive term such as "aesthetic response," "aesthetic apprehension," "aesthetic experience," etc., qualified by adjectives "favorable" and "successful," would recognize the relevancy of painful, unpleasant, irritating and repulsive feelings in

⁵³ Munro, op. cit., p. 88.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

aesthetic contemplation.

In this discussion of pleasure, two alternatives have presented themselves. If the word "pleasure" is to be retained as a satisfactory description of the feelings obtained in aesthetic contemplation, its meaning may be widened so as to include all possible fields of aesthetic experience, including the tragic and the serious. This departure from the common usage of the term is, however, neither practical nor desirable. On the other hand, the term "pleasure" may reasonably be employed to describe the feelings experienced in some instances of aesthetic contemplation, for instance, in comedy and some examples of music, literature and painting. But even here, it is often a particular kind of pleasure that is experienced. In ordinary experience the word is used loosely in any case, but in applying it to aesthetic experience it suffers because of its limited capacity to form an adequate description of aesthetic feelings. For the purposes of aesthetic theory, "enjoyment" or "felt satisfaction" have the advantage that they may describe aesthetically pleasureable feelings along with a great many others of a similar nature for which adequate names do not exist. It is in this sense that these terms will be employed throughout the remainder of this essay.

5. Other Contemporary Theories.

To conclude this section of the psychological description of aesthetic contemplation, I propose to review two contemporary theories which purport to be accounts of the

nature of aesthetic contemplation. They are found in the writings of Theodor Lipps and Vernon Lee (in the doctrine of Empathy) and Edward Bullough (theory of Psychological Distance).⁵⁶ The value of each of these theories is to be found in their respective contributions towards an understanding of the psychological processes which govern the spectator in the presence of works of art. Both theories, within their limits, are relevant and illuminating to any discussion of aesthetic contemplation.

Empathy. The key word of the theory of Empathy is "Einfühlung," of which the literal translation from the German is "feeling (oneself) into." In this doctrine the aesthetic object is described as a fusion of the external stimulus, i.e., the physical content of the work of art, and the inner activity consisting of the various feelings or emotions. Any consciousness of the self and the object disappears:

Esthetic pleasure has no object at all. The esthetic enjoyment is not enjoyment of an object, but enjoyment of a self. It is an immediate feeling of a value that is lodged in oneself. But this is not a feeling that is related to an object. Rather its characteristic consists in this -- that there is no separation in it between my pleased ego and that with which I am pleased; in it both are one and the same self, the immediately experienced ego.⁵⁷

Empathy, then, refers to the psychological tendency to project bodily movements, tensions and attitudes into external objects which stimulate them. According to this analysis a

⁵⁶ M. Rader, A Modern Book of Esthetics (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1947) Chapters 8, 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 293.

statue of a runner would not only be perceived and identified as the statue so described, but the interpretation would also include the emotions of tension, excitement and expectancy which the spectator might experience in a similar situation. But the emotions, nevertheless, are felt as those of the runner:

In a word, I am now with my feeling of activity entirely and wholly in the moving figure. Even spatially, if we can speak of the spatial extent of the ego, I am in its place. I am transported into it. I am, so far as my consciousness is concerned, entirely and wholly identical with it. Thus feeling myself active in the observed human figure, I feel also in it free, facile, proud. This is esthetic imitation and this imitation is at the same time esthetic empathy.⁵⁸

The outward consummation of the movements felt in inner activity may or may not take place. Substitution of mental images for movements probably takes place in the minds of all spectators except those most inclined to literal imitation. In any case, the feelings of empathy are those held in the object, and not those about it.

Certain objections may be advanced against the empathy theory. According to the theory, the act of empathy does not seem to be a random occurrence, for certain forms and gestures seem to be correlated with certain emotions. But this does not allow for a measure of subjective interpretation of the form and content of art by spectators, as evidenced by common disagreements on the nature of the success or failure of certain aesthetic objects.

The theory of empathy perhaps results from an undue concentration on the visual arts, for it is difficult to

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 298.

conceive how inner imitation could take place on hearing music, either vocal or purely instrumental. Therefore the idea of the identification of the self and the object cannot be allowed as an important aspect of aesthetic theory, for it is strictly applicable in only a few instances. And since this phenomenon is not capable of being observed and verified, the empathy theory should not be taken too seriously.

The mistake which the empathy theory makes consists, in part, in its taking for a central, essential factor this contributory factor in art.⁵⁹ The idea of inner imitation is subject to similar criticism. Statements about muscular reactions, rather than being the essence of a theory of aesthetic perception, may be a contributory factor only, and an awareness of them on one occasion may lead to expectancy or exaggeration of them on subsequent occasions.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the initiative for appreciation must come from the work of art itself, and empathy seems to reverse this fact:

It may be necessary to have felt in certain ways in order to appreciate a certain work of art, but I do not think appreciation involves putting these feelings into a work of art. In appreciating a novel, for example, although the characters are in a sense "alive," they are surely only artistically alive, i.e., their thoughts and feelings have only formal or artistic value.⁶¹

The basis for identifying the "feeling into" exclusively with aesthetic experience may be questioned, since the occur-

⁵⁹ Bartlett, op. cit., p. 199.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 201.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 200.

rence of the empathetic reaction is equally evident in non-aesthetic experiences. The conclusion must be that the theory of empathy is a useful account of the kinaesthetic factor in apprehension -- the ways of knowing external objects by means of muscular-motor responses -- and that its value lies in the manner in which it can clarify certain types of aesthetic experience, but it cannot be a complete explanation of aesthetic contemplation, as it often pretends to be.

Psychical Distance. The varying distinctions applied to the term "aesthetic" have arisen from the attempt to distinguish a particular type of experience possessing certain identifiable properties and characteristics, from all other experiences which do not measure up to these more or less determinate specifications. As evidenced by discriminations made earlier in this chapter, certain refinements in meaning have been applied in a somewhat arbitrary manner to descriptions of the aesthetic attitude. Theories explaining feelings obtained in aesthetic contemplation in terms of imaginative activity, absorption in content, detachment, empathy or pleasure have seized upon one element in the experience upon which to base their analyses. In view of the wide variability of response to works of art this tendency has been inevitable. However, there seems to be one common constituent of the experiences so described, without which the term "aesthetic" cannot be employed:

The fundamental attitude consists in the separation

of the esthetic experience from the needs and desires of everyday life and from the responses which we customarily make to our environment as practical human beings . . . We may take pleasure in regarding the sky as a mass of shifting form and shades of color, and not merely as an indicator of weather changes; we may contemplate with peculiar delight entirely divorced from practical considerations, the spectacle of a building burning at night, the flames rising into the dark sky and illuminating the faces of the awed spectators. On these occasions we are perceiving something "not for the sake of action, but for the sake of perceiving."⁶²

The implications of this attitude have been developed at length as the foundation of a separate aesthetic principle in the essay, "Psychical Distance," by Edward Bullough.⁶³ The basis of the theory is the introduction of "distance" between the self and the objects which are the sources or vehicles of affections (sensation, perception, emotional state or idea). Distance is produced by putting the phenomenon

. . . out of gear with our practical, actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends -- in short, by looking at it "objectively," as it has often been called, by permitting only such reactions on our part as emphasize the "objective" features of the experience, and by interpreting even our "subjective" affections not as modes of our being but rather as characteristics of the phenomenon.⁶⁴

This is the negative, inhibitory aspect of distance. The positive side is constituted by "the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of Distance."⁶⁵

⁶²Hospers, op. cit., p. 4.

⁶³ Rader, op. cit., pp. 315 ff.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 317-318.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 318.

For complete aesthetic apprehension, the object must evoke a personal response, and at the same time be held off from the personality. This is effected by filtering the relation of the practical and the concrete, as in the appeal of drama where the characters and events are regarded as parts of normal experience. The difference lies in that what otherwise would be the "normal" reaction of the audience is arrested. When the spectators hiss the villain and warn the heroine, they are not taking the appropriately distanced attitude. This "distanced" relation directs attention to the second important topic, "the antinomy of distance."

Some predisposition on the part of the spectator is necessary before a work of art can be appreciated properly. The better the preparation, the greater the likelihood of the success of contemplation. Because of emotional and intellectual differences, there is bound to be disagreement and variance in tastes. But one factor is essential, that of distance:

Distance may vary in degree according to the nature of the object, and also according to the individual's capacity for maintaining a greater or lesser degree. And here one may remark that not only do persons differ from each other in their habitual measure of Distance, but that the same individual differs in his ability to maintain it in the face of different objects and of different arts.⁶⁶

In short, Distance may be said to be variable both according to the distancing-power of the individual, and according to the character of the object. . . . "Under-distancing" is the commonest failure of the subject, an

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 323.

excess of Distance is a frequent failing of Art, especially in the past.⁶⁷

The lack of recognition of this important element in the aesthetic experience has been the source of much misunderstanding. In most cases, a distance-limit exists for the average person which marks the minimum for the preservation of the contemplative attitude, and this is usually higher than that of the artist. Subject-matter which is near this limit may easily fall below it, thus arousing hostility or amusement instead of appreciation.⁶⁸

Censorship in painting, sculpturing and drama also hinges upon the maintenance of a perspective of distance, for ". . . if every member of the public could be trusted to keep it, there would be no sense whatever in the existence of a censor. . . ." ⁶⁹

The concept of distance is sometimes difficult to apply in music and architecture. In "pure" instrumental music most people hold an over-distanced attitude. It may be supposed that the "mean" is more often reached in vocal music of a "classical" nature, while popular songs and music generally are below the distance level of good art, and become superficially pleasing. There is also the tendency of unmusical persons, no matter what the nature of the subject-matter, to

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 324. Italics in the original.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 325.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 328.

lapse into a train of irrelevant, subjective day-dreaming.

The appreciation of architecture lies at the extreme end of the distance scale:

Architecture requires almost uniformly a very great Distance; that is to say, the majority of persons derive no esthetic appreciation from architecture as such, apart from the incidental impression of its decorative features and associations. The causes are numerous, but prominent among them are the confusion of building with architecture and the predominance of utilitarian purposes, which overshadow the architectural claims upon the attention.⁷⁰

The preservation of distance toward all the arts is hindered by excessive admiration of technique and manual dexterity, which hold a practical appeal for the public. This tendency has been a factor in the durability of much bad art, as well as genuine art.⁷¹

The theory of Psychical Distance gives a clue to the understanding of the legitimate place of the ugly in art. Unpleasant subject-matter is not easily put out of gear with things of practical concern. If we are not to react to such objects with feelings of repugnance and distaste,

. . . the ugly merely requires of us more fortitude and disinterestedness in the contemplation of things pitiful and fearful, of things emotionally powerful. The problem is psychological, that of willingness to enter into things which from another point of view are painful or disturbing. But by reason of the energies and tensions being caught and resolved in the sensuous thing, what would otherwise be painful yields aesthetic satisfaction.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 329-330.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 340-341.

⁷² Morris, op. cit., p. 134.

CHAPTER III

AESTHETIC JUDGMENT

1. Preliminary Distinctions.

In the preceding chapter, the discussion has been concerned primarily with the effects that a work of art may have upon the spectator or listener, and with a description of some of the main factors peculiar to the attitude of contemplation of aesthetic objects. Emphasis has been placed on the consumer of works of art. There is, however, a further important aspect of aesthetic theory which remains to be considered. It has to do with the place of values in art, and how they are judged.

All consumers of art are, in one sense, critics. When they are confronted by a work of art, they express their enjoyment, liking or disliking, approval or disapproval. But the principles on which these judgments are founded are often conflicting or obscure, and in many cases are unclear to those passing judgment. About taste, it has been said, there is no disputing. However, if standards of taste and criticism are derived from judgments which are arrived at by an empirical study of certain relevant facts common to aesthetic objects, there is some justification for assuming that arguments and disagreements regarding the merits or values of particular works of art may be clarified by a study of the principles of

aesthetic appreciation, valuation and criticism.

Contemplation is but one aspect of the whole aesthetic experience, and may be distinguished from the appreciative and critical which, taken together, will be referred to as the judgmental aspect. The preceding analysis has been a purely descriptive study of the mental processes and attitudes which take place in the apprehension of works of art, and nothing whatever has been said regarding the comparison and evaluation of different works of art. This is the particular field of aesthetic judgment, which has to do with the estimation of worth or merit in art with reference to some specific value-qualities. Through the consideration of these value-qualities the works of art in question are designated as good or bad, successful, unsuccessful or mediocre, beautiful or ugly, and so forth.

The distinction between the appreciative and the critical aspect of aesthetic judgment may be explained in another manner. Appreciation of art presupposes some measure of sensitive awareness which is necessary for the apprehension or appraisal of aesthetic value. A certain delicacy and susceptibility of feeling is required for the recognition and estimation of worth or merit in art. The experience of appreciation, in the judgment of beauty or other forms of value, is of a personal, subjective nature at this stage. It might be described as an assertion (to oneself) about the reaction or interest that the aesthetic object has aroused.

Unless this interest can be shown to reside in some inherent property in the work of art there can be no claim to universality of tastes in art.

Criticism, on the other hand, is also a form of judgment, but it involves a discrimination of aesthetic values with a view to evaluating the merits and faults of a work of art and comparing it with other works of a similar nature. Criticism also states the grounds which are the basis for such decisions.

The arts may be approached in a number of ways which may be mistaken for appreciation. The historical approach to music or painting, suggests A.R. Chandler,¹ may provide interesting background about the composer or the artist and the circumstances surrounding the production of the work, but adds little or nothing to any aesthetic values which the work may contain. A statement such as the following, for example, cannot be admitted as relevant to the critical evaluation of a work of art:

Artistic expression bestows upon us the calmness of a rapt experience. Our admiration is heightened because we know what effort, what exertion precedes a perfect work of art, because we envisage the chaos the creator had to conquer, the pains he had to endure, to transform something amorphous into an enchanting, captivating shape.²

Also, appreciation is not a knowledge of technical details

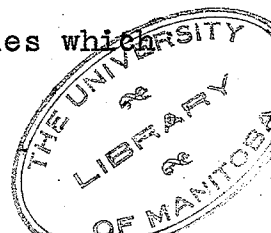
¹ Beauty and Human Nature (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1934) pp. 342 ff.

² S.L. Hart, Treatise on Values (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949) p. 91.

concerning the primary media of the arts. An understanding of the nature of the harmonic system of vibrations produced by musical instruments or the chemistry of pigments in painting is useful to experts in these fields, but it does not insure any addition to the aesthetic enjoyment of these arts. Furthermore, appreciation is not to be confused with the collecting of works of art, for objects of small aesthetic worth may be purchased and collected merely on account of their rarity.

While these activities do not constitute appreciation, they may nevertheless promote it, and through them the appropriate attitude towards works of art may be adopted. The important thing is not to substitute the purely historical or technical interest for aesthetic interest.

Any satisfactory account of the nature of aesthetic value -- that which is appreciated, evaluated or judged through the contemplation of works of art -- must involve a detailed and painstaking process or analysis. In any consideration of aesthetic value, the term "beauty" is one which cannot be ignored or avoided for long. I cannot attempt a complete description of beauty here, but I hope to be able to account for the use of the term as a referent in the appreciative aspect of aesthetic judgment, and to point out the limitations surrounding the indiscriminate use of the term as equivalent to aesthetic values generally. The difficulties of locating the particular aesthetic qualities or values which



constitute beauty, have prompted one theorist to write:

Indeed one might almost say that the concept of beauty is only relevant to aesthetics in a precise context. It is not correct, I think, to say that in aesthetic experience one is aware of beauty, or that as the result of his Impulsive Experience the artist sets out to create it, unless it is understood that the term is only a convenient symbol by means of which certain complex facts can be referred to. What one is aware of in aesthetic experience is not a bare beauty, but certain objective complexes which one recognises to be of a certain kind through the quality of one's response to them.³

2. Beauty.

Perhaps the most common description of enjoyable works of art is that they are "beautiful." Some writers often use terms such as "fine," "attractive," "lovely," "agreeable," "satisfying," and the like, as if they were equivalent to "beautiful." However, for the sake of consistency and accuracy, it would be preferable to say that while these terms often seem appropriate as descriptions of particular kinds of beauty, they should be made to stand for other kinds of aesthetic value.⁴

The appreciative judgment "X is beautiful" is consequent upon aesthetic contemplation as described, but the description of the contemplative attitude cannot be reproduced as a description of the appreciation of beauty. As Prall identifies aesthetic judgment (which I prefer to call the appreciative aspect of aesthetic judgment, as opposed to the critical), the chief characteristic is that

³ Bartlett, op. cit., pp. 232-233.

⁴ See below p. 52.

Aesthetic judgment is distinguished from aesthetic experience as such by the simple fact that it follows and records such experience after the experience has been had and with reference to what was experienced. And it is distinguished from criticism clearly by the fact that it is content with simply making this record explicit. It makes no attempt to say that one thing is better than another, nor to explain on what grounds it is so, nor to say just what class of things it belongs to, nor to explain it in any sense, nor yet to reproduce in an account of the thing some of its quality of beauty so that a reader of the criticism may re-enact a similar aesthetic moment of more or less derivative appreciation.⁵

This judgment of beauty is "appreciative" in the sense that it merely follows and records the aesthetic experience. However, the aesthetic judgment "X is beautiful" may also be "critical" in that we do not simply record our own delight or enjoyment, but we also predict, if only implicitly, that the object will delight others as well. It is only with reference to the critical aesthetic judgment that disagreements regarding the value of aesthetic objects can be resolved; for there could be no difference of opinion about a simple recording of one's own aesthetic experience. This matter will be considered at greater length elsewhere.

The appreciation of an object as beautiful is characterized by a general feeling of delight or enjoyment taken in the object:

The word [feeling] is commonly used of the process or act of appreciation, as when we say that we feel the exquisite grace of flowers, or, less probably, of the vase they are in . . . One is always struck by great beauty, the feeling is called forth suddenly by a blow upon the senses. Instead of saying that we feel something, we say

⁵ Op. cit., p. 5.

that something makes us feel, that something strikes us. It is shocks of this sort that we record in aesthetic judgment.⁶

This analysis is satisfactory enough in describing the subjective reaction of the apprehension of beauty, but as Lewis points out, exception may be taken to the use of the term "judgment" as indicative of immediately presented value. Actually a judgment is not called for in this type of experience, since beauty, as a form of value, is merely felt, found or discovered. As a matter of fact there is nothing which is judged. The distinction which should be recognized is between the assessment of value found in the experience of the appreciation of beauty and of value resident in the presented object, which is the proper field of the critical aspect of aesthetic judgment. For the present discussion the important thing is that

Whenever there is a judgment of esthetic value in an object, based on the value-character of an immediate experience, or on an assessment of comparative value, it still remains true that the value disclosed in the experience need not be judged. The value directly found need not be assessed in order to be disclosed and enjoyed, nor compared with any other in order to have its own apprehended quality.⁷

For the most part, experiences of nature and art are enjoyed, not criticized or judged. Delight in nature could hardly be taken as criticism, for as Santayana points out,

The word "criticism," used on such an occasion, would emphasize too much the element of deliberate judgment and of comparison with standards. Beauty, although

⁶ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁷ Lewis, op. cit., p. 464.

often so described, is seldom so perceived, and all the greatest excellences of nature and art are so far from being approved of by a rule that they themselves furnish the standard and ideal by which critics measure inferior effects.⁸

Beauty, as the mark of artistic achievement, may be referred to as one kind of aesthetic excellence. Chandler⁹ proposes to regard beauty as one of the several co-ordinate terms for aesthetic excellence, which are called aesthetic categories. Other such terms are the sublime, the tragic and the comic. In theory at least, the number of aesthetic categories is indefinite, a large number of which are incapable of being described adequately in words. Thus the pretty, the lovely, the elegant, the magnificent, the grand, the impressive and the sublime and so on must be distinguished from one another and from beauty. It is likely that the large number of possible aesthetic categories is due to the variety and complexity of the impulses, feelings and emotions which are fused in the aesthetic experience. Thus a work of art which is termed beautiful by one observer may be regarded as ugly by another, or as is more usually the case, it will be met by an attitude of indifference and lack of appreciation. The judgment of beauty, on this account, is not to be regarded as arbitrary, but as a product of the individual's capacity for sound appreciation:

Beauty is not a thing, but the experience of something which in its form and setting makes a bid for perfection . . . Some say they cannot "understand" music.

⁸ Op. cit., p. 14.

⁹ Op. cit., p. 23.

It makes no bid for their appreciation. Its conformable pattern of expression finds no responsive chords in their make-up. Such an indisposition is akin to a lack of mathematical insight. In the case of mathematics, however, the defect is largely in ability to discern enumerative and functional distinctions. In music, the defect is in the appreciation of a pattern the parts of which may not be understood as enumerated, but must be felt aesthetically.¹⁰

The influence of the complexity of our impulses and interests in determining our appreciation of beauty is also evident in the variation in response between different individuals, or in the same person at different times. The fact that natural objects, roses, sunsets and the like produce harmonious color combinations on many occasions may be an unconscious selection on the part of the spectator. As I.A. Richards notes,

. . . the vast range of close gradations, which a rose petal, for example, presents, supplies the explanation. Out of all these the eye picks that gradation which best accords with the other colors chosen. There is usually some set of colors in some harmonious relation to one another to be selected out of the multitudinous gradations which natural objects in most lightings present; and there are evident reasons why the eye of a sensitive person should, when it can, pick out those gradations which best accord. The great range of different possible selections is, however, of importance. It explains the fact that we see such different colors for instance when gloomy and when gay, and thus how the actual selection made by an artist may reveal the kind and direction of the impulses which are active in him at the moment of selection.¹¹

Form and Content. It is not always clear whether beauty is meant to refer to the form or the content of art, since

¹⁰ R.M. Ogden, The Psychology of Art, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938) p. 16.

¹¹ Op. cit., pp. 155-156.

contemporary theories, either formalist or emotionalist in outlook, have tended to stress one aspect at the expense of the other. It should be unnecessary to point out that normally our attention to works of art takes in both form and content at once, and they are inseparable in fact. In some arts, however, one or other of these aspects is often predominant: form, for example, in "modern" art and architecture, and content in literature or drama. For the purposes of analysis, it will be profitable to separate these essential ingredients of art in order to estimate the place and importance of each in the total effect which a work of art may have. The three important aspects of a work of art are "matter," "form" and "content," and there is considerable ambiguity surrounding the descriptions, definitions and usage of these concepts.

Matter, according to Greene, "includes all the material, of whatever kind, which is available to the creative artist for artistic manipulation."¹² The materials of a work of art include all the stimuli, sources of inspiration or experiences of the artist which are relevant to the production of art. This "subject-matter," as it is sometimes called, "refers to the model or object of imitation -- whatever is imitated in the work of art."¹³ It might be inquired, in the case of music, whether material refers to notes or to human experiences and feelings. To answer this question Greene makes the distinction

¹² Op. cit., p. 32.

¹³ Hospers, op. cit., p. 19.

between primary and secondary materials:

The primary raw material of pure music is auditory sound with variations of pitch, timbre, intensity and duration, plus silence . . .

The secondary raw material of pure music comprises all the emotions and conative [all dynamic tendencies and processes, such as wishing, willing, and striving, at various stages of conscious reflection] attitudes which might conceivably find expression in pure music, for example, such emotional states as joy and sorrow, and such conative attitudes as hope, despair, endeavor and resignation.¹⁴

Ordinarily the artist is aware of the potentialities of matter of which the layman is unaware, but prior to its formal organization it has no aesthetic value whatever (with the possible exception of such primary materials as solitary tones and pure colors).

The concept of form is largely free from misunderstanding. It refers to the innumerable, in fact infinite, number of ways in which the artist organizes his material. In a broadly inclusive sense it means

. . . the organization, ordering, or relationships of elementary art objects. This organization will include such artistic constituents as balance, symmetry, and rhythm; and we call such elements of form "formal." But artistic form or organization need not be restricted to these elements; the concept may refer also to the ordering of such "associated" elements in the realm of artistic expression as action, character, and setting. In this case we have associative, rather than formal (or "plastic") form.¹⁵

In addition, a unity is required which consists in a synthesis of the elements of form:

¹⁴ Op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁵ B.C. Heyl, New Bearings in Esthetics and Art Criticism, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1943) pp. 79-80.

"Organic unity" is generally set forth as the sine qua non of all works of art. Each element is necessary to all the rest, and together they form a whole so unified that no part could be removed without damaging the remaining parts.¹⁶

Other important principles are theme and variation, rhythm and development, tension and release, conflict and resolution, and so on.¹⁷ These relations are but a few of the great number that constitute the formal aspect of works of art which we enjoy, whether they are recognized as present at that time, or not.

The third concept, namely that of content, refers to whatever is expressed in a work of art, as in

. . . the innumerable moods which art objects express: for example, the "energy and power" of a baroque facade, the "poignant sadness" of Détente sculpture, the "dignity and aristocracy" of Velasquez' portraits. So defined, content is something totally different from the non-esthetic factor of subject matter . . . Content, in short, is synonymous with artistic expression.¹⁸

Content is not always capable of being translated into words, especially in the case of music and in modern non-representational art, nor can it be duplicated exactly in another work of art in the same or in a different medium:

Artistic content has, it is true, a generic character which reappears in different artistic compositions in different media, which can be analyzed and described. But the specific artistic content of every work of art is unique. This unique content is a function

¹⁶ Hospers, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁷ D.H. Parker considers the simplest principles of form to be: organic unity, theme, variation, balance, hierarchy and evolution. (In Rader, op. cit., pp. 232ff.)

¹⁸ Heyl, op. cit., p. 79.

of the work's specific matter as well as of its specific form.¹⁹

It would be a difficult and hazardous task to attribute exclusively our enjoyment of beauty in art to either one of the aspects of form or content, although several writers have attempted to do so.²⁰ For one reason, the different arts vary in the proportionate importance of either form or subject matter in the expressed content:

For all the arts are beautiful in so far as they establish satisfying relations of form; and music does but show overtly and unmistakably the character of art in its essential expression. Architecture comes next in purity to music, in creating satisfying relations of the masses, and spaces and lines and planes with which it is conversant. But it contains also the representational element of use; the forms of its materials mean also houses and temples. Poetry, and literature generally, is from the outset representative because its words are not mere sounds to be musically composed, but are charged with meanings, that is, with reference to things denoted.²¹

Thus it would seem that the formal and the representative arts are not so divided as to be different in kind. Pure music has a subject matter though one not outside the material of its tones: the element of foreign reference is at a minimum or non-existent. In representative art the formal element is still the essence of its beauty, but there is the added reference to the foreign subject; but that foreign subject is so transformed in the artist's vision as to correspond to the material form and be implied in it. Thus there is no quarrel between formal and representative art, and in every art (under appropriate qualifications) there is both a subject and a material form, only in music the two coincide.²²

¹⁹ Greene, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁰ For the formal aspect see Clive Bell's "Significant Form," D.W. Prall's discussion of aesthetic "surface," and the writings of Roger Fry.

²¹ S. Alexander, Beauty and Other Forms of Value (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd. 1933) p. 78.

²² Ibid., pp. 79-80.

The form of art may in itself have intrinsic value, but while

. . . the artistic form of a work of art is the peculiar locus of its artistic quality, this form is not merely an end in itself but also, and essentially, a means, in fact the only means, whereby the artist can express himself and communicate his ideas to others.²³

Since the content or "expressiveness" of art is a function of both the subject-matter and the form, the emphasis on one aspect at the expense of the other is bound to result in a short-sighted view of the potentialities for enjoyment in art which lies outside such limited boundaries. No less one-sided than Bell's insistence on the importance of form is the overemphasis on morally appropriate subject-matter in Tolstoy's What is Art?. Writers of both opinions are partly correct in what they have to say, but their theories are equally limited by what they deny or ignore:

Genuine art is both aesthetically satisfying and profoundly revealing. Art exists "for life's sake" as well as "for art's sake." Its form is both a self-sufficient end of aesthetic response and also the means to the end of significant expression.

. . . All art worthy of the name is in some sense and to some degree expressive of something and possesses not only surface pattern but artistic content as well.²⁴

One factor which is often held to be a part of the total sum of complexes which constitutes beauty, is referred to as the "treatment," a word often used by critics to convey the idea of imaginative management of subject-matter by artistic devices and techniques (loosely equivalent to "form").

²³ Greene, op. cit., p. 123.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

In music, while the theme of a composition is important, it is the manner in which it is developed that constitutes its effectiveness. In painting the critic does not confine his remarks to the formal aspects of the work, but he also evaluates the feeling-tone or the emotional impact contained therein.

It has been made clear, I hope, that both the form and the content of a work of art are sources of enjoyment, delight or satisfaction, and that both contribute to the spectator's response, as evidenced by his appreciative judgment of beauty. The critic, of course, needs specialized knowledge of art-forms in his work, as well as sensitive feeling for the expressive potentialities inherent in a work of art. The ordinary consumer, on the other hand, will appreciate art only in so far as his capacities and sensibilities permit him to do so, and his appreciation will be limited in accordance with the degree to which his interests coincide with the aspects of experience expressed in the work of art.

Beauty and Value. Whenever a work of art measures up to certain standards or meets particular requirements, it is said to have aesthetic value. What these standards or requirements are need not concern us at this time, nor is it necessary to offer a definition of aesthetic value here. What is significant, however, is that beauty is often referred to as a value, or a species of value. The following sections will be devoted to an investigation of aesthetic value in general, of which beauty is but one type.

There are, points out Ducasse, two ways of relating beauty and aesthetic value.²⁵ If aesthetic evaluation of art is the evaluation of it in terms of beauty and ugliness, then beauty and ugliness are positive and negative aesthetic value in general. In this wide sense, other categories of aesthetic value (e.g. sublime, pretty, graceful, etc.) are subsumed under the general term "beauty." In a narrower sense, however, beauty may be regarded as "not an inclusive but a special category of aesthetic value, to be distinguished and contrasted with sublimity, prettiness, gracefulness, etc."²⁶

The second of these alternatives will be adopted for the purposes of this discussion. If we consider our aesthetic experiences and the way in which we describe them, we find that the term "beauty" does not apply equally to all the arts. Those arts to which the application of the term is most common are music, architecture, sculpture and some poetry, but even in these the usage of the term is not at all times accurate. The novel, the drama, and even the motion picture, are seldom so characterized. The main reason for its retention as a general term for aesthetic value is a matter of tradition. Veron accounts for the origin of the term and its persistence in use:

Had not the tyranny of formulae by custom become too strong, we would willingly refrain from using the word "beauty" at all, for it has the drawback of being

²⁵ Op. cit., pp. 234ff.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 234.

too exclusively connected with the sense of seeing, and of calling up too much the idea of visible form. The employment of this word became general when the art par excellence was sculpture. To make it apply to the other arts, it was necessary to foist upon it a series of extensions which deprived it of all accuracy. Language possesses no word more vague or less precise. This absence of precision has perhaps contributed more than might at first be supposed to that confusion of ideas which can alone explain the multiplicity and absurdity of current esthetic theories.²⁷

The feelings or satisfactions experienced in types of art not commonly termed beautiful may also be values on a par with beauty, but there is no reason to suppose that beauty is the only value, or that it is superior to other species of value, whose exact nature may be incapable of being described precisely in words.

3. Aesthetic Value -- Objective, Subjective, Relative.

There are two views about the nature of aesthetic value. It may refer either to some inherent quality common to aesthetic objects themselves, or it may refer to the feeling experienced in the contemplation of these objects. Two quotations will serve to illustrate this difference:

The aesthetic quality of most aesthetic objects of awareness . . . is a function of their formal organization . . . Aesthetic quality is the lowest common denominator of all aesthetic objects, for by an "aesthetic object" is meant an object which actually possesses the unique generic quality designated as "aesthetic." This quality, like other ultimates, is unique and therefore indefinable.²⁸

. . . value is a determination or quality of an object which involves any sort of appreciation or interest. Such appreciation, however, involves feeling and ultimately

²⁷ Rader, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁸ Greene, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

desires or tendencies underlying the feeling. Therefore value is the feeling. Value and feeling of value are the same thing.²⁹

This distinction between what is sometimes called the objective and the subjective aspects of aesthetic value is, however, not always so clear-cut. Clive Bell's analysis, which holds that the personal experience of a peculiar aesthetic emotion is the reaction by which we recognize a work of art, states that the common quality of works of art is "Significant Form:"

There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? . . . Only one answer seems possible -- significant form. In each, lines and color combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our esthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colors, these esthetically moving forms, I will call "Significant Form;" and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.³⁰

Any thoroughly objectivistic theory of value may have a difficult task in maintaining that beauty, or any other aesthetic value, exists apart from the mind of the perceiving subject:

²⁹ W.M. Urban, "Values, Theory of," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th edition, XXII, 962.

³⁰ Rader, op. cit., p. 247. It is odd that the "aesthetic emotion" should respond only to form, but nowhere is an explanation offered of the "significance" of "Significant Form," nor does it reveal the non-significance of forms which do not give rise to the "aesthetic emotion." An admirable criticism of this passage, and of the hypothesis of Significant Form in general, is to be found in Ducasse, op. cit., pp. 307-314. The quotation used here, however, illustrates the confusion between the objective and subjective foundations of aesthetic value.

There is so far always an element of illusion in art, a character being imputed to the material which it does not possess of itself. Even in natural beauty, the beauty may be seen to depend on selection on our part, or it may be an addition; for instance, we may select in the sunset the shades which harmonize, or in the landscape the features which suit our own mood.

It would seem to follow that beauty is really dependent on the mind, and would not exist either in art or nature except for our interference.³¹

This mental character of values seems to suggest subjectivism, but it should be pointed out that the selection of valuable qualities is from the object itself, and it is to these qualities that we attribute our experienced satisfaction or enjoyment when in the presence of aesthetic objects, for example. It would, therefore, be more accurate to say that experienced beauty consists in a subject-object relation:

Strictly speaking, there are values only in respect of the whole situation, consisting of subject and object in their compresence; it is the totality that is . . . beautiful. The value is not subjective, peculiar to the subject like consciousness; nor is it objective, like a secondary quality. It is a subject-object determination.³²

There are, of course, other variations on the themes of objectivism and subjectivism. It might be maintained that aesthetic value is a property of the object, and that disagreements on the presence of it were due to subjective variations in appreciation.

Subjectivism finds its appeal in the purely personal

³¹ S. Alexander, "Qualities," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th edition, XVIII, 812.

³² M.R. Konvitz, On the Nature of Value: The Philosophy of Samuel Alexander, (New York: King's Crown Press, 1946) p. 23. Chapter 5 of this book is given over to an exposition and criticism of Alexander's aesthetic theory.

emotional state which is held to constitute aesthetic value, but such a theory regards training, education and experience in the arts as irrelevant, and prohibits reflective judgments of works of art along with the formation of any standards of criticism. While objectivism is not open to this exception, or others which may be taken against the subjectivist viewpoint, there are drawbacks to the objective type of value theory which make it untenable.³³ For one thing, a consistently objectivist theory cannot account for the changing standards of taste or the disagreements among critics regarding value judgments. In addition, the objectivist may be forced to consider the terms "beauty," "aesthetic value" and "aesthetic quality" as unanalyzable and indefinable concepts. Moreover, the variation in the usage of such terms is indicative of the fact that

The lesson to be learned from all such interpretations of this and other similar terms is that there is no a priori reason to presuppose the existence of a common intrinsic, and inexplicable quale connoted by the terms.³⁴

There is, suggests Heyl, the third possibility of relativism which avoids the difficulties peculiar to the detached absolute values of objectivism, and the purely personal standard of preference of subjectivism. This approach involves a new interpretation of both the valued object and the valuing subject, and has two sides, the relatively objective and the relatively subjective.

³³ Heyl, op. cit., pp. 93 ff.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

Value, according to the relatively objective aspect, is regarded as a relational property of the object and the experiencing subject. That is to say, "the work of art has potential value which becomes actual only in transaction with a sensitivity."³⁵

"Relatively objective" is meant to convey the idea that the properties are objective in that they do not belong to the self, yet are relative in that they are dependent upon individual organisms.³⁶

However, to say that value is objective in the sense that it does not belong to the self, reveals nothing about what is valuable, whether it is an inherent quality or the appreciation of it. It may be that a work of art has no aesthetic value except for the presence of an experiencing subject, but surely this view cannot be labelled "relatively objective." If aesthetic value disappears then the subject is not present, then this view slips back into the subjectivist position. Questions regarding the sensibilities and capacities for enjoyment enter at this point. In order to uphold the objective aspect of the relativist viewpoint, it would be necessary to state that it is possible for a work of art to have great value without anyone being in a position to experience it. The value exists actually, and is present for appreciation potentially:

The value is actual not only to an actual appreciator but also to a possible perspective. . . . To be an appreciator of art means to be placed in a certain

³⁵ Ibid., p. 125.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 110n.

perspective wherein the value of works of art can be felt, and this requires certain knowledge and peculiar sensibilities.³⁷

The other side of the relativist theory, called the relatively subjective aspect, holds that value has to do with interest, but does not identify valuing with mere liking or personal preference, as does the purely subjective view. The difference lies in the stress which is laid upon the properties of the object in the act of evaluation. While the role of liking is regarded as a necessary condition for evaluation, it is insufficient as compared to the rational factor of reflective inquiry on the total situation.³⁸ This view also recognizes the importance of training, education and the cultivation of taste in the task of criticism. The relativist view, of course, admits that there may be important differences between various aesthetic experiences because of the great complexity in psychological constitutions, and that differing explanations of the experience may be equally relevant and valid. But this does not mean to imply that all experiences are equally valid. Apparently the discrimination between what is relevant and what is not is thought to turn on the cultivated sensitivity and capacities of the spectator or critic.

In view of the impossibility of unqualified acceptance

³⁷ Feibleman, op. cit., p. 16.

³⁸ Heyl, op. cit., p. 126.

of any one of the objective, subjective or relative views of aesthetic value, it would be pointless to pursue this inquiry any further. While each view offers something which might profitably be used in a discussion of value, each aspect seems to insist upon the exclusion of much that is pertinent in each of the other two possibilities. I propose now to consider another classification of values, following the general terminology used by C.I. Lewis.³⁹

4. Aesthetic Value -- Extrinsic, Intrinsic.

It is at once necessary to consider the question which was asked at the beginning of this section: When anything is held to be aesthetically valuable, does the value refer to the object itself, or to the experience of the object? The terminology of the reply in this argument will employ the terms "extrinsic," "intrinsic," "immediate," "inherent" or "instrumental" as the value-predicate. Of these, the classifications of instrumental value, are the ones relevant to aesthetics.

If the value of a thing depends on its worth to other things, it is said to be extrinsically valuable. But if the value is held to be independent of other things, its value is called intrinsic. This is the most general distinction which can be made in value theory, that is to say, between what is valuable for its own sake and that which is valuable for the sake of

³⁹ An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation, op. cit., especially Chapters 12-15.

something else; it is either intrinsic or extrinsic. This does not exclude the possibility that a thing may have value in both these senses in some particular instance, but this division is the basic one.

This dichotomy may be explained in another way. In the usage which Lewis adopts, "values ascribable to objects are always extrinsic values; intrinsic value attaching exclusively to realizations of some possible value-quality in experience itself."⁴⁰ In order to clarify this statement concerning extrinsic values he says:

The final end by reference to which all values are to be appraised, is the ends of some possible good life: that the goodness ascribable to objects is, therefore, some possible contribution of them to a life which would be found good in the living of it. And this implies that values in objects are extrinsic only.⁴¹

Intrinsic Value: Immediate. On the side of intrinsic value, the work of art has value in itself in the sense that the value attributed to it is realized in the presence of the aesthetic object. Now aesthetic value, for example, is often characterized as being immediately felt or found. Just what it is that is immediately experienced, is not so easily identified:

Immediate or directly findable value is not so much one quality as a dimensionlike mode which is pervasive of all experience. . . Value or dis-value is not like the pitch of middle C or the seen color of median

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 389.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 395.

red or the felt hardness of steel. It is not one specific quale of experience but a gamut of such; more like color in general or pitch or hardness in general.⁴²

There is always a great difficulty in finding a name to describe the character of the immediately valuable. The terms "beauty," "pleasure" and "satisfaction" are ambiguous in this sense. If the "immediately good is what you like and what you want in the way of experience; the immediately bad is what you dislike and do not want,"⁴³ the terms "liked," "disliked," "wanted," "unwanted," "good," "bad," are better characterizations of the experience than the terms "pleasure," "displeasure," or "pain." Pleasure as a synonym for the immediately and intrinsically valuable would have to cover the greatest possible range of experiences, from passive, self-forgetting satisfactions to active, self-conscious ones, and at the same time include both sensuous pleasure and emotional gratification. If objection is taken to the use of the term pleasure, "so far as words go, the commonest and widest ascription of all -- merely 'good' -- is probably best; although that term fails of precision by covering also all manner of extrinsic values. . . ."⁴⁴ For the present, however, I prefer to reserve the terms "good" and "bad" to apply to works of art so described, by reference to some critical standards. If the intrinsically valuable (for its own sake) is a "liking" (or "goodness" in Lewis's terminology) or directly apprehended

⁴² Ibid., p. 401.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 404.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 405.

satisfaction, then the attitude of aesthetic contemplation is an absorption in intrinsic value:

And although all experience is esthetic in the broad sense of being presentation of some quality-complex in which value or disvalue is directly findable, it becomes aesthetic in the narrower sense which is more appropriate, only if it becomes the object of the esthetic attitude; only if the experience is marked by absorption in the presented content on its own account.⁴⁵

Certain objections may be advanced against this description of intrinsic value. Two questions may be asked with regard to intrinsic value: What is it? and, What is the nature of the experience of it? In answer to the first, the phrases "felt satisfaction" or "experienced goodness"⁴⁶ are as close as words will take us to a description of intrinsic value. In answer to the second, the experience of intrinsic value is described as immediate, final, indubitable, non-cognitive and non-judgmental.⁴⁷ One critic makes objections on these points:

But felt satisfaction cannot be identified with intrinsic value merely because, if there were such satisfaction, it would be an indubitable datum. The fundamental question is factual, whether or not there is this felt satisfaction and whether or not men do choose all else for the sake of it. . . felt satisfaction is not directly and immediately found as a distinct mode of the given. We are not aware of felt satisfaction on one hand and of the objective constituents of the experience on the other . . . in order to think clearly about value experience as a phenomenal occurrence and in order to direct and control experience for the more adequate realization of value, a distinction must be made between the more or less stable elements, between the "objective" and the "emotional" aspects of

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 439.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 387, 389, 455, 525, et passim.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 365, 374, 397, 407.

the phenomenally given. But both aspects are present together and are not in fact distinguished in the immediacy of the esthetic experience.⁴⁸

What I take to be the essential point of this criticism is that, as a matter of fact, in the experience of intrinsic aesthetic value, we do not distinguish the "objective" (factual) and "subjective" (emotional) elements which are fused in the immediate satisfaction felt in the presence of a work of art, but for the purposes of analysis of this intrinsic value, Lewis has pointed out that the two aspects are distinguishable:

He cannot hold that this distinction necessarily is made in the intrinsic value experience nor that intrinsic value is necessarily to be identified with one of the distinguishable aspects to the exclusion of the other.⁴⁹

This distinction has been made earlier in this chapter, where I suggested that while the elements of form and content each make a specific contribution to the total aesthetic experience, the effect of each cannot be felt separately, to the exclusion of the other. The single consideration of each aspect was for the purposes of analysis only. For this reason neither "form" nor "content" should be identified with the "objective" (factual) or "emotional" (subjective) elements of the experience.

In reply to the second question -- What is the nature of an experience of intrinsic value? -- Brown questions the

⁴⁸ S.M. Brown, "C.I. Lewis's Esthetics," Journal of Philosophy, XLVII (March 16, 1950), p. 145.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 146.

adequacy of Lewis's answers. Lewis has proposed that the experience is immediate, final, indubitable, non-cognitive, and non-judgmental. If this were the case,

. . . then all further questions would be scientific -- psychological, sociological, and physiological investigations of the conditions under which ineffable and qualitatively identical value experiences occur. If, on the other hand, there is sufficient justification for describing esthetic experiences as in some sense cognitive, judgmental, mediate, and tentative; then philosophers have still to make clear and precise in just what sense or senses this is so, and they have still to provide philosophically adequate accounts of esthetic judgments.⁵⁰

With regard to this statement, it will be remembered that Lewis has stated elsewhere that in the experience of immediately felt satisfaction (intrinsic value) there is nothing which is judged; or in other words, the experience of intrinsic value is not an aesthetic judgment. It may be objected that this conclusion is not in strict accordance with the facts. It has been pointed out that if aesthetic judgments can be regarded as correct or mistaken, then intrinsic values -- reports of immediate satisfaction as found in particular moments of aesthetic enjoyment -- are the basic forms of aesthetic judgments, and are therefore subject to error. The factors which contribute to the making of erroneous reports concerning the nature of the aesthetic experience have been carefully stated by one writer:

In the first place it is a fact that judgments of hedonic tone are rather more unreliable than judgments of other sense qualities. The qualities themselves are extremely volatile and variable, and any shifting of attention to them and away from the "object" is likely

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 150.

to remove the quality from the experience altogether. Moreover, aesthetic experience of any complexity takes time, so that it is usually never possible to give more than a synoptic impression after the fact of the affective quality or value of the experience. In the second place, such judgments are easily deflected by habitual preferences or by the desire to conform to some prescribed canon of taste. Despite the very widespread acceptance in our day of the principle of de gustibus, it still remains true, ironically, that most people fear to be candid -- if indeed they are any longer capable of being so -- in reporting what they find when they listen to a dull fugue by Bach or a tedious comedy by Shakespeare.⁵¹

Consequently the report of intrinsic aesthetic value implies nothing concerning the object of satisfaction beyond the fact that it is immediately experienced or attended to. But this, I surmise, is implicit in the very notion of satisfaction.⁵²

There are additional factors which may be taken into account in evaluating reports of immediate satisfactions. It will be impossible to relate their specific influence here, for they vary among the several arts, and among the same arts on different occasions. I am referring, of course, to the factors of familiarity or unfamiliarity, insufficiency of first impressions, perishability, fatigue or the effect of repetition, the pleasures of recognition, and so forth. If an observer is reasonably familiar with the form and style used by a certain artist in a particular medium, he may not be able to approach that work again and again with undiminished interest and enjoyment. Such a noticeable drop in enjoyment is usually called fatigue. In some arts, however, notably music of the severely classical variety, maximum enjoyment is

⁵¹ H.D. Aikin, "A Pluralistic Analysis of Aesthetic Value," Philosophical Review, LIX, 496-497.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 498-499.

rarely obtained on first hearing, and in some cases never; this depends upon the sensitivity and training of the listener.

The only way in which intrinsic values can be held to be objective, in such a way as to provide a sound basis for criticism, is to take these variables into account. This requires the postulation of a "normal person" or "qualified observer." If this can be allowed, then

Actually the judgment of a capacity of a work of art to give pleasure is perfectly objective. When the relevant variables are put in, such as the degree of the individual's hedonistic discriminations and the influences of his cultural environment, the judgment is not only objective but stable and a sound basis for prediction. The only assumption is that an indiscriminating taste is at a disadvantage in its capacity of getting enjoyment from objects, which is a purely empirical matter open to verification. . . . It follows that the aesthetic value of a work of art has nothing to do with the number of people who enjoy it, but only with the amount of enjoyment it gives to those people discriminating enough to enjoy it. The indiscriminating are missing something.⁵³

This is a good place to introduce the other important aspect of aesthetic value, which is inherent value. At the risk of anticipating too much a conclusion of this discussion, I would like to point out what I think is a central consideration of aesthetics which has important implications for value theory. Inherent value in aesthetic objects will be shown to consist in their potentiality for the realization of value in experience. From what has been said, it should be clear that a work of art may have inherent value in this

⁵³ Pepper, Basis of Criticism in the Arts, pp. 51-52.

sense, though it cannot be realized within the actual limits affecting some individuals. According to Lewis, this view cannot be termed "relative."

Thus once we understand the meaning of ascribing value in the mode of relativity to persons, it becomes obvious that there is no contradiction nor even any puzzle in the fact that a thing may have objective value but that 'relative to S' it may have none. This merely signifies that S has certain incapacities, or is affected by certain circumstances, within the limits of which the potentialities which the object has for conducing to satisfaction cannot be realized.⁵⁴

Extrinsic Value: Inherent and Instrumental. The class of extrinsic values may be subdivided into inherent values and instrumental values. Inherent values are "those values which are resident in objects in such wise that they are realizable in experience through presentation of the object itself to which they are attributed," while instrumental values are those "which consist in an instrumentality to some other object, in presentation of which a value is directly realizable in experience."⁵⁵ An aesthetic value such as beauty is a case of extrinsic value, or more specifically, of inherent value. When an aesthetic object is said to have inherent value, attention is drawn to its potentialities for producing experienced satisfaction.

Value in objects is vested in properties of them which are as little dependent upon any momentary apprehension or any individual judgment for their factuality as are objective squareness and hardness. But this value-property is the objective character of the thing as capable of contributing some satisfaction to direct experience; its potentiality for realization of a value

⁵⁴ Op. cit., p. 523.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 391, 392.

immediately disclosed. It is that fact which is indicated in the thesis that all value in objects is extrinsic, in the sense of being a value which is not for its own sake but is for the sake of something else.⁵⁶

To say that "This painting is beautiful" is to assert the capacity of the work of art, when beheld under the appropriate conditions, to induce delightful or satisfying aesthetic experience:

The point here is not that the goodness of a good object is dependent upon this goodness of it being experienced, or even upon the object's being experienced. Both of these theses we would emphatically deny. If there be some "gem of purest ray serene which dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear," still it may be as truly beautiful as any which human eyes will ever behold. The point is that the criterion of that beauty is a delight with which it would be beheld if it ever should be beheld under conditions favorable to realization in full of the potentialities for such delight which are resident in this thing.⁵⁷

The distinction between inherent value, which is disclosed in the presence of an object, from the intrinsic value which is attributed to the experience itself, needs clarification:

Intrinsic value, which is that for the sake of which all other things are valued, belongs exclusively to occasions of experience as such; and value in objects consists in their potentiality for contributing goodness to such occasions. But this value-property in an object, whether it be a mere utility or an inherent good to be found in presentation of this thing, is still something which belongs to it objectively, whether disclosed in any particular experience or not.⁵⁸

If the question should arise as to how to determine

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 412.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 388-389.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 433.

the comparative beauty of two works of art, according to this theory, the answer would involve an explanation of their respective potentialities for producing a satisfying aesthetic experience in a normal person. This is clearly a case for the determination of "objective" value. Lewis, at various points, describes value as objective in the following senses:

1) in so far as it is reliable, i.e., in so far as it is such as would be confirmed by a succession (presumably unlimited) of human experiences. . . . 2) in so far as the experiences which confirm the value are those of normal human beings whose "capacities of apprehension" are "common to humans in general" 3) in so far as the value attaches to the object apart from its being actually apprehended or confirmed by anyone.⁵⁹

Lewis's intention is to deny aesthetic judgments as experiences of emotion merely, and to uphold the possibility of expertness in aesthetic criticism. To do this he has recourse to the "normal person." Here the objection is that:

Specifically what Professor Lewis seems to me to do is to confuse the term "objective" in the sense of "leading to reliable beliefs" with the term "objective" as meaning "normal to human experience." . . . he means by normal what is not subjective, and . . . he wavers in his use of "subjective" between the meanings "peculiar to the individual" and "misleading as to future experience." (e.g. pp. 408 f. and 417 ff.)

. . . the crucial question remains: What special connection exists between the normalcy of a reaction (one definition of objective) and its reliability (another definition of objectivity)?⁶⁰

From the following statement regarding the possible correction of abnormal reactions it would seem that no special

⁵⁹ L. Garvin, "Relativism in Professor Lewis's Theory of Esthetic Value," Journal of Philosophy, XLVI, 172.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

reliability could be attached to the evaluations of "normal" people:

For the person with an idiosyncrasy of taste can, allowing for it, go on to predict the "if-then" propositions describing the objects or properties that will satisfy the tastes of normal people. That is, he can, assuming appropriate training, experience, and powers of discrimination, become an expert critic in the sense above described and pronounce upon the wisdom of esthetic choices. But though he may correct for his idiosyncracies in arriving at valid evaluations, there is nothing that makes "objectively incorrect," in the sense of undependable, that part of those evaluations that applies to him and informs him where, having a certain sort of abnormality and being "stuck with it" (something he should know by properly "correcting" for it), he should look for reliable and rewarding esthetic experience.⁶¹

But if the conditions surrounding inherent aesthetic value were completely incapable of being realized, and I do not think that this is the case, the informative and educational functions of criticism would be limited to the recognition of qualities not requiring any more training than those required for the perception of objective redness. Furthermore, if inherent aesthetic values did not have an independent status, training and education with a view to indicating these qualities would be pointless. I think that Garvin has overstressed the importance of the "normal" person's reaction at the expense of the informative role of the critic. It may be granted that an individual has a greater susceptibility to beauty than ourselves,

But this does not necessarily qualify him as a critic whose reports of what he finds in his own immediate experience of a work of art are to be regarded as reliable evidence of its inherent value, i.e., powers

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 176.

to delight of which we are also capable. The reason why we acknowledge the critical appraisals of certain persons to possess a certain authority in the appraisal of works of art is simply that we are prepared to accept their testimony as evidence of an experience which ultimately we may hope to approximate at a later time. But were it not for the fact that (a) there are aesthetic satisfactions which are not immediately accessible to everyone, and (b) many, if not all, of us are in some degree capable of similar satisfactions, the need for a concept of inherent value would probably never arise, and critical discourse, to any except the self-assertive or merely curious, would have no point whatever.⁶²

Granted that reports of immediately felt satisfaction may be untrustworthy on some occasions and under certain conditions, for the most part, supposing an observer of at least normal capacities and sensitivity, the value immediately found may be regarded as indubitable for him. But inherent value -- the potentialities for further experience -- is something which has to be judged, and may be judged erroneously on the basis of a single experience. This distinction between intrinsic and inherent aesthetic value must be maintained for the additional reason

. . . that realization of positive value-quality in an occasion of actual experience is an end in itself, whereas objective value in a thing, even when inherent and to be realized in the presence of it, is still a means only to this further end of a satisfaction found in human living. For clarity, however, the most important

⁶² Aikin, op. cit., p. 506. It should be noted that the definition of inherent value in this passage, and others by the same author, differs slightly from that of Lewis. In this context, inherent aesthetic value means "a certain standard or 'normal' degree of satisfaction which is characteristic of a response to the public work of art. . . I attribute inherent value not to the conditions which produce the response, but to the response itself. . . [This] implies that on some occasions the inherent value of a work of art may more or less closely coincide with the immediate or intrinsic value of our encounter with it." (p. 503)

point is simply that inherent value is an objective property of the thing to which it is attributable, even though this property consists in the potentiality for conducing to experience of a certain kind -- as, indeed, other objective properties, like hardness or squareness, could also be construed.⁶³

There are two main types of extrinsic value to be found in objects, inherent value and instrumental value or utility. By far the majority of objects in our experience are of this latter type, for there are few things that are utterly useless, or good for nothing, so to speak. However, to be characterized as useful rather than inherently good, the object must be preponderantly useful, or good on the whole. Since most inherently good things are also useful, the occasions upon which a thing will be directly gratifying are few in number. Now, if we are to be concerned about these occasions at all, the inherent value must be of a high order. If this is so, then

Those things which are of little or no utility but still are accounted good by being especially reliable sources of direct gratification or affording gratification in a high degree, represent the class within which we must look for the peculiarly esthetic objects.⁶⁴

Lewis states that it would be pointless to seek any other characteristics of the aesthetic experience beyond the distinctions drawn here. There is no peculiar quality which labels the aesthetic experience and separates it from other non-aesthetic goods, unless the distinction is

. . . one of the degree of positive value-quality

⁶³ Lewis, op. cit., p. 434.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 436.

found in it, or one derivative from the prior distinction of esthetic objects from other inherently good things, or from the distinction of the esthetic attitude or orientation toward objects.⁶⁵

In addition,

. . . peculiarly esthetic things are subject to the moralistic consideration that they should be such as afford gratifications which are pure and the good of them enduring, and are spiritual in the sense of being non-competitive goods, the value of which is not divided by being shared.⁶⁶

On this account, the aesthetic judgment applies particularly to the concept of inherent value, rather than to immediate value. The criteria which must be used in determining the value of a work of art will be those which refer to the inherent values, and these must be judged. This is so because the immediate values in themselves are no sure indication of inherent aesthetic value since they may, like others of their kind, easily exhaust themselves and lead to dissatisfaction. While the sensitive critic or observer may receive immediate enjoyment from all works of art classed as "valuable" or "good," this immediately felt satisfaction is not the source of the value, but rather a by-product of it. The possibility still remains that some, due to defective capacities, may fail to perceive the inherent value and thus miss the accompanying enjoyment; or others, for the same reason, may regard their immediate feelings as evidence of aesthetic value, through some idiosyncrasy of taste. The judgment of aesthetic value, then has to do with evidence

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 437.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 456.

presented by the aesthetic object itself; and what is judged is the inherent value, values which are realizable in experience through presentation of the object and their potentialities for experienced enjoyment:

And if the esthetician's sixth sense of the enduring in art enables him to classify enjoyments as esthetic or non-esthetic by clues which are immediate and immediately affect his own enjoyments, still it remains true that it is not the immediate enjoyability but the signalized endurability of enjoyment which constitutes the sufficient criterion of genuine esthetic character in the experience. Such judgment is directly an assessment of esthetic quality in the object, and only indirectly of the genuine esthetic character of the experience.⁶⁷

Measurement of Aesthetic Value. This leads to one of the more important, and one of the most difficult problems in aesthetics. We should now wish to know the principles by which to distinguish that which is aesthetically valuable and that which is not so. We should like to discover the peculiar characteristics of aesthetic objects which, when present, make them objects of enduring enjoyment, and in virtue of which we term works of art "beautiful," "good" or "valuable."

It must be admitted that a direct answer to questions such as this is impossible at this time. It is customary to refer to principles of composition and design, and how they are applied to color, line, mass and tone in order to produce satisfying works of art. In addition, there have been attempts to measure aesthetic value which is thought to

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 465.

reside solely in the formal aspects of a work of art. One theory holds that

Many auditory and visual perceptions are accompanied by a certain intuitive feeling of value, which is clearly separable from sensuous, emotional, moral, or intellectual feeling.

.
Of primary significance for aesthetics is the fact that the objects belonging to a definite class admit of direct intuitive comparison with respect to aesthetic value. The artist and the connoisseur excel in their power to make discrimination of this kind.⁶⁸

In its simplest statement, the theory holds that the effort of attention which is necessary for the act of perception increases in proportion to the complexity (C) of the object, and that the object is characterized by a more or less concealed harmony, symmetry, or order (O). The aesthetic measure (M) of the object is the feeling of value which rewards the attention given to these two functions. The mathematical formulation of this proposition is given:

Within each class of aesthetic objects, to define the order O and the complexity C so that their ratio $M = O/C$ yields the aesthetic measure of any object of the class.⁶⁹

This theory is useful in determining the rank of aesthetic values among the more purely formal art objects, such as polygonal forms, vases, etc., but it is only of limited usefulness among the other fine arts due to their complexity and the almost insuperable difficulties involved in the application of the formula to any other than the most simple objects. The work is indicative, however, that various types

⁶⁸ G.D. Birkhoff, Aesthetic Measure (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933) p. 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

of arrangement and proportion are immediately satisfying in themselves, and reveals their importance as elementary aesthetic factors. The fact that the inherent aesthetic value of these simple forms can be computed may, however,

. . . easily lead to the fallacy of atomicity, that is, to the belief that a work of art is merely the sum of its parts, and that aesthetic response to the work as a whole is merely the sum of individual ingredients which can be isolated by analysis. They also tempt the investigator to conclude, often contrary to his own better judgment, that sheer obedience to the rules suggested by his own analytical investigations may suffice to produce real art.⁷⁰

Moreover, it would be possible to find many instances where the principles of order, harmony and symmetry, would be applicable to other phenomena utterly devoid of aesthetic value. This is one of the main inconsistencies common to objectivist theories. As Aiken points out,

Purely objectivistic theories have invariably been unable to provide an intelligible account of beauty or aesthetic value. Nor have they been able to define in clear and sufficient terms the difference between an aesthetic and a non-aesthetic object. Such so-called objective properties as unity, order or coherence, for example, may perhaps be necessary conditions of an aesthetic object, but they are never sufficient. It is always possible to give instances of unified, harmonious, or orderly objects which are quite devoid of aesthetic quality.⁷¹

Thus it is both very difficult and very risky to attempt a definition of aesthetic value which will enable one to locate the inherent values of art solely in the technical devices such as compositional structure. However, it cannot be denied that

⁷⁰ Greene, op. cit., p. 89.

⁷¹ H.D. Aiken, "Criteria for an Adequate Aesthetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. VII (December 1948) pp. 145-146.

these ingredients do play an important part in determining the total effect that a work of art may have upon the observer.

Summary. To conclude this chapter I propose to bring together the observations that have been made previously, in an attempt to construct what may be called a criterion of value, which will embody the most significant generalizations which can be made regarding aesthetic value.

Earlier in this chapter, it was decided to forsake the objectivist and subjectivist theories of aesthetic value, since the limiting fields of each did not seem adequate to the needs of aesthetic theory. The theory of the relativism of aesthetic values was not disposed of so readily, for its usefulness is somewhat greater. However, an unqualified acceptance of this view was also regarded as untenable. The consideration of aesthetic values as inherent and intrinsic is a more workable basis on the whole, since it may embody some of the views of each of the objectivist, subjectivist and relativist theories, without committing itself to the accompanying deficiencies. The concept of inherent values, however, when it is adapted to a positive science of aesthetics, is found wanting in that its appeal to the technical principles of art creation is not alone sufficient to explain the reasons why particular works of art, each with similar formal foundations and common subject matter, evoke different responses in different observers. Professor Aiken's attribution of the inherent value of art to the characteristic response of a certain normal degree of satisfaction, rather than to the

conditions which produce this response, is one attempt to avoid this difficulty. When inherent and intrinsic value coincide this may be completely true, but when the two aspects diverge the problem still remains as to how to determine the inherent value of a work of art.

The most that can be done at this time, I think, is to try to indicate the conditions under which inherent value may be realized, without recourse to an arbitrary listing of the technical principles at the disposal of the artist which are thought to be the cause of the aesthetic response. The respective roles of subject matter, form and content have been considered earlier, and do not need repeating here.

What we are to be concerned with is the effect on the individual of works of art described as having inherent value. The fundamental test of this value is

. . . that upon further experience with it under reasonably favorable conditions, it will "grow on us" in meaning and emotional significance; it will increase our capacity to cherish and appreciate it . . . the word "appreciate" is used here in the relevant sense as given in the dictionary; it means, to esteem, cherish, prize, hold dear. . . .⁷²

Good art, therefore, is that which causes growth in appreciation, while poor art does not; and short-lived excitement is not to be confused with this long-term growth. This situation is also confirmed by reference to musical tastes. It is an obvious fact that so-called popular music is popular because it appears to have intrinsic value; that is to say,

⁷² T.T. Lafferty, "Empiricism and Objective Relativism in Value Theory," Journal of Philosophy, XLVI, 149.

it seems to be the case that large numbers of people receive immediate pleasure or enjoyment upon hearing it. But what is equally evident is that the life-span of this type of music is extremely short. That this is due to satiety or fatigue in listening cannot be ignored, for the same situation may occur on repeated hearings of some greater classic. What is important is that its inherent value is low, or non-existent, which may be confirmed by reference to the qualified observer of at least "normal" sensibilities and capacities for judgment on this matter. In short, by means of some complex arrangement of qualities, which we have been unable to locate unquestionably so far, the superior type of art holds potentialities for future enjoyment, while the inferior one does not, and the fact that this type of art holds such potentialities will be verified by the judgments of competent, qualified observers and critics:

The criterion or test of value is stated as one which must appear in future experience. In other language, the test of a value is to live with it. Nevertheless, this more ultimate test is not always required. . . . After we have had considerable experience with good things of a certain type, we develop a more ready sensitivity which is sometimes called "good taste," a term too often degraded to the merely conventional. I mean, rather, an ability to decide more or less immediately how a thing would affect us upon further experience. This ability can be measured, in some cases at least. At any rate, the ability will not be absolute; it will be relative to the types of things with which we have had experience. For anything quite different, we must resort to further experience to note how it affects us. The art critic is no less in this predicament than the rest of us.⁷³

This increased ability may not be limited to the thing

⁷³ Ibid., p. 151.

itself, but may carry over into other fields, that is,

"values tend to sensitize us to other values."

This fact of mutual enhancement is, moreover, one of double significance. On the one hand, a value tends to sensitize us to other values, while, on the other, some degree of variety is required for fuller appreciation of any one of them.⁷⁴

This would seem to indicate that our apprehension of inherent value is not directed by any aesthetic sense of beauty or of value, but that the value-judgment is a function of our experiences in a particular field, or perhaps of those within the larger field of the arts generally.

A further observation may be made, namely, that the values of art are shareable. If, however, it is meant that the emotional response or the experienced enjoyment is shareable, they could not be regarded so, absolutely. While we have in common the capacity for emotional experience or enjoyment, the content of a specific emotional situation, e.g., the response to a work of art, is purely private and subjective. Moreover, the words we use to describe these emotional reactions are only indefinite and approximate descriptions of the feelings experienced.

There is one implication of the view of the sharability of aesthetic value which must be avoided. Some theorists, notably Tolstoy, recognizing the universal appeal of works of art and its social nature, have gone to the extreme of locating the primary importance of art in its communication of

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

emotion. What must be rejected is the identification of value with emotion, although an emotional state may be involved in a large number of circumstances, if not all. In addition, it is questionable whether the intention of the artist is, in fact, an attempt to induce an emotional state in the observer of his work. Communication of attitudes, it may be granted, seems to be an important factor in some types of art, but this value, if it can be called that, is rather instrumental, and therefore not peculiarly aesthetic. There may be any number of reasons prompting the artistic creation, such as the desire to create beauty, the desire for prestige, a place in society or immortality, etc., none of which reveal any intention to communicate ideas or emotions.⁷⁵

As Lewis points out, the positive science of aesthetics remains largely undeveloped. The only content of such theories of which we may be assured are the various "principles of composition" and so forth, that exist for the various arts, and are fairly well attested. But as to how these principles should be formulated in order to offer specific definitions of what constitutes the inherent values of art, there is little agreement, due for the most part to the complexity and diversity concerning aesthetic objects. The most that can be said, however, concerning aesthetic value, is that in all objects described as being aesthetically valuable,

. . . this value of them depends upon a complexus of properties constituting an esthetic essence, in some

⁷⁵ K.E. Rosinger, "What Shall We Look for in Art?" Journal of Philosophy, XXXIV, 309 ff.

part literally embodied, or capable of being embodied, in some physical thing which is the instrument of presentation, and in some part belonging to a context of this object, which is associated with it in some manner which is not subjective merely. Whatever the nature of this entity which is direct object of the esthetic judgment, this esthetic essence by reason of which it has or lacks esthetic value, is an abstract entity. This kind of abstraction thus represents the basic category of esthetics.⁷⁶

I think that it is legitimate to identify the terms "good" and "valuable" with one another for the purposes of locating aesthetic value. That is to say, the examples of art we describe as "good" are those in which the inherent aesthetic value is of a high order. The same identification, however, cannot be made between the terms "beauty" and "valuable," for while all types of art which evoke a response such that the aesthetic object is termed "beautiful" are valuable, it is not always the case that objects having inherent aesthetic value are beautiful. That many aesthetic theories seem to maintain this identification is due to the fact that they regard "beauty" and "pleasure" as synonymous terms. But because of the various interpretations which may be put upon the usage of these terms, which is in a large measure arbitrary, their usefulness is only of a limited nature. The reservation of the term beauty to apply to but one species of aesthetic value, used to describe aesthetic objects in virtue of their capacity to evoke only a small section of the total possible range of aesthetic response, must be maintained.

⁷⁶ Lewis, op. cit., p. 478.

Criteria of Inherent Aesthetic Value. Taking into account all the distinctions which have been made, I think that the position has been reached where it is possible to make a generalization regarding the criteria of inherent aesthetic value. Under the limitations, the most that can be said is as follows: A work of art may be said to have inherent aesthetic value only in so far as it would provide intrinsic or immediate enjoyment of a more or less enduring nature, or reveal potentialities for future experienced enjoyment in aesthetic contemplation, to an observer of at least normal capacities and sensibilities, under circumstances favorable to this response. A work of art corresponding to these requirements, and apprehended under these conditions could, therefore, be called "good," and in some cases, but not all, "beautiful." Stated in more formal terminology, X is good, or inherently valuable, in virtue of its capacity to produce (immediately or potentially) in contemplator Y, under circumstances Z, and enduring experience of aesthetic enjoyment or satisfaction (intrinsic value).

The concept of inherent aesthetic value is necessary in order to show that the value in a work of art can be "objective" without implying that the value is independent of the immediately felt satisfactions of the experiencing subject. It is also necessary in order to demonstrate that mistaken disagreements on the value of works of art are due to errors in reporting immediately felt satisfactions. Thus aesthetic judgments may be correct or incorrect, and there is no need

to assume that the opinions of the majority are right.

The qualified observer is necessary to the idea of inherent value, and the more or less subjective conditions peculiar to the normal person become relevant only when they are fairly pervasive. This means that it is not necessary to suppose that only one universal canon of inherent value exists, for

. . . there will have to be as many different conceptions of the inherent value of a work of art as there are fundamentally different types of limiting conditions affecting the characteristic responses of considerable numbers of individuals.

Such conditions vary, to a greater or less degree, from culture to culture and from psychological type to psychological type. Moreover . . . works of art resemble constitutions in the sense that, despite continuous and common centers of significance and value, they are constantly acquiring and losing levels of meaning and interest for the successive generations of men even within the same culture.⁷⁷

For this reason, therefore, every age and culture will have to determine its own order of inherent values among works of art. This will probably not differ absolutely from that of the age which precedes it. And some works will obviously vary more from age to age than others. The fact remains, however, that the conditioned subjective contexts which determine the perceptual content of any aesthetic work of art vary enormously from culture to culture and epoch to epoch. And because of this, there cannot be any single or final determination of the inherent value of any work of art.⁷⁸

Confirmation of this view may be obtained by reference to the writings of social and cultural anthropologists. According to one theory, the arts have passed through two stages, the first characterized by a non-aesthetic estimation

⁷⁷ Aiken, Journal of Philosophy, op. cit., p. 507.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 509.

of goodness or value. In this stage, all art creations were produced, not for the sake of art or beauty, but for the sake of religion, morals, patriotism, etc., and other non-aesthetic ends. This period is identified as being that in Greece up to the fourth century B.C., and in Europe up to the Renaissance. The second stage is concerned primarily with the creation of beauty and other purely aesthetic values, and it is here that art connoisseurship, collecting and criticism make their appearance. These two stages are called the Idealistic and the Sensate, and their dissimilarity is marked by the fact that

. . . Idealistic art is almost always both a self-sufficient value created for its own sake, and a means to express, to manifest, to convey, to teach, to propagate the ideal and its values, which lie outside art. Such an art is rarely art for art's sake, but almost always a partner or companion, sometimes a handmaid of religion, moral and civic virtue, or of other values of a non-aesthetic character. . .

The Visual (Sensate) art tends to be an art for art's sake so far as it does not tend to be a means to express anything except itself. It sees its main purpose and objectives in its reflection of the empirical reality as accurately as may be. It therefore is often associated with "aestheticism" in a particular sense, with that period in art history when art for art's sake appears, with its crowds of aesthetes, connoisseurs, collectors, professional critics, theorizers of beauty, professional artists who want to be artistic and nothing more.⁷⁹

The true difference between the Sensate and the Ideational forms of art consists in the fact that they serve quite different masters,

. . . one to hedonism, to emotions and sensations;

⁷⁹ P.A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, vol. I, Fluctuations in the Forms of Art, (New York: American Book Company, 1937) p. 257.

the other to the Ideational and Idealistic values of religion, morals, civics, science, philosophy, etc. One is divorced from the duty of fostering Ideational values but is inevitably bound to the gratification of the senses; the other is inseparably united with the Ideational, but escapes becoming the "plaything" of sensations and emotions.⁸⁰

The revolt against the purely Sensate values has occurred in comparatively recent times in Tolstoy's attack on contemporary literature, art and criticism generally; and together with the reaction of other critical trends, seems to be indicative of a crisis in purely Sensate art and criticism.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 670.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICISM

1. Preliminary Distinctions.

To close this discussion, I propose to consider one further matter which has so far been ignored, but which is actually a logical extension of the previous survey of aesthetic theory. The subject now at hand is that of criticism in art, or the critical aesthetic judgment. If any theory of aesthetics is to prove satisfactory, it must be so constructed that its various observations shall be capable of being applied in some way. In so far as aesthetic theory is concerned with a description of the aesthetic experience and the standards or criteria of aesthetic evaluation, then the principles evolved should be practically applicable to a theory of criticism. It is for this reason, then, that a discussion of the nature of criticism should follow and complete a survey of aesthetic contemplation and aesthetic judgment. This discussion may be brief, for much of what has been said may be applied to the consideration of the critical aesthetic judgment. For the sake of clarity, however, the relevant observations will have to be restated in a new form, which will make evident their connection with this discussion on criticism.

There are two factors about the aesthetic experience

which would seem to render the critical attitude -- one of comparison and classification -- a difficult one to sustain. There is, first of all, the uniqueness of each aesthetic experience. As an expression on the part of the personality and interests of each artist, each work of art will differ, if only in degree, from all others of its kind. In order to appreciate each work fully, it must be appreciated singly, without thought of others. This leads to a second difficulty, namely, the necessity of a complete absorption in the presented content on its own account, and an abandonment of "self-consciousness" on the part of the spectator or critic.

However, these objections are not entirely relevant to the critical aesthetic judgment.¹ As a matter of fact, it is only by throwing ourselves open to the advent of feeling, and becoming absorbed in the content of a great number of works of art of all kinds that we begin to formulate standards of taste and criticism. The delight or satisfaction experienced in the presence of a good work of art is, in part, determined by the measure of accordance that the given work might have with certain expectations aroused in the mind by reference to other aesthetic works of a similar kind. It is, of course, necessary that these expectations be satisfied by a high degree of inherent value in the work under consideration, if the judgment is to be favorable. Thus criticism cannot rest completely on the contemplative level, for recollection, comparison and evaluation each have an important

¹ Parker, op. cit., pp. 106 ff.

role in the formation of critical judgments.

For this reason, it is not difficult to explain the wide disagreements regarding the value or disvalue of examples of contemporary or "modern" non-representational art. Most spectators, and not a few critics, are insufficiently acquainted with the newer styles and techniques to enable them to evaluate adequately the content of this type of art:

It is impossible, therefore, not to compare works of art one with another. We will concede to the impressionist that anything which anybody finds beautiful is beautiful momentarily; but we must insist on the everyday fact that, because of the operation of the standard as a result of growing experience in art, what once seemed beautiful often ceases to seem so. And we must also insist that among the things surviving as beautiful we inevitably set up a hierarchy, a scale. A plurality of values, each unique and in its own way indispensable to a complete world of values, is not inconsistent with relations of higher and lower among them.²

I do not propose to embark upon a discussion concerning the proper domain of the critic here. It may be the case that the critic, in addition to analyzing the aesthetic qualities of art, may also have a function which is variously informational, interpretative and stimulative. His primary function, however, is to criticize and to analyze works of art in order to locate their aesthetic value by reference to certain standards, principles or criteria. Norman Foerster, himself a critic, reveals this particular aspect of the critic's interest:

The critic is interested, like the artist, in technique, the process of making, but especially he is

² Ibid., p. 108.

interested in structure, the esthetic properties of the thing made, its architectonic features such as unity, balance, emphasis, rhythm, and the like, the shapely pattern resulting when all the materials, that is, the emotions, sense perceptions, images, allusions, ideas, ethical insights, have been brought into more or less complete interplay and fulness of tension. . . . The critic thus has esthetic exaltations, satisfactions, annoyances, boredoms, which it is his business, as a rational judge, to justify in terms of the esthetic qualities of the works themselves.³

2. Standards of Criticism.

In the appraisal of aesthetic works of art it is essential that the critic should have clearly in mind a set of standards or principles on which to base his evaluations. The usefulness of his pronouncements will depend, to a great extent, upon the care with which he defines his attitude to such problems as the importance of the artistic medium, the role of the subject matter, the relation of form and content, and so on. If agreement on the nature of the various criteria can be once established, then

. . . judgments can be made which will indeed be "relatively objective" -- relative in that they depend upon deliberately chosen standards, objective to the extent that they can be empirically checked with these by the trained critical expert.⁴

If one critic, for example, judges art according to what he believes the purpose or intent of the artist to be, and another evaluates on the basis of "expressiveness" or feeling-import only, then disagreements cannot hope to be resolved.

³ D.A. Stauffer, (ed.), The Intent of the Critic, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941) pp. 69-70.

⁴ Hospers, op. cit., p. 128.

Critical standards should therefore measure up to certain requirements. Of these, the two most important are that they should be both derivative and tentative:

They are derivative in that they result from human choice and are, therefore, merely codified judgments of expert critics. Moreover they are derived by induction from concrete situations to which they should never be regarded as external. . . . Therefore they are subject to constant revision or extension, so that our aim should be not only to apply our chosen criteria but equally and constantly to test them by our appraisals. If a theory does not support a penetrating and carefully considered insight, by all means modify the theory rather than distort evaluations in order to fit them into a predetermined hypothesis.⁵

Keeping these requirements in mind, it is possible to formulate a few of the most general principles of critical aesthetic judgment which may apply to all the arts.

The first of these is the complete utilization of the expressive potentialities of the artistic medium. While many writers do not state this point in exactly the same manner, they are all, without exception, in agreement here:

As between a highly integrated jewel box, however, and a poorly integrated cathedral with a lot of scattered charm, which is the better? . . . You already have the aesthetic judgment when you have seen that the one object utilized its small amount of aesthetic material to the greatest advantage, and the other has failed to make the most of the large amount of positive aesthetic values that it has.⁶

. . . artistic quality is always a function of the success with which artistic form is adapted to artistic intent. It is a characteristic of the work of art as a whole, not merely of its formal pattern as such.⁷

⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

⁶ Pepper, Basis of Criticism in the Arts, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

⁷ Greene, op. cit., p. 390.

By effective exploitation of the artistic medium is meant the full realization of both the potentialities and the limitations of the medium. Artists who do not make the fullest possible use of their materials are both feeble and incompetent, as opposed to those greater members of their kind whose talent enables them to select, in some specific way, that portion of the materials at hand which will be at once both economical and effective. On the other hand, over-exploitation of the medium -- the lack of recognition of expressive limitations -- may be much more common, and usually consists in a technical manipulation of the medium for its own sake. Program music which attempts to imitate natural sounds, and excessive abstraction in sculpture and painting are examples of arts which, in many cases, exceed the limitations of their media.⁸ Here, as in the application of other standards, only the cultivated aesthetic perception is qualified to discriminate between what is good and what is either deficient or excessive.

Closely connected with this effective use of the medium is the criterion of unique use of the material or subject matter:

We do not want poetry to be merely imagistic or merely musical when we have another art that can give us much better pictures and still another that can give us much better music than any word-painting or word-music. When we read a poem, we do not want to be made to think how much better the same thing could be done in a different medium.⁹

This standard of the unique use of the material may be taken

⁸ Ibid., pp. 407 ff.

⁹ Parker, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

as an implication of the one given above, namely, the complete use of the medium; for as Greene points out, "artistic quality is a function of the specific form of a work of art . . ."¹⁰ The criterion is not merely the artist's faithful obedience to the specific techniques and principles of his art,

. . . but rather the artistic vitality and perfection of the specific form of the work of art as a unique composition. Since every work of art is a unique solution to a unique problem, the critic must ask: How successfully has the artist solved his particular problem in this particular work of art? How appropriate is this specific form to the artist's specific intent? In this sense every critical judgment recording an appraisal of artistic quality is necessarily a singular judgment.¹¹

A third standard, according to Parker, is

. . . The perfect use of the medium in the effort to fulfill the artistic purpose of sympathetic representation -- the power to delight the sense and create sympathy for the feeling expressed, on the one hand, and the range of vision, on the other; the depth and the breadth of the aesthetic experience.¹²

Here the measure of the success of the work of art is the degree to which it evokes in the observer the feelings, emotions, and activity of the imagination which accompany the contemplative attitude. As I have pointed out in the earlier chapters, it is not possible to define, with any degree of exactness, the various ways in which art may accomplish this, but the competent observer and critic will be able to identify these qualities when they are present.

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 391.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Op. cit., p. 111.

At least one of the ways in which good art is recognized is by the qualities of uniqueness, freshness or spontaneity, as opposed to purposeless originality or novelty. What is required of the artist in this case is that either he shall have new themes to express in his medium, or that he shall be able to devise new forms in which to express old themes. Greene identifies this "significant originality" as "an Aristotelian mean between sheer order or convention and sheer novelty or emergent difference."¹³

Finally, reference can be made to additional standards, which may be said to apply to good, if not great, art. These standards are called profundity, magnitude, intensity, and depth and breadth of meaning:

Great art has profundity, by which we mean that there are layers of aesthetic meaning, not independent of one another, but so interlaced that we may be fully aware of some of them and only dimly and opaquely aware of others. Great art has scope, by which we mean that it encompasses as magnitude of vision not found in more simple and direct works of art. Finally, great art has intensity, by which we mean that its dramatic character reaches a pitch and climax unattainable in everyday expressions.¹⁴

Greene has made a similar observation on the criterion of artistic greatness, using "profound" and "profundity" as synonyms for "great" and "greatness":

The profundity of any artistic interpretation and evaluation must, in turn, be regarded as a function of the "depth" and the "breadth" we predicate of the artist's normative insight. The depth of his insight is

¹³ Op. cit., p. 406.

¹⁴ Morris, op. cit., p. 181.

proportionate to the adequacy with which he comprehends the nature and human import of any subject-matter, however limited, from any specific point of view, however restricted. Its breadth is proportionate to the scope of the subject-matter surveyed and to the catholicity of the agent's normative outlook. The greatness of a work of art can be determined only by reference to both of these complementary criteria.¹⁵

The fact that such criteria are used constantly by competent judges may be evidenced by a reference to an essay by the music critic Virgil Thomson, entitled, "The Art of Judging Music":

In order to make a fair judgment from only the first stage of acquaintance, either from hearing or reading, everybody is obliged to have recourse to the aid of clues and clinical signs. The clinical signs of musical quality are (1) a certain strangeness in the musical texture; (2) the ability of a work to hold one's attention; (3) one's ability to remember it vividly; (4) the presence of technical invention, such as novelty of rhythm, of contrapuntal, harmonic, melodic or instrumental device. The pattern that a score makes on a page can be enticing, too, even before one starts to read it. In the matter of attention, it is not germane that one should be either delighted or annoyed. What counts is whether one is impelled to go on listening.

It is necessary to keep wary, too, and to examine one's mind for possible failure to make cardinal distinctions. These are (1) design versus execution, or the piece itself as distinct from its presentation; (2) the expressive power of the work as distinguished from its formal musical interest; (3) a convincing emotional effect versus a meretricious one. One must ask oneself always, "Have I heard a pretty piece or just some pretty playing?" "Has an abstruse work been obscured by the more facile character of its neighbors on the program?" "Have I been listening to sentiment or brilliance, counterpoint or profundity?" "Have I been moved or merely impressed?"¹⁶

It is on these criteria that most evaluations of great

¹⁵ Op. cit., pp. 463-464.

¹⁶ R.F. French (ed.), Music and Criticism, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948) pp. 108-109.

art are seen to rest. What most critics mean by "treatment" or "interpretation" is essentially the same as what Greene means by "depth" and "breadth." It is obvious, from what has been said, that the choice of subject matter will not of itself determine the degree of profundity or triviality, rather it is only the effective or significant interpretation of subject matter in the artistic medium which can contribute to artistic greatness:

Now every specific work of art offers some specific interpretation, via artistic form, of a specific subject-matter, and expresses an individual normative attitude in a specific way. This factor of individuality is absolutely essential, as we have seen, to all artistic achievement. None the less, the greatness of art is primarily a function of the generic type of interpretation which underlies any specific interpretation, and of the generic attitude of which the specific attitude recorded in any particular work of art is merely a specific variant. It is always the universal shining through the particular which constitutes the greatness of art. But since human experience takes various forms, and since men adopt various generic attitudes, different works of art which express very different generic attitudes and interpretations of the same or different subjects may be judged by the critic to be equally great.¹⁷

As a postscript to this chapter I think it is necessary to state some of the characteristics of that hypothetical personage who has been referred to so often. I refer, of course, to the "competent critic" or "qualified observer." The following quotation is as complete a description of this person that can be found:

I suggest that the more skilful the critic, the more completely will he possess and use the six following qualifications: (1) a natural sensitiveness to the aims of the artist and to the qualities of the works he

¹⁷ Greene, op. cit., pp. 475-476.

is judging; (ii) a trained observation resulting from wide and varied experience with the kind of art he is considering; (iii) sufficient cultural (i.e., historical, religious, social, political, iconographic, and so forth) equipment to enable him to understand the objects of his criticism; (iv) a reflective power which will allow him to detect and hence to take into consideration personal eccentricities in his preferences, and by means of which he will analyze, weigh, and balance the effects which artistic creations make upon him; (v) a degree of normality, as opposed to eccentricity, which will make his range of experience sufficiently central to be available for participation by others; and (vi) a critical system which will present a satisfactory basis for artistic evaluations.¹⁸

The "competent critic" and the "qualified observer" will differ only in the degree to which they measure up to these ideal qualifications. As for the ordinary consumers of works of art, the basic requirement is that they should possess at least a normal sensitivity and capacity for the apprehension of works of art which will enable them to participate in the aesthetic experience of the critic, if only to a lesser degree. Then education and enlightenment can make a definite contribution toward a more complete understanding and appreciation of works of art.

¹⁸ Heyl, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It will now be profitable to bring together in summarized form the most important observations and conclusions which have been made at various points in the preceding chapters.

The basis for the organization of the material presented here has rested on the distinction, made by Ducasse, between the receptive and the judgmental attitudes; hence the major division of the essay into discussions on aesthetic contemplation and aesthetic judgment. The aim of the chapter entitled "Aesthetic Contemplation" was to offer a description of the nature of the mental processes which occur in the apprehension of works of art. The contemplation of aesthetic objects, as I have tried to indicate, consists in an attitude of receptiveness which may be described as both active and disinterested, non-practical, presupposing a content of attention, not conducive to overt action, free from ulterior interests or ends, and a detached absorption in the presented content. With regard to the nature of the feelings experienced in the apprehension of works of art, the chief obstacle in classifying the various sensations, emotions and moods lies in the difficulties surrounding the attempt of personal introspection to describe accurately the feelings experienced. Moreover, another main

drawback is that the precise nature of the psychological mechanism through which these feelings are aroused is not at all clear. It may be the case that art may duplicate, in a smaller degree, some of the feelings experienced in every day life, but what is more likely is that art may arouse in the observer some feelings, emotions or moods -- some writers have called them "aesthetic emotions" -- not common to every day experience, and which therefore are not capable of being described in words with any measure of exactness. In any case, the number, variety and complexity of the impulses, feelings and emotions fused in the aesthetic experience are so great as almost to defy analysis. Similar objections can be advanced against the use of the word "pleasure" to describe the aesthetic enjoyment of works of art. In order to avoid inconsistencies in the use of this term, its meaning either should be expanded beyond common usage to cover all fields of aesthetic experience -- a remedy which is impractical -- or confined to a description of some instances of aesthetic contemplation in which a particular kind of pleasure is experienced. Since the meaning of this "aesthetic pleasure" is so limited it would be better if the term could be dispensed with altogether. Such terms as "enjoyment" or "felt satisfaction," although not completely adequate in themselves, are not subject to the peculiar limitations surrounding the use of the word "pleasure."

Taken together, the judgmental and critical attitudes comprise the second chief aspect of the aesthetic experience.

By aesthetic judgment is meant any evaluation or appraisal which identifies or describes actual or potential values or satisfactions which are realized in the apprehension of aesthetic objects.¹ The critical aspect of aesthetic judgment is arrived at by the formulation of many singular judgments into a scale or hierarchy of values by which we compare the merits and faults of various works of art one with another. Aesthetic judgment and criticism, while involving aesthetic contemplation, differ from it by reason of the fact that they employ recollection, evaluation and comparison in the process of stating the grounds for their decisions.

A large part of this study has been concerned with the questions "What are aesthetic values?" and "What is the nature of them?" Some part of the discussion has been devoted to an analysis of the usage of "beauty," which is one form of aesthetic value, in order to correct the misconceptions surrounding the casual usage of the term. Here again, the term lacks accuracy in its widespread application. Accordingly, we cannot conceive of beauty as being the only or the highest form of aesthetic value, for other values of a similar kind may simply not be capable of being described verbally with any degree of precision.

The remainder of the chapter "Aesthetic Judgment" has been purely analytical. It has attempted to find a satisfactory systematic classification of the aesthetic values.

¹ Adapted from H.D. Aiken, "Evaluation and Obligation: Two Functions of Judgments in the Language of Conduct." Journal of Philosophy, XLVII (Jan. 5, 1950), 8.

On account of the various deficiencies and limitations accompanying the unqualified acceptance of any one of the theories of objectivism, subjectivism or relativism, another classification, involving the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic values, was examined. As far as aesthetic theory is concerned, the most important distinction is between intrinsic value, which is immediate, and inherent value, which is a species of extrinsic value.

In attempting to locate intrinsic value, which is the basis of aesthetic judgment, the closest approach possible in terms of language is to words such as "felt satisfaction," "experienced goodness" or "enjoyment." But because of the complexity of the aesthetic experience, and because of the variations in subjective response which are attributable to other factors complicating aesthetic appreciation, this form of judgment is most subject to error. This requires the postulation, for theoretical purposes, of the "qualified observer" of at least normal sensibilities and capacities.

Inherent value in aesthetic objects, on the other hand, consists in their potentiality for producing "experienced satisfaction" or intrinsic value. Beauty is a case of inherent value, for when we say "X is beautiful," we state, if only implicitly, its potentialities for producing in others, as well as ourselves, an intrinsically satisfying aesthetic experience, when beheld under the appropriate conditions. This concept of inherent value holds important implications for a theory of criticism. If inherent value in aesthetic objects

did not have an independent status, the training and education which attempts to indicate the artistic qualities thought to be the cause of the satisfying experience would be pointless. Therefore the criteria of good art depend on inherent value, which must be judged rather than merely felt. It was pointed out that any attempt to locate inherent value solely in the formal qualities or technical devices of art is doomed to failure, for the aspects of form and content can be separated for theoretical purposes only. The most that can be done is to supply a criterion of the conditions under which inherent aesthetic value may be judged to be present, namely, that the work of art in question be of such a nature that it would provide, in aesthetic contemplation, immediate or potential enjoyment of a more or less enduring nature to an observer of at least normal sensitivity under favorable conditions.

To round out the discussion I have referred to some of the general principles or standards which are thought by critics to contribute to the inherent values of art. The way in which these principles are applied and the limitations surrounding their use, add further corroboration to the argument of the futility of a practical separation of the form from the content of art for the purposes of locating aesthetic value.

The chief difficulties which beset the formulation of a completely adequate theory of aesthetics at this time seem to be resolvable into those which are of a psychological

nature, and those which are philosophical. The psychological ones, such as the inadequacy of theories of emotional response, and so on, have already been examined and need not be repeated here. One of the philosophical questions, however has to do with the perplexing problem of the meaning of aesthetic terms. It cannot be said that one "true," "correct" or "ultimate" meaning for these terms exists, for between the symbols (words) and things symbolized (the various aesthetic experiences, values, etc.) there exists a gap which is even widened by the great number of confusing definitions and descriptions of the basic aesthetic terms. The term "beauty," for example, may be held to refer to a quality of a thing according to one theory, and to mental activity or psychological reaction according to another. In a recent account of this situation Heyl says:

Terms like "beauty," "art," "esthetics," "judgment," "value," "quality," and so forth have never stood for specific referents, but have rather been a part of a series of contexts, the meanings of which are constantly shifting to a greater or smaller degree. . . . Thus [beauty] and all similar words have a peculiarly flexible and variable nature, and the sense of such words are even less pinned to specific referents than are those of other sorts of words. In short: variation in the meanings of esthetic and critical terms is the rule, not the exception.²

Rather than trying to glean some useful meaning from the multiple definitions of aesthetic terms, and thus becoming inextricably involved in confusing and irrelevant material, it is much more satisfactory to devise volitional definitions to describe aesthetic objects and situations. A working

² Op. cit., pp. 8-9.

agreement is reached when we say

"Let us agree that by 'art' we will mean such and such." In this procedure, which contrasts with those of making both dictionary and real definitions, we are primarily giving words meaning, not searching for meanings in them.³

Once agreement is reached on these preliminary verbal matters the problems at hand are greatly simplified, and the philosophical analysis of the contemplation and judgment of works of art can proceed with greater clarity. Provided that analysis does not overlook or ignore the integrated unity of works of art, it can contribute much toward the development of discriminating perception, which, in turn, may lead to a deeper understanding of the nature of art and the aesthetic experience.

³ Ibid., p. 13.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

- Alexander, S., Beauty and Other Forms of Value. London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1933. 305 pp.
- Bartlett, E.M., Types of Aesthetic Judgment. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1937. 241 pp.
- Birkhoff, George D., Aesthetic Measure. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933. 226 pp.
- Chandler, A.R., Beauty and Human Nature. New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1934. 381 pp.
- Ducasse, Curt John, The Philosophy of Art. New York: The Dial Press, 1929. 314 pp.
- Feibleman, James K., Aesthetics. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949. 463 pp.
- French, Richard F., editor, Music and Criticism. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948. 181 pp.
- Greene, Theodore Meyer, The Arts and the Art of Criticism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947. 690 pp.
- Hart, Samuel L., Treatise on Values. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949. 165 pp.
- Heyl, Bernard C., New Bearings in Esthetics and Art Criticism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943. 172 pp.
- Hospers, John, Meaning and Truth in the Arts. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946. 252 pp.
- Johnson, Martin, Art and Scientific Thought. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1944. 192 pp.
- Konvitz, Milton R., On the Nature of Value: The Philosophy of Samuel Alexander. Morningside Heights, New York: King's Crown Press, 1946. 119 pp.
- Lewis, Clarence Irving, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation. LaSalle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1946. 567 pp.
- Morris, Bertram, The Aesthetic Process. Northwestern University Studies in the Humanities, Number Eight. Bloomington, Illinois: The Pantagraph Press, 1943. 189 pp.
- Munro, Thomas, The Arts and Their Interrelations. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949. 559 pp.

Nahm, Milton C., Aesthetic Experience and Its Presuppositions.
New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946. 554 pp.

Ogden, Robert Morris, The Psychology of Art. New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938. 291 pp.

Pepper, Stephen C., The Basis of Criticism in the Arts.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945. 177 pp.

_____, Principles of Art Appreciation. New York: Harcourt,
Brace and Company, 1949. 326 pp.

Prall, D.W., Aesthetic Judgment. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell
Company, 1929. 378 pp.

Rader, Melvin M., editor, A Modern Book of Esthetics. New
York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935. 504 pp.

Richards, I.A., Principles of Literary Criticism. London:
Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1928. 298 pp.

Santayana, George, The Sense of Beauty. New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1896. 210 pp.

Schoen, Max, The Psychology of Music. New York: The Ronald
Press Company, 1940. 258 pp.

_____, editor, The Enjoyment of the Arts. New York:
Philosophical Library, 1944. 336pp.

_____, editor, The Effects of Music. London: Kegan Paul,
Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1927. 273 pp.

Sorokin, Pitrim A., Social and Cultural Dynamics, Vol. I,
Fluctuations in the Forms of Art. New York: American
Book Company, 1937. 745 pp.

Stauffer, Donald A., editor, The Intent of the Critic.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941. 147 pp.

B. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Aiken, Henry David, "A Pluralistic Analysis of Aesthetic
Value," Philosophical Review, LIX (October, 1950),
493-513.

_____, "Criteria for an Adequate Aesthetics," Journal of
Aesthetics and Art Criticism, VII (December, 1948),
141-148.

- _____, "Evaluation and Obligation: Two Functions of Judgments in the Language of Conduct," Journal of Philosophy, XLVII (January 5, 1950), 5-22.
- Brown, S.M., "C.I. Lewis's Esthetics," Journal of Philosophy, XLVII (March 16, 1950), 141-150.
- Garvin, L., "Relativism in Professor Lewis's Theory of Esthetic Value," Journal of Philosophy, XLVI (March 31, 1949), 169-176.
- Lafferty, T.T., "Empiricism and Objective Relativism in Value Theory," Journal of Philosophy, XLVI (March 17, 1949), 141-155.
- Rosinger, K.E., "What Shall We Look for in Art?" Journal of Philosophy, XXXIV (June 10, 1937), 309-322.

C. ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

- Alexander, S., "Qualities," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th edition, XVIII, 810-813.
- Urban, W.M., "Value, Theory of," Encyclopaedia Britannica, edition, XXII, 961-963.