

RECENT AESTHETIC THEORY:

A SHORT SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is not to include all theories of aesthetics, nor to present every recent judgmental analysis of artistic worth, nor is it to terminate the endless search for better systems or criteria for determining aesthetic excellence. It is, rather, merely to present and examine views of some philosophers on the basic problem of how one is to ascertain the aesthetic merit of a work of art.

Some questions to be considered are:

- (1) The meaning of beauty - aesthetic (quality) value or what is pleasing.
- (2) Does the "beautiful" have more aesthetic value than the "ugly"?
- (3) Is this the way one determines how "great" a work of art is?
- (4) Can a work of art be great and ugly at the same time?
- (5) How does one determine what are the criteria that must be fulfilled in order that a work of art be considered great?

Once these criteria are determined how does one establish to what degree an art object fulfills them?

It will be a presupposition of all that follows here that an art object is in some sense an expression of an individual's feeling about the world, and that an aesthetic experience is, or at least involves, an attempt to feel what the artist intended the completed art object to produce in the observer.

The most natural classification of aesthetic value theories is the division: subjectivist and objectivist. A remark such as "An object is beautiful because I like it" or "I don't enjoy it therefore it is not

beautiful," is plainly subjective in nature. Many subjectivist accounts are more complex and sophisticated than this, but all proponents of this point of view hold that the relationship between the art object and the observer, not the qualities of the object itself, constitutes whether or not a thing is of aesthetic value.

The objectivist theory is of course radically different. Objectivists hold that the aesthetic value of a work of art somehow belongs to the work itself quite independently of the fact that one, many, or all observers like or dislike it. The enjoyment of a work of art may be a result of its value, but it is not what constitutes its value.

The case for each of these theories will now be considered in turn.

CHAPTER I

Some Proponents of Subjective Values

The early beginnings of the subjectivist point of view have been traced by Maurice DeWulf in his book Art and Beauty to the Einfeldung school in Germany around the 18th century. Einfeldung is a

projection of our feelings into the objects surrounding us, a gift of ourselves by which we pour our very being, all palpitating with sentimental tension and livid emotion, into the being of other things from which results a sympathetic union between ourselves and the object. ¹

This sentimental autoprojection, supported by Lotze has been analyzed into three elements: (1) while contemplating a work of art there is an increase of emotional tension which depends upon sensible contact; (2) the sensation becomes aesthetic only when it is coupled with an outward sharing of that which is experienced within oneself; one feels the forces

which in reality originate from oneself since there are only transformations of one's being; (3) fulfillment is found in the sympathetic contemplation of the art object which has in some manner become united with oneself so that one identifies with the object which has become a part of one's being.² This Germanic subjectivism supports a type of sympathetic aesthetics in which the art object entices or enhances our present feelings, whatever they may be. In other words at one time we may find in a work of art expressions of happiness while we ourselves are in a joyous state, upon another occasion while we are in a dejected mood we can find in the identical object expressions of sadness or remorse. This is one basic criticism of the aesthetic of sympathy in which beauty is reduced to a state of consciousness which is most changeable - our emotions. This theory of "autoprojection" assigns to one's feelings the perfection of form in any artistic object. The theory of the *Einfühlung* denies to beauty any permanence or stability, for what is beautiful today may be ugly tomorrow according to the sentiment of the contemplator; so says the subjectivist-relativist.³

Another subjectivist school, that of the 'sociological aestheticians,' holds that social values are determinative of the works of art. This brand of subjectivism sees the statement: "This picture is beautiful," as a judgment merely concerning a reflection on collective life and nothing else. Here value is connected with the idea of utility which is drawn out of the object by the observer. Also, in this case one or many individuals may maintain identical or different values in art criticism. Charles Lalo, defender of this sociological aesthetic, points out that it is not the individual but rather the social value by which a work of art

is deemed to beautiful. This seems to mean that the merit of a work of art is measured by the public. Aesthetic appreciation is possible only when the work of art is enjoyed by a group, the society, as opposed to the limited and confined delight of an individual. Furthermore, "there is no art without value, as in fact, there is no value which is not social."⁴

Therefore if one should wish to know the aesthetic value of a certain work of art, one must merely find out what judgment one's contemporaries have made of it. For the popular commendation or condemnation is the sole criterion of beauty. If the sovereignty of the audience is the sole dictator of artistic worth found in an art object as Charles Lalo says, it seems to follow that the group does not enjoy the object because the object is beautiful; rather the work is beautiful because the group enjoys it. Lalo writes: "aesthetic value is glory and admiration."⁵

It is technique which is the standard of the collectivity that decides the merit of a human artistic creation. This artistic norm evolves in conjunction with the consciousness of society, deriving its signification under the influence of consciousness of the present society. And according to Lalo, "the aesthetic conscience dictates a law of beauty from its tendencies and tastes; and consent of a notable group creates the social commandments." Societal sanction with regard to art suggests or rather demands a certain perspective while examining a work of art; this is what he calls the normative side of aesthetics.⁶ Only those artists who conform to the norms established by their surrounding society receive praise for their objects of art which can be esteemed at that instant.

However, deviations from the standard (law) of acceptable beauty merit disdain and ridicule. Sociological aesthetics as described by Lalo is of course a form of relativism. Nothing is absolute; criteria for judgment of artistic excellence vary from generation to generation, society to society.

Maurice DeWulf criticizes the relativism of Lalo's sociological aesthetics, as follows: success may be an indicator of the value of a work of art, nevertheless success does not determine that value; many artists who were rejected in their own time are today recognized as geniuses. The great artists of earlier generations will persist in drawing admiration of later generations because of the undeniable mark of genius concentrated and manifested in their creations. However, DeWulf points out that Charles Lalo had foreseen this difficulty and had written off such veneration of past techniques as an illusion. For Mr. Lalo adds:

Therefore all that we admire of the techniques of the past seem to us to have always had, even at the time when they lived, the same immutable value that we ascribe to them today, and they can offer no other. We live in a period which in certain respects and for certain arts is undoubtedly an age of decadence,..., in part by reason of legitimate love of history, in part because of a regrettable lack of outstanding personalities and of strongly marked tastes. Thus, then, when we appreciate highly, side by side and under the same title,..., a Renaissance palace beside our modern-styled homes we do not sufficiently reflect that the taste of each one of the generations which have made these diverse forms of art live was much more pronounced and restrictive than our own.⁷

DeWulf answers that one does not need to be a scholar of any sort in order to appreciate a beautiful work of art from the distant past. A person can attain aesthetic enjoyment without the aid of books or witnesses or culture, since all that is needed is some artistic temperament.

Mr. DeWulf also points out that Charles Lalo in his sociological aesthetics neglects the technical value of art since he places emphasis upon the tastes of the society as regulators of artistic achievement.⁸

A third type of subjectivism can be found in the aesthetics of the pragmatists, who hold that judgments can be verified as true or false in view of the purpose they serve. Thus,

... the truths of a generation become errors of the following generation when the latter has created ways more valuable and more efficacious and manipulating the apparent facts which the new truths constantly transforms.⁹

Mr. DeWulf then points out that this view entails that the moment a certain artistic work ceases to please, it ceases to be beautiful.¹⁰

C.E.M. Joad, in his work A Guide to Philosophy, presents two additional subjectivist views: that of Tolstoy and that of I.A. Richards.

For Tolstoy art is the communication of emotions. The effect produced upon those who perceive the art object wholly determines the value or worth of that particular art object. Hence the goal of the artist must be to transmit his emotions to the audience or rather the general public - this is what Tolstoy defines as art. "When emotion is fresh and springs from a fresh and vivid attitude to the world, then there is great art."¹¹ However art which states a goal such as being beautiful yet strives merely to stimulate pleasure is not art at all. Rather, the beauty of a work of art is determined purely by how the public feels about the art thing in question. This is obviously very close to Lalo's view. Furthermore, as in other subjectivist theories, beauty is not inherent in the works of art; it is in the effect art objects have upon those who contemplate them.¹²

A more sophisticated position of aesthetic emotion is proposed by I.A. Richards. Briefly, beauty is a state of emotional satisfaction. So that whenever one attributes the word "beautiful" to an object of art, one signifies that peculiar impulses within one's self are activated by contemplation of it to a condition of "emotional equilibrium or harmony." Because one senses a state of equilibrium and satisfaction one then rashly hypothesizes that it is the presence of beauty in the object of mental reflection that caused gratification of the emotions. But, Richards says, this situation is merely the projection onto the outside world, namely the art object, of one's own feelings.¹³

As a point of criticism of all subjectivist views Joad points out that in their perspective there is denied a common element found in all sorts of beautiful objects which persists whether or not a mind perchance appreciates such an object or objects. To I.A. Richards' views, Joad raises four objections. First, when one says that a thing is beautiful, one is not positing something concerning the mental state but about the object. In praising the beauty of a portrait, one does not intend to eulogize the process taking place in one's mind. Second, he grants that the case may be either that equilibrium between impulses is (a) a necessary condition, (b) the result, or (c) a common companion of aesthetic enjoyment; however, declaring that a, b, or c is the case is not the same as saying that "equilibrium of impulses" is aesthetic enjoyment, or beauty or aesthetic value. Third, as to the tendency of the value of works of art to fluctuate from age to age, is this phenomenon due to the variance of equilibrium of impulses of people in general? One must therefore suppose that should one cease to recognize an art object as

beautiful either by no longer contemplating it or by completely rejecting it, then the art object at that moment has no value whatsoever. The fourth and last point is concerned with the statement that after all impulses are harmonized, we then recognize beauty. Whether this phenomenon results from observance of some or all objects of art, implied in this assertion is that, provided the correct circumstances, any object has power to constitute the conditions for aesthetic appreciation. It is clear that this occurrence results from a property within the object itself. What is this property? Mr. Joad suggests an answer found in Plato's insights rendering the idea that the property of an object being beautiful is in virtue of its sharing in the Form of Beauty.¹⁴

A final variety of subjectivism is the aesthetics of existentialism, of which Arturo B. Fallico's theory is a notable example. In his work Art and Existentialism, Mr. Fallico explains the existentialist-phenomenological view as an uncovering of what really surrounds man but which he normally accepts as "obvious." His philosophy does not probe beyond what appears, nor does it seek hidden realities. The philosophy in action comprises two stages: (1) clearing away of obstructed vision - to gain a fresh perspective which is free of all preconceived conceptualizations, so that the object in question can be brought into critical view; (2) with the clear vision thus obtained, the object is then scrutinized with discrimination.¹⁵ Stripped of all illusions in life, one can proceed unhindered, undistracted, giving full attention to the art object while observing it.

In viewing or listening to a work of art one does not see or hear it with the identical frame of reference as in watching television.

The art object one experiences is an object of one's aesthetic awareness. Mr. Fallico also proposes that even if the original art-fact should be demolished, a decent replica would yet sanction the same sensation to be re-experienced. The space-time world existence of the object was determined once and for all by the will, feeling and imagination of its creator. For the art object is in but not of the reality of becoming old and dying, it is a free object. It is isolated and stands apart from our changeable world. In a world of its own anything can be believed, said and done; however, the only regulation is that of "original, sincere realization, irrespective of purpose, of possible being as such."¹⁶

A clear view of Fallico's subjective element of artistic creation shielded from objective criticism can be found in the following quote:

The art object represents a world whose being is prior to every form of judgment, and therefore immune to every judgment. Neither truth, nor goodness, nor any hypothetical imperatives measured by the practical and theoretical consciousness can touch it.... The art object appears as a simple, direct presentation of possibility without practical or theoretical injunctions attached: it poses neither for what it is, nor for what it ought to be. It presents itself innocently and nakedly in the world of our experience without intent to embarrass or to build up our ordinary evaluations, though it can do this and more.¹⁷

Furthermore, Mr. Fallico stresses that the art object should be thought of as a "presentation," not a representation in the world. The work of art is not a mere copy or duplicate of nature -- it is a presence of nothing that exists, has ever existed, or can exist. The presence is not a display of possibilities subsisting apart from art presence but it is the possibility itself. He also states that difficulty in grasping this concept is due primarily to the fact that more often than not one sees the art object simultaneously while one's mind is filled with pre-

suppositions as to what things are, imaginable and possible. The aesthetic object viewed is conceptualized as a presentation of one of these vision-obstructable presuppositions. Since only the original, sincerely realized presence is aesthetically imaginable, anything that is conceivable is never an original, sincerely realized presence of a work of art.¹⁸

Going deeper into the existentialist-phenomenological view, one finds that aesthetic presence is not a presence of something other than itself; neither having existence for or presence to an individual in order to have any being at all. This statement, Mr. Fallico indicates, implies that:

The art object can be objective precisely because its whole reference is to subjectivity. Its objectivity does not seem to rest on any necessary role it must play in the world of spatio-temporal things: the aesthetic object is not one included among the objects which constitute the world.¹⁹

Without anyone to notice the art object it would be as if it had never existed -- the art object appears out of nowhere. It is free from time's influence; however, it relies upon an existing subject in order to gain its objectivity. The art object is an essence which depends upon a subject which is essenceless and bound in time and space. Nevertheless, each art object is original and unrelated to any other work of art. Similarities are not found in the objects of art, but rather in the unity which is within the subject-creators. Therefore, a collection of art objects is a world of independent essences connected to and by the subjectivity which creates and sustains their being.²⁰

The art object exists to indicate the truth about how the existent or creator feels about life; it stands as a symbol of self-deliverance of

the creator. All that is presented is a clear perspective of the despair, joy, mystery and the possibility of meaning or absurdity of one's existence. However, the unity of an aesthetic object signifies the coherence of the subject himself, acquiring self-freedom and self-awareness of being, and manifesting his own emotions to himself in an art object. A further unity arises from a combination of imagination and feeling in such a manner that feeling is imagined and the image is felt. This situation transcends the mere experience of objects to an encounter with individuals rather than things. The limits of the art object expression expand to the boundaries of spontaneous feeling and imagination.

Moving to the area of art criticism Fallico proposes that this process takes a type of "partnership of efforts" between the critic and the artist. Yet he points out that there is no immediate connection between the two terms - aesthetic purposing (task performed by the artist) has nothing to do with criticism and criticism makes no aesthetic presences. Furthermore the artist in creating an art object has no need to indulge in criticism; however, the art critic, in engaging in art criticism, must experience an enactment of aesthetic presentation -- this is what he is about to evaluate. This critic must be able to vocalize in the manner of the first utterance which is the art object itself and he must be able to create his own utterance concerning what he has to verbalize about the work of art of which he must speak for himself and indicate how he truly "feels."²¹

Even though a critic cannot enact the art object, address himself to it, or say anything about it, this does not indicate that the critic is not saying anything. His verbalizations, Mr. Fallico posits, may be a

work of art all its own, although his utterance seems to have nothing at all to apply to the object of concern. Yet a critic of this sort may, at times, have questionable motives for viewing the work of art (revenge, etc.) It must also be pointed out that the motive for an individual's enactment must not be for the sake of criticism concerning that particular work but purely for the sake of enactment. An art work cannot be enacted at all except for its own sake; for art objects were not created to be criticized, but to be. Of itself, the critical enterprise or purposing constructs neither works of art, nor laws for creating art objects. It does, nevertheless, indicate whether aesthetic purposing is in reality capable of enactment in regard to the apparent feeling of which it portrays.²²

Considering the justification of art criticism of this sort, Arturo Fallico does not hide behind handy terms such as "reason," or "common sense," or "all reputable critics." Rather he states:

Only existing men are self-accounting in what they say; they alone are answerable for their assertions. The final justification for the statement can reside nowhere else than in the sincerity with which the existing individual confronts himself, art, and existence.²³

The critic simply indicates whether an aesthetic enactment is possible while regarding a specific art work. As there is no rigid procedure or rules regarding the creative activity of art presentation so also are there no fixed prescriptions regarding the speech of the critic -- for it is his own art-thing and has its own aesthetic enactment.

Although Mr. Fallico's existentialist perspective is quite different, especially in terminology, one is still left with aesthetic experience as a relationship between existent (or the subject) and the art object.

Once again Mr. Joad's criticism of subjective proposal finds its application. Aesthetic value for the existentialists is present only if one observes it as such in a specific art form. In order to arrive at such a state of openness one must see the object as it is and for what it says of itself. It is very difficult to imagine the acquisition of that specific condition of mental awareness, to enteract with an object of art without bringing any preconceived notions of other similar art forms.

CHAPTER II

Some Proponents of Objective Values

INTRODUCTION

This portion of the thesis takes into account those philosophers who, as opposed to the subjectivists, propose that objective criterion can be found within the art object itself. In this realm one can judge artistic excellence or aesthetic value or beauty with regards to the degree that an art work exhibits the basic qualities that are deemed as properties of excellence. Therein lies the degree of aesthetic merit or value. The principle authors cited in this section are Mortimer J. Adler, Susanne K. Langer, Meyer Shapiro, and D.W. Gotshalk.

CHAPTER II

Aesthetic excellence for Mortimer J. Adler in his book Art and Prudence is sought in particular reference to the most contemporary art of motion pictures. Since this recently discovered medium of artistic expression embodies elements of the other arts, poetry and

drama (script), sound (music), and visual arts (picture), criteria for judgment can be somewhat similar with arts combined or isolated. Yet, it must be remembered that the art of motion pictures involves ingredients of the other arts as a unified whole -- each held in particular reference to the whole, the film in its entirety.

The intrinsic or aesthetic consideration of motion pictures is restricted primarily to the feature film; thus, the exclusion of news reels, topical film, vaudeville pictures, and travel pictures. The latter group are principally concerned with providing information and education. In formulating an aesthetic judgment about motion pictures Adler suggests that one must first define its essence or nature by inspecting the form and matter of the film - the medium and the manner of imitation. Medium of imitation refers both to the "medium of words and the non-symbolic plastic medium of pictures."²⁴ Manner of imitation refers to "cinematic manner" which is neither singularly the epic nor the drama, but a fusion of both, differing because the spectacle is included in its essence.²⁵

After having established the matter and form, Mr. Adler next examines the phenomenon of technique, which can be analyzed into elements of plot, character, thought, pictures, words, sound effects and music. Yet the technique is not each separate element but the combined process of the director performing the art of telling a story using the media of words, sounds, and pictures conjointly. This is called motion picture production.

However, technique is constructed in terms of rules of art and from these rules are found the principles of aesthetic criticism which permit

an individual to analyze one's likes or dislikes of immediate sensory judgment. "Judgment of taste is casuistical and immediate," preceeding any analysis merely expressing aesthetic sensibility.²⁶ Technical analysis may supply a taste with well-founded rationale. Therefore, good taste differs from bad taste since it is grounded in and guided by technical analysis. (Adler also points out that the significant problem of taste is the relativity of aesthetic excellence to aesthetic cultivation). A person is said to have good taste if he receives "pleasure in proportion to the objective goodness of the work."²⁷

An important distinction that Mr. Adler offers draws the line between a judgment of taste and a critical judgment. The former merely states that the art object is likable or unlikable, the latter considers the object in terms of its nature and technique. Criticism as such involves an evaluation with regards to standards of technical mastery. Taste on the other hand, deals with the capability to derive aesthetic pleasure from a work of art. The most general criticism comes from the insight that the artist should never attempt to accomplish more than the elements of his medium elicits, and should not permit himself to strive for less.

Technical criticism should not be confused or equated with extrinsic or political criticism; for the subsequent is concerned with the influential ramifications upon the public. Nor should technical criticism be connected or identified with aesthetic criticism, since the former is specifically related to and is a question of style. Style is further divided into narrative, what is said, and linguistic, how it is said. The total montage - the filmic style considered as a whole, a joint

composition of the sound track and pictorial frames -- with a balance between clarity and variety provides the ultimate criterion of good motion picture-production style.²⁸

Having undertaken a brief synopsis of manner, media, and technique, it is now possible to examine Mortimer J. Adler's view of aesthetic excellence. He admits that good style is not enough to credit a work of art as truly great. Levels of aesthetic excellence are not determined or dictated solely by technical criterion; it is more exclusive, for aesthetic criticism pivots upon two other criteria: (1) "the magnitude of conception," the vision of the artist, the intuitive apprehension of the object he is to create. Thus, the greatness of a work of art demands not only that there be a mastery of technique or means employed to be sufficient to the conception, but also that the end, which is the conception, should justify the means or technique executed. Goodness implies judgment of means and end. (2) the "worth of the subject matter or content" is necessarily moral. This aspect entails a verdict concerning material goodness of the work of art, whether morally sound or unsound. If the work presents a reflecting individual who is morally disordered, then it is unsound and cannot be great. Thus, Adler proposes that ethical criteria have a part in the complete aesthetic judgment, just as technical criteria.²⁹

The final problem to be answered is formulated in terms of the relation of excellence in art to the pleasure it provided the public which possesses different degrees of aesthetic awareness. More precisely, the problem can be defined as to what degree does a work of art please the highly cultivated and the less cultivated at the same time; however,

not in the identical manner. Adler further explains that many levels of the general public can be reached when a given work of art is complex yet unified, subtle yet clear.

The cultivation of taste is a gradual development of aesthetic capacity. It must begin wherever it finds the individual's sensitivity according to natural endowment. The judgment of taste is an appreciation of relative beauty: the work found beautiful is always proportional in complexity to the grade of the spectator's sensibility. Good taste is not cultivated by a transition from the enjoyment of poor work to the discovery of beauty in good work, but rather by gradual appreciation of the excellence of work that was at first appreciated for much less than its full perfection.³⁰

By nature, art must please by affording delight when contemplated, by providing satisfaction of recreation, and by purging the emotions of excitement. Judgments of taste then, verify whether a certain object of artistic achievement releases such pleasure. To be great art must please and gain approval of some or all men. The artist, therefore, cultivates the critical audience by the work he creates.

Proceeding now to the objective view of another aesthetician, Susanne K. Langer, one is confronted with another somewhat similar definition of art and the artist - the "symbol" and symbol deliverer. She asserts that the artist makes a symbol primarily to contain or manifest his own imagination or "organized feeling" or forms of emotion. In one sense he creates simply for his own enjoyment and yet in another sense, he must also bring the art work into existence for the public. A work of art must always have an audience, for it is the general viewers' func-

tion to impose the norms of complete objectivity. It is a false assumption to think that the artist must always be aware of the particular audience where his work will be displayed. Rather, he considers the ideal public or audience; moreover it is the ideal observer who can calibrate an art work objectively, and it is this person the artist keeps in mind even though the beholder's specific existence might occur years after the work's completion.³¹

When the question arises: "What is the artist trying to say?" Ms. Langer replies that he (the artist) is not attempting to tell anything, even about the nature of his sentiments. The artist merely shows the "appearance of feeling in a perceptible symbolic projection."³² Revealed to the one beholding the art object is a way or manner of conceiving an emotion. Aesthetic emotion, therefore, is the ignition of the emotion sealed within the observer's own self through the contemplation of the work of art -- the symbolic projection of feelings through revelation. She then equates aesthetic emotion with a penetrating sensation of exhilaration which is the consequence of the contemplation of good art. And every object of good art is beautiful after one comprehends the expressiveness portrayed.

Nevertheless, one must not be so ingenuous as to limit beauty to such qualities as that which is "sensually appealing," or "charming," or even that which is "normal." Beautiful works of art may also contain certain characteristics which are obscene or revolting when separated from the work. It must be realized that these seemingly questionable elements are presented as authentic symbolic projections of the author's feeling. "Beauty is expressive form."³³ In understanding a

work of art, the expressive form, there is the requirement of responsiveness which is intuitive and cannot be taught. This responsiveness many times demands the cleansing obliteration in one's mind of the intellectual misconceptions and prejudices which may obscure one's receptiveness. Art provides the forms of feeling and imagination, that is, it organizes and clarifies intuition. Thus, Langer says, aesthetic intuition captures the greatest form immediately, for there is no demand for the progression through lesser ideas without first a reception of the whole, not a need for discursive reasoning. It is the irresistible lure to extended contemplation of good art which is embodied in the simple immediate revelation of the whole.

In order to criticize an art object one must be able to appreciate it first of all. Next, one must note how the formalized feeling was presented - a recognition involving analysis by discursive reasoning about the effects of the work of art. Criteria of excellence must not be formulated from such an analysis, for these findings are only explanations of success or failure. When this analysis is generalized and utilized as standards of artistic achievement they become "baneful." For Langer contends that:

Materials are neither good nor bad, strong or weak. Judgment, therefore, must be guided by the virtual results, the artist's success or failure, which is intuitively known or not at all.

No theory can set up criteria of expressiveness (standards of beauty) But because every artist must find the means of expressing his own "idea," he can be helped only by criticism, not by precept or example; and criticism, if it is to develop his powers, must be based on partial success -- that is, the critic must see the commanding form of the disciple's work, because that is the measure of right or wrong in the work.³⁴

Bad art finds expression, therefore, when the envisagement of the symbol or formalized feeling is hampered by emotions which are not correctly formed or recognized by the artist. This art, distorted at its origin, is bad because it lacks candor - "it is not true to what a candid envisagement would have been." The criterion of good art then is candor (seeing straight). Bad art is corrupt art; a case in which an individual attempted to give expression to an emotion, but failed. In non-art there is no attempt whatsoever to express the form of emotion. A distinction between good and bad art can be understood as a distinction between free art and hampered or poor art.³⁵ Good or free art is the symbolic formalization of feeling which provides the stimulation of aesthetic exhilaration.

Another method for judgment of artistic excellence which differs markedly from previously mentioned aestheticians is examined by Meyer Shapiro in an essay entitled "On Perfection, Coherence, and Unity of Form and Content." Mr. Shapiro describes his purpose to be the analysis of specific qualities which are ascribed to a work of art and which are regarded as conditions for beauty. These standards or qualities are listed as: "perfection, coherence, and unity of form and content." As a preceding comment, he states that judgments frequently change with prolonged experience of an art object, such that these original judgments are never confirmed and even at times invalidated by a single new observation.³⁶

The examiner's experience of rightness observed in an art work can be equated with the word "perfect." If any alteration of the object as a whole should occur, the result would rest in the destruction of perfection, of the feeling of rightness. However, Shapiro reservingly

comments, the immediate perception is not always comprehensive and complete, for additional glances will render more information. He denies certitude to the judgment which arises from immediate intuition. Certitude implies that once a specific aspect of an art object is experienced as perfect it will likewise be experienced in far distant occasions. Even the experts are often times mistaken and fail to recognize the work as it is in its fullness. Judgments of perfection in art are mere hypotheses to be collected over many generations-- meaningful revelations provided by new points of view.³⁷

Advancing to the quality of coherence, Mr. Shapiro remarks that such a criterion is regulated by norms of style exposed as universal prerequisites of art found in the orderliness of symmetry and balance. History witnesses (with reference to the specific example of early condemnation of Cubism) the fallibility of judgments of coherence and incoherence. This standard of excellence "excludes the intricate, the unstable, the fused, the scattered, the broken; yet such qualities may belong to a whole in which we can discern regularities if we are disposed to them by another aesthetic."³⁸ It seems as though Shapiro intends to forward this as evidence for collective observation of successive generations.

Examining the concept of unity of form and content, Shapiro proposes that it consists of the definite correspondence of the forms to connotations of the signified theme. Oneness of form and content is furthermore compatible with inconsistencies in the signification or connotation of the object itself, and must not be confused with unity of inner accord. The unity of form and content, hence, is an accord of identifiable forms and significations and may be experienced to such a degree of satisfaction

that one can declare that everything as a whole is in harmony -- a criterion of beauty.

Judgments of unity and perfection in art ... stems from an unreflecting and sometimes a habitual choice of aspects to judge that a work of art possesses oneness of form and content. It is not even necessary to contemplate it; the oneness follows from the definition of content in the work of art.³⁹

All in all, when the act of art observation is in progress one fails to examine a work of art as a totality. It is necessary to see it as thoroughly as possible, in a unifying manner, yet, seeing is selective and limited. Awareness of inexhaustive perception, critical seeing is concerned with details as well as overall aspects of the whole work. It must take into account the critical observations of others; that is, the inclusion of different perspectives to an accumulative judgment.

Several philosophical thinkers have forwarded various comments upon the qualities of perfection, coherence, and unity of form and content put forth by Shapiro. Paul Ziff, for instance, questions the relevancy of new judgments concerning artistic excellence. If one should propose a perspective, that earlier held a work of art as coherent, later contradicts this statement to deem that the object is now incoherent; must one welcome the new viewpoint as relevant. Since Mr. Shapiro says that judgments of perfection and coherence are subject to change, the previous conclusion could be tenable. Therefore, Paul Ziff theorizes that in order to formulate a decision concerning the relevance of a different manner of seeing a work of art, it may be necessary to examine not merely the object in question, but also other similarly styled works, the basis of meaningful stylistic classification, and qualifications of the critics, etc.⁴⁰

"Originality as a Ground for Judgment of Excellence" is posited by H. W. Janson, for it is apparent to him that Shapiro's criteria of value offer little usefulness. Originality of a work of art demands that other works be compared in every possible way with the work in question rather than in isolation. Furthermore, this criterion of aesthetic value implies that decisions based on originality cannot be final, for one simply can not compare every work of art. In all fairness to ascription of aesthetic worth, one must admit that the margin of originality is narrow. How does one compare primitive art with modern art? Yet, originality is a somewhat valid standard for consideration despite its limited application.⁴¹

Perfection as a term in Aesthetics is also analyzed by Max Black. He suggests that an art object slowly reveals its meaning and worth. Single acts of observation cannot comprehend all aspects of great works of art no matter how prolonged the contemplation and perception of the person. If Mr. Shapiro should insist upon the significance of the term "perfect" in aesthetic judgments, then he must specify the standard by which an object of art can be deemed as perfect. Max Black seems to think that there exists no such standard as perfection and that it should possibly be shelved with "other grandiose terms that do more to obfuscate than to illuminate aesthetics."⁴²

Chauncey Downes' consideration of perfection as an aesthetic predicate corresponds basically with that of Max Black. If one uses the term "perfect" in aesthetic contexts does it involve the employment of standards or criteria, and if so, where are these rules of excellence to be discovered - extrinsic or intrinsic to the art work itself? Downes proposes

to define the use of "perfect" as applicable for judgment of aesthetic value when the work of art itself indicates an intention and proceeds to fulfill all qualifications of that intention. From his definition of perfect he describes three conditions when the predicate is correctly applied:

- 1) when there are no intentions without fulfillment,
- 2) when every feature of the work is a fulfillment of some intention of the work and is not merely there,
- 3) when there is a sufficient degree of complexity of intentions and fulfillments to create in the viewer that tension which both stimulates and satisfies.⁴³

Furthermore, Downes indicates that there is no necessity for one to ascribe states of consciousness to an art object, nor is one required the knowledge of what is going on in the mind of the artist. One must simply reserve one's self to an observation of the work of art itself. For the art object possesses qualities capable of summoning in the perceptive individual certain attitudes and expectations which are objective qualities of the art object itself and which in theory can be sensed by anyone. Consequently, the ascription of the criterion "perfect" demands a proper applicability that is characteristic of the relationship between a "meaning intention and a meaning fulfillment."⁴⁴

Another view expounded by Sidney Hook concerning judgments of excellence in art examines the possibility of universal criteria. Mr. Hook sees originality as maybe a necessary condition, but certainly not the sufficient condition of excellence in art. Rather, other criteria must be determined before originality can rate as a relevant aesthetic quality.

He does not suppose that any meaningful correlation can be constituted between the hierarchy of originality and that of aesthetic worth. And so, criticism must be stabilized in objective standards of judgment arising from some technical achievement recognizable by systematic analysis of the object of art. Such judgments compel one to focus one's attention to skills and effects of these skills, its uniqueness and interrelateness with other discernable qualities of the work. Yet, what renders decisions of artistic achievement complex is that there is no absolute and determined set of laws and regulations. There is only a history of tradition recording different techniques imposed upon the art object from the creative effort of artists.⁴⁵

A final comment on Meyer Shapiro's essay is provided by Richard Kuhns concerning the partiality involved while experiencing a work of art. One might ask what property is there in art that exists continuously and can be rediscovered at each re-observation which makes art worthwhile. Mr. Kuhns remarks that works of ample complexity and richness render them worthwhile objects of consideration. Because of the intricacy of art, one's experience of it is necessarily cumulative without being exhaustive. However, partiality is a property of art not solely connected with the form nor the attainment of the complete content of the art object; rather, one's perception includes the aspect of an awareness of incompleteness. Therefore Mr. Kuhns suggests that perhaps the essential defining quality of artistic value, since perfection, coherence, and unity are also predicates on other human achievements, rests with the revelation of what the art work is of itself as an object of artistic achievement. This is called "style," which can be identified in the intricate intermingling

with "cultural assumptions, artistic methods, and critical knowledge." Partiality arises from the fact that no one style is exhaustive of values in art. Style demands a choice of artistic techniques and subject matter, and thus provokes the awareness of partiality. Mr. Kuhns also adds some very interesting comments on beauty, indicating that beauty is not the primary value of art as has been suggested resulting from misplaced emphasis upon artistic beauty as formal organization dependent upon criteria of perfection, coherence, and unity. For he insists:

Not only is it not the primary value of art, but also those characteristics named as the ground of beauty are the ground for other values as well... so beauty is a function of and a contributor to other values which we recognize as our awareness extends to the fullest grasp.⁴⁶

The final theory of aesthetics to be presented as resting in the category of objectivism pertains to perspective of D.W. Gotshalk in his book Art and the Social Order. He describes his view as a relational standpoint, a hypothesis to aid in the process of analysis in art criticism, attempting to render as a collective unity various relevant empirical data and verified theory into a realistic and inclusive perspective. "Fine art," Mr. Gotshalk definitively states, "is the creation of objects for aesthetic experience." Aesthetic experience is simply intrinsic perception, or attention to an object or a field pre-eminently for the apprehension of the full intrinsic perceptual being and value of the object or field."⁴⁷ The term "aesthetic" needs to be redefined basically because of its original arbitrary and limited restriction to the word "beautiful." Reconsideration compels one to reject this exclusive definition to include the grotesque, the heartrending, the gloomy and the charming, the simple, the sensitive. Hence, Gotshalk suggests that the

definition of aesthetic be expanded to include more than just the "beautiful."

To appreciate a work of art aesthetically one must attain psychical distance by putting aside non-aesthetic interests. This procedure requires more than relaxed effort in order to maintain an object-centered attention for the sake of intensifying perceptual consciousness. Nevertheless, unlike practical activity of observation in which perception is the means to the goal of knowledge or tested information; aesthetic activity employs knowledge as a means to greater perception, which is the end. Mr. Gotshalk also maintains that truth is not the end of aesthetic experience, but rather it is a helpful boost to the magnification of aesthetic response by the accumulation of extra stimulation to the experience and it is an intrinsic content of the art object. Knowledge or truth can result from the aesthetic response; since perception involves cognitive actions for the expansion of intrinsic perception and results as a pensive formulation of an idea.⁴⁸

Empathy also fulfills a role in aesthetic experience bringing into play the factors of imagination and feeling. Imagination collaborates with the implied tendencies and movements of a work which are felt in that art object. Another basic element found in empathy, as in aesthetic appreciation, is object centrality in which, aesthetically speaking, there is a unison between self and object for the sake of the object and not of the self. This is the goal of aesthetic experience - to gain the fullest possible apprehension of the work of art's intrinsic perceptual value within one's self through a unified transformation with the object in question. Much aesthetic experience may be intensified by empathy,

yet the theory of empathy seems, to Gotshalk, insufficient in itself as a theory of aesthetic experience. Rather, it is simply an element connected with total aesthetic response, a manner of enlivening the content of art for the purpose of greater intrinsic perception. One must allow the relaxed submission of one's self (of one's attention) and yet one must approach a work of art with an attitude of high tension and a keyed-up mood.⁴⁹

In speaking of art criticism, Mr. Gotshalk believes that since the artist creates objects for aesthetic experience, then it would follow that criticism of art as art should be an analysis of the art objects as objects for aesthetic experience.⁵⁰ But he also cites subordinate phases of judgment; namely the "genetic" and the "immanent." Of these two phases, the genetic concentrates upon the examination of the subjective and objective elements that have molded the work of art. The subjective element involves psychological factors - "sensitivity, imagination, personality, taste aims, the value system, and peculiar experiences of the artist." The objective element concerns environmental factors - "materials, physical milieu, traditional influences, social needs, and cultural climate of the creator." Alone these phases may be considered as history or biography of the artist; hence, merely scientific in nature unpertaining strictly to art criticism. However, when such studies are gathered in an attempt to evaluate aesthetic merit of a work of art of a particular artist or group of artists, it transcends the usefulness as mere history and biography.⁵¹

A study of the dominant features of the art object itself is properly found in the immanent phase of judgment. Here one takes into account the

materials, the form, the expression and the function. There occurs in this stage an effort to clarify and point out the feature of the work of art by a description of their instrumental properties - an attempt to describe what is actually in the work.

Thus, the total judgmental process could be regarded as a third phase in which the immanent and the genetic phases are culminated or completed by a critical process involving the application of a collection of general standards or criteria.

The judgmental phase of art criticism is simply the systematic application of a set of relevant general standards to a work of art that is known genetically and immanently.... (it) is the explicit evaluation of the actualities of a work of art in the light of a canon or an appropriate set of relevant values, possibilities or ideals.⁵²

Having presented his method of aesthetic judgments, one is drawn to admit that his criticism is an extremely inclusive attempt to formulate a judgment of art found in the processes of aesthetic perception.

There are some obvious difficulties with this theory, as Gotshalk points out, sprouting from the various angles to be examined in order that the critic may sufficiently and properly judge an art object. In addition, due to the complexity of some works of art, it is relatively easy to understand why some critics seemingly contradict others, both may be right simultaneously since each may be emphasizing different aspects of the same object. Another difficulty can be found with regard to subjective complexity of the critic himself. Most certainly there exists the possibilities of prejudices, of inexperience, and of biases. Also there is the language barrier of critical analysis which is often times too vague in its terminology to the extent that the public and even fellow critics fail to understand one another.

The aim or goal of art criticism, consequently, should be concerned with pointing out in clearest language possible the merit of a work with respect to the view of the critic in a manner which would enable the public to develop a more adequate, correct perception of art in particular and in general. For the judgment of art has two major tasks: to evaluate the inter-relation of the features of the art object (integrity) which replaces the classical criteria of form; and to evaluate the terminal features of the work of art which exist outside art. The judgmental phase of criticism measures the integrity in perception and the critic communicates this information in such a way that the audience can learn and can be led to unearth for themselves the aesthetic values buried with a work of art.⁵⁴

FOOTNOTES

1 Maurice DeWulf, Art and Beauty, St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1950, p. 145.

2 Idem, pp. 146-7.

3 Idem, pp. 143-52.

4 Idem, p. 155.

5 Idem, p. 155.

6 Idem, pp. 157-8.

7 Idem, pp. 161-2.

8 Idem, pp. 162-5.

9 Idem, p. 167.

10 Idem, pp. 167-71.

11 C.E.M. Joad, A Guide to Philosophy, New York: Dover Publications, 1946, p. 336.

12 Idem, p. 336.

13 Idem, p. 339.

14 Idem, pp. 341-3.

15 Arthuro Fallico, Art and Existentialism, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1962, p. 15.

16 Idem, p. 20.

17 Idem, p. 20.

18 Idem, p. 21.

19 Idem, p. 22.

20 Idem, p. 24.

21 Idem, pp. 154-5.

22 Idem, p. 157.

23 Idem, p. 157.

24 Mortimer J. Adler, Art and Prudence, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937, p. 476.

25 Idem, p. 507.

26 Idem, p. 458.

27 Idem, p. 545.

28 Idem, pp. 545-64.

29 Idem, pp. 572-8.

30 Idem, p. 583.

31 Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, pp. 392-3.

32 Idem, p. 394.

33 Idem, p. 396.

34 Idem, pp. 406-7.

35 Idem, p. 381.

36 Sidney Hook, editor, Art and Philosophy, New York: University Press, 1966, p. 3.

37 Idem, pp. 5-6.

38 Idem, p. 7.

39 Idem, p. 9.

40 Idem, pp. 19-20.

41 Idem, pp. 24-30.

42 Idem, pp. 32-35.

43 Idem, p. 38.

44 Idem, pp. 36-41.

45 Idem, pp. 50-55.

46 Idem, pp. 42-48.

47 D. W. Gotshalk, Art and the Social Order, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 3.

48 Idem, pp. 7-12.

49 Idem, pp. 13-17.

50 Idem, p. 173.

51 Idem, pp. 173-4.

52 Idem, p. 175.

53 Idem, pp. 177-180.

54 Idem, pp. 199-200.

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