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Are Aesthetic Judgements Objective or Subjective?

Nigel Farndale

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
(about 51,000 words)

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May 1990

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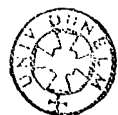

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Throughout this thesis the term 'property' should be assumed to be synonymous with the terms 'feature', and 'quality'. It should be assumed that unless otherwise stated aesthetic judgements of art rather than of nature are being referred to; and that words importing the masculine gender include the feminine gender. Where a reference number is printed in bold this indicates that there is a note at the end of the thesis - as oppose to a simple book/author name and page reference.

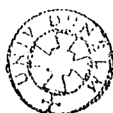
Are Aesthetic Judgements Objective or Subjective?

Chapter One

Introduction

To begin with, I must confess a certain prejudice: I dislike the expression 'I'm no art expert, but I know what I like'. I suspect that the assumptions which underlie this threadbare commonplace are at best naive, at worst downright vacuous. To an extent, this thesis is an attempt to cure me of, or confirm me in, my prejudices and suspicions.

What assumptions, then, are actually being made? If P assumes that his statement 'I know what paintings I like, and I like this', actually means 'This is a good painting because I like it', then the status of his judgement, as a critical (aesthetic) judgement, is questionable. It tells us something about the personal preferences of P but practically nothing about the aesthetic value of the painting. P has assumed his subjective judgement to be an objective criterion. Though 'liking' the painting is important to P as an individual, it is not a criterion for judging the painting to be objectively good. If P says 'I like this painting' this cannot mean - as it is often assumed to mean - 'this painting is good', because the statement 'I like this painting' is true if P likes the painting, but false if he does not. The statement 'This is a good painting', on the other hand, contains no reference to P and can therefore be true or false whether P likes the painting or not. Furthermore, if the statement 'This is a good painting', merely means 'I like this painting', it can no



longer be usefully taken to mean 'all similarly constituted people <u>ought</u> to like this painting as well'.

It is, of course, unreasonable to draw the above syllogism from the gap between what P <u>says</u> and what he <u>means</u>: he may intend no such necessary connection. However, if P says 'This is a good painting' when what he actually means is 'I like this painting', then the burden is on P to state quite categorically what he <u>does</u> mean. He is inviting confusion over the meaning of his statement by confusing it himself with the conditions under which it is uttered. Moreover, unless P is willing and able to support his claim with a reasoned justification, then he should not presume to articulate such a judgement in that form. If, on the other hand, P is prepared to qualify his judgement by saying 'I like this. This seems like a good painting <u>to me</u>'; or, more stiltedly but more precisely, 'Because I have an enjoyable aesthetic experience in response to this painting I consider it to be good', then this would not be open to dispute. It would be a legitimate, subjective response of taste. To paraphrase James McNeill Whistler: You should not say it is not good, you should say you do not like it, then you know you are perfectly safe . . .

It is the intention of this thesis to examine the function of aesthetic judgement and then, in the light of this examination, to consider certain fundamental questions it raises. These questions are: I. Are aesthetic judgements objective or subjective, absolute or relative? II. According to what criteria are aesthetic judgements made? III. Do they involve concepts? IV. Should some aesthetic judgements be taken more seriously than others, and, if so, whose should be and why should they be? V. Is the ability to make 'sound' aesthetic judgements learned or intuited? VI. Do aesthetic judgements refer to objective properties? VII. Do they involve interpretation, and, if so, are some interpretations more

appropriate and/or valid than others? VIII. Can we interpret form as well as content? IX. And, finally, can aesthetic judgements be tested and justified?

First, though, it is necessary to set out the background to this inquiry and to consider its terms of reference. I am aware of the unsatisfactory nature of some of the terms I employ, but, because satisfactory substitutes do not readily suggest themselves, they must be used, albeit with caution.

The word 'aesthetic' is ambiguous . . .

To allow for this ambiguity it is tempting to take the precaution of putting the word 'aesthetic' in parenthesis or scare quotes. Perhaps, as Whistler might say, it should be put in both, ('aesthetic'), just to be on the safe side. The expression 'aesthetic judgement' is no less ambiguous. Depending on the context, it can refer to both 'aesthetic value' and 'instrumental value'. An alternative to this might be to refer to 'artistic value judgements', or 'critical evaluations of art' but really these phrases are too limiting to be of much use.[1] Much depends upon the distinction between 'aesthetic judgement' qua 'critical evaluation', and 'aesthetic judgement' qua 'response of taste'. As Harold Osborne, among others, has suggested, the two represent quite distinct modes of activity. I would take this further and suggest that the former can be considered a quasi-objective activity when it is concerned with the interpretation of symbolic content; and that the latter can be considered a subjective activity when it is concerned with the appreciation of form. The former judgement is typified by the objective statement 'This is good', whilst the latter judgement, being concerned exclusively with pleasure, is typified by the subjective statement 'I like this'. Regrettably, in the realm of practical art evaluation, this dichotomy tends to inspire

emotive rather than rational debate. This is not altogether surprising though, since it is commonly assumed that this dichotomy does not even exist. This common assumption follows inevitably from the assumption that de gustibus non est disputandum . . . There is no disputing about taste because it is assumed that taste is concerned with beauty, and that this vague and mysterious thing called beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It is further assumed that attempts to define beauty are futile because they are inevitably circular - as with John Keats's 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'. This is because, as Edgar Allen Poe would have it, beauty is an effect, and, as such, inseparable from the mind which experiences it. Now, T.E. Jessop accounts for this dichotomy in terms of appreciation as emotion and appreciation as judgement, the latter being characterised by a claim.[2] In a similar vain, unless otherwise stated, I shall be using the term 'aesthetic judgement' in the 'critical evaluation' sense, rather than in the sense of 'response of taste'.

The Polish aesthetician Stefan Morawski has summarised the nature of this dichotomy to a nicety:

> Taste . . . cannot be learned if the propensity is lacking; refined taste . . . is simply taste manifested and cultivated in favourable circumstances. Personal taste can and generally does succumb to outside influences to the point where in the end no individual differences are . . . discernible; that is, people with different dispositions . . . respond to the same objects or qualities as aesthetic stimuli. If individual sensitivity is therefore elusive, it is much easier to discern the general 'taste' of an age or a community . . .[3]

By contrast Morawski refers to aesthetic judgement as:

> . . . a physical act of an intellectual character which results in a proposition expressing an aesthetic experience and formulating an appraisal based upon certain reasons.[4]

~~Baring~~ Bearing this definition in mind let us move on to the question of whether such aesthetic judgements are objective or subjective. In 1856 John Ruskin railed against that 'German

dullness' and 'English affectation' which had multiplied the use of two of the most objectionable words that were ever coined by the troublesomeness of metaphysicians: 'objective' and 'subjective'. But, of course, this debate goes back much further than Ruskin. From Plato onwards the history of aesthetics has been characterised by a search for an alternative to these polar opposites. In fact, broadly speaking, this bifurcation of nature between mind and matter, subject and object, observer and observed, could be said to be the recurring theme of Western philosophy. In the aesthetic realm, though, perhaps the most sophisticated and influential attempt to resolve this dichotomy is to be found in Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgement of 1790. In this monumental work, Kant introduced a third term: intersubjectivity, that is, the property of holding in reference to more than one subject. More recently though, Kant's aesthetic has inspired some contemporary philosophers to look beyond this polarisation of the subjective and the objective, and to acknowledge instead the autonomy of one term from the other. By this I mean either the autonomy of the object as a thing-in-itself, existentially independent of both its creator and its perceiving subject; or the autonomy of the subject's experience, independent of the object. In my view both are wrong.

The perennial controversy over whether aesthetic properties inhere in the object or entirely in the mind of the beholder, has been neatly summed up by Gorden Westland:

> To say that something is objective means . . . that it can be observed, it can be measured, it can be demonstrated. I suggest that the broad test any scientist uses in practice is that refusal to accept the reality of something which is objective results in empirical contradictions. Serious consequences will follow if I act upon a refusal to accept the statement that arsenic is poisonous. Therefore a scientist can say that a statement which he has objectively verified 'ought' (in an intellectual sense) to be accepted by others . . . It cannot be said that anyone 'ought' to accept an aesthetic statement - certainly it cannot have the same force, since no contradictory consequences follow refusal to accept.[5]

Whilst I agree with the first part of Westland's analysis, I take issue with the second. I believe that we can say that certain critical evaluations (aesthetic judgements) ought to be accepted by most 'normal' people [for reasons I shall explain in a later chapter]. The interesting question that this quotation raises though is this: Need objectivity in aesthetics be the same as objectivity in science, that is, universal, absolute and definitive? Can it not be of a form that admits of a degree of subjectivity?

When a subject appreciates an object (which has both form and content, as in a painting, say, or a work of literature) it is almost a truism to say that you cannot have one without the other, (subject without object). In a similar way, it is idle to deny that you can have form without content. This was certainly the view held by Walter Pater whose ringing phrase 'all art constantly aspires to the condition of music'[6] has become part of the language of art appreciation. His claim is based upon the assumption that in music form and content are indistinguishable. As already mentioned, it is commonly assumed that 'subjective' taste should be concerned with form (because the interpretation of 'content' is not disinterested enough); whilst 'objective' critical evaluation should be concerned with content (because the appreciation of 'form' is, as it were, in the eye of the beholder). Now, if Walter Pater's dictum is correct, where does that leave literature and painting? Is the form distinct from the content? Should we measure their aesthetic value according to the extent to which the two parts present a unified whole? And, if so, would not such 'unity' be a formal concept? The distinction between form and content is notoriously muddled. In Chapter Eleven I argue that insofar as critical evaluation is concerned with interpretation, this distinction is artificial. I argue this on the grounds that

interpretations of seemingly 'abstract' form are often no more arbitrary than interpretations of symbolic content.

But to return to my original question: Why does the subjective/objective debate admit of little or no compromise? Are they really so dialectically opposed? Should we believe in the procedures of one or the other, but not in both? Conventional wisdom suggests that we should, but, as ever, the problem arises from our confusion over the meaning of these two terms: subjective and objective. I suspect that part of this problem is also tied up with the attitude with which the conventionally wise approach this debate. Arguably, our most fundamental liberty is our freedom of choice - all men are created free and equal, and so on. When this is applied to the aesthetic realm it means being free to choose what art we like and dislike, and, by extension, what art we consider to be good and what bad - the proof of the pudding is, as they say, in the eating. However, exercising our freedom to make an aesthetic judgement that is nothing more than a subjective response of taste is, in my opinion, a somewhat futile exercise. It may be a means of expressing our appreciation, or of getting what we want, but, because such a judgement cannot be disputed, there is little point in attempting to communicate it to others. It licences a chaotic democracy of opinion to which we are all obliged to show unlimited tolerance. If all that is meant by the statement 'This painting is aesthetically good' is 'I enjoy this painting', then why bother saying it? The statement is important for the person who utters it, but trivial to everyone else.

We can consider a painting to be 'good' without actually liking it, and we can like a painting without actually considering it to be 'good'. By this I mean it is possible to explain to a person why you consider a painting to have value, and it is possible for that person to understand and appreciate

your explanation without actually agreeing with it. For example, I might respect someone's judgement that a painting is good in virtue of its formal unity, yet I, personally, might find such formal unity unutterably boring. Alternatively, I might enjoy looking at vulgarly sentimental Victorian art - depicting, say, Christmas day in the poor house - whilst accepting that sentimentality is not a particularly elevated criterion for judgement. In this respect subjective 'aesthetic judgements' are not really aesthetic judgements at all, they are emotional responses. If P's subjective 'aesthetic judgement' is 'This is a good painting' (meaning 'I like this painting') and A's subjective 'aesthetic judgement' is 'This is not a good painting' (meaning 'I do not like this painting') then both statements are undisputably correct: the painting is both good and not good at the same time. If they are relativists both P and A can claim that their statements are relatively true, but, to be consistent in their relativism they would also have to admit that because this truth is relative, it may also be false in relation to other beliefs. Thus their statements - and, by implication, the theories of subjectivism and relativism - may be both true <u>and</u> false at the same time, and therefore self-contradictory.

The same can be said of an appeal to sociological justifications for a judgement. If I were to advance a theory which states that an artwork is good because the majority of the population say it is good - with disputes being resolved by taking a poll - we are saying nothing about the artwork, we are merely talking about the preferences of the general public which, according to the principle of the lowest common denominator, would probably rank kitsch art above 'high' art. The quality of the art being in inverse proportion to the quantity of people who like it. If more people prefer the music of Kylie Minogue to that of Richard Wagner then that does not make Kylie Minogue's music superior. The minority who

prefer Wagner are surely more entitled to judge of the comparative merits of both types of music than are the majority who prefer Kylie Minogue. The few may not share the preference of the many but they are more likely to understand why a simple, repetitive 4/4 beat should appeal to the 'immature' taste of the many. The reverse is simply not true. Besides, in the long run more people (with 'mature' taste) will have preferred Wagner than prefer Kylie Minogue at any given time. Thus Wagner can be judged to be superior to Kylie Minogue because there is a consensus of opinion to that effect among persons of 'mature' taste, over a longer period of time. Furthermore, if one were to continue playing devil's advocate, one could argue that persons whose tastes are 'mature' can be characterised by their 'universal' preference for Wagner over Minogue.[7] But is this 'sociological' principle, by means of which an elite of 'experts' might 'validate' their judgement, not the same as the 'lowest common denominator' principle outlined above? Not necessarily. To allow for the inevitable disagreements that there would be between these 'experts', an appeal could be made to several generations of 'qualified' experts - qualified according to certain specific criteria x, y, and z. Whilst it need not necessarily follow from the judgements of this elite (whose qualifications it would be notoriously difficult to define) that a given painting is actually 'good', perhaps we have to pragmatically accept that this is the closest we can get to a useful critical (aesthetic) judgement, and that this is at least preferable to the self-contradictory and trivialising alternatives discussed above. The question now is: Are such aesthetic judgements close enough to called objective? Even under these conditions we are still left with a description of critics' responses to a work of art, rather than a description of the work of art itself. Perhaps we have to ~~except~~ accept, then, that there will always be a difference between a statement about the value of a painting ('This is a good painting'), and a statement about the opinion of those

judging the painting ('An elite of qualified critics have, over several generations, liked this painting').

But, to return again to my earlier question: Can we avoid the legacy of Cartesian dualism; that is, the assumption that aesthetic judgements must be either objective or subjective, but never both? On the surface it would seem that an argument in favour of one must be an argument against the other. Yet surely the two terms are fundamentally interconnected. Aesthetic judgements require both a perceiving subject and a perceived object; the one is incomplete without the other. Consider, for instance, Roman Ingarden's theory of concretion:

> . . . a work of art requires an agent existing outside itself, that is, an observer, in order . . . to render it concrete. Through his co-creative activity in appreciation the observer sets himself as is commonly said to 'interpret' the work or, as I prefer to say, to reconstruct it in its effective characteristics, and in doing this, as it were, under the influence of suggestions coming from the work itself he fills out its schematic structure, plenishing at least in part the areas of indeterminacy and actualizing various elements which are as yet only in a state of potentiality.[8]

It might be that some critics are better, or pretend to be better, at rendering this potentiality concrete than others. Their position as critics certainly depends upon this pretension. However, the idea discussed earlier - of an elite of critics determining aesthetic value - would not be readily entertained by objectivists. Apart from pointing out the circularity of the Humean approach - that an expert is one who makes expert judgements, and an expert judgement is that which is made by an expert - an objectivist could also argue that the attribution of aesthetic value does not consist in the judgements of expert critics anyway, but rather in the nature of the object itself. Perhaps, once again, the problem is in the phrasing of the statement. If we were to take an instrumentalist approach to making objective aesthetic judgements we could legitimately say 'This is a painting, and paintings have a function which this has the capacity to

successfully fulfil, therefore it is good'. But what might this function be? Propaganda? Entertainment? Education? Spiritual elevation? Pleasure? The evoking of an aesthetic experience as an end in itself? . . . If this latter is the case then it would seem that art does not exist for its own sake but rather as a means to this end. This seems a plausible, if somewhat limiting, suggestion. Apart from establishing a criterion for justification it also affords a means by which one painting could be judged to be better than another: namely that the capacity of one work of art to evoke aesthetic experiences is greater than that of another. This capacity may not be actualised, or indeed verifiable, or quantified in terms of the number of people who can realise the capacity, but this does not mean that it need not be true, nor that this capacity is not a property of the object. Aesthetic value could therefore be said to be a property of the object - that is, a capacity to produce an aesthetic experience under the right conditions - which can be judged by an elite of critics.

So far, I have raised the epistemic question: How do we 'know' whether or not our aesthetic judgements are objective or subjective? Let me now turn to the semantic question: What does it actually 'mean' to say that an aesthetic judgement is objective or subjective? A dictionary definition provides a useful skeleton that can, I hope, be fleshed out during the course of this thesis.

'Objective' refers to that which relates to objects which actually exist, concretely and independently of the percipient's mind - that is, independent of the process of cognition. 'Objectivism' refers to the doctrine that knowledge based on sense-perceptions corresponds to reality, and that the state of being objective refers to the ability to free oneself from personal prejudice in judgement or assessment. Richard J. Bernstein puts this in unequivocal terms:

> By 'objectivism,' I mean the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness . . . Objectivism is closely related to foundationalism and the search for an Archimedean point. The objectivist maintains that unless we can ground philosophy, knowledge, or language in a rigorous manner we cannot avoid radical skepticism.[9]

Objectivity, then, is by turns ontological, universal, and epistemological in character - knowledge that is not objective can, according to this theory, only be pseudo-knowledge. The amount of agreement about an objective judgement is irrelevant because the aesthetic value is ontologically there. Its correlative, the 'subjective', is that which does not correspond to external reality, but rather arises from, and is relative to, one's own mind and feelings. The subject is dependent upon the sense-data of the object - as, for instance, with such dispositional properties as 'deliciousness' - and the object is dependent upon the subject, insofar as nothing is knowable without a knowing mind.

Monroe C. Beardsley has taken this definition further:

> First, an aesthetic experience is one in which attention is firmly fixed upon heterogeneous but interrelated components of a phenomenally objective field - visual or auditory patterns, or the characters and events in literature . . . in such an experience, as when we are deeply absorbed in the tension of a visual design or in the developing design of music, the distinction between phenomenal objectivity and phenomenal subjectivity itself tends to disappear . . . the eye is kept on the object, and the object controls the experience, but of course the connotation is more intimate, for the object, which is a perceptual object, also appears _in_ the experience as its phenomenally objective field.[10]

As these definitions apply to aesthetic theory, then, the difference is this: an objectivist believes that the properties that make an object aesthetically valuable are properties of the object itself; a subjectivist believes that the aesthetic value lies not in the properties of the object but in the experience of the judging subject. For the subjectivist, aesthetic value is always characterised by a personal response.

It is my contention that aesthetic value concerns not only the object, and the experience of the object, but also the relation between the two.

The above description is intended as a framework on which to build a definition. In my view, most theories concerning this subjective/objective debate have in common one methodological weakness. Namely, they start with the conclusion that aesthetic judgements must be either one or the other, and then set out to confirm this by, as it were, working backwards, arranging their arguments to agree with the questionable or, at least, circumstantial 'evidence' of their conclusions. As an alternative to this approach I shall attempt to strengthen my argument by acknowledging its weaknesses. My approach may not be radical, exactly, but I hope, insofar as it is eclectic, and insofar as it weighs up the pros and cons of both the subjective and the objective schools of thought, it is at least pragmatically compromising. These two schools of thought can perhaps best be understood in terms of a continuum of aesthetic judgements. On the one hand there is what I will call the Humean legacy which seems 'objectivist' in character. This has been inherited by the likes of Sibley, Osborne, Beardsley, Pepper, Best, Seldon and Morawski. On the other hand there is the Kantian legacy, subjectivist (or intersubjectivist) in character, the inheritors of which might be said to include, Tolstoy, Freud, Bell, Croce, Bullough, Ducasse, and, more recently, Bleich. There is a middle ground, of sorts, tentatively explored by the likes of Munro and Heyl, but on the whole this middle ground remains largely unoccupied. In both camps the theories are characterised by a concentration on one particular aspect of aesthetic judgement to the exclusion of others (as with Sibley on 'properties', or Croce on 'expression'); and on one particular art form to the exclusion of others (as with the application of Kant's theory to painting

or music but not to literature). I accept that I am guilty here of oversimplifying the theories of the abovementioned philosophers and aestheticians merely in order to illustrate a point. They do not fit as neatly into the two camps as I have implied. Hume and Kant, for instance, are more alike in their thinking than different. But, insofar as Hume believes a standard of taste is possible (even though beauty is in the eye of the beholder) and insofar as Kant believes a standard of taste is impossible (although others 'ought' to agree with our disinterested judgements), I think my point is worth illustrating. In my view there has been, to date, no truly comprehensive and eclectic consideration of this area of research.

If an aesthete is one who believes in art for arts sake, and a philistine one who believes that art has an instrumental value, then I admit to being a philistine. Apart from anything else, the art for art's sake formula suffers from a logical circularity inasmuch as it depends upon a concept of art which two aesthetes might disagree on. On the face of it my thesis may seem neo-Humean in character. Certainly I have a deal of sympathy for the ideas expressed in Hume's Standard of Taste (1757), but I also entertain certain misgivings about it. In Chapter Two I offer a detailed exposition of Hume's theory, and in succeeding chapters I discuss various contemporary philosophers who, it could be said, are following in the Humean tradition. In Chapter Three I balance Hume's 'objectivist' theory against Kant's more ambitious and influential theory of 'universal subjectivity', indicating in both cases what I consider the shortcomings of these theories to be. The remaining chapters are arranged according to themes rather than specifically dealing with one school of thought. In Chapter Four, for instance, I suggest certain 'relevant' criteria according to which aesthetic judgements might be made. In Chapter Five I suggest that 'relevant' reason-giving over a

period of time, in the context of a tradition of protracted disputes between an elite of 'experts' within the critical institutions, affords a means by which judgements might be justified. In Chapter Six I suggest that these judgements can be supported by reference to concepts, and good and bad examples of a given kind. In Chapter Seven I go on to suggest that judgements can be supported by reference to 'relevant' interpretations. In Chapter Eight I examine the form that such reasons might take: namely, pointing to properties, and using aesthetic terms. In Chapter Nine I argue that aesthetic judgements can be relatively objective in terms of their being context-specific. In Chapter Ten I discuss whether or not aesthetic taste is acquired or innate, and whether or not it is profitable to compare the relative objectivity of aesthetic judgements with the absolute objectivity of scientific judgements. Finally, in Chapter Eleven, I compare Jungian interpretations of symbolic content, with Gestalt interpretations of, and affective responses to, form. By suggesting certain hypothetical means by which such interpretations, and subsequent judgements, might be tested, I conclude that interpretation of both form and content admit of a degree of objectivity. These, then, are my main areas of research. Obviously these areas are not exhaustive and many of them actually overlap with other broader issues in the field of aesthetics in particular, and within the disciplines of philosophy and psychology in general. Bearing this in mind it might be useful to categorically state at the outset which areas I shall not be attempting to cover. These are: aesthetics in nature; moral judgements; and judgements of the sublime. Those areas which I shall be referring to in a strictly limited sense only are: Physical taste - for example, of food and drink - and physical beauty. For reasons of space I shall confine my examples to paintings, works of literature and, to a lesser extent, music - rather than to architecture, sculpture and dance.

Chapter Two

An Objectivist's View: Hume and the British Empiricist Tradition

An obvious starting point for any discussion of modern aesthetics has to be David Hume's Of the Standard of Taste. After briefly outlining Hume's argument I shall go on, in the next chapter, to consider his views in relation to those of Immanuel Kant. By attempting a detailed analysis of Kant's profoundly influential Critique of judgement, I hope then to establish a more precise vocabulary with which to tackle such issues as taste, judgement, universality, disinterest, and intersubjectivity in subsequent chapters.

David Hume regards the faculty of taste as being an emotionally inspired form of discrimination. In his essay Of the Standard of Taste he applies an empiricist argument to the principle of aesthetic taste and judgement. He proposes that:

> It is natural for us to seek a standard of taste; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another.[1]

Natural though this search may be, any 'rule' uncovered by it must surely be questionable. Is it possible to establish an objectively valid method by means of which a person might formulate such a rule? and, if so, in what way would such a person be qualified to implement it? To an extent, Hume affirms the first question in his answer to the second. For Hume, a legitimate aesthetic judgement of taste can be made if and only if the person making it 1) has a 'delicate sentiment'; 2) has familiarity with the given art form - in order that

comparisons might be made. 3) has a 'strong sense' (that is, a capacity for reason); and 4) is not prejudiced.

The problem with Hume's notion of a competent judge is, of course, that it can only be useful if it can be defined without circularity. Thus it is not enough to define the competent judge as being one who usually makes competent judgements, since it is the competent judge who has to decide which judgements are competent. ~~Baring~~ Bearing this in mind it may be profitable here to examine Hume's criteria for the competent judge in detail, and, later, to suggest how the criteria might be practically applied to, say, our appreciation of Modern Art.

Hume addresses himself to the relation of our everyday experience of nature and our aesthetic experience of art. Both, he would argue, appeal to our emotions, whether real or imagined. The subsequent associations - of sympathy, nostalgia, or whatever other 'internal' sentiment - may be both pleasurable and informative. This pleasure is immediate and may be transferable through association. Judgements based upon this pleasure can be corrected through argument and reflection. In this Hume is influenced by Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) who took from the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) the concept of an inward eye or sense that grasps harmony and beauty, and expanded it to account for a special faculty of aesthetic appreciation which sees harmony and beauty in objects that have suitably harmonious and beautiful qualities.[2] Whilst Hutcheson's formulation of this 'sense' assumes neither intellect nor association of ideas it does, nevertheless, afford a non-relativistic standard of judgement. This is in virtue of the somewhat slippery means by which he defines beautiful objects as being those that present 'a compound ratio of uniformity and variety'[3] in that, if one term were held to be constant, variability in the other term would determine the

beauty or otherwise of the object. Variations in preference - beauty being in the eye of the beholder - are explained, by Hutcheson, in terms of the varying expectations with which different subjects approach the object. Hutcheson's concept of sense can be said to be taken up by Hume in his conception of 'a delicate sentiment', that is, a creative and associative imagination. Like Hutcheson, Hume supposes that there are qualities present in certain objects that a qualified percipient can inductively inquire into in order to establish certain standards for judgement. For Hume this 'imaginative' exercise confirms the value of our aesthetic experiences, insofar as it evokes ideas which unite us with, and allow us better to respond to, nature. In Hume's words:

> One obvious cause, why many feel not the proper sentiment of beauty, is the want of the delicacy of imagination, which is requisite to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions. This delicacy everyone pretends to: Every one talks of it; and would reduce every kind of taste or sentiment to its standard.[4]

Hume's concern with the faculty of the imagination has precedents in the associative theories of John Locke (1632-1704). However, whereas Locke believes that we are perfectible - because we are born into the world with minds like blank sheets of paper - Hume believes that we are not so malleable, and that we have certain passions which are innate and constant throughout human history. This, for Hume, is evidenced by the 'universal beauty' and 'timelessness' of Homer and Virgil whose observations point to the permanence of the human condition. For Hume, then, this passion, like common sense, is a product of the imagination - and some people are more imaginative than others. In his words:

> Though some objects, by the structure of the mind, be naturally calculated to give pleasure, it is not to be expected, that in every individual the pleasure will be equally felt. Particular incidents . . . hinder the true from conveying to the imagination the proper sentiment and perception.[5]

How does Hume account for this apparent relativity? It

should follow that since a standard of taste is, for Hume, to be derived from the subjective mechanisms of the mind, there can be no absolute cognitive authority. And yet Hume's ideal man of taste is held to be precisely that. As he puts it:

> . . . the judgement of one man had been preferable to that of another.[6]

In exercising his taste Hume's ideal man employs general terms which have a universally understood and therefore objective application; such as 'propriety', 'simplicity', 'veracity' and 'elegance'. However, he goes on to say:

> When critics come to particulars, this seeming unanimity vanishes; and it is found, that they had affixed a very different meaning to their expressions . . . The difference among men is there oftener found to lie in generals, than in particulars; and to be less in reality than in appearance.[7]

So how can this ideal man of taste justifiably draw universal conclusions and aesthetic judgements from these particulars? For Hume the empirical meaning of a word is related to a particular idea and the content of this idea is derived from experience. Without such experience the word has no meaning. This causation can only be understood in terms of necessary connections of events in the imagination which are based upon past experience. He argues that:

> It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasoning a priori, or can be esteemed abstract conclusions of the understanding, from comparing those habitudes and relations of ideas, which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience; nor are they any thing but general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages.[8]

This in turn is related to Hume's emphasis upon 'practice' and comparative analysis. Simply by examining the appearance of an art object we cannot immediately recognise the 'cause' of its aesthetic 'effect'. This must be inferred through accumulated experience or 'practice', rather than through some a priori axiom. Paradoxically, Hume's ideal man of taste

justifies his 'objective' critical conclusions and expectations by 'subjectively' drawing from his past experiences:

> But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to increase and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art.[9]

Hume goes on to suggests that there is a useful analogy to be made here between the taste exercised in our mental discrimination of art and our bodily appreciation of food and drink. The usefulness of this comparison is limited. As I read him, the point Hume is making here is that if a degree of objectivity is possible in such a paradigm of subjectivity as wine tasting then it must surely be possible in art appreciation . . . But, our appreciation of wine is contingent upon the 'normality' of our metabolism. We may disagree with the wine connoisseurs judgement because we are physically allergic to that particular wine. In such a context the proof of the pudding must surely be in the eating, and one man's meat <u>can</u> be another man's poison. There is no real equivalent to this in art appreciation. Even if I do not like a painting for some subjective reason - like it fell on my head when I was a baby - I can still appreciate why others consider it to be 'good'. By 'good', though, I do not necessarily mean 'beautiful'. I shall discuss this distinction in Chapter Four, but, insofar as it relates to Hume, I think it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that beauty <u>is</u> in the eye of the beholder. According to Hume:

> Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.[10]

For Hume then, this quality of beauty is not in the art object but in the sentiment of the subject perceiving it. Yet Hume seems to contradict himself by comparing such beauty in beautiful art, to the 'goodness' in good wine. He alludes to the story in <u>Don Quixote</u> about the two wine connoisseurs who by turns detect the taste of leather and iron in a hogshead of

wine. When a key with a leather thong tied to it is found at the bottom, their respective delicacy of taste is confirmed. From this Hume concludes that;

> . . . it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings.[11]

What qualities does Hume have in mind? Presumably he is not referring to qualities of 'beauty' because he has already concluded that they are in the mind. Perhaps he has in mind the 'general' terms referred to above - such as qualities of 'propriety', 'simplicity', 'veracity' and 'elegance'. For the ideal man of taste to apply these terms appropriately he must have sound judgement. According to Hume everyone has two states: one sound and one defective. It is the uniformity of the sound state that affords us a standard of taste:

> Amidst all the variety and caprice of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind.[12]

Conversely, it is the defective state that makes for 'bad' taste.[13] Hume:

> Where men vary in their judgements, some defect or perversion in the faculties may commonly be remarked; and there is just reason for approving one taste, and condemning another.[14]

As already mentioned however, this 'bad' taste may also be explained in terms of a person's lack of 'practice':

> A man, who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him.[15]

Although attractive, Hume's argument - that taste is the same in all men, yet not all men are qualified to act upon it - seems paradoxical. It relies on too many psychologistic assumptions that are difficult to prove or disprove. It is to Kant we must look in an attempt to resolve this paradox . . .

There are, however, certain aspects of Hume's argument that are worth considering in relation to the problematic issue of taste in, say, Modern Art. First, 'beauty' seems an inappropriate term to apply to certain Abstract Expressionist paintings, so, like Hume, we should perhaps consider substitute terms - Beardsley's intensity, complexitity and unity, for instance. Second, many modern theorists would take issue with Hume's notion that art has an ulterior function: namely, that through the exercise of imagination required to appreciate art we become better equipped to appreciate nature. They would argue, instead, that all art is autonomous (as Croce and Collingwood do, for instance). But there are some theorists who would agree with Hume's suggestion that art has a function (George Orwell's argument that all art is propaganda, for instance). Third, 'imagination' has an important role to play in the appreciation of abstract art. People imagine they see faces in arbitrary arrangements of colour, for instance.[16] Fourth, Hume's conception of expertise is still relevant: unless a person is familiar with the basic tenets of Modernism; is aware of the traditions and innovations which Modernist paintings represent; and has some 'Modern' frames of reference with which to compare and contrast a given painting; the painting will be inaccessible to him or her.[17]

The British empirical aestheticians of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries can also be said to have contributed to our understanding of the importance of psychological perception and interpretation in art evaluation. For instance, Locke's suggestion that sensation is the main source of pleasure and pain, and hence of aesthetic value; or, Joseph Addison's theory that our response to the aesthetic properties of a given art object is an imagined pleasure; or Hume's associationist theory, that is, the emotional qualities that we associate with certain properties of an art object; or Burke's theory that we

experience the beautiful and the sublime according to different psychological faculties . . .

Burke's Essay on Taste[18] of 1759 can perhaps be seen as a theoretical departure from Hume's position and an anticipation of Kant's. It concerns the aesthetic perception and judgement of 'works of imagination'. Like other Eighteenth century empiricist aestheticians, Burke asks whether aesthetic perception can be universal in the way that discursive knowledge is, and, if so, whether it is learned or innate? Burke's answer to these questions seems to lie somewhere between Hume's presupposition that judgements of taste can be universal but not because there is a separate faculty of the mind responsible for aesthetic perception, and Hutcheson's view that there is such a separate faculty, or 'inner eye'. Burke considers that our aesthetic perceptions can be universal because they involve the faculty of reason - through which conceptual, discursive knowledge can be said to be universal - as well as the faculty of imagination.

From this supposition Burke then asks if there are any principles - governing the faculty of the imagination - which could inform a standard of taste and, conversely, if there are principles of taste which could define the faculty of the imagination? He concludes that there are:

> . . . weather there are any principles, on which the imagination is affected, so common to all, so grounded and certain, as to supply the means of reasoning satisfactorily about them. And such principles of Taste, I fancy there are.[19]

Burke also suggests that taste can be considered in Lockian terms, that is, as an interplay of various other faculties - such as pleasure, passion, reception, creation, sensation and judgement - rather than just that of reason and imagination:

> . . . made up of a perception of the primary pleasures of sense, of the

secondary pleasures of imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty . . . [20]

This capacity for unifying and recreating reality and rendering it meaningful seems in some respects to be an anticipation of Gestalt psychology [as discussed in Chapter Eleven]. Because sensual perception is universal (the imagination being the representation of the senses); and because epistemological perception (the faculty of reason) is universal; so, Burke concludes, aesthetic perception (being a combination of the two) must also be universal:

. . . there must be just as close an agreement as in the senses of men.[21]

In this respect the faculty of imagination - and thus of taste - involves the epistemological recreation and imitation of sensual perceptions of an art object. Burke's next problem is to determine the criterion by which these 'imitations' of the art object can be said to be correct, that is, to establish an objective criterion by which the imitating perception can be said to correspond to the imitated art object. This he proposes to do by referring to the faculty of judgement or 'reason'. For Burke, then, aesthetic perception implies aesthetic judgement. The pleasure derived from a true imitation of an art object (that is, a true representation of it recreated in the imagination) is universal because it is based on experience. In other words he applies the traditional empirical criterion - for making experiential judgements as to the truth of discursive knowledge - to aesthetic perception. According to Burke, then, the justification of aesthetic perceptions depends upon a correct usage of concepts and upon factual (experience-based) knowledge of the object. The imagination involves the interplay of sensual perception and conceptual knowledge. The principles of taste can thus, for Burke, be defined in terms of this interplay of the senses, the imagination, and the faculty of judgement.

For a response to the theories of Hume and Burke and the other British empiricists, one must turn to Kant. Kant partly agrees with Hume that there are no innate ideas - meaning things known prior to sense experience - but, like Burke, he is not prepared to accept that this applies to all forms of knowledge. Kant believes in a priori concepts (which Hume does not) which are sometimes confused with innate ideas. They make possible knowledge which is independent of experience. Like Burke, Kant locates aesthetic judgement in the faculty of the imagination and makes a (partial) connection between the universality of aesthetic perception and conceptual knowledge. Our knowledge of the properties of certain objects may, Kant claims, be related to the 'nature' of the object, rather than to the thing-in-itself. Furthermore, Kant suggests that our knowledge of the object is as much dependent on the apparatus we have for knowing, as on what there actually is to know about the object. Kant makes a distinction between productive imagination (a synthesis of conceptual and intuitive knowledge of the object) and reproductive imagination (merely an imitation of the object, in Burke's sense). It is in the former that Kant locates aesthetic perception. Kant therefore refers to 'reflective' judgements of taste in terms of an imitation of the form of conceptual knowledge; that is, in terms of the free-play of the faculties of (productive) imagination and judgement. According to Kant, the imagination works on sensual intuitions which afford a preconceptual understanding of the work of art. In other words, it affords an aesthetic perception of it which is universal in virtue of its intersubjectivity.

Chapter Three

A Subjectivist's View: Kant's _Critique of Judgement_

Whilst Hume believes that all meaningful propositions must be either analytic a priori or synthetic a posteriori, Kant proposes a third term, that of synthetic a priori. To a degree then, Kant's _Critique of Judgement_ can be seen as a synthesis of empiricism and rationalism. In it, he offers a profoundly ambitious argument for the universal subjectivity of aesthetic judgements of taste.

Kant believes we have three cognitive faculties: reason, understanding, and sensibility. It is in the second faculty, of judgement, that Kant locates the aesthetic interest. Judgement, for Kant, entails thinking of a particular category as it is included in a universal principle. If this universal principle is given, the judgement, which includes the particular, is determinant. If only the particular is given, without the universal, the judgement is reflective. Whilst the determinant judgement is empirical, the reflective judgement is autonimous and therefore aesthetic, as, for instance, when it concerns non-dependent beauty. For Kant there are no degrees of beauty - something either is or is not beautiful. I doubt this, but if it is true and beauty is to be our one and only criterion for judging art, it is going to be an extremely limiting one. We are able, surely, to make valid comparative judgements within a given canon. Also, even if a comparative judgement is only being made between that which is beautiful and that which is not beautiful, surely such a judgement admits of degrees of beauty. The object that is beautiful, for instance, is more beautiful than the object which is ugly. Also, the

contemplation of one beautiful object may be more pleasurable than the contemplation of another and so the one might be considered to be more beautiful than the other.

For Kant, the non-dependent beauty of the object is separated from the practical interests and scientific concerns of the subject. The object is not a means to an end and so the subject ought to be 'disinterested'. It is to this experience that Kant addresses his argument.

The first part of Critique of Judgement, entitled Analytic of the Beautiful,[1] is divided into four 'moments': relation, quantity, quality and modality. These are interdependent - satisfying one criterion assumes that the other three criteria will also, necessarily, be satisfied. Kant summarises these 'moments' as follows:

> i) Taste is the faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful.[2]
>
> ii) The beautiful is that which pleases universally without [requiring] a concept.[3]
>
> iii) Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, so far as this is perceived in it without any representation of a purpose.[4]
>
> iv) The beautiful is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of a necessary satisfaction.[5]

It is worth examining each of these moments in turn:

i) According to Kant, the pleasure to be had from contemplating a representation of beauty is located in the free-play of the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding.[6] Kant offers no adequate explanation, however, for the aesthetic pleasure to be had from gaining knowledge, and from pure understanding, as, for instance, is the case in the contemplation of mathematical formuli. (Presumably he would argue that such pleasure would not be aesthetic, because,

for him, the beautiful object cannot be a means to an end.) Kant maintains, then, that a non-conceptual relation is stated between the representation and a disinterested satisfaction:

> The judgement of taste is therefore not a judgement of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be no other than subjective.[7]

Whereas a determinant judgement of an object is empirical, and therefore logical, a reflective (intuitive) judgement of a representation of beauty is, for Kant, perceptual, contemplative, reflective, discerning, and therefore aesthetic. Kant offers no adequate explanation of how such a judgement would be different from a judgement of non-beauty (ugliness) except to say that such a judgement would be non-aesthetic. Kant goes on to claim that the 'satisfaction' which determines the aesthetic judgement of taste must be 'disinterested'. However, as Mary McCloskey argues,[8] there is no reason to believe that that which gives us disinterested pleasure is any less idiosyncratic than that which gives us interested pleasure. Furthermore, as McCloskey argues elsewhere, disinterested pleasure only tells us what aesthetic pleasure is not, not what it is. Following from this I propose an alternative to Kant's view, namely that we might learn what aesthetic pleasure is by referring to the objects in which it is taken. In other words, we might define art by example according to certain concepts. [See Chapter Six]

It should be noted that by 'taste' (in the above quotation) Kant is referring to 'the beautiful' as opposed to 'the pleasant' and 'the good', both of which, for him, are 'interested', and both of which belong to the other faculties (sensibility and reason). Kant defines 'the pleasant' as being that which pleases the senses in sensation; and 'the good' as being that which pleases intellectually and conceptually through its purposiveness. This pleasure may be mediate or immediate, depending on whether an object is useful or good in

itself. 'The beautiful' and 'the pleasant' always please immediately. Both pleasure in 'the good' and in 'the beautiful' are universal, communicable, and necessary, unlike in 'the pleasant' (which is private). 'The good' communicates pleasure through a concept whereas 'the beautiful' communicates pleasure through 'The Form of Finality'. However, Kant argues that only 'the beautiful' is aconceptual, that is, free from interests of sense or reason, and is therefore the only one which can be truly unprejudiced.[9] For reasons I shall explain in Chapter Six, I believe our critical evaluations of art can also be understood in terms of Kant's formulation of 'the good' as oppose to being exclusively understood in terms of his formulation of 'the beautiful'. . .[10]

ii) I find Kant's account of the second moment more persuasively argued. In this, Kant claims that the satisfaction derived from contemplation of 'the beautiful' is, unlike sensual pleasure, universal (although it must also be singular in logical form, as in '<u>this</u> rose is beautiful'). It follows from his argument in the first moment that because this satisfaction is disinterested it must meet with universal assent. Because, for Kant, the disinterested judgement of 'the beautiful' is not peculiar to the individual, the individual will presuppose that everyone shares his judgement. So far so good. At this point, however, Kant denies the obvious conclusion to be drawn from this: namely, that concepts are involved. He argues instead that the individual will assume that the 'beauty' he or she is judging is a characteristic of the object, and that the individual will <u>think</u> his or her 'conceptual' judgement of it is determinant and logical (when in actual fact, according to Kant, it is referential and aesthetic). If his or her judgement <u>were</u> conceptual, Kant argues, there would be no transition to the feeling of pleasure and pain. But why not? Kant offers an explanation:

. . . the judgement of taste, accompanied with the consciousness of

> separation from all interest, must claim validity for every man, without this universality depending on objects. That is, there must be bound up with it a title to subjective universality.[11]

For all its partial success in avoiding the question, Kant's answer has inadvertently opened up a Pandora's box of polemics, viz. 'subjective universality'. This is the phrase with which Kant attempts to resolve the antinomy of taste. He deals with this problem more thoroughly in a later chapter, but insofar as the problem relates to the second moment, he suggests that everyone may have their own taste of sense (as in 'the pleasant') or of reason (as in 'the good'), but that these are not aesthetic tastes:

> . . . it is not open to men to say: Every one has his own taste. This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste, that is, no aesthetic judgement capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all men.[12]

Now, the three forms of pleasure - in the sensation, in the beautiful, and in the good - locate their pleasure in sensation; reflection on perceptual form; and concepts, respectively. Only taste that is universal, as in 'the beautiful', can claim to be aesthetic. Having proposed this Kant then goes on to claim that if a person were to qualify a judgement of beauty, as in, 'this object is beautiful <u>for me</u>', then it cannot be beauty he or she is referring to - but, rather, pleasantness or goodness. This is because a judgement of beauty, according to Kant, does not need qualifying. I find Kant's interesting account unsatisfactory on two counts: First, despite his claim [in the fourth moment, section two] that aesthetic feelings are 'universally communicable' I fail to see how this is possible without qualification. If I claim that my judgement 'This <u>is</u> beautiful' is universally communicable I do so, according to Kant, on the grounds that others <u>ought</u> to agree with my judgement <u>because</u> it is disinterested. The 'because' here is a qualification.[13] Second, beautiful objects need not always give pleasure and, conversely, ugly objects can

sometimes give pleasure. As McCloskey points out, Kant's reasoning would seem to imply that the opposite of this is also true, that is; that a judgement of a non-beautiful object must needs express a communicable and universally necessary displeasure that is similarly non-conceptual but in the absence of the Form of Finality.

It is worth pointing out here just how forcibly Kant iterates his distinction between conceptual 'good' and non-conceptual 'beauty'. He refers to three variants of 'the good': (I) good in terms of the usefulness of the object (good for); (II) good in and of itself (for instance, moral good); and (III) good 'as' a given kind. Each is conceptual. McCloskey again:

> That we can demand universal assent and say that anyone ought to assent to our judgement turns upon their applying the same concepts to the objects in question and upon their bringing the same rules to bear upon the objects as we do. It is by way of the concept and the rules that we 'extort approval'.[14]

But Kant wants to have his cake and eat it too because, by contrast, 'the beautiful' is still universal, but non-conceptual - that is, it commands a non-governable 'ought'. Universal validity is not the same thing as logical universality. If I say that 'I find the colours in this painting pleasing' then that statement is universally valid insofar as everyone must accept that it is true for me. However, the statement 'the colours in this painting are pleasing', would be valid if and only if it were actually, phenomenally, true - according to certain 'universal' criteria for pleasure. Does it not follow from this that Kant is really arguing that an objective universal validity is also subjectively valid, to the extent that everyone shares the same 'concept'? I suspect that it does. This said, however, it does not follow that a subjectively universal validity will necessarily be objectively valid. This is because, according to

Kant's formulation, there are no concepts available to share. This distinction is important for Kant because:

> . . . the aesthetical universality which is ascribed to a judgement must be of a particular kind, because it does not unite the predicate of beauty with the concept of the object, considered in its whole logical sphere, and yet extends it to the whole sphere of judging persons.[15]

As already stated, Kant believes that the subjective feeling of pleasure and pain is free from concepts; and is also singular. But surely, if this singular judgement is transformed by comparison into a concept, it may then become a logically universal judgement - as in 'the good'. Kant seems prepared to concede this point, albeit with qualification:

> I describe by a judgement of taste the rose that I see as beautiful. But the judgement which results from the comparison of several singular judgments, 'Roses in general are beautiful,' is no longer described simply as aesthetical, but as a logical judgement based on an aesthetical one.[16]

Kant seems quite justified in making this assumption about judgements of beauty in nature, however, the cross-over of this assumption into the realm of fine art is not necessarily a smooth one. A criticism often levied at his assumption is that judgements such as those concerning roses are periferal and secondary to those concerning fine art.[17] I think what is meant by this criticism is that judgements of specific works of art can be informed by an appeal to other examples of their kind, but that there is no corresponding appeal to objects in nature (excepting the extent to which both refer to perceptual form). I think it is misleading to assume, as Kant does, that there is little or no distinction between beauty in nature and beauty in art. One important distinction is that unlike, say, a rose, an art object is produced, therefore we need some sort of concept as to what it is a production of (what it is intended to be) for example, a painting as a work of art rather than a doormat:

> If . . . the object is presented as a product of art, and is as such to be declared beautiful, then, seeing that art always presupposes an end in the

> cause (and its causality), a concept of what the thing is intended to be must first be laid at its basis.[18]

Kant seems to be claiming here that we should attend to beauty in art in the same way that we attend to beauty in nature. But how can beauty in fine art avoid being, at least partially, conceptual and dependent? Surely in the above quotation Kant is actually claiming that art imitates nature and so is representational and so, by implication, does involve concepts? There is also another objection which Kant invites by his singular judgement as to the beauty of the rose: How can beauty ever be anything other than dependent, unless it is referring to an abstraction - which plainly the 'concrete' rose I hold in my hand is not? or unless it is referring to some Platonic Ideal (conceptual) Form of beautiful roses, in which case it would not be a singular judgement, but rather a judgement of a rose in relation to the Ideal class of roses? According to Kant, a rose is beautiful in virtue of its abstract form, not in virtue of its being a rose. But what if, as McCloskey speculates, a dependent beauty is taken as a paradigm? The universality of such a beauty will be conceptual, that is, in reference to an object which is judged as an example of its kind, and not, therefore, as an object which is autonomous. The problem here is that, if not actually ambiguous, Kant's theory does lend itself to misinterpretation. Beauty is non-dependent in that it depends on the (abstract) form of the object, and not on what kind of a thing it is. Thus a rose, for Kant, is not beautiful qua rose but qua the spatial relationships of its parts to one another. Admittedly, this does not imply that there is no such thing as pure beauty, but it does imply that if a particular rose is taken as a paradigm then we are in the realm of dependent beauty . . .

iii) Let us look at Kant's third moment. This is concerned with the purposiveness of the form of an object. Beauty, for Kant, does not have a purpose. He explains that 'purpose' is

the object of a concept; the concept is the cause of the object; and the cause of the object of the concept is its purposiveness. In short, the judgement of taste cannot be determined by the representation of an objective purpose:

> Every purpose, if it be regarded as a ground of satisfaction, always carries with it an interest - as the determining ground of the judgement - about the object of pleasure. Therefore no subjective purpose can lie at the basis of the judgement of taste.[19]

A universally communicable judgement of taste can, for Kant, only be determined by the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object, which, paradoxically, has no purpose or concept. However, as Eva Schaper argues:

> No concepts of any kind . . . are thinkable without the logically prior 'pure concepts of the understanding', the categories. So if judging is an operation of the understanding, then subjectively valid judgements cannot be exceptions on that score. If aesthetic judgements of taste 'unify representations' as all judgements do, then concepts cannot be totally absent.[20]

If this is true - that aesthetic judgements are not strictly autonomous and subjective, but rather that they refer to certain criteria and therefore, of necessity, imply the use of certain concepts - then there is a serious weakness in Kant's argument[21]. This is not to say, however, that the beauty of art can be judged by concepts alone. On the contrary, as I have already suggested, beauty is a phenomenal rather than a noumenal or deontological property. As Karl Ameriks puts it:

> The remark that aesthetic properties are not found in the concepts of things . . . is still compatible (in Kant's world) with judgements of beauty functioning just as objectively as ordinary particular empirical judgements.[22]

But is Kant arguing that there is complete autonomy? Not necessarily. That is, he may be arguing that there is some degree of autonomy, but not necessarily giving licence to a full-blown theory of art for art's sake. Rather, as McCloskey argues, it is more a case of beauty for beauty's sake:

> Kant does not deny that works of art have 'meaning' nor that their subject matter is relevant to an aesthetic understanding of them. Nor does he think that their 'meaning' or subject matter contributes nothing to their aesthetic value. He thinks that works of art express aesthetic ideas and that aesthetic ideas are what genius contributes to a work of art, and hence that of which in addition to considering beauty we must take note in making an estimate of them.[23]

Kant also claims that taste cannot be acquired through imitation, but rather must be experienced first-hand. The proof of the pudding must be in the eating. As he puts it:

> . . . the archetype of taste, is a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself and according to which he must judge every object of taste, every example of judgement by taste, and even the taste of everyone.[24]

In this sense Kant refers to an ideal, or archetype of beauty. He defines the ideal as being the representation of an individual being, regarded as adequate to an idea or rational concept. Because this ideal, or norm, of beauty is a presentation rather than a concept it must come from the faculty of the imagination. For Kant, imagination is not associative, as it is for Hume, but rather is constitutive, meaning that it is a part of the nature of the experience that expresses it.

> If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the Object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding) we refer the representation to the Subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure.[25]

According to Kant the imagination synthesises the sensible intuition of an object and the concept of that object, in order that we might have an aesthetic experience of the object, which is free from concepts. This need not mean, however, that just because the object is perceived by a subject then the judgement of that subject will necessarily be subjective, any more than it should necessarily be objective. Ameriks again:

> It is a fundamental of Kant's general philosophy that <u>whenever</u> we determine qualities a posteriori we must do so via intuition and thus via some sensation which is subjective at least in the sense that it <u>exists</u> in

> us. Thus even when a tree is perceived as being really tall and green there occur sensations that exist merely subjectively. So, the fact that the kind of taste Kant is discussing requires discrimination by something subjective does not entail that what is discriminated should be called subjective.[26]

Surely then, an ideal of beauty must be fixed by its objective rather than subjective purposiveness, a purposiveness by means of which any judgement of taste derived from it will be, to some extent, intellectual? Consider Kant's position on this:

> . . . in whatever grounds of judgement an ideal is to be found, an idea of reason in accordance with definite concepts must lie as its basis, which determines a priori the purpose on which the internal possibility of the object rests.[27]

When Kant talks of 'objective purposiveness' he has in mind objects that have instrumental value (good for something) but what, he seems to be asking, is pure beauty good for, other than for the 'purpose' of contemplation, namely, being perceived as beautiful? . . . Well, just that. Beauty is good for satisfying the aesthetic interest. I may be accused of putting the cart before the horse here but this seems to be an unavoidable conclusion to draw from Kant's theory of intersubjectivity (in which 'subjective' judgements of taste, are equated with 'objective' judgements of experience). Let us reconsider this theory. If individual judgements of experience, that is, empirical judgements, are objective because they deal with objective correlatives or 'facts', then if such a judgement based on 'facts' x, y and z is true for one judging subject it must be true for all judging subjects. This need not be a necessary or universal truth, but, in its particularity and contingency, it does necessarily claim the assent of everyone. The same argument can be applied to individual judgements of taste insofar as such judgements may be true or false according to the criteria by which they were made, and, as such, true or false for everyone. Yet these judgements, according to Kant, are subjective whilst the former

are objective. Wherein lies the difference? If there is no difference (which would be consistent with a theory of intersubjectivity) then why does Kant seem to be claiming that judgements of experience are objective because they are either true or false, whereas judgements of taste are subjective because they are neither true nor false (although we do claim that they ought to accepted)? Surely this is inconsistent with his argument that aesthetic judgements of taste are not items of knowledge in a way that empirical judgements of experience might be. If all that he means by this is that to say empirically that a sculpture is curved is different from saying aesthetically that it is 'beautiful' then I would agree with him (although I would add that the former objective claim may well inform the latter subjective claim). But is that all he is saying? The argument here seems to pivot on whether Kant believes a work of art is 'subjectively' beautiful because it gives aesthetic pleasure, or whether it is aesthetically pleasurable because it is 'objectively' beautiful? To determine an answer to this we must look to Kant's fourth moment.

iv) In this moment Kant argues that 'the beautiful' has a necessary reference to aesthetic satisfaction. This is not a theoretically objective necessity, nor is it a practical one, but rather it is exemplary, insofar as others ought to take satisfaction in 'the beautiful':

> The judgement of taste requires the agreement of everyone, and he who describes anything as beautiful claims that everyone ought to give his approval to the object in question and also describe it as beautiful. The ought in the aesthetical judgement is therefore pronounced in accordance with all the data which are required for judging, and yet is only conditioned.[28]

A judgement of taste, then, asserts a conditioned subjective necessity which in turn is the idea of a common sense. This common sense is different from common understanding, insofar as it judges by feelings rather than concepts. Following from this Kant concludes that:

> The necessity of the universal agreement that is thought in a judgement of taste is a subjective necessity, which is represented as objective under the presupposition of a common sense.[29]

In other words, through common sense the 'necessity' shifts from being subjective to intersubjective. This sounds reasonable. According to Kant, it does this because there is a distinction to be made here between sensation and feeling, in respect of pleasure:

> The green colour of the meadow belongs to objective sensation, as the perception of an object of sense; but its agreeableness [belongs] to subjective sensation, by which no object is represented: i.e. to feeling, through which the object is regarded as an object of delight (which involves no cognition of the object).[30]

What Kant is saying here is that pleasure though not itself a representation nevertheless presupposes that its object has certain tertiary properties (greenness, for instance) which are pleasurable [See Chapter Nine for an explanation of primary and tertiary properties]. McCloskey again:

> The perceived green colour of the meadow pleases. The green colour as perceived can represent, but whether or not it does, the green colour is what is found pleasing. Pleasure in the perceived green colour cannot represent the meadow; and Kant adds, it cannot represent the perceiving subject either.[31]

Our judgements of beauty, then, are universal in virtue of their claim to common sense, or, more precisely, to common feeling. We need not assume that everyone will agree with these judgements, only that they ought to. Common sense is an ideal norm on which a rule may be based. On this point Kant seems to be in accord with Hume. As Kant puts it:

> The principle which concerns the agreement of different judging persons, although only subjective, is yet assumed as subjectively universal (an ideal necessary for everyone), and thus can claim universal assent (as if it were objective) provided we are sure that we have correctly subsumed [the particulars] under it.[32]

This distinction between subjective universality and

objective universality is crucial to Kant's argument. A subjective judgement as to the beauty of an individual object may be universally valid to all subjects but not necessarily to all objects - that is, it does not mean that the same judgement will necessarily apply to similar objects of that type. As Stephen Korner puts it:

> First, an objective empirical judgement refers to an object and not merely to the subjective impression. Second, an objective empirical judgement is, if true, true for everybody. It is not qualified by some such clause as 'in my consciousness' or 'as it seems to me' but is generally valid, i.e. for everybody in every consciousness or, in Kantian terms 'in consciousness in general'.[33]

For Kant, then, a judgement that has subjective validity need not have objective universal validity, but an objectively valid judgement must also have subjective validity. This is because objective judgements are universally valid both for the whole class of objects being judged and for all the subjects doing the judging; whereas subjectively valid judgements are always singular, that is, valid for the judging subjects only, and not for the whole class of objects being judged. The subjective universality of a synthetic a priori judgement of taste is, moreover, validated through a transcendental deduction. According to Kant, this deduction is arrived at along the following lines: Because determinate judgements bring together particular sense intuitions of representations (through the imagination) and general concepts (through understanding), it is possible to have empirical knowledge. The formal purposiveness of a beautiful object can provoke the disinterested free-play of the imagination which does not depend upon particular knowledge but rather on an awareness of this bringing together of the two cognitive faculties of understanding and imagination. This harmony of the two constitutes aesthetic pleasure. Since we assume that everyone shares this consciousness of the co-operation between imagination and understanding then we can, according to Kant,

legitimately claim our subjective judgements of taste to be universally valid.

Now, Kant maintains that this transcendental deduction can achieve its universal validity through reference to 'form' alone. In other words it does so without reference to either the sensation of, or the conception of, 'matter'. For Kant, it is not enough to assume universality through an appeal to the 'matter' of sensation (that is, 'sense data') as this is private and relative. Only the public 'form' can legitimately be referred to. This deduction need not justify the objective reality of any concept, it merely presumes that the subjective conditions of the judgement will be universal. Furthermore, this judgement must be made by the individual a priori, because taste claims autonomy. Yet these judgements are not autonomous, as becomes apparent when Kant makes a thinly-disguised appeal to the test-of-time principle of justifying taste (similar to that already encountered with Hume):

> . . . taste, because its judgement is not determinable by concepts and precepts, is just the one which most needs examples of what has in the progress of culture received the longest approval . . . [34]

Kant is here indulging in a sort of philosophical sleight-of-hand. After all, what are 'examples' if not 'concepts'?[35] We need examples or concepts of art <u>before</u> we can determine whether or not the object we are judging is, in fact, an art object. If P pretends to agree with a universal judgement about an 'example' of a 'good' work of art - when actually he does not like it - he probably does so in order to appear more sophisticated.[36] He has probably assumed that the 'fault' is in him, not in the artwork. He may assume that his 'fault' is that he is not knowledgeable enough about - familiar with enough examples of - the art form in question. Kant would, of course, take issue with this. He would argue that a judgement of beauty has nothing to do with knowledge, and that you cannot prove that an object is beautiful. As he puts it:

> . . . the agreement of others gives no valid proof of the judgement about beauty. Others might perhaps see and observe for him; and what many have seen in one way, although he believes that he has seen it differently, might serve him as an adequate ground of proof of a theoretical and consequently logical judgement . . . There is . . . no empirical ground of proof which would force a judgement of taste upon anyone.[37]

If this is true, which I doubt, then we are unable to justify our aesthetic judgements. In claiming that judgements of taste are synthetical (in that they are more than a concept or intuition of an object) and are determined only by a feeling of pleasure and pain (rather than an empirical cognition) Kant has weakened his claim to universality. As Schaper argues:

> The problem of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement is to provide a justification of the claim to universal validity that yet preserves this essential distinction between judgements of taste and objective knowledge claims. The justification must be in non-empirical terms appealing to something like laws or prescriptions. Judgements claiming to hold good for everyone need not themselves be a priori judgements - few in fact are; but they must be based on principles that can show what they claim to be justifiable.[38]

Kant offers no such principles. His antinomy of taste, therefore, cannot be resolved through an appeal to justification of judgement in the way that Schaper suggests. If, as Kant argues, we feel pleasure or pain in the representation of an object, we must also feel compelled to make an immediate judgement about it, in virtue of our rationality. Surely though, such 'rational' judgements, or choices, involve an exercise of reason, and such reasoning involves concepts? Again, Kant has worked a 'get-out' clause into his theory. He argues that we do not 'reason' our way to judgements of beauty, rather, we just 'recognise' beauty when we come across it or when we observe something in the right sort of way. Must we, then, still accept that there is no accounting for taste? With great equanimity Kant discusses this antinomy in terms of a thesis and antithesis. Either:

1) The judgement of taste is not based upon concepts, for otherwise it

would admit of controversy [would be determinable by proofs.]

Or:

2) The judgement of taste is based on concepts, for otherwise, despite its diversity, we could quarrel about it [we could not claim for our judgement the necessary assent of others].[39]

Kant suggests a middle course, namely that 'there may be a quarrel about taste'. His distinction depends upon how he defines the term 'concept'. Kant is forced to concede that our transcendental judgement of taste must refer to 'some' concept, insofar as it is necessarily universal. This concept, however, does not offer 'proof' of the judgement of taste - as it would of a judgement of reason or sense - and cannot be determined through intuition. It is the pure rational concept of the supersensible which refers to the sensible object. Kant attempts to avoid this apparent contradiction by stating that:

> . . . the judgement of taste is based on a concept . . . from which, however, nothing can be known and proved in respect of the object, because it is in itself undeterminable and useless for knowledge. Yet . . . has validity for everyone . . . because its determining ground lies perhaps in the concept of that which may be regarded as the supersensible substrate of humanity.[40]

According to Kant, then, the contradiction between the thesis and the antithesis, lies in the false assumption that the 'concept' - which in each case determines the universal validity of the judgement - is the same for both. And if thesis and antithesis may both be true then they cannot be (literally) contradictory. The judgement of taste in the thesis is not based on a determinate concept, whereas that of the antithesis is based on a concept, only it is an indeterminate one. The contradiction then, is resolved to the extent that both can be true, and so there may be a quarrel concerning taste. But, it follows also that if two contradictory statements can both be true, they can also both be false . . .

So where does this leave us? To what extent has Kant's theory of the aesthetic judgement of taste resolved the paradoxes that were evident in Hume's theory? Perhaps it hasn't. Perhaps one must accept the paradoxical nature of the antinomy of taste as an inevitable consequence of the self-contradiction inherent in the expression 'aesthetic judgement' - namely, that the subjective 'sensation' implied by the first term is negated by the intellectual, reasoned 'concept' it refers to in the second. Then again, perhaps one should simply err on the side of optimism and overlook this inconvenient paradox.

Although, on the whole, kant offers an appealing argument for the subjective universality of a disinterested judgement of taste, there are certain passages which lend themselves to accusations of obscurantism. I, for instance, remain confused as to how I might be able to make an immediate, disinterested, subjective judgement of beauty (that has necessary, universal validity) without referring to <u>any</u> objective concepts (not even of the form or content of the object). Perhaps Kant means by this that we must perceive the thing-as-a-whole (that is, as an object) but not as an object of any particular kind, that is, not as an ideal <u>of</u> something. For Kant, to judge a work of art <u>as</u> a work of art is not to make a pure judgement of taste, because the beauty (or ugliness) that is contemplated is dependent. If this is the case then I am at a loss to know just how I am supposed to come into contact with the art object in the first place. How do we distinguish between 'natural' objects, man-made objects, and man-made art objects? According to Kant we cannot. It follows that Duchamp's <u>Fountain</u> is as worthy of our aesthetic attention as is a painting by Rembrandt, just because someone, anyone, has said it is. The painting may embody other non-aesthetic (instrumental) values, as may the urinal, but these, according to Kant, are irrelevant to our aesthetic judgement of it. In short, I fail to see how

such non-conceptual aesthetic judgements can be universally communicated. As Kant himself might suggest, this failure may lie in my reasoning and not in his argument. But of this much I feel sure: non-conceptual aesthetic judgements can never mean other than 'I like this'. And 'I like this' does not mean 'This is good'.

I shall be returning to Kant's theory in subsequent chapters. In Chapters Six, Seven and Ten, for instance, I re-evaluate Kant's antinomy of taste; in Chapter Six I discuss concepts in terms of 'examples'; and in Chapter Eleven I suggest ways in which judgement is concerned with matter as well as 'Kantian' form. In the next chapter though, I shall, in contradiction of Kant, suggest certain concept-criteria according to which we might attempt to justify our aesthetic judgements.

gallery and derive pleasure from looking at a painting. I would not take issue with this. I would question, however, what kind of pleasure is being derived, and I would analyse the form in which the response is articulated.

Again arguably, if such an 'uninformed' person, P, were to claim that because a given painting occasioned him pleasure it was therefore 'good', we should, perhaps, respect his subjective judgement. However, we should also qualify our respect by asking him certain questions: First, is the painting good because it gives him pleasure or does it give him pleasure because it is good? Second, is he able to justify his judgement or explain wherein his pleasure consists? Third, is his judgement universally valid? And, if so, according to what relevant criteria has he made his judgement?

To be on the safe side P's answer to the first question should be 'both'. If, however, P answers in the negative to the second question, then I would assume that the answer to the third question will be similarly negative. In which case P could neither legitimately claim that his taste is discerning, nor that he is a worthy candidate for the title 'arbiter of taste'. Yet we all know a P and we all know that these are precisely the sort of claims he is prone to make. After all, P can appeal to the relativism of subjectivity which holds that (i) all judgements are subjective (ii) all subjectivities are equal, and therefore (iii) all judgements are equal.

However, as I.C. Jarvie[1] points out, because, according to subjectivism, any judgement made by anyone at any stage of their life is equal to any other judgement, the comments of an 'untrained' child should be taken just as seriously as the comments of a 'trained' expert. Furthermore, because we cannot improve our judgement through learning, and because we cannot consider one work to be better than another - other than that

'I' personally happen to prefer it - there can be no rational argument about judgement.

This, in a nutshell, is the subjectivist fallacy.

This fallacy seems to consist not so much in P's 'democratic right' to make judgements about art, so much as in the disproportionate 'value' subjectivists would have us place upon his ill-considered judgements. In other words, what it does not allow for is the 'Orwellian' possibility that: (iv) All judgements are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Scientists are not so accommodating. They do not entertain this possibility. Even the most hardened subjectivist would hesitate to question scientific objectivity. Consequently, most lay-persons would not presume to hold forth on the subject of invariable physical laws under a space co-ordinate transformation of uniform velocity, or whatever. At least let us hope not. Yet art 'experts' have an uphill struggle trying to persuade said lay-persons not to furnish them with their opinion on the merits or shortcomings of, say, Italian Futurist painting. Admittedly, the vocabulary employed in a discussion of quantum mechanics (a theory within which the constituent concepts have a precisely defined sense) is going to be more specialised and inaccessible than that employed in a discussion of Futurism, but, even so, the fact remains that the vocabulary of Futurism <u>is</u> specialised and inaccessible (take the concepts of 'simultaneity' and 'dynamism' for instance).

Before pursuing this analogy with science though, we should perhaps return to the fourth question asked of P: According to what relevant criteria has he made his judgement?

Is it stating the obvious to say that P should judge Italian Futurist paintings according to the criteria of Italian

Futurism?[2] As Theodore A. Gracyk puts it, to appreciate a work, as opposed to merely having a reaction, one needs to know about its tradition.[3] There are certain theories that help us to better understand and therefore better judge, Italian Futurism. How far will P's 'I don't know much about art, but I know it when I see it' line of argument take him?[4] My point is that, to the above extent, P's evaluations and interpretations should be category-relative and context-specific. In other words, there may be a correct and incorrect way for him to attend to art - in that he should no more judge Boccioni to be a bad Rococo painter, than he should judge Boucher to be a bad Futurist.

An amusing example of what can happen when this principle of judging 'as' is taken too far, though, is the notorious review of Lady Chatterley's Lover that appeared in the American magazine Field and Stream:

> Although written many years ago, Lady Chatterley's Lover has just been re-issued by Grove Press, and this fictional account of the day-to-day life of an English gamekeeper is still of considerable interest to outdoor-minded readers, as it contains many passages on pheasant-raising, the apprehending of poachers, ways to control vermin, and other chores and duties of the professional gamekeeper . . . Unfortunately, one is obliged to wade through many pages of extraneous material in order to discover and savour these side-lights on the management of a Midland shooting estate, and in this reviewer's opinion the book cannot take the place of J.R. Miller's Practical Gamekeeping.[5]

Doubtless 'this reviewer' would also consider that Lady Chatterly's Lover cannot take the place of The Joy of Sex as a practical guide to sexual intercourse! . . . He is making a valid judgement - that the book is barely worth reading - but for invalid reasons, or at least extremely trivial reasons in a literary sense. This said, however, the reasons that 'this reviewer' gives are descriptively true. It is his standards for judging that are at fault. After all, the relevance of a reason is partly constituted by its correlation with a relevant norm.

In other words, if 'this reviewer' were to pursue his criticism that Lawrence's writing is characterised by 'pages of extraneous material'; if he were to compound his criticism with reference to other examples of Lawrence's tortuously purple prose-style, or perhaps to Lawrence's heavy-handed symbolism; and if he were to place his criticisms in the context of the twentieth century English novel, by, for instance, comparing Lawrence's prose-style unfavourably to the controlled and lucid prose-style of Orwell or Koestler, then his 'literary' criticisms would be more objectively valid.

Another objection that is sometimes levelled at this sort of genre criticism is that it does not allow for those works which do not fit neatly into any particular genre, in other words, for uniqueness. If, for instance, there was only one Italian Futurist painting that had survived the last war (so that it could not be compared to any other examples of Italian Futurism) it would be difficult to assess its merits and, consequently, our appreciation of it would be impoverished. Perhaps, then, genre may only be one relevant criterion out of many possible criteria worth considering . . .

A less obviously answerable question should be asked: What is it _about_ the painting or novel that makes it worthy of 'art' status? that is, what are the properties we are looking for when we look at a work of art _as_ a work of art? Perhaps, ultimately, the reason this subject is such a preoccupation for aestheticians is that it offers a means by which we can attempt to answer the central question of the philosophy of art: viz. what _is_ art? Or, rather, what are the objects of aesthetic experience? Perhaps one way of answering this question is to ask another: viz. what is art _not_? Only when we have sufficiently characterised what the aesthetic experience _is_ can we go on to delimit the class of aesthetic objects. But who is qualified to judge the nature of this characterisation, and

according to what criteria? Perhaps, as Professor Diffey suggests, something is art if the right people say it is art. Arguably, the right people are those who offer reasoned justifications in support of their judgements. So how do these 'right people' go about justifying their claims, that is, according to what relevant criteria do they make their claims?

The traditional criterion for judgement is, of course, beauty. It could be that the property of beauty (in one form or another, for instance 'gracefulness', 'brightness' and so forth) is present to some degree in all 'good' art. Furthermore, it could be that the degree to which this property is present determines the degree to which the aesthetic object can be said to have aesthetic value. So, it might be that P is making an aesthetic judgement as to the <u>beauty</u> of the painting. In which case, according to Kant, he would not judge according to <u>any</u> criteria at all, because he <u>cannot</u> have knowledge of beauty. Kant argues that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and that in judging beauty we must make a 'singular' judgement of the 'form' (and not the content) of the thing-in-itself, rather than of the object <u>as</u> something: that is, according to a concept of it.

As I suggested in the previous chapter, I do not doubt that the Kantian approach can be relevantly applied to our aesthetic judgements of beauty in nature, but I do take issue with its application to our aesthetic judgement of art. As Arthur Child has argued:

> The mere fact that the term 'beauty' has such common use and that people understand each other in using the term, even if they do not agree with each other's judgements, appears to indicate that the phenomena to which the term refers are simply not altogether disparate and unique.[6]

Consider also, C. E. M. Joad's definition of beauty:

> . . . beauty is an epiphenomenon that supervenes upon the

art, and claimed to be the vital ingredients of aesthetic value? Could it be that whenever this property or set of properties is present the work of art will be a good one, or at least better than it would be without it?

The property 'beauty' has already been discussed, but what of other properties? In his essay The Meaning of 'Good' in Aesthetic Judgement,[8] Hans Eichner suggests some alternative criteria - but finds each criterion lacking:

> If we praise a Cezanne for its brightness and a Rembrandt for its chiaroscuro, a Degas for its naturalism and a Russian icon for its stylization, then neither brightness nor chiaroscuro, neither naturalism nor stylization, are criteria. Smallness is a criterion of merit in a lap-dog because bigness is incompatible with being a lap-dog, but if a painting can be good without being bright, brightness is not a criterion of goodness in painting; and there is no property (other than 'goodness', if goodness is a property) which is common to all good paintings.[9]

Surely this objection can be met along lines similar to those proposed by Beardsley; namely that 'brightness' might be a specific criterion rather than a general one. It could be a criterion for a Cezanne without being a criterion for a Rembrandt. The meaning of 'good' could therefore be said to be determined in every specific context in which it is used by the specific criteria which are applied. But what of more general criteria? Bearing in mind that criteria offer reliably contingent grounds for judging, rather than logically necessary and sufficient conditions, I again raise the question: Should our judgements as to the value of artworks always be concerned with one and only one criterion of judgement, namely beauty? What about instrumental value, for instance? Examples of other concept-criteria are as numerous as they are varied. Consider, for example, the following list (in no particular order):

1. Degrees of 'concretions' (Ingarden).
2. Communicability of emotion (Tolstoy).
3. Under and over-distancing (Bullough).

4. Perfect harmony (Alberti) . . . that which cannot be improved upon, that is, if anything is added to the artwork, or taken away from it, or altered in it, it would diminish it.
5. Instrumentality (Beardsley) . . . as in propaganda or entertainment or education. According to Beardsley the statement 'This is a good X' means 'This is an X, and there is a function of X's that it successfully fulfils'.
6. Intentionality (Goethe) . . . The criteria of judgement here being: what was the artist trying to do? did he do it? and was it worth doing?
7. Capacity to produce an aesthetic response (Dewey).
8. Perhaps the value of a piece of music could be measured according to whether or not it bears repeated listening; if it improves with further acquaintance it is good, but if it becomes irritating it is bad.
9. Significant form (Bell).
10. Cognitive efficiency (Goodman) . . . How well an art work signifies what it signifies?
11. Expressionism (Croce).
12. Symbolism (Langer).
13. Originality.
14. Verisimilitude (Vasari).
15. Technical virtuosity.
16. The Platonic Idea of beauty.
17. Beauty as unity in complexity or diversity (Plato and Aristotle).

This list is by no means exhaustive. However, if there are certain 'ingredients' which constitute the 'essence' of all 'good' art then this list probably contains some of them. Some or all of these criteria may be relevant in judging a work of art. Perhaps we should eclectically consider them all and then decide whether or not the criterion is appropriate to the specific artwork in question. Hypothetically, a panel of 'experts' could compare two paintings by awarding a score out

of 100 for each of the above, so that, for instance, Picasso's Guernica might score 80 out of 100 for communicability of emotion, but only 40 for technical virtuosity; whereas Dali's more academic Swans Reflecting Elephants might score 20 for communicability of emotion but 90 for technical achievement, and so on, with a maximum possible score of 1800 (perhaps with some criteria carrying more 'points' than others). This procedure may seem trivialising, but we probably do something similar to it on a sub-conscious level anyway [see conclusion to Chapter Eleven] . . . For my money, though, the most plausible and comprehensive criteria of judgement are those proposed by Beardsley, namely:

18. Unity, complexity and intensity.

Let us examine these three for a moment. Beardsley considers these to be internal relations within the artwork itself, and therefore to be objective qualities.

> Where either descriptive statements or interpretive statements appear as reasons in critical arguments, they are to be considered as objective reasons.[10]

Perhaps, then, Beardsley is lessening the gap introduced by Kant between description and evaluation; between the normative and the factual. Beardsley admits that these qualities need not be necessary or sufficient conditions of the 'goodness' of an artwork, but considers that, all things being equal, their presence or absence might make the artwork better or worse.

One problem which arises from these types of descriptive statement is that they tend to be generalised and may therefore fail to take into account deliberate, innovative negations of accepted forms of, say, unity. The overall structure of a 'literary' novel such as Joyce's Ulysses may not be unified in the conventional sense of the word, yet it is still considered

to be a more significant and 'literary' novel than say, one of Jeffrey Archer's 'well-organised' novels. As already mentioned, Beardsley answers this objection by introducing the idea of Specific Canons and General Canons:

> The objective features of plays, poems, paintings, and musical compositions referred to in the Special Canons can, at least most of them, be conditionally justified as standards because they are, so to speak, unifying, complexifying, or intensifying features of the works in which they occur, either alone or in combination with other features.[11]

These three general critical standards then, can, according to Beardsley, be meaningfully appealed to in the judgement of aesthetic 'objects' (whether linguistic/ideo-sensory, visual or auditory). Furthermore, they are constantly being appealed to by reputable critics, whether directly or indirectly, and, consequently, they afford the closest approximation to 'logical relevance' that we can hope for.

Be this as it may, two lines of questioning are left begging: First, can all categories of judgement be meaningfully subsumed within these three? Consider a beautiful painting, for instance. If the Kantian notion of beauty comes under the category of 'intensity', what about Kant's notion of harmony? Would this come under 'unity' perhaps? Well, yes and no. Kant makes a distinction between noumenal reality and empirical reality. From the noumenal point of view, all the unity that is observed in the world is mind-dependent. Nevertheless, from an empirical point of view unity is an experienceable reality and so objective. As I argued in the last chapter, such a distinction is difficult to reconcile with his theory of intersubjectivity. If unity or harmony is not a property of the art object itself, but rather, as Kant argues, something we project into the art object, it is therefore subjective, and singular. But surely if the individual presupposes that his or her recognition of harmony is intersubjective, then harmony must be both a physical property of the object and an

experiential projection of the subject? [I elaborate on this Gestalt/Kantian recognition of harmony in Chapter Eleven.] So much for beautiful paintings, but what about art forms which have a less clearly determined ontological status? Do such conceptions of harmony also apply to the 'pure form' of music, for instance? Beardsley assumes that his categories apply in equal measure to all art forms. However, if an animal objectively 'hears' all the musical sounds of a Mahler symphony can it also 'hear' and consequently appreciate the tonal harmonies? Are the harmonious patterns and forms objectively there, or are we subjectively projecting them? The answer again is 'both'. But, because we are unable to objectively verify the latter, we must concern ourselves with the former. That is, concern ourselves with the capacity of the object to produce aesthetic value, rather than with the capacity of the subject to receive it.[12] The aesthetic value of a work of art can therefore be judged according to its effective capacity as an instrument for the production of an aesthetic response. So far so good.

The second question is: How can Beardsley's categories be practically applied? One method would be to project them on to an ideal scale, a continuum by which to measure aesthetic merit (similar to the Alberti model suggested above). This method would involve a comparison of the artwork with itself, that is with its unrealised possibilities and alternatives. If an artwork is unimprovable then it is a 'good' artwork. This method has been proposed by the Israeli aesthetician, Tomas Kulka. The ideas I am attributing to him in this discussion are my sense of remarks he made in an informal discussion at the XI International Congress in Aesthetics at Nottingham University in 1988. On that occasion Kulka suggested these 'alternatives' could involve local adjustments or overall transformations to the artwork. Aesthetic value judgements could be justified or, rather, tested according to whether the alternatives were

aesthetically superior or inferior. At first glance this seems to be a circular argument: we need to make judgements in order to justify our comparative judgements; however, we can perhaps say that alternative A is superior to alternative B, without being committed to the value of A and B, by seeing how individual features of the artwork fit in with the whole, according to Gestalt. By offering negative (or positive) alternatives we can claim that our judgements that an artwork is good (or bad) are justified. We might also assume that aesthetic value is a property which admits of gradation; thus it might be possible to compare objects with regard to the degree of complexity, intensity and unity of a given value. The scale of values against which these alternatives might be measured can, according to Kulka, be shown in algebraic form:

If a = the number of beneficial alternatives.
and b = the number of damaging alternatives.
and c = the number of inconsequential alternatives.

and if X = the degree of intensity.
and Y = the degree of complexity.
and Z = the degree of unity.

And if K were to equal the total number of alternatives (a+b+c) to which the work of art (W) could be subjected; and if V were to equal aesthetic value; and if M were equal to the combined degrees of intensity, complexity, and unity (X+Y+Z); then the greater a is, and the smaller b is, the greater will be V(W).

So, $V(W) = (a-b) = Z$

and if $K = (a+b+c) = Y$

and if $\frac{(a+b)}{c} = X$

then, $V(W) = (a-b) \cdot (a+b+c) \cdot \frac{(a+b)}{c} = M$

Arguably, this structure would represent a critical context in which to make judgements.

With Beardsley's criteria (and Kulka's method of applying them) in mind, let us now return to P. It is not that I am begrudging P his pleasure, I am merely drawing attention to the possibility that his pleasure may be unreflective and superficial and therefore of little consequence. Albert Tsugawa [in his essay The Objectivity of Aesthetic Judgements] argues that this distinction lies in the critical and noncritical contexts in which pleasure is taken. He argues that in a critical context a person is logically, or rationally, committed to giving reasons. Similarly, Stefan Morawski argues:

> A primary aesthetic judgement is objective so far as it is relevant to a legitimate artistic value. The proposition 'x is aesthetically valuable' is an elliptical form of the judgement 'x is valuable for such and such a reason', with appropriate value performing the role of 'reasons'.[13]

In the case of P, if his reply to the question '<u>Why</u> do you like Modigliani?' was 'I don't know, I just do, that's all', then we can assume his pleasure is taken in a non-critical context, cannot therefore be objectively considered or universally valid, and is, by implication, trivial.

P, however, might take exception to having his pleasure dismissed as trivial. If he were able to, he might suggest that his inarticulateness should not preclude him from the taking of pleasure. Well, fair enough. His pleasure <u>may</u> be profound, elevating and so forth to him, but for no better reason that

that, say, Modigliani's painting happens to remind P of his long-necked mother - because if he has had no previous experience of Italian painting or of art theory, then why should we take his opinion seriously? Do we not assume his pleasure is personal to him, but irrelevant to everyone else?

If we are able to claim that the 'greatness' of Caravaggio's Supper at Emmaus (c.1598) is 'timeless' or 'universal' then we are able to do so only through an appeal to reasoning that holds good for everyone in like circumstances. These reasons may be of two sorts: (1) particular features and characteristics possessed by the work. These might be: clarity, detailed execution and finish, strong chiaroscura, dramatic lighting, harmony of composition, and the dramatic intensity of the narrative (in which the luminous and androgynous figure of Christ blessing the frugal supper comes as a revelation to the disciples . . . and so forth); or (2) general rules and principles, that is, norms and canons of institutions as exemplified by the work under consideration. These might include the painting's 'realism'; its treatment of a traditional genre of religious painting; or its use of symbolic attributes, such as St Peter's cockleshell.

In other words, if P were to describe the use of colour, the handling of the paint, the universal symbolism of the subject-matter and so forth, then we could ascertain for ourselves whether or not his observations were correct and his judgement appropriate. To this extent his subjective judgements would be relevant if and only if they were intersubjective. Even subjective or emotional responses can have an intersubjective or quasi-objective validity to the extent that there is a common currency for the application of descriptive terms. [See Chapter Eleven for examples of this.]

As discussed in the introduction, if P were to point to an area of a painting and say 'the orange colours in this area here make me feel depressed, because they seem to me to be cold' then his analysis would not be open for re-analysis, because subjectively, for him, it is a correct analysis. If, however, he were to say 'the orange colours here are depressing because they are cold' then we could treat his analysis as an objective statement and take issue with it accordingly. We presuppose that agreement and disagreement is possible in virtue of the fact that such objective reasoning is corrigible and capable of reassessment.

Tsugawa suggests that there is an objective component to the exercise of pointing, in that the pointing gesture (the sign) is cognitively meaningful because it has a reference (an object) that is ascertainable. In P's case he can point to an area of colour on the canvas and say 'this area is orange' and, upon inspection, we can either agree with, or reject, his analysis. In the next chapter I shall discuss the relevancy of these concept-criteria in relation to, and in the context of, critical institutions.

Chapter Five

Reasoned Justification

In the last chapter I suggested that P can point to certain shapes and colours in a painting in order to indicate that they are objectively there. In this way he can support his preference for them by referring to an appropriate association or 'feeling tone' that the colours and shapes evoke in him. Obviously there will be other 'facts' or 'truths' about the painting which are either correct or incorrect; such as its date and size. But these would not necessarily count as reasons for his liking or disliking the painting. New Critics argue that we should only pay attention to the words on the page or to the paint on the canvas, and that we should ignore all other biographical and historical information as irrelevant. However, such contextual information may be relevant to our appreciation, evaluation and interpretation of a book or painting and this is why critics need to be discerning in their judgement and justified in their reasoning. It is possible for someone to be profoundly moved by a work of art for 'appropriate' reasons without being able to articulate those reasons, but this, in my opinion, constitutes a response rather than a critical evaluation (a dog can respond but only a human can critically evaluate). George Dickie[1] argues that it is a confusion to take compatability with disinterested attention as a criterion of relevance. He argues that a relevant interpretation must be 'congruous' with the meaning of the work of art, rather than 'disinterested'. To dismiss cognitive information (historical, and so forth) as irrelevant is to deny the possibility of objective aesthetic judgement. A relevant reason may therefore be said to be one based upon cognitive information. This would constitute a 'good' reason.

Tsugawa again:

> Alleged reasons are either good reasons or bad reasons. Good reasons are relevant reasons which are also true. A reason may be bad either because it is false or because, although true, it is irrelevant.[2]

This need not mean, however, that reasons adduced in support of an aesthetic judgement need be conclusive. There may be disagreement about a given judgement because proof as to the value of a work of art is difficult to ascertain. Even though Tolstoy's judgement that King Lear was a 'bad' play was supported by reasons, the 'subjective' reasons he gave were not necessarily relevant/good ones. This is why a reasoned judgement must also be considered in relation to the reasoned judgements of other critics over a given period of time. But this begs the question: Who is to decide what is and is not relevant? An expert? If so, then who is an expert? Someone with whom other experts agree?

When an 'informed' critic makes a value judgement he or she considers that it ought to meet with universal assent. He or she will support his or her judgement with a reasoned justification. He or she might point to, and describe, certain relevant features which ought to provoke a certain emotional response. If they do this successfully then the painting ought to be considered a 'good' example of its kind.

The critic might point to Velazquez Christ Crucified (of 1630) and reason 'deductively' that, for instance: i) Seventeenth century crucifixion paintings eliminated all extraneous and anecdotal detail. ii) Seventeenth century crucifixion paintings depicted Christ against a darkened sky as oppose to the clear azure skies which predominated in the paintings of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries. iii) Because this is a 'good' example of the economic treatment and dramatic lighting of Seventeenth century crucifixion painting,

it is therefore 'good' of its kind. An additional premise might be to say that a painting is therefore 'good' if it conforms to type.

Alternatively the critic might qualify his judgement by 'inductive' reasoning, for instance: i) This is a powerful image of the isolated figure of Christ emerging from the brooding darkness. ii) Powerful images of isolated Christ-figures emerging from brooding darkness ought to provoke feelings of finality, alienation and catharsis in the spectator iii) Such feelings are spiritually elevating and psychologically rewarding, and, therefore iv) the painting should be considered 'good'. The second premise would depend on the inductive inference to the conclusion that such works in general do provoke these feelings.

Certain objections may be levelled at these somewhat unorthodox variations on the deductive and inductive methods of reasoning. After all, it could be argued that in a Gestalt sense the aesthetic whole of a work of art is far greater than the sum of its component parts, and that, therefore, a work of art is unique and not simply an arrangement of certain artistic ingredients. (Hume's Standard of Taste is often criticised along similar lines.) However, without certain relevant criteria with which to judge a work of art as a work of art, all we are left with is the half-baked subjectivity of P's approach, namely: 'I don't know why I like it, I just do, that's all.' Aesthetic judgements, however, have more in common with the procedures of law courts than the inductive and deductive methods of science. As Dr Margaret Mcdonald argues[3] 'This is good' has the character of an impersonal verdict like 'he is guilty'. It does not describe the accused or the feelings of the jury, it affirms a decision reached by a definite procedure. Criticism is an indefinite series of

methods for 'presenting', rather than proving, the value of an artwork.

But this is not to submit to the solipsism of subjectivity. We can still achieve partial objectivity. In the case of the Velazquez painting we should look at as many examples of Seventeenth century crucifixion painting as possible, compare them with those of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries and see what they do, or do not, have in common. An accumulation of such evidence should substantiate the judgement (assuming, for the sake of argument, that the particular properties are not peculiar to that work of art, but rather are 'universally' applicable to that genre). In other words, as Tsugawa puts it:

> The logical feature of all reasons is that a reason that is good for one context must be good in any other like it.[4]

Greek tragedy presents an interesting case. Aristotle offers a systematic theory by means of which we can analyse the function of tragedy. Although Aristotle was more of a formalist than an instrumentalist - because the purpose (or telos) of tragedy was, for him, a well constructed plot - we can, nevertheless, conclude from The Poetics that Greek tragedy had a function. If its function is to afford pleasure then by determining the nature of this pleasure (catharsis) we can determine the criteria according to which it is possible to judge one tragedy to be better than another. Thus we can say that a given Greek tragedy is 'good' if and only if it satisfies Aristotle's definition in The Poetics. The tragic hero, for instance, must be:

> . . . a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement . . . the change in the hero's fortunes must be . . . from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part; . . .[5]

It might be that Aristotle decided that Oedipus Rex was the best example of Tragedy before proceeding to analyse what made it so (which might suggest that the proof of the pudding is in the eating). However, because there are such striking similarities between examples of Greek tragedy I think it is fair to say that the Greek tragedies were written according to a formula of some sort - which Aristotle identified. Therefore, if an example of a tragedy is found which departs from this formula, Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, say, then it may still be a 'good' tragedy, but it cannot be an example of 'good' Greek tragedy. Such general properties are repeatable, they are not unique, it is the arrangement of the properties that makes for their dissimilarities and 'uniqueness'. In other words what I am arguing is that we should judge a work of art according to its instrumental value within a generic context. If X is a good Greek tragedy, then any other play that is relevantly similar to X will also be a good Greek tragedy. Aristotle's criteria are universalisable insofar as criteria are for judging classes of particulars rather than, as it were, one particular in particular.[6] Although one individual could not hope to give all the relevant or 'good' reasons that might support his or her judgement, the more he or she can give, the better - that is, the more authoritative and competent his or her judgement will be.

Michael Scriven[7] argues that reasons are only good reasons if they are connected with the conclusion (evaluation). However, Scriven also maintains that these reasons can be objective in virtue of their independence from the conclusion. I take this to mean that we are able to know reasons for a conclusion without first having to know the conclusion - otherwise we would not be able to use the reasons to arrive at the conclusion. In my example (above) the particular reasons (that Velazquez is economic in his treatment of the theme, and

so forth) could be said to deductively define the general conclusion (that this is a good example of Seventeenth century crucifixion painting). It may or may not be that we can know such a specific claim or particular reason without first knowing the general conclusion. Scriven argues that such a claim involves an 'independence criterion', which avoids circular definitions (such as weak being the opposite of strong). However, he adds, if the reason is too independent of the conclusion then both become irrelevant. Reason and conclusion must therefore be independent and connected. Furthermore, for a conclusion to be relevant and valid the reasons leading up to it must be demonstrably true. A reason is a good reason if it can be objectively proved or demonstrated to be true without first having to make a judgement or conclusion as to the aesthetic value of the painting. Moreover, the reasons which inform the conclusions must be consistently used within a given context or genre (for example, the presence of characters whose actions consistently make you laugh might be a relevant reason for concluding that a given play is a good comedy; but a similar presence in a tragedy would not be a relevant or 'good' reason for concluding that it was a good tragedy). Curt Ducasse, however, argues that although this may be true of instrumental goodness, it tells us nothing about the aesthetic goodness:

> The instrumental goodness of an object can be proved or disproved, if there is agreement as to the end, being a means to or condition of that which constitutes the object's goodness; for it is then only a matter of showing whether or not the object does not under the sort of conditions in view, cause or make possible in other objects effects of the sort desired.[8]

This is a moot point but I think it can be met if we suggest that the instrumental value of an artwork may actually constitute its aesthetic value. As in the idea that: This is a work of art and there is a function of works of art which this

successfully fulfils. Another objection may be raised at this juncture: In what does the relevance of these good reasons and justifications consist?

What if, for instance, a twentieth century artist were to paint a forgery of Velazquez Christ Crucified which was indistinguishable from the original? Or what if a person (who could not play music) were to record him or herself slowly playing Chopin's Polonaises one note at a time, using one finger, and then speed the recording up (using hi-tec digital recording equipment) so that the finished recording was indistinguishable from, say, Arthur Rubinstein's rendition? . . . Well, I would argue that the relevance of reasons and justifications consists in whatever the 'accepted' definition of 'art' is over an (unspecified) period of time, that is, according to the critical context promoted by the institutions over time. In my examples their 'authenticity' should not make the slightest difference to our objective appreciation of them as 'good' works of art. The Cult of the Genius and the romanticising of the 'Work of Genius' as some sort of unique and holy relic, are just a distraction from the real issue, which is how we ought to, and do, (and how we did) respond to the actual object before us in the here and now (and the there and then). If there is some mystical quality to the origional Christ Crucified which the copy does not have, then this can be identified and cited as a relevant reason for preferring it. Scriven argues that:

> . . . reasons do not have to be generalizable, except in the sense that they must be applied consistently - and they are only consistently applied when they are used to draw different conclusions between two works of art which cannot be said to differ in any respects that are relevant to critical categorization.[9]

This argument may be one means by which we can counter the familiar objection that we would have no standards against

which to judge innovative or experimental art. It is often argued that a work of art is unique and autonomous and must be judged according to its own standards. This objection is, however, misleading. The actual combination of properties present in a given work of art may be unique, but the properties themselves may be of or pertaining to a standard - as in the case of Greek Tragedy mentioned above. Again, it all depends on what we judge it as, we must identify what it is that causes us to respond as we do; and how our response to the new innovative 'art' object corresponds with our responses to those objects we already consider to be works of art. If our response to it is quite unlike anything we have experienced before; and if it has no artistic points of reference, that is, if it has absolutely nothing in common with anything we associate with the term 'art'; or with any concept we have of artistic function - then, however interesting the object might be, it probably isn't art. At least not yet. It would seem that, as in the British empirical tradition of the Eighteenth century, we must compare and contrast from experience. Put crudely, at the very least a painting must involve paint; a work of literature must involve words on a page (the oral tradition excepting); and a sculpture must involve a three-dimensional form, and so on. In other words, we cannot show an unlimited tolerance toward the use and abuse of such general definitions and of the particular types within them (sonnet, novel, play, poem and so on). There may be some disagreement among critics as to the application of such terms; and indeed of the application of generic terms within these types (such as tragi-comedy); and the movements and periods to which these forms and types belong . . . But arguably these disagreements can be ironed-out by an appeal to standards (as with the example of Aristotle's Greek Tragedy suggested above).

Here I agree with William Righter[10] when he suggests that we do not need to describe how, if at all, a reason supports an

aesthetic judgement, it is enough to know that it explains it:

> When we argue about aesthetic matters we are moving from hypothesis to conclusion or in any other formally logical way, but we show, point, compare, draw attention to, and generally try to make others see what it is that we mean by offering alternative descriptions or suggesting different ways of looking at a particular work.[11]

What is perhaps more problematic is disagreement over the application of aesthetic terms such as 'graceful', 'sensitive' and so on [see Chapter Eight]. If we are asked to say whether or not we think a painting is 'good' the appropriate response should be 'it depends what you mean by good'. Agreement over the application of these terms may not establish truth, but, then again, disagreement over their application does not prove that the applications are false either. Perhaps the best we can say is that once agreement is reached over general criteria then it is possible to bring to bear more specific criteria. There is no absolute answer to the above problem. But, in the case of innovative art we can perhaps say that although art is in a continual state of flux, certain art objects do seem to have 'withstood the test of time', or at least survived protracted disputes as to the validity of claims for their aesthetic value. 'Good' art can be defined by the stability over time of experts' agreement as to its value. Thus truly innovative 'art' such as that of Richard Long or Gilbert and George can only be good retrospectively, and the first critic to acknowledge its goodness is only proved correct insofar as future critics will agree with him! Also, if there is disagreement as to its application then perhaps 'good' is being used with different meanings.[12] Although 'art' is continually being redefined to accommodate innovations that the art establishment considers *worthy* of accommodation, this should not mean that, as the saying goes, 'if you can't justify it, call it art'. An object can be called art *only* to the extent that it can be relevantly justified *as* art to and by the

critical institutions of the day. Innovative art can only be provisionally accorded the status of 'good' art by expert critics who claim to recognise its potential. The burden of proof, however, is on these critics. They must persuade any dissenting fellow critics that the judgements they have made are well-founded because they are supported by 'good', relevant reasons. If after a given number of years - say, one hundred - critics still recognise this potential, then perhaps the innovative art can be said to deserve the status of 'good' art.

Another objection suggests itself here. If it is an art establishment (comprised of expert critics) that defines art - as oppose to art autonomously defining itself, as in art for arts sake - could it not be argued that an informed critical judgement could be transmissible 'second-hand', as it were, to the uninformed P's of this world? To the extent that, rationally, P <u>ought</u> to adopt such a judgement, then I would suggest that, yes, perhaps it could. This could be reasoned as follows: i) The critical institution (comprised of expert critics) judges Velazquez <u>Christ Crucified</u> to be a good example of Seventeenth century crucifixion painting ii) P <u>ought</u> to agree with this judgement, as an act of faith in the competence and authority of the critical institution. This is not to say, however, that a) P will necessarily have an aesthetic emotion when viewing the painting (though he might learn to, given the right experience and training) b) Nor does this mean that P can necessarily agree with the critics without first coming into contact with the painting for himself (that is, not by simply having it described to him). We could therefore say that a painting ought to seem 'good' for a certain person with a certain educational background and certain interests x, y and z, only in a certain context.

In his essay *Critical Judgements* Alan Tormey argues that critical judgements are formed, not found, and that though the forming process may be private the object that is being judged is public. From this premise Tormey argues that critical judgements are 'claims' that are testable. Furthermore, the relevant tests are 1) phenomenally direct tests - such as the appearance of a painting - as oppose to 2) tests of claims concerning the way something appears under stipulated conditions - such as the way the painting appears in a particular gallery [examples mine]. According to Tormey, the first test has to be experienced first-hand, whilst the second test could be indirectly obtainable and logically transmissible from a qualified observer. However, I would argue that this is an artificial distinction, because although P should be actually standing in front of the painting whilst 'testing' the validity of the claims, he would not necessarily have the critical vocabulary to take issue with the claims, the critical judgement he therefore arrived at would not be independent. In other words, he might *agree* with the reasons given by the critics, but he would not necessarily be qualified to *disagree* with them. This point excepting, I would go along with Tormey's definition of critical judgements:

> Critical judgements are not 'subjective' if that is meant to denote such things as first-person sensation reports, expressions of occurrent feelings, affirmations of preference, and exclamatory effusions of appreciation. Critical judgements are claims about, and purport to be claims about, public objects. Hence they must be testable in principle if they are to be sustained . . . [13] . . . Thus, the relevant tests of critical judgements are corroborative tests rather than confirmative tests, and the case for a critical judgement rests on the extent of its acceptance among independent judgers and not on something like 'degree of confirmation'.[14]

It may well be that a given claim is peculiar to a given age, and that a hundred years after it is made it becomes irrelevant. I would argue that this should not matter, so long as the conventionally wise agree on the 'greatness' of a

painting and continue to deem it relevant according to the conventional (that is, institutional) wisdom of the here and now (or there and then). As the saying goes: the good artist is slowly discovered, the bad artist is slowly found out. This situation may not be ideal but it is surely preferable to the subjective view which holds that, because all judgements are equal, it need only take one uninformed dissenting voice to legitimately make a nonsense of the seemingly universal judgement that, say, Supper at Emmaus is a 'great' painting. Furthermore, it need not be paradoxical to argue that if Supper at Emmaus is agreed to be a great painting by successive generations of critics, but each generation gives different sets of reasons in support of its judgements, then this means that at each age it must be considered good in a different sense. The judgements may be 'relatively objective' [see Chapter Nine].

However, if two conventionally wise critics from the same age disagree about the relevance and validity of the claims then that is a different matter . . .

Tsugawa suggests that the strongest argument in support of the subjectivity of aesthetic assertions is that there is disagreement among critics. Judgements are considered to be relativistic because two critics can give the same description of an object but emerge with different evaluations of it. However:

> The very process of our re-examining the grounds of the value assertion reveals our inclination to assume that the difference of opinion is based on a discoverable difference in fact. But our temptation to reassess assessments shows that we are inclined to expect a fairly close uniformity of perception.[15]

These 'discoverable' differences might be over genre classification, or the relevance of a certain interpretation,

and, as such, are resolvable to the extent that critics are able to agree (or at least compromise) over such issues according to the strength, or otherwise, of the justification with which they support their respective judgements. As Bernstein has argued in a different context:

> . . . plurality does not mean that we are limited to being separate individuals with irreducible subjective interests. Rather it means that we seek to discover some common ground to reconcile differences through debate, conversation, and dialogue.[16]

In other words, differences are resolvable through rational debate. It might be that in the case of Supper at Emmaus we are making an elliptic proposition that painting A (Supper at Emmaus) is better than painting B (Caracciolo's Christ washing the Disciples' Feet, of c.1622), because of reasons x, y and z. Aesthetic judgements as to the aesthetic value of Supper at Emmaus could therefore be said to be objective insofar as they were relevant to the degree of certain aesthetic values. A judgement of this sort could be described as comparative, regulative, normative and canonic. The more 'testable' a judgement is, the more credible and valid it will be, and the more competent will be the critic who made it. Furthermore, as Tsugawa puts it:

> . . . the whole of the logic of criticism presupposes that the reasons proffered for an aesthetic judgement are mutually corrigible and re-assessable. It is because these presuppositions are made that people can even begin to say that there is . . . an element of taste in critical judgements; and it is revealing that this rock bed of objectivity should underlie the dictum of subjectivity.[17]

Perhaps, then, we can say that aesthetic judgements are objective in character if there is potential or actual agreement between many critics within a strictly delimited cultural context. It is also important to bear in mind that when two critics disagree about a work of art they may not be

talking about the same thing. As Caroll C. Pratt puts it:

> The physical picture on the wall is one and the same, and the auditory frequencies from the stage are the same. But for those whose eyes and ears are in contact with such events, the correlative perceptions may be organized in quite different ways, - in fact often so different that agreement rather than disagreement would have to be accounted for.[18]

Tsugawa persuasively argues the case for the objectivity of aesthetic judgements by means of a three-pronged attack on the subjective approach. As I read him, these are as follows: i) judgements are not relative to the extent that critics have a similar cognition of a work of art, even if their judgements are incompatible. ii) Because we presuppose that our experiences of works of art are similar we should also presuppose that our comprehensions of them are mutually corrigible, and therefore objective. And iii) The relevance of the justifications which the critic gives in support of his judgement are publicly inspectable - because they refer to features of the work of art - and publicly assessable, and are therefore objective. Tormey argues along similar lines:

> Corroboration . . . though logically weaker than confirmation is stronger than contingent agreement, and for that reason recommends itself as an appropriate characterization of the manner in which critical judgements, even though autonomous and non-transmissible, may be mutually supportive.[19]

The concept of a phenomenon requires as a correlative concept the idea of the thing-in-itself, as it exists apart from the way it appears to the percipient. Both these theories presuppose that it is possible to arrive at a conclusion, that is, a judgement, through 'balanced' rational argument. Although there are no hard and fast 'rules' through which this can be achieved, this should not prevent us from making a judgement according to certain standards. After all, a jury can never have absolute certainty as to the guilt or innocence of

a defendant, yet it is still able to arrive at a conclusion, that is, a majority verdict, according to certain standards. It might be, then, that in saying that an aesthetic judgement is objective 'to some extent' I am merely saying that it meets with intersubjective agreement. I shall return to this in my conclusion, for now though it should be noted that just as scientific statements are either true or false according to objectively testable criteria so we are able to predicate the properties of truth or falsity to certain statements about art (even though there is no equivalent objective correlative in the arts). This does not necessarily imply that, for instance, the statement 'it is true that Supper at Emmaus is a great work of art' is as objectively valid as the statement 'Einstein's Theory of Relativity is true', but, by the same token, it does not discount the possibility that it might be objectively valid to the extent that it is corrigible.

Jarvie suggests that we can avoid subjectivity by shifting the critical emphasis away from the detachment of the individual critic and relocating it in the tradition of rational argument, and the institutions of criticism which carry this tradition:

> . . . from the discussions between the many individuals manning the critical institutions there emerges a set of broad agreement, and . . . this constitutes a tradition.[20]

Jarvie also suggests that scientists have just as many anticipations - or expectations and biases - that precede their scientific observations in the order of time and logic as do art critics; and that they legitimately overcome this individual subjectivity through an appeal to the objectivity of traditions which are established over a long period of time on a foundation of protracted disputes. The implication being that art critics can do likewise. However, what if - as some subjectivists would have it - our aesthetic judgement is

nothing more than the articulation of an emotional attitude or response, with all emotions being equal and therefore relative? As Jarvie points out, this assumption is mistakenly based on the equating of responses with evaluations. As previously discussed, when P's response is 'I like Modigliani's Cellist', it is not the same as his evaluation 'Modigliani's Cellist is a good painting'. It follows that there would be no contradiction in P saying: 'Modigliani's Cellist is a good painting, but I don't like it'.

Stuart Hampshire[21] argues that unless we recognise general methods of resolving disputes there can be no grounds for distinguishing a valid argument from an invalid one. To have no reasons for preferring one solution to another, or to give different reasons in different cases of the same type, is to be irrational. Such reason-giving might often amount to subsuming particular cases under a general rule; or to identifying how a particular arrangement of properties constitutes an origional variation on a general theme. But surely there is nothing wrong with this so long as the arguments are consistent? In other words, through rational debate, there may be objective agreement over evaluation, even though personal responses remain legitimately subjective. As already discussed, disagreement over interpretation can usually be settled or compromised through an appeal to the prevailing wisdom of the institutions - or, in the case of the features of a painting, through physical inspection. And, arguably, we are only able to appreciate a painting once we have satisfied these first two criteria. It is my contention then, that because aesthetic judgements are concerned with perception, interpretation and evaluation, they therefore involve more than mere subjective response.

As I mentioned earlier I do not believe that art exists for its own sake, rather, I believe it has meaning and

instrumental value. From this belief I would argue that it is possible for aesthetic judgements to be either valid or invalid - in which case disagreements concerning them would be, at least partially, resolvable. Similarly, it might be that a given art object has one and only one determinate, relevant meaning. Arguably, people will always find this same meaning if and only if they understand and interpret the object in the same way, that is, if they judge it according to the same criteria. To this extent subjectivists must entertain the possibility that everyone might intersubjectively agree about a given judgement, which would then become a quasi-objective judgement - the reverse, however, does not necessarily apply (that is, if everyone subjectively disagreed) because this, to an objectivist, would not be a relevant judgement. Furthermore, as Jarvie points out, there _is_ considerable agreement over evaluation, and this agreement is not randomly distributed, but rather is clustered around certain centres. A subjectivist could argue that this is because our evaluations are the product of our education and that we are conditioned to direct our evaluations in a given direction. But this does not solve the problem which was not 'how do we come to like what we like?' but rather, 'how come we like alike?'. Jarvie puts this problem schematically: a) We like alike; b) We like what we are conditioned to like; and c) We are conditioned alike. He contends that we cannot derive a) from b), although it may be that we like alike because we like what we are conditioned to like. But we can derive a) from b) together with c).[22]

Interestingly, Jarvie regards objectivity as being a sort of democracy of opinion and criticism, within which the truth may be pursued. The institutions have a built-in self-criticism which compensates for the bias of the individual critics who run them. The institutions are more impartial than the individuals because they are governed by traditions of judgement which are continually being reassessed.[23] This

reasoning leads Jarvie to conclude that:

> We can say that an individual evaluation is open to criticism, traditional evaluations are also open to criticism, and the institutions of art criticism are themselves open to criticism of their objectivity. The standards (traditions) emerge from the process of criticism of the arts and yet they remain criticizable - not established beyond dispute.[24]

In other words, without objective standards of criticism, the critical enterprise is a waste of time and consequently the term 'aesthetic judgement' is rendered obsolete. We learn to aesthetically respond to (that is, acquire a taste for) artworks through the reasoned judgement and evaluation of critics working within the traditions of the critical institutions.

As a working definition, then, I would say that an aesthetic judgement is the articulation of a reasoned evaluation of an art object. It can be considered relevant only to the extent that it is adequately justified - subject to logical analysis - and quasi-objective to the extent that it is corroborated by the critical institutions over a given period of time. In the next chapter I shall argue that such justification can be achieved through defining 'good' art by example.

Chapter Six

The Exemplification of 'Good' Art

In this chapter I shall consider four propositions: (1) That there may be considerable agreement about how a given work of art should be interpreted, and that this in turn may determine whether or not we consider it to be 'good'. (2) That a 'good' work of art art can be defined by example. (3) That we consider an artwork to be 'good' because it is granted canonical status and, tautologically, we grant it this status because it 'good'. (4) That a distinction can be made between 'good' and 'bad' art (for instance, that which does or does not appear in an art gallery, or in a literary canon) and that each term defines the other by comparison.

But what do we mean by 'good'? Good as what? Good for what? Good for whom? . . .

If 'good' is an absolute term then a work of art that is 'good' in one culture cannot suddenly become 'bad' if removed from that culture and considered in another culture. But is an absolute term? 'Goodness' depends upon the criteria of 'goodness' being employed. The status of 'goodness' is conferred upon an artwork by a culture; it is culturally-dependent. 'Goodness', therefore, is the intersubjective experience of objectively 'good-making' properties. However, because art does not deal with factual certainties - in a way that science might claim to - it would seem that any interpretation or evaluation of it can only ever be partial. If such is the case, then it would seem sensible to adopt an eclectic critical approach. A Marxist critic for instance, will consider an artwork to be 'good' only to the degree that

it functions as effective propaganda in the the class struggle, and so on. A feminist critic, on the other hand, will consider an artwork to be 'good' if and only if it advocates the emancipation of women. Alternatively, a structuralist critic will base his or her value judgement upon formal considerations; whilst a psycho-analytical critic will base his or her judgement upon psychological considerations, and so on. Which approach is correct? Certainly the most 'democratic' approach would be to systematically apply each theory in turn and then decide which is and is not 'relevant' to the given artwork. Such a decision would not necessarily depend upon whether the critics were themselves Marxist or feminist, or whatever, but rather upon whether the interpretation based upon a Marxist or feminist reading was insightful and appropriate. Thus it might be that a Marxist reading will interest a non-Marxist at the level of 'possible' interpretation, if it leads to a fuller understanding and appreciation. In terms of 'relevance', a feminist reading of Jane Eyre would, probably, be more rewarding than a Marxist one; a Marxist reading of Crime and Punishment, on the other hand, would probably be more rewarding than a feminist one.

Literary criticism seems to fall into two camps. There are those critics who take an objective trajectory (as with: (1) Anglo-American New Criticism and Russian Formalism which contends that a critic should empirically concern him or herself only with the form of an autonomous object, that is, the words on the page rather than biographical or historical background; and (2) Marxist Criticism which assumes the historical determinants of the content to be objective). And there are those who take a subjective trajectory (as with: i) Reception or reader-response criticism, which ignores the historical conditions of a literary text; and ii) some aspects of structuralism, deconstructionism and psycho-analysis). The latter two differ from the former two in that they locate the

critical enterprise in the act of interpretation rather than in the object of interpretation. I think both approaches can be useful, depending upon whether or not they are relevant to a given context. As Stephen C. Pepper argues:

> [The] object of criticism [is] the totality of relevant material based on the perceptions stimulated by an aesthetic vehicle.[1]

Thus there are not as many different works of art as there are perceptions because some perceptions may not be relevant. Similarly, recent trends in literary criticism have pointed to the phenomenon of reader-as-author, recreating a text according to his or her own experience. According to this theory, a text cannot be described without reference to a reader. Assuming, for the moment, that there is virtue in applying such a democratic system of critical analysis (rather than assuming a text has only one determinant meaning) the obvious problem we are now faced with is how to determine which individual readers are best qualified to make a judgement as to the 'relevance' of a critical approach, and therefore, as to the value of the work of art.

Once again we are faced with the problem of how to avoid the circularity of the expert judge being someone who makes expert judgements. But let us try. Apart from the obvious, such as needing to be sensitive, perceptive, discriminating, unprejudiced, rational, and a 'person of taste', an expert judge would also need to be plain common-sensical. Common sense would be important if, for instance, a feminist were to advance Macherey's (Marxist) 'silences' argument (that what a text does not say is as important as what it does say) in order to claim the relevance of his or her interpretation and evaluation about Crime and Punishment. If the feminist critic were to claim that it is an over-rated work of literature because it fails to mention whether or not Raskolnikov was breast-fed as a child, then the critic has failed to exercise common sense. Another

important qualification for the competent critic, then, is flexibility. The late Peter Fuller was a brilliant exponent of this, not only because he was able to analyse his initial subjective response to a painting in terms of an almost encyclopedic knowledge of art history and aesthetics, but also because he was common-sensical and flexible enough to realise when his (earlier) Marxist approach was no longer appropriate. In other words, following Hume's reasoning, the more artworks and critical theories that a critic is familiar with the better will be his or her facility for perception, interpretation, evaluation and appreciation. According to Plato the competent judge (of mimetic art) must have 'first, a knowledge of the nature of the original; next, a knowledge of the correctness of the copy; and thirdly, a knowledge of the excellence with which the copy is executed'.[2] Surely this still applies. Again, it would seem to be a case of defining by example.

Perhaps, then, examples _are_ common-sensical. We consider _Supper at Emmaus_, _Hamlet_ and _Don Giovanni_ to be paradigms of 'great art' because we attribute aesthetic value to them in equal measure. We recognise certain properties in each of them, and these properties constitute 'great art' (complexity, intensity and unity, for instance). Furthermore, this label of 'great art' can be substantiated by making comparison with examples of not-so-great art. We can say that these three examples of 'great art' are more aesthetically valuable than, say, the sentimental whimsy of Norman Rockwell or the pornographic sub-literacy of Shirley Conran, or the bland easy-listening of James Last. To the extent that the three art forms are comparable these, then, can legitimately be said to be examples of 'great' and 'not-so-great' art.

But would it be futile to compare two 'good' or 'great' paintings which are 'good' or 'great' for different reasons? Not necessarily. It may be that some 'reasons' are better than

others. Much depends on the 'goodness' criteria that are being volunteered by way of reason-giving. Let us suppose, for the moment, that some limited form of essentialism is possible. In an abstract sense the essence of 'great' art (as oppose to merely 'good') is its capacity to satisfy the aesthetic interest, perhaps through its elevating themes; or through the potency of its expression; or through its capacity to 'transport the soul'; or through its identification of profound truths about the human condition; or through intellectual and emotional stimulation, in the form of education and entertainment.[3] Such essential 'greatness' would constitute an 'example'.

One obvious problem involved with appealing to examples to define 'good' art, though, is that we have no proof that the examples that are being appealed to are themselves examples of 'good' art. Do we have to look to other examples to define the first example? and if so does this involve a regression to infinity, a reductio ad absurdam? Well, not necessarily. The question is, do 'examples' entail concepts? Without concepts anything can be considered as art. Speaking of art is only meaningful if it describes a part of existence. A definition of art that covered everything would be absorbed by existence in general and would therefore lose its 'meaning'.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Kant refers to an antinomy of taste - either we can or we cannot account for taste. The antinomy arises over whether or not concepts are involved in judgements of taste. If a judgement does not involve concepts then it cannot be the subject of disagreement, which it is; if however a judgement does involve concepts then it must be rationally disputable, and provable by reasons, which, Kant argues, it is not. Kant's attempt to resolve this antinomy by suggesting that only the indeterminate concept of the thing-in-itself (which underlies the judging subject as well as the

judged object) is involved in judgements of taste. In other words, according to Kant, there is no determinate concept involved. Non-cognitive, concept-free judgements of taste, for Kant, require nothing more than an exercise of contemplation.[4] Surely though, the same claim cannot be realistically made for critical (aesthetic) value judgements? Arguably, a critical (aesthetic) judgement is more than a simple response of taste. Whether or not an artwork is 'beautiful' is perhaps a matter of taste, whether or not it is 'good' is a matter of critical (aesthetic) judgement. I say this because I believe that the art object can be an instrument of knowledge. It <u>can</u> have meaning - although it need not - and therefore <u>can</u> be interpreted and evaluated. As I have already argued, our capacity to interpret and evaluate is acquired through learning rather than inheritance.[5] But, so the subjectivist argument goes, this has nothing to do with taste - we cannot be taught how to respond.

Surely though, for the most part, we <u>are</u> taught how to respond. Marxist, formalist and structuralist critics have tended to dismiss the idea of instinctive, subjective response as being reactionary, romantic and naive. Even if this subjective response comes from as eminent a scholar as F.R. Leavis or Peter Fuller it can carry no more weight than the response of an eight year old child unless it is supported by objectively valid reasons. Besides, as the American literary critic Rene Welleck suggests, however much a critic like Leavis aims for the direct communication of his 'complete response', he cannot avoid using concepts or invoking norms and standards.[6]

So far I have suggested that an intellectually systematic approach to criticism is preferable to an instinctive approach, but what form might this system take in practice? The criticism of literature strikes me as being less problematic than the

criticism of painting. We 'interact' with a literary text on three levels: (i) two people can have the same sensorimotor experience of it; (ii) have the same understanding of the nominal meaning of the words; and (iii) have the same interpretation of its symbolic meaning. But what 'system' might we employ in the 'practical' appreciation of a painting? First, like Fuller, we must consider our initial response to it and ask ourselves why we like or dislike it. This is phase one, the subjective response of taste. Second, we should attempt to answer the first question by considering the following empirically verifiable points: Composition (is it simple or complex? how is the painting organised? what is the scale? is there a focal point?); Space (does the painting have depth? aerial or linear perspective? is it consistent?); Light (is this used to define form? what is the source?); Line (does it have outline or is it constructed in masses and tonal areas?); Colour (how does this relate to composition? does it focus perception?); Form (is there a sense of tangible form? How is this achieved?); Handling (what use is made of texture and finish?) Subject matter (what is the narrative? is it symbolic?) . . . Other considerations might include its proportions and size; its medium; its location; its condition; its frame; and its title. We might also ask certain question about its style: is it linear or painterly? abstract or illusionistic? decorative or expressive? and so on. All these questions would constitute phase two: the critical evaluation or 'aesthetic judgement'.

So far I have discussed literary criticism in relation to art criticism, now, in order to tackle the questions I set out at the beginning of this chapter, I shall discuss it in relation to music criticism.

A good work of fiction can be an instrument of knowledge. It has 'content'. It 'contains' meaning. It requires more than

an exercise of taste or a 'gut-reaction' in order to be evaluated. Reading is an acquired skill in which codes must be learned before statements can be understood. Certain written words act as a substitute stimulus which, through learning language, we associate with the original stimulus. For example, the letters t-r-e-e are associated with the shape of a symbolic or imaginary, or 'real' tree.[7] Once these codes have been learned - and we are able to make these associations - we can even learn to speed-read, to look ahead for cues to confirm us in our 'horizons of expectation' and then to fill in from experience the parts we have skipped over. Our interpretations of language could therefore be said to involve a conditioned response.[8] Also, because the written word can be grammatically correct or incorrect, passages of prose can be said to be 'good' or 'bad' examples of their kind - in a formal sense as well as in terms of the meaning of their content. Obviously it is difficult to establish truth-tests in this area because it is difficult to justify calling a work of fiction 'true' or 'factual' (although we do refer to certain psychological insights as being 'poetic truths'). This is sometimes referred to as the fact-value dichotomy: that is, value judgements do not necessarily involve purely factual statements - our evaluation of a fact need not be synonymous with the fact itself. But aesthetic judgements do not really 'assert' so much as 'persuade': 'You <u>ought</u> to like this for reasons x y and z'.

Music is more problematic. In music the 'statements' are not 'statements' in any language about the quality or performance of a piece, rather they are the music itself. If we listen to a piece of traditional music from our Western culture we know when a 'wrong' note is played because we can follow its development, even if we are unfamiliar with the particular piece of music being played (just as a musician can scan a score with certain expectations). We have assessed the musical phrase and decided it is not 'true'. In the tonic

scale, for example, we expect to hear the seventh located towards the end of a melody, if it comes at the beginning we sense that it is 'wrong'. However, when we hear Indian or Chinese music for the first time it often seems to be just an unintelligable noise. This is because we are unfamiliar with the diatonic scale. We do not 'understand' it because we do not understand its concepts or musical structure - that is, which sounds are available, and how they are put together. As Gombrich puts it:

> Even an art of pure form, such as music, needs a background of expectations to become understandable.[9]

There are numerous anecdotes in circulation which illustrate this: one such concerns Ravi Shanka's first sitar concert in the West at which the Western audience obligingly applauded his tuning-up (wrongly thinking the concert had started); a similar anecdote relates how a Chinaman attended a classical music concert for the first time and hated it, apart from, of course, the tuning of the instruments at the beginning; then there is the one about the party of Eskimos in Canada who attended a performance of Othello and thought that the actors were actually being killed - because they did not understand the theatrical conventions at work . . . and so on.[10] If we accept that we need to understand these conventions in order to evaluate, we must then ask how it is that knowledge of the conventions can include knowledge of appropriate criteria of evaluation.

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, one abstract 'truth-test' might be to compare what is seen or heard or experienced to previously known structures, that is, 'examples'. We must then consider whether the current statement fits in with or deviates from these structures. In music, for instance, notes, harmonies and melodic lines which are known, or are like those which are known, would be classified as being

'true'. Those unfamiliar with Western music and Western theatre would perhaps pass different judgements from Westerners, but, arguably, both would be performing the same abstract 'truth-test'.

Whilst in recent years theories of art as communication have encouraged the misleading use of the word 'statement' to refer to a brushstroke on a canvas[11] this principle of a 'truth-test' is also applicable to the visual arts. I do not necessarily mean by this that it is possible to say that if a painter intended to imitate nature by way of an illusionistic, naturalistic painting of a landscape, but ended up painting the sky green and the grass blue, we could say his painting was 'false'.[12] This 'truth-test' could not, for instance, be legitimately applied to an abstract interpretation of a landscape. I had more in mind the possibility that a 'truth-test' could in some way be established in terms of the frame of reference in which the work of art is perceived and interpreted - along the contextual lines discussed above in relation to music. There is, for instance, a well known anecdote about an explorer who discovered a primitive tribe in Papua New Guinea and took a photograph of its Chief. The Chief could not 'see' himself in the photograph because he did not 'understand' how it worked. He had had no experience of 'interpreting' the representation of a three dimensional form as a flat geometrical projection on a two dimensional plane. In order to 'see' the photograph the Chief would have had to learn some of the pictorial vocabulary of our Western culture. That is, he would have to have some of the expectations involved with Western critical parlance. In a similar sense, we require a specialised vocabulary to 'read' sophisticated pictorial images in our own culture - because we have to 'decode' the painted signs and symbols. In this context, as Tom Wolfe ironically said of Modern Art, believing is seeing.

Perverse as this reasoning may seem, and boring and pretentious though some Modern Art undoubtedly is, the fact remains that if we are to appreciate Modern Art we must do so on its own terms (although one still has the option of rejecting the terms and so the works). As Gombrich argues:

> Without some framework against which to test and modify our first impressions, we are left to the tender mercies of our initial projections.[13]

Let me develop this point. We cannot simply expect to be able to open our aesthetic pores and breathe in the significance of an artwork without first familiarising ourselves with its concepts. For instance, in his seminal essay Modernist Painting (1965), Clement Greenberg argues that in emphasising the flatness and two-dimensionality of the picture plane, Abstract Expressionism has demanded that we re-evaluate our preoccupation with narrative and figurative illusionism. Through 'Kantian' self-criticism, he argues, Modernist painting can take on an autonomy which allows for self-definition and, therefore, self-justification. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether or not we agree with Greenberg's analysis, let us consider whether or not such sophisticated theories are immediately accessible to the lay-person. Would it not be unreasonable to conjecture that the average spectator has to 're-learn' his or her critical vocabulary in order to take this theory on board? To this extent our judgements seem to be contextual. Background knowledge about the history of the painting - or artist's intentions, or theories - may or may not be relevant to our judgement and appreciation, and the only way we can find out is to do our homework.

Another instance: If we contemplate a Mark Rothko canvas for the first time we may feel a sense of profound melancholy, or a sense of tranquillity, or we may be disturbed by the 'mood' of the painting. However, it might be that these

feelings become richer and more intensified once we are told that in 1970, whilst painting this canvas, Rothko obsessively listened to Schubert's 'Trout' Quintet - the needle on the record player continually going back to the start of the record - and that after he finished painting it he committed suicide. In this case biographical knowledge, albeit melodramatic, may confirm one's origional impressions, or indeed, disconfirm them. But the only way to find out is to avail yourself of that knowledge in the first place. Surely, in this sense, such propaganda art as that of National Socialism, or Stalin's Social Realism, cannot be properly evaluated if divorced from its historical context, namely, the gas chambers and the gulags?

Admittedly, these examples of background knowledge informing judgement may only account for our immediate emotional response, but other examples of more complex ideas - which are not immediately apparent - are not difficult to find. In his essay The difficulty of being an artist John Berger offers an ingenious, if somewhat pretentious, defence of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. I think it is worth quoting at length:

> Imagine a man brought up from birth in a white cell so that he has never seen anything except the growth of his own body. And then imagine that suddenly he is given some sticks and bright paints. If he were a man with an innate sense of balance and colour harmony, he would then, I think, cover the white walls of his cell as Pollock has painted his canvases. He would want to express his ideas and feelings about growth, time, energy, death, but he would lack any vocabulary of seen or remembered visual images with which to do so . . . I believe that Pollock imaginatively . . . isolated himself almost to that extent. His paintings are like pictures painted on the inside walls of his mind . . . His work amounts to an invitation: . . . discover the universal in your self, for in a one-man world you are universal![14]

P's initial comment in response to Pollock's canvases might be 'Surely he's taking the mickey?', or words to that

effect. But if P was asked to read Berger's explanation and then return to look at the canvases, arguably he would find them more 'accessible'. Although he may conclude that it is the critic and not the artist who is the real mickey-taker, and although he may not necessarily 'understand' his response any better, he would, arguably, be more inclined to make a more appropriate, 'informed' response. In this respect critics such as Berger, Greenberg and Fuller have an important role to play. A critic is an exemplar rather than a legislator. Criticism is the articulation of a considered intersubjective response to an artwork which, with the use of concepts, justifies a particular interpretation and consequently informs a particular taste. The critic makes a rational discrimination between artworks that are worthy of our intellectual contemplation and those that are not. To this extent there are such things as 'skill', 'expertise', 'competence' and 'sophistication' involved in art, literary and music criticism.

William Charlton[15] considers that in acquiring skill and expertise we acquire the ability to monitor relevant factors unconsciously and continuously. He compares this ability with that of an expert musician who can play an instrument without being consciously aware of the successive positions of his fingers. Charlton concludes that, because this is similar to the expert's unconscious awareness of formal features in a work of art, taste in aesthetic form is in fact a skill. In the next chapter I shall develop this point and offer some specific examples of how certain interpretations can be said to be relevant and valid.

Chapter Seven

Relevant Interpretations

In the last chapter I suggested that the arts are an acquired taste, and that art and literary criticism are an acquired skill. In this chapter I will develop these ideas by considering 'good' art and literature in terms of the relation of form to content. A work of art or literature might be considered good if and when we are not made aware of its formal structure, that is, if and when its form does not interfere with out enjoyment of its content. As already suggested, our knowledge of language codes and formal structure is acquired. A work of literature, though, is 'good' independent of the skill or otherwise of its reader. We can claim this if, for instance, its language is rich in associations, is appropriate and functional, and its formal construction efficiently communicates the meaning of the content. We can say it is 'bad' if through pretentiousness or illiteracy the meaning of the content is obscure, and the language is redundant and cliched. If a reader has a taste for such pretentious or obscure writing then, perhaps, we can say he is unskilled and therefore lacking in taste.[1] As before, much here depends upon the procedure by which we determine the relevance of the reasons that are volunteered in support of a judgement. Arnold Isenberg, for instance, divides the critical process into three parts: verdict (V), reason (R), and the norm (N). This process can be recognised in the following form of statement: 'This book is good because it has such-and-such a quality (Q), and any book with this quality is pro tanto good'. According to Isenberg's formulation[2] V is an utterance conditional upon R which appears in a normative sentence.

Let us examine this. If N is based upon a sound induction it would (together with R) afford a real reason for accepting the validity of V. This, of course, is not an absolute method for resolving disagreement about judgements. But if such a method were possible it would probably be along these lines. The problem is in determining Q. Is there a Platonic essence to all novels that have aesthetic value? Or is there a certain arrangement of certain ingredients x, y and z which, when reproduced, will always occasion aesthetic pleasure? Arguably there are certain formuli to such genre as, say, crime fiction or romantic fiction or, as discussed in Chapter Five, to Greek tragedy. But is each work of art unique? I would say not (although Isenberg maintains that the critic is not committed to the general claim that the quality named Q is valuable in all cases).

Isenberg argues that it is the qualities of the work of art that are good or bad, rather than the work itself. These qualities are in the mind of the subject and a critic can help other people to perceive these qualities for themselves by use of concepts. We have a concept of harmony and if a critic applies this to a painting we can see whether our perception of the presence of this quality agrees with our conception of it. The critic refers to the 'idea' of a quality rather than to the quality itself. In this way, concepts referred to by critics can be said to influence the way in which we perceive. This does not necessarily mean, however, that everyone agrees that we can rely exclusively on the competence of 'qualified' critics to make our judgements for us. Clive Bell, for instance, proposes a system of aesthetics which has <u>no</u> objective validity, instead it relies on personal experience and subjective feeling alone. He argues that aesthetic judgement is a matter of personal taste, and that whilst an aesthetic emotion might arise after a critic has 'explained' an artwork to us, it must, nevertheless, be felt first hand if it

is to be considered genuine [cf. Kant]. Conversely, F.R. Leavis assumes an objective criterion is possible by virtue of this very same individual response (although he is thinking in moral rather than aesthetic terms). He argues that it is precisely because criticism is devoted to the individual response - and the justification of that response - that it may achieve objectivity. The 'scientific' explanations of structuralism and semiotics would be considered interesting but irrelevant for Leavis, because the value judgements they lead to lack the intellectual and moral 'integrity' required for objective evaluation. I will not detail Leavis's theory here, but it is worth pointing out that the form of criticism he advocates makes use of concrete and direct language, in the manner of: 'This - doesn't it? - bears such a relation to that; this kind of thing - don't you think so? - wears better than that',[3] rather than of abstract language. This approach has two advantages: first, a justification of a response by Leavis always appears in a context that both the reader and the critic can identify; second, this frame of reference - within which relevant comparisons might be made - must be to a literary canon acknowledged by a common culture.[4]

In this context (as Northrop Frye suggests) criticism as knowledge is one thing, and value-judgements informed by taste are another.[5] Although it is misleading to compare a critic such as Bell whose theories deal primarily with sensory art (visual) with a critic such as Leavis who deals with ideo-sensory art (literature), I believe that comparisons between the two art forms can profitably be made. As suggested in the last chapter, the letters and words we use as visual printed signals require a highly specialised knowledge of linguistic codes, just as painted images and symbols of Medieval and Renaissance art require a certain visual literacy on the part of the viewer. Experimental writing may deliberately defamiliarise these codes for effect, but on a purely

linguistic level the degree to which our 'horizons of expectation' are satisfied often determines the degree to which we initially consider a text to be 'good' or 'bad'.

A painting can be understood in terms of semantic codes similar to those used to understand written language. When we look at religious paintings from the Renaissance we need to know what the attributes of the Saints are in order to follow the narrative. Renaissance religious painting can be said to be 'about' something. It is 'meaningful' and (perhaps) has one and only one determinate meaning. Arguably, people will find this same meaning in the painting if and only if they 'understand' and interpret it in the same way. Like written language, the Renaissance painting 'describes' a subject, whether real or imagined, and, as such, is meaningful. But does this necessarily apply to Modernist painting? Benedetto Croce, in my view wrongly, suggests not. He refers to this process of description in terms of 'representation' and makes a tenuous connection between this and 'expression'. For him, an abstract expression is that which does not necessarily evoke through association, nor directly refer to, an independent subject matter. For Croce, representation is largely irrelevant, because conceptual, whereas expression is central to the aesthetic experience because it is intuitive, immediate and autonomous.

To counter Croce's theory we must reassess the role of 'interpretation'. What is it? Let us consider David Bleich's definition:

> Interpretation is an explanatory activity that is itself explained by the principles underlying the acquisition and use of language. Linguistic articulation - naming and identification - is the symbolization of experience; interpretation is a resymbolization motivated by the demand that the knowledge thus symbolized be explained, or converted into a more subjectively satisfying form. In this way all explanations are interpretative and may be understood as the construction of

new knowledge.[6]

I disagree. Interpretation finds rather than makes knowledge. The meaning is a combination of: (1) what the author intended the meaning to be; (2) what the reader's shared understanding of what the words the author uses actually mean; and (3) what meaning there is contained within the symbolic object that can be realistically extracted from it. If every interpretation is a personal, subjective resymbolisation then 'anything goes'. All interpretations, however ludicrous or irrelevant, carry equal weight, because they involve a subjective construct. An example might illustrate this. During my mock exam for A level English I was given an 'unseen' poem to analyse and criticise. Unbeknownst to me the poem I was given was a war poem about the battle of Ypres. All I had to go on was the title 'Wipers' (this, I later found out was the nickname given by the British Army for 'Ypres'). As a consequence of this I interpreted the poem to be about someone whose car had broken down on a desolate road somewhere. The protagonist's misery was further compounded by the fact that it was raining and his windscreen wipers were broken. I even managed to contrive some symbolic meaning, namely that the the road was a metaphor for Life and the wipers were a symbol of Hell . . . My interpretation was completely irrelevant, but, nevertheless, it informed my judgement that the poem was pretty dire.

Let us consider interpretation in terms of the symbolic function of art. Bleich suggests that a sculpture is only a block of stone, it is not a symbolic representation of a man until someone interprets it as such. The 'real object' of stone becomes the 'symbolic object' only when it is interpreted. I doubt this, but, if it is true, does the same apply for music? In response to the structuralist theories of Roland Barthes, Susanne K. Langer has constructed a theory of presentational

symbols which attempts to explain the nature of artistic expression as an articulation of 'feeling'. Her theory compares the discursive symbols of language and propositional thought to the presentational symbols inherent in music and the symbols of 'feeling' and form inherent in art. According to Langer, an artwork can only be understood in terms of its symbolic function. That is:

> A word or mark used arbitrarily to denote or connote something may be called an associative symbol, for its meaning depends entirely upon association.[7]

Langer fights shy of actually concluding that music, too, is a language of meaning - because it does not have a vocabulary with fixed reference and association - but she does imply that music can be understood. Along similar lines Nelson Goodman argues that art is as cognitive as science, insofar as it refers to objects through its formal structure. These references may be representational, expressive or, a third term, 'exemplary'. This sounds more reasonable. However, both Langer and Goodman argue that it is unnecessary, indeed repetitive, to explain and justify our understanding of symbols in terms of language - what Cleanth Brooks refers to as 'the heresy of paraphrase'. How, then, are we to construct a method of evaluation, without providing conceptual, 'explanations', given the plurality of interpretations?

Feelings do not depend upon sensations or even perceptions but rather they depend upon conceptions. Although some sensory impressions arouse certain feelings [examples of these are given in Chapter Eleven] these feelings do not have affective feeling tones that are timelessly constant. This is because an emotional feeling is a reaction to a total situation as it is understood at a given period in time. An emotional feeling therefore depends upon the entire conceptual meaning of the stimulus and not just upon the affective tone. The terms we use to describe artworks, and to articulate our aesthetic

impressions of them, are similar to those we use to describe the relation of the artwork to its subject matter. These might be affective, expressive, representational or formal. Insofar as these terms are descriptive, and therefore conceptual, they would seem to require an exercise of reason rather than a simple exercise of taste. If the ability to exercise reason is learned empirically then artistic achievement can perhaps be evaluated, on one level, by the study of an artist's technical abilities - that is, his or her ability to imitate and conform to the stylistic convention of a given period in time.

But, again, as asked in Chapter Five, what of innovative art for which conceptual language does not yet exist?

Like Croce, R.G.Collingwood argues that true aesthetic experience is autonomous in that it is an act of pure contemplation, that is, it exists in the imagination. The problem with this argument, appealing though it may seem, is similar to that already encountered with Langer and Goodman: namely, that in contemplating art as 'art' we have already taken on board a concept.

This is by no means an exclusively modern consideration though. The Platonic 'Idea' could be said to be the first example of this reasoning. Later, in the Middle Ages, St. Augustine's suggestion - that because our perceptions of beauty involve normative judgements they are therefore not relative and must therefore have objective validity - can be seen as a development of this reasoning.[8] This concept of ideal order has met its most significant challenge with the Modernist movement. If, as Plato and St. Augustine might suggest, we must have a concept of what art is before we can recognise an object as being an art object, then how are we to accommodate Duchamp's radical claim that one of his objet trouve should be considered as an art object? Arguably we have to redefine our conceptions

of art in order to do this - although some might argue that Duchamp's ready-mades are historically significant, but aesthetically trivial. Even so, whether we are acknowledging or denying Duchamp's work as having art status we must do so through a received theory or concept of art. Theories of art enable us to pay special attention to those art objects which we deem worthy of our special attention. If this were not the case then we would fall victim to the scenario - much beloved of satirists - of unwittingly contemplating the mop and bucket left in the corner of the gallery. The mop and bucket would become just as worthy or unworthy of our attention as Supper at Emmaus because we would be unable to justify why we should pay attention to Supper at Emmaus and not to the mop and bucket.

An illustration of how this can happen concerns the artist Joseph Beuys whose studio was cleaned up by cleaning contractors after he died in 1986. One cleaning women threw out a pale of grease which had been hanging from the ceiling, later to be told it was a 'Work of Art' entitled Grease Corner which was valued by a leading German art dealer at 50,000 German marks! It follows then, that before you can contemplate art you must have some conception of what art is. This argument presupposes a rational mind which in turn suggests that our aesthetic judgement is something we learn, like language, through the intellect. As Charlton has said: 'The faculty of aesthetic discrimination is less a kind of sensitivity than a kind of intelligence'.

Does this bring us any closer to resolving Kant's antinomy of taste? Arguably, we can account for our aesthetic judgements, but can we account for our judgements of taste? In what way are the two forms of judgement different?

I pointed out in Chapter Three that Kant proposes a middle course between these two positions. He argues that our

aesthetic judgement of taste is a synthesis of our empirical, sensory perceptions and our rational, intellectual conceptions. However, as I also suggested in Chapter Three, 'aesthetic judgement' is something of a contradiction in terms. Perhaps this apparent contradiction could be avoided if 'aesthetic judgement' became a compound word, aesthetic-judgement, the meaning of which was separate from the meaning of the individual words from which it is formed. Anyway, there is no 'real' contradiction. I say this because on one level our experience of, and appreciation of, an artwork is aesthetic (empirical, instinctional, sensational and irrational); and on another higher level it is judgemental (rational, intellectual and conceptual). Arguably, anyone is capable of reaching the first, instinctive level of appreciation; but it is only at the second, intellectual level that an artwork begins to take on intersubjective (symbolic) 'meaning'. Consequently, it is to this second level that the critic should address him or herself. This is because it is only at this level that the critic can give a reasoned justification for his or her judgement. If this were not the case and there were only one level (accessible to everyone because, in Kantian terms, free from concepts) then aesthetic judgements could be unreliable, arbitrary, irrelevant, and relative, and yet still be of universal validity - and that would be a contradiction in terms![9]

Does this reassessment bear up to my earlier assessment that the antinomy of taste can be resolved through compromise? I would say so. There may be some argument over taste, but not all arguments will be valid. More specifically, some arguments will be better than others. May we not assume that, for instance, Sir Roy Strong's judgements of aesthetic taste will have more credibility than, say, Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards'?

Structuralists argue, rather optimistically, that there is no such thing as an uninformed reader: even if a reader is only bringing ignorance to a text, he or she still has knowledge of the linguistic codes in virtue of the fact that he or she can read. An unskilled reader, however, will not always be able to comprehend the meaning of a text. The unskilled reader cannot simply immerse him or herself in a text and expect it to speak directly to his or her unconscious self in order to satisfy his or her aesthetic interest. But does the same apply to painting? Not everyone can read words, but surely everyone can read pictorial images, or at least allow the images to speak to their unconscious self? What about the illiterate cavemen who painted at Lascaux some fifteen thousand years ago? Well, perhaps painting is a special case. As Gombrich has pointed out,[10] we do not read the shape of a jug into a naturalistic Dutch still-life painting, we simply recognise it. Perhaps then, the problem is not so much the ability to read painting, but the ability to read 'into'. That is, interpret. Most people can read an illusionistic representation of an object in nature, but not everyone can read an abstract expression of it - without first re-learning their 'vocabulary'.

Aestheticians in The Age of Enlightenment considered that through an adequate education all individuals could be directed toward the same aesthetic values. Surely there is some truth in this. If meaning can be said to be communicated through conventional codes, signs and symbols, then when these conventions are subverted or new scales and mediums (such as 'texture' in Modernist painting, with the impasto paint medium being part of the message) are taken into consideration, then these codes must be modified, that is, re-learned, accordingly. The immediate and intuitive response that Croce and Collingwood espouse would be most unrewarding in this context. According to Croce, the artwork exists in a mental intuition

grasped by an act of aesthetic understanding. If this were the case then it would be possible for anyone to respond to an artwork on a purely emotive, contemplative level. Furthermore, everyone could do so without needing to - perhaps without being able to - articulate why or how they respond as they do. But again, surely we must ask ourselves whether or not it is useful or relevant to talk of a 'valid' aesthetic judgement which is unjustifiable, cannot be communicated (although perhaps mutely shared), and is relative to each individual - regardless of his or her cultural experience or intellect.

What if, for instance, P decides that King Lear is an unsuccessful play because he has wrongly interpreted it as being an allegory about the malpractices of eye-surgeons in Elizabethan England? Although a neo-Hegelian investigative journalist might consider this interpretation to be valid (because it reflects an aspect of the mentality of our age) he would have an uphill struggle trying to persuade other people of its relevance and universal validity. Surely, then, we can legitimately talk in terms of the objective meaning of words, that is, their standard meaning and accepted usage. This necessarily limits the number of possible, relevant interpretations. We share the meaning of language with the authors who employ it, the meanings of the words can thus be said to be determinate and objective. The way we interpret the meaning of these words is not arbitrary either. As E.D. Hirsch, Jr. has suggested,[11] there are two equally compelling normative ideals that can be appealed to: the author's meaning and the best meaning. These may not be the same, in which case the critic who suggests the best meaning becomes the author of the best meaning. Hirsch also suggests that the meaning of a text does not change, it is fixed. It is the significance of the meaning which is in flux from age to age and person to person. It is therefore the significance, not the meaning, that is relative. Validity, for Hirsch, implies the correspondence of

an interpretation to a meaning which is represented by the text.[12] After all, lawyers win or lose cases according to the precision with which they define their terms and appeal to strict definitions. They often appeal to what a 'reasonable' man would take the words to mean. Perhaps in this sense it is possible to come close to a 'correct', that is, valid interpretation of a literary text or painting. This does not necessarily mean that there is only one determinate interpretation, only that some interpretations are going to be more appropriate than others. In his essay Must the Critic be Correct?, Richard W. Lind argues against this view by suggesting that it does not follow that just because there are misreadings there must be correct readings. Well, perhaps not. But Lind fails to allow that just because the best possible interpretation cannot necessarily be determined, it does not follow that we cannot determine that some interpretations are better than others. It might be that the 'correct' interpretation is the one intended by the author or artist, it does not follow, however, that this is the 'best' interpretation, or a better interpretation than any other. There may be an indefinite number of better or worse interpretations and the most aesthetically valuable one might be that which combines the 'correct' author's intention with the most relevant of the 'better' interpretations.

Lind goes on to argue, however, that conventionally determined meanings are merely necessary, not sufficient, for a coherent understanding of the art work as a whole. I would go along with this if what he means by it is that a relevant interpretation might help us to understand a work of art. If this is the case P could legitimately say 'I like what I know' as oppose to 'I know what I like'. Interpretations imply understanding and understanding, in this context, could be said to imply enjoyment. But is everyone fitted with a similar capacity for understanding and enjoyment? Possibly not. It is

possible that some people have never had, nor never will have, an aesthetic experience or emotion and, presumably, it would be difficult to explain to such a person what an aesthetic experience or emotion is like. I'm not sure I have. I like to think I have but, in the absence of a vocabulary for describing, comparing, and communicating the way I feel, I have no real way of knowing whether or not my aesthetic experiences have been of the same intensity and profundity as everyone elses'. Thus although aesthetic judgements qua emotional responses are highly important, they do not offer us any insights as to the cause of the emotional effect; viz. the nature of art (because although facial expressions may register the effect, in the absence of reasons, the cause cannot be adequately determined, articulated, and understood). It is to aesthetic judgements qua critical evaluations that we must look in search of such insights.

Although I believe it is difficult to explain to someone what an aesthetic experience is like, this is not to say that you cannot suggest ways and means by which someone might improve their chances of discovering for themselves what it is like. Certain basic elements of appreciation can be taught. Consider Roger Fry's interesting analogy to the principle of the wireless. Fry suggests that we can regard the artist as transmitter, the art object as the medium, and the spectator as the receiver. For the message to work, he argues, the spectator must be 'tuned-in' to the transmitter. When the receiving instrument is crude and imperfect, and the message complex, then only part of the message will be received and the receiver can only respond to extremely basic and violent transmissions.[13] If we pursue Fry's analogy we could say that as an individual's aesthetic tastes become more sophisticated, so his or her receiver becomes more finely tuned. In this regard individuals could be said to attain cultural maturity - that is, the capacity for the full aesthetic experience - by

realising the full aesthetic potential of an artwork [cf. Ingarden's theory of degrees of concretion]. In this regard they might be like children reaching maturity in adulthood. Also in this regard, our tolerance threshold for easily-found emotions, such as the sentimentality and nostalgia of chocolate box art, is lowered. An analogy with the maturing of culinary tastes could also be usefully made here. During childhood we have a sweet-tooth but in adulthood our tastes develop and mature so that we prefer more spicy, savoury foods. To put it crudely, people who have an aesthetic experience or emotion from contemplating soft-focus photographs of wide-eyed kittens; or from reading Barbara Cartland novels; or from (easy) listening to James Last recordings, can be said to be aesthetically retarded. As I mentioned earlier though, this may not be a case of having a permanent taste-handicap, it might be that the potential for development has simply not been realised. As Gombrich amusingly put it:

> Whether we are writers, critics or painters, we are all apt to forget that not everyone shares our knowledge and our past experience. But without such sharing, messages will die on the way from transmitter to receiver, not because we fail to be 'attuned', but simply because there is nothing there to relate them to. Neither communication nor expression can function in a void.[14]

Perhaps, then, it is an article of faith to believe an aesthetic experience or emotion is possible, and indeed that it is even beneficial. It <u>might</u> be that such an emotion is <u>not</u> possible and that, as with the Emperor's clothes, everyone believes certain artworks are good and certain artworks bad <u>because</u> everyone else believes them to be good or bad. Without concepts, though, we do not have the tools to challenge such an absurd suggestion. To re-phrase Beardsley: without concepts all we are left with is a definition of good art as being that which is produced by good artists who are good artists in virtue of their having produced good art.

By way of conclusion to this chapter, it should perhaps be accepted that an aesthetic judgement should not be received second hand, but, also, that certain people do not have the intellectual capacity - or at least have not been adequately trained - to have a full aesthetic experience or emotion for themselves. This begs the question: Should they be allowed to undermine the status that a given play, painting or symphony has as a good work of art - as conferred upon it by a cultural elite? I think not. The 'fault' may be in the perception of the consumer and not in the competence of the producer or the quality of the product. In the next chapter I shall consider the extent to which our interpretations of a work of art are in reference to its objective properties.

Chapter Eight

Sibley's Theory of Objective Properties

In the 1930s C.W. Morris raised two interesting question: (1) If an art object can be a sign of itself - that is, if it can invite us to pay attention to it for its own sake - can it not also be said to be a sign of its properties? (2) If its aesthetic value is one of its properties can the art object be said to be a sign that designates a value? To Morris's two questions might be added a third: (3) Are there a finite set of identifiable properties which constitute aesthetic value? In this and the next chapter I shall offer answers to the first two questions and explain why an answer to the third question cannot be realistically attempted.

Arguably, the most influential and provocative exposition of this subject to have appeared in recent years is F.N. Sibley's essay Objectivity and Aesthetics.[1] In this essay Sibley throws down the objectivist gauntlet by calling for an examination of the characteristic properties of aesthetic terms. There is, he argues, a legitimate comparison to be made between these and the terms used in colour judgements: that is, if we accept objectivity in the latter case, then we ought to accept it in the former.

Sibley addresses himself to the commonly-held assumption that where proof is impossible there can be no objectivity - that is, without proof we are unable to establish the truth or falsity of an aesthetic judgement. He asks whether we actually need to test these proofs 'fully and successfully', that is, conclusively, in order to establish a valid judgement. Perhaps,

he argues, 'general agreement' will suffice:

> . . . a realm of objectivity might be made possible by some limited (not widespread) actual agreement including some settled and virtually indisputable cases, together with a perhaps elaborate and hard to describe procedure that offers the possibility, by envisageable ways, of attaining wider agreement.[2]

Sibley suggests that an aesthetic term, like 'graceful', connote's dependent properties - whereas a colour term, like blue, does not. Colour, rather, is a simple property on which we must all agree (excepting those who are colour blind). Furthermore, it may be possible for us to say we know that the colour of a given object is blue without being able to say why we know. To paraphrase Sibley's supposition: dependent aesthetic properties make a similarly direct appeal to agreement, hence any proofs offered - as to the validity of any given aesthetic term - appeal not to other properties, but to general agreement. We can agree on colours and other prima facie objective matters without proof, therefore we should be able to agree on aesthetic terms without needing proof.

One weakness with Sibley's analogy between colour concepts and aesthetic concepts is that aesthetic properties admit of degrees in a way in which colours do not. Thus painting A may be deemed 'graceful' compared to painting B but not compared to painting C. For the colour term 'blue' to be meaningfully applied, though, the object in question must be blue according to some non-relative standard. But perhaps to argue this is to miss Sibley's point. His analogy is a useful one insofar as colours are deemed to be objective properties even though, like aesthetic properties, they are necessarily related to experience and therefore to a subject.

But what counts as an aesthetic term? Are 'beautiful', or 'ugly', for instance, aesthetic terms in the same sense as 'graceful' is? Let us consider this question in light of

previous comments I have made about Kant. Kant would argue that on one level they are not the same, because, for him, something either is beautiful or is not. On this level the term beautiful does not admit of degrees. Nor does it require comparison with other non-beautiful things in order to be rendered meaningful. In the Kantian sense, beauty is neither relative to the object nor the subject, but rather is universal to the extent that everyone ought to subjectively recognise it as being a property of the form of the object. In this sense Kant is able to claim that judgements of aesthetic taste which involve the disinterested contemplation of the beautiful are intersubjective and therefore universal. On another level, however, Kant claims that beauty does admit of degrees (as imagination and understanding may be in more or less harmonious interaction) seemingly without going back on his claim that individual aesthetic judgements are non-comparative. He does this through claiming that to recognise that A is more beautiful than B depends on an ability to recognise beauty in A and beauty in B separately. Thus it is not like recognising that A is bigger than B which is a true comparative judgement involving comparative or relativistic terms.

Now, can this be applied to comparisons of colour? Leaving aside the complications involved with shade and tone (pale-blue as opposed to navy-blue, for instance) can we not say the colour blue does not admit of degrees? If painting A is coloured blue it is still going to remain blue when it is compared to paintings B and C. It will not suddenly become less blue in a way that one figure might seem less 'graceful' when compared to another one. How, then, if at all, is the non-relativity of colour different from the non-relativity of beauty? Kant would argue that there is a world of difference - in that colour is related to content whilst beauty is related to form. But, for reasons already mentioned, I find Kant's account unsatisfactory.

Consider again the objection I raised in Chapter Four. Largely due to Kant's legacy it is assumed that aesthetic judgement is concerned exclusively with the pleasurable contemplation of non-dependent beauty. Although 'the beautiful' may be called different things - 'aesthetic value' for instance, or perhaps what Bell later called 'significant form' - it is always characterised by associations of mystery, it is an esoteric quality containing 'Factor X'. It is, in short, indefinable and elusive.

Osborne suggests that correct critical judgements should be made according to certain principles of beauty, but not to others. Righter has summarised Osborne's position thus:

> The investigation of beauty is to be carried on in two ways: first by examining the states of mind involved in the appreciation of beauty in works of art, and second by examining the objective properties in works of art which are connected with this mental state. This latter is the search for the true nature of the 'objective beauty-property' - which after careful consideration is identified with the formal elements in a work of art - with the arrangement of its parts into a coherent whole. Beauty is, in fact, the property of being an organic whole for perception, a whole that is normally of great complexity and intricate organization, and . . . the greater this complexity of elements organized, the greater the beauty.[3]

The question now to be asked is this: How is this 'objective beauty-property' different from other aesthetic terms which are descriptive of properties ('harmony', 'elegance', 'lucidity', 'grace', 'intensity', 'complexity', 'unity', 'ugliness', 'dullness', 'sublimity', and so on)? Arguably, what they have in common is that they are all either commendatory or discriminatory, and can all be applied in a (neutral) descriptive way - and yet, at the same time, the words themselves <u>are</u> the judgement. 'This painting is complex' can be treated as a statement of fact - perhaps by comparing the complex painting with a 'simple' painting. Now, a Kantian might argue that the statement 'this painting is beautiful'

can also be factual, but not demonstrably so because we do not understand beauty in terms of a comparison with ugliness. Rather, the argument goes, beauty is not relative to the object, it is relative to the subject (in the eye of the beholder) and is 'factual' to the extent that everyone ought to agree with it. Even in this new context the distinction being discussed is still that between aesthetic terms qua responses of taste and aesthetic terms qua critical evaluations.

Sibley accepts that there might be limited disagreement because even though aesthetic properties are emergent they must be noticed in 'interrelation'. However, he also points out that certain people might be unwilling or unable to attend appropriately, so that disagreement would result, even though, with attention and training, agreement ought to occur. But, for Sibley, the apprehension of phenomenological properties requires a special sort of sensitivity as well as training.[4] Sibley argues that agreement in discrimination is not arbitrary - that is, not dependent on certain mental or emotional experiences - in virtue of the extent to which we do agree:

> Some people, I am saying, when they develop certain everyday capacities and acquire a diversity of not uncommon experience and knowledge, exhibit a tendency to make similar discriminations.[5]

Sibley goes on to note, however, that other people with apparently similar knowledge and experience - and, of course, those who do not have the knowledge and experience - simply do not agree. This is because, he provocatively suggests, some people are incurably insensitive, just as some people are incurably colour-blind:

> What we do not know is whether, by continuing efforts, we might elicit a large measure of agreement in the majority of people, or whether many simply lack the latent capacities. Educators in art appreciation assume the former; history may suggest the latter.[6]

Pursuing his colour-blindness analogy Sibley suggests that if an elite of such aesthetic connoisseurs were to exhibit a

fairly constant degree of agreement, over several generations - that is, an elite that legitimately applies 'the test of time' - then it would establish a possible standard of judgement. It is worth quoting Sibley at some length on this point:

> We may therefore regard much existing difference in discrimination as irrelevant. It is not the majority being colour-sighted that permits a property language for colours, but the existence of a nucleus (large or small) making regular, detailed and closely identical distinctions. And as the 'opinions' of the colour-blind can be ignored, so, in aesthetics, we can concentrate on the perceptive 'elite' group, even if it is a minority; for if we are dealing with properties, we shall be no more interested in the 'opinions' and 'disagreements' of people who cannot or can only fitfully recognize them than in those of people who evince no interest at all in aesthetic matters.[7]

This seems to be a not unreasonable suggestion. If the properties of a given aesthetic term are objectively present in the art object, then a member of the perceptive elite group could legitimately point to a given property - such as a curved line suggesting 'gracefulness' - and use this as a form of 'proof' to support the rational argument he or she gives in support of his or her interpretation and evaluation. One seemingly unanswerable question that this raises though, is this: How can we know what colour another person is experiencing when he points to a certain object? We can only know what the other person says he is experiencing. In this sense colours can only be said to be socially objectified, pace Wittgenstein and the Private Language argument.

Perhaps, then, it is misleading for Sibley to speak of the 'proof' of an aesthetic judgement which simply consists in pointing to those features upon which the the aesthetic properties supervene. It is more complicated than that. Pointing may be a satisfactory way of indicating colour, but not aesthetic value. Pointing in and of itself does not involve reasoning. In Chapters Five and Seven I proposed that a degree of 'proof' might be found in the relevance of the

interpretations which inform the judgement and that such interpretations constitute relevant reasons for that judgement. Let me develop this point. Arguably, there are three forms of interpretation: one concerns an understanding of the symbolic meaning of the content; another involves the 'way' in which we actually perceive an object (as with the duck/rabbit phenomenon); whilst another involves the use of aesthetic terms in relation to the form . . . In the first two cases a Kantian philosopher might argue that the judgement of aesthetic value has little to do with the interpretation of - and understanding of - meaning. This is because, he or she would argue, an artwork is not an instrument of knowledge, rather, it is concerned with the pleasurable contemplation of the form. However, as I have suggested in the third instance, interpretation need not always be concerned with 'meaning'. It could be argued that if I offer a commendatory critical evaluation of a painting I might do so on the grounds that I consider its form to be 'graceful'. This could apply as much to an abstract painting as to a narrative painting [perhaps in virtue of the Gestalt phenomenon I shall go on to discuss in Chapter Eleven]. To substantiate my claim I could point to an example of a painting that I considered to be 'graceless'. Such a comparison would constitute a relevant reason for applying the term 'graceful'. Now, there <u>is</u> an element of relativity involved in such a scenario, but this need not lead us down the nihilistic road to subjectivity. Part of this relativity lies in the assumption that grace is always a commendatory term indicating positive aesthetic value. This need not be so. 'Graceful' as represented in a frivolous, sickly-sweet Rococo painting may be a pejorative term. Elsewhere, in Picasso's brutally fragmented images, 'graceful' may simply be deemed inappropriate. Again, it would seem that these terms are context-bound, perhaps according to genre, and - another sense in which it might be relative - depending upon the comparisons

that are made . . . as in the case of painting A being graceful compared with painting B but not C.[8]

Obviously, much here depends upon the ontological status we accord to the artwork being discussed. Problems will arise if we are discussing music scores, but even in such problematic cases surely the principle still applies. It is possible to indicate to someone which particular passage of music you wish to evaluate. It is, for instance, straightforward enough to 'explain' why the musical climax to Wagner's Tristan und Isolde can be interpreted in terms of a sexual climax. The evocation of mood in music is perhaps somewhat trickier to explain. Can we say that a given piece of music itself expresses melancholy, in contrast to it being the composer who is expressing melancholy? Music can be said to 'objectively' express melancholy in a metaphorical sense, that is, the music could be said to have certain objective 'properties' which evoke feelings of melancholy in the listener. On the other hand, perhaps the melancholy belongs to the individual subject who listens to the music. The question is, can we identify certain passages of music which are melancholic - or which we recognise as being capable of evoking feelings of melancholy - without necessarily feeling the melancholy ourselves? What we actually feel about a piece of music (the subjective feelings that the music evokes) may not correspond with the objective properties we attribute to it. I can say 'this music is melancholic' even if it does not make me, personally, feel melancholy. I can also go on to give reasons for this judgement along the lines of 'this music is melancholic because it is slow and the tones are muted'. [To be explained in Chapter Eleven]

If, on the other hand, the subjectivist position is taken to its logical conclusion we can say that the object of perception is not even needed because it only serves as a catalyst of an aesthetic response [pace Croce's view that the

art object is merely the occasion of the art]. According to this 'radical' subjectivist view, such a catalyst would not be necessary because it is the experience, not the object or its properties, which constitutes the aesthetic value. Because such experience is independent of objective properties, any object can be accorded art status, by anyone, regardless of the degree to which they are intellectually and psychologically ill-equipped. But how, it must be asked, could a subjectivist account for objective phenomena (intellectual-sensual stimuli: semantic, formal, symbolic, and historical) which are external to the percipient, but which, nevertheless, influence our judgements? If the subjectivist position is correct, such phenomena should not exist - insofar as they do, subjectivism implies consequences that contradict the known 'evidence'. Such 'evidence' can be said to be 'factual' in virtue of the objectivity of Sibley's aesthetic terms.

It seems reasonable for Sibley to talk of certain aesthetic terms being factual and correct, insofar as he is prepared to define what he means by 'fact'. A 'fact', for Sibley, is that which a nucleus of people (an elite) agree upon when they apply a given aesthetic term to a specific object.[9] Thus in respect of colours we can agree enough (by pointing to a range of colour perceptions and by referring to the scientific laws which govern these perceptions) to claim that we are dealing with facts. In a similar sense there can be enough agreement to validate a claim that certain aesthetic terms are applicable to certain paintings.

A by-now-familiar objection needs to be reconsidered here. The notion of an aesthetic expert, or elite of experts, is only useful if it can be defined without circularity [cf. Hume's 'competent judge' in Chapter Two]. Thus it is futile to define the expert as one who usually makes correct judgements since it is the same expert who has to decide which judgements are

correct. Other qualifications have to be taken into account. These are, I have suggested, that 'good' judgements are those that are adequately substantiated with relevant reasons, and which have survived protracted disputes, that is, have survived the test of time. Thus we can say that, although Tolstoy and Ruskin are considered to be experts, Tolstoy's criticisms of King Lear and Ruskin's of Whistler have not withstood the test of time.

A new objection is this: It is not enough that any group of people who consistently agree in their judgements should count as experts. It all depends upon their reasons for judging as they do. Thus teenyboppers might be considered the best judges of those pop groups which most appeal to their age group. Teenyboppers might be more sensitive to the properties that go to make up a good teenybopper record than an adult might be. For instance, a good pop record might be one in which the lyrics are shallow and sentimental, and which has a catchy, repetitive, synthesised 4/4 beat. Thus citing these properties a teenybopper might validate his or her judgement that a Kylie Minogue record is good of its kind. As before, this does lead to a kind of relativism, but not one that necessarily takes us down the road to subjectivity. Such generic or contextual judgements have, themselves, to be taken in context. Thus we can argue that whilst Kylie Minogue's single I Should Be So Lucky might be a good example of its kind, its kind is not particularly 'good'. This could be demonstrated by comparing it with a recording of Wagner's Tannhauser. A teenybopper might hate the Wagner recording, complaining that it is boring and depressing and that all classical music 'sounds the same', but this may be because the teenybopper is insensitive to the nuances of Wagner's music. Likewise, an 'expert' on classical (Romantic) music may be insensitive to the qualities of pop music. In a similar sense he or she may be unable to discriminate between different examples, but at least in all

probability he or she will be able to appreciate why a teenybopper considers Kylie Minogue to be good - the reverse, however, is not necessarily true. The point is this: although someone may be an expert in a particular genre (opera) this does not qualify him or her to assume expertise in other genres (such as pop) but by the same token just because a song such as I Should Be So Lucky is considered to be good of its kind this does not mean that its kind shares a similar status to other 'kinds' such as opera. On the contrary, in many respects (too numerous to list here) the operas of Wagner can be said to be vastly superior to the pop songs of Kylie Minogue. Whilst it is misleading to compare pop music with Romantic opera, Pop Art with Renaissance art, Television 'sitcom' with Greek Tragedy, it is, nevertheless, possible to claim that, according to certain specific standards of excellence, certain forms are superior or inferior to others. It could be argued, for instance, that Wagner's Tannhauser is 'greater' than Kylie Minogue's I Should Be So Lucky, insofar as the criteria for judging 'Great Music' should not be that it has 'shallow and sentimental lyrics, with a repetitive, synthesised 4/4 beat', but rather that it should be 'spiritually and intellectually elevating, and have a capacity to produce a profoundly rewarding aesthetic experience in the listener'. Again, to make another cheap and obvious comparison, Shirley Conran is a better writer of pulp fiction than Iris Murdoch, but generally, Iris Murdoch is a better 'literary' writer - with the criteria for 'better' here being, more intellectually rewarding, and more aesthetically pleasing from a literary point-of-view. One of the problems with this method of judging according to canons is like that of the chicken and the egg. Do our reasons for judging something to be good determine what shall be in the canon, or does the canon determine the reasons? Did Aristotle set out a formula for good tragedy and then decide which plays conformed to it, or did he (as is more likely the case) watch existing good tragedies and then try to analyse what properties

they had in common? Perhaps these are unanswerable questions. They do, however, bring us closer to resolving the perennial and thorny question of what to do if two members of such an elite of experts disagree. Consider Sibley again:

> What concerns us is the state of affairs, including occasional disagreements, within the nucleus who largely agree. For it is here - roughly speaking, amongst professional and lay critics through the ages (by virtue of whose broad agreement we classify them as critics) - that genuine disagreements without significant parallel in the realm of colours may occur (though, of course, no sharp line divides the nucleus from the rest; the fully colour-sighted, too, shade into the mildly colour-defective.[10]

There is no clear-cut solution to this problem, but perhaps we can take consolation in the extent to which there is agreement. Sibley reasons that because there is a considerable amount of stable consensus then it is far from clear that the existence of unresolved disagreements is a conclusive argument against objectivism.

It has been suggested by, among others, T.S. Eliot (in his essay The Function of Criticism) that the critic should overcome his personal prejudices and 'compose his differences with as many of his fellows as possible, in the common pursuit of true judgement'. Agreement and disagreement may take various forms but it is no argument to say that just because critics do disagree this undermines the occasions when there is agreement. Be this as it may, some critics, such as Ducasse,[11] dismiss agreement as being merely the occasions on which critics judge alike because they are constituted alike. Ducasse argues that critics are constituted alike because they are subjected to the sort of psychological pressure appropriate to the causation of such a judgement. Surely though, in presenting this defence of subjectivity Ducasse has, as it were, painted himself into a corner. If social conditioning determines a judgement then the judgement cannot be subjective because everyone who is conditioned alike will judge alike and, therefore, their

judgements will take on an intersubjective or quasi-objective validity. This is because, all other things being equal, everyone in like circumstance 'ought' to arrive at the same judgement. As Jonathan Culler has argued, even though experts may disagree about meaning this should not undermine the fact that they follow a common set of interpretative conventions:

> A primary task of the study of reading is to describe the operations responsible for the interpretations we find plausible.[12]

In section five of his essay Sibley turns to the correct application of aesthetic (property) terms or concepts. He asks: should these concepts make demands for agreement - or explanation where agreement is lacking - as part of their logic? From this initial question Sibley asks two further questions: i) Should we use aesthetic concepts with elements of an objective logic, requiring some agreement and explanations of disagreement? and ii) if so, then are we able to find some agreement and some workable explanations of disagreement?

Sibley allows that peoples' opinions do change but, he argues, this does not make the choice of which group of people - that is, which elite should discern which properties and define which terms - an arbitrary choice. Rather, he argues, the choice is no more arbitrary than is our choice over colour. Everyone accepts the concept of blue as blue, and red as red. Sibley considers colours to be a paradigm of properties. He argues that the principle behind these properties applies to other less rigid concepts. Consequently, as with colours, the 'is' of the attribution of aesthetic terms is tied to the group able to agree regularly on the maximum of discriminations. Sibley concludes that some aesthetic judgements may, in this sense, be right or wrong, apt or inappropriate, true or false - but that, because no real proof can be offered, all we have to go on is nucleate concepts. The judgements of this nucleus, he argues, may not be unanimous, but this does not necessarily

imply subjectivity. It merely implies that there should be further specific defining of the aesthetic terms being used.

In his essay Objectivity and Aesthetics,[13] Michael Tanner argues that Sibley's distinction here is between objective-concepts and response-concepts. Universal agreement is not, according to this view, a sufficient condition for objectivity: inasmuch as everyone might agree on the application of a term like 'graceful' without actually agreeing on what 'graceful' means. As Sibley puts it:

> For us to be using a word as a property term, it is required that, to be using it correctly, people must (not merely may) in certain circumstances apply it to more or less the same cases . . . A personal response concept makes no such demand.[14]

Tanner takes issue with this. He argues that an elite group whose colour or aesthetic discriminations happen to coincide, may only be one of many possible 'elites'. Furthermore, he argues, to say that an object is a particular colour is to say no more than that one group calls it that particular colour. Another group might call it a different colour, by virtue of the similarities and contrasts that they perceive between it and another object. Tanner assumes from this that both groups cannot be right, but questions whether or not it is actually possible to determine which group is wrong.

I would argue that it is possible. I suggested earlier in this chapter that not all elites shared the same status - as in the case of the teenyboppers. I would also argue that it is possible to have more than one elite which can make differing though relatively valid 'panaesthetic' judgements. [I shall elaborate on this concept in the next chapter.] What does it mean to say that a judgement is valid? It need not mean that a given judgement is definitive, universal and absolute forever. Rather, a judgement characterised by a given cultural tradition may be socially acceptable to that culture for a given period

of time. Community A might recognise certain values which Community B rejects or is unaware of; or community A may have similar values to Community B but order them according to a different hierarchy. In both communities the judgements they make may be, to use that troublesome word, 'relatively' valid. That is, universally valid for all members of this specified group according to the extent to which the judgements are panaesthetic. This is not to assume, however, that the judgement of each individual within the community will be similarly valid. The individual is not necessarily a microcosm of the community. In the next chapter I shall pursue this principle of 'relative objectivity' further. I shall also present other objections to Sibley's theory and determine how effectively they can be countered.

Chapter Nine

Relative Objectivity

In previous chapters I have argued that definitions of art are culturally dependent, and that they cannot therefore be truly universal. But if they are not universal then what becomes of the 'test of time' I have also argued for? Is each age culturally different from preceding ages? Is the past another country, 'they do things differently there'? For the most part I suspect it is, but this need not undermine my argument. Can we not accept that when two different ages, or two different communities within the same age, agree or disagree about their definitions of art that both can be equally, that is, relatively correct? This is not to licence a full-blown theory of relativism, rather it is introduce the concept I wish to discuss in this chapter: viz. relative objectivity.

There may be certain explanations as to why Community A has a different set of values to Community B. In Chapter Six, for instance, I suggested reasons why music is culture-dependent. But there are other explanations: community A may have a more advanced level of knowledge about theories of art, about the history of the arts, and about certain psycho-social aspects of art reception. Community B's emotional-cognitive capacities may be unequal to those of Community A. There may be a diversity of cultural and artistic traditions between Communities A and B. Community B may have difficulty in discerning particular qualities of object-properties and in articulating the kinds of aesthetic values corresponding to these qualities.

It might be that if these two communities - each with their own relatively valid value systems - came into contact with one another it would be possible to establish that one value system was superior to another (perhaps in terms of sophistication, maturity, sensitivity, and eclecticism). This could be established along the lines set out in Chapters Six and Seven, viz. that interpretations of language or art 'statements' may be either valid or invalid; also in Chapter Eight viz. the superiority of Wagner over Kylie Minogue. Empirical data - such as sensual observations or intellectual-analytical operations involving the reconstruction of formal structures and symbols - may be referred to in order to establish this validity or invalidity. The two communities would have to carry out their evaluations under identical conditions. The values of one community (A) could then perhaps accommodate or subsume the values of another (B). It would not necessarily matter if B did not accept that its values were inferior to those of A - they may do given time - what would be important would be that A had become aware of the values of B and had subsequently either dismissed them, through strength of argument, or subsumed them, or even exchanged them in preference to some of their own values. An example of this might be the accommodation of primitive ideas and symbols in Twentieth century art. In this respect it may also be possible to suggest ways in which the literary merits or shortcomings of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses can be considered objectively. Community A (Western, liberal and democratic) may consider the book to have aesthetic value according to criteria x, y and z. These might be such things as complex formal structure and unity, sophisticated narrative technique, and profound symbolic or allegorical content. Community B (Islamic fundamentalist) may consider it to have no aesthetic value whatsoever, according to one criterion (w) only: viz. that its content can be interpreted as being blasphemous. We could say, therefore, that a judgement which is relative to a specific

frame of reference may, nevertheless, be relatively objective. Thus, if judgement X is valid for Community A and judgement Y for Community B, judgements X and Y may not be objectively valid without qualification; but, nevertheless, X _is_ valid for A and Y _is_ valid for B.[1] Might it be possible, therefore, to construct a continuum of panaesthetic value?[2] Zero could represent aesthetically neutral objects; right of zero could represent positive values; and left of zero could represent the realm of negative values. Positive values could be identified with the absence of correspondingly negative ones. In the case of _The Satanic Verses_ its literary value could be justified according to a ratio of three positive values (x, y and z) to one negative value (w). A similar principle has been proposed by Child:

> It is the group predispositions to which the social-historical relativity of esthetic value has reference. It is the group predispositions, moreover, which concretize the objective ground in general.[3]

Bleich applies this principle to knowledge in a broader sense:

> If two individuals are obligated to one another, they are in the same community. The pedagogical relationship in pursuit of common knowledge incurs a mutual obligation to either synthesize the knowledge or to form a new community defined by other common knowledge.[4]

How does this relativity principle square with the theory of objective properties and concepts? To return to Tanner, I suspect that his problem is that he is drawing the wrong conclusions from Sibley's distinction between objective-concepts and response-concepts.[5] After all, in proposing a 'property theory' Sibley is following in a distinctive tradition in Western aesthetics. According to the philosophers of Ancient Greece, for instance, good works of art have an intrinsic, objective value property. Eighteenth-century theorists held that good works of art have a property, or set

of properties, which are instrumental in occasioning disinterested pleasure - pleasure being valuable.[6] Consider, also, the account of beauty that Thomas Reid offers as an alternative to Kant's. Like Sibley, Reid contends that beauty is a property of the beautiful object. It is impossible, he argues, to perceive the beauty of an object without perceiving the object, or, at least, conceiving it.[7] He makes a useful distinction between primary properties which an object has in itself, independent of an observer and which are therefore objective (such as size, shape, solidity, softness, and hardness) and tertiary or secondary properties which involve interaction with an observer (such as colours, tastes and smells). According to James Manns, Reid's terms are borrowed from Locke who considered that the sensation we have of an object is occasioned by a primary property and that this corresponds to our <u>idea</u> of the object. In terms of the Cartesian mind-matter duality the primary properties are an objective function of matter whereas the tertiary properties need to be experienced and so are a subjective function of mind.[8] Reid believes that we can have direct and therefore objective contact with reality through the primary properties. There is a subtle distinction here between ideas and sensations. Sensations act as signs which inform an interpretation of a perceived object, and, as such, they function significantly - but this does not mean that they are ideas. In other words, we become directly aware of art objects through the sensations which signify them.[9] This seems consistent with the hedonistic view held by certain post-war Anglo-American aestheticians that aesthetic judgements do not refer to classes of objects or certain features or emotions, but rather to the way certain objects <u>appear</u> to the senses.

Now, as Osborne argues, if our aesthetic experience can be reduced to having pleasant sensations, and if pleasurability can be considered the one and only criterion of aesthetic

judgement, this still does not account for the characteristics of the appearance of certain objects that make them better able to hold our attention, elevate us, engross us, transport us, and so forth, for the object's own sake rather than for the sake of the subject. If this were not the case then aesthetics would be reduced to the solipsism of personal taste, and all that would remain would be the statistical or sociological investigation of personal, subjective preference.[10] In other words, if art is only concerned with pleasure then it will necessarily be a subjective enterprise. But it is not. A hierarchy of art cannot be determined solely according to pleasurability. In such a case, as Ingarden has pointed out, it would be the subject's pleasure not the work of art that was being valued. Furthermore, because the subject may have different responses of pleasure to the object at different times and in different moods, not only will his judgement be relative it will also be hopelessly subjective. This assumption - that aesthetic judgements are based upon the experiencing of pleasure - is a legacy of Kant's assumption that aesthetic judgements are based exclusively on 'the beautiful'. In the last chapter I questioned the supposed subjectivity of aesthetic terms such as 'graceful', now I shall attempt to answer the question that has been left begging: Is beauty an objective property? According to Reid, beauty is a property which is separate from both primary and tertiary properties - because both of these are simple whereas beauty is relational and complex. However, as Manns puts it:

> Our judgements as to the beauty of things are as systematic in attributing the beauty to the thing as our judgements of perception are in attributing qualities to the thing . . . and systematic attribution . . . is held to stand as its own justification.[11]

If Manns also assumes here that comprehension is part of apprehension, meaning that you can say not only that you know an object is beautiful, but also that you can say _why_ you know,

then it must be assumed that the properties being referred to are primary ones, informing tertiary ones.[12] Now, two forms which our criticism might take are the factual-descriptive and the normative-evaluative. The descriptive assumes that others can see, or be persuaded through strength of argument to see, an object as you see it (seeing as); the evaluative assumes that certain properties of the appearance of an object can be referred to (seeing).[13] One of the problems with this view, however, is that evaluation is based upon comparison - the idea of defining art by example [Chapter Six]; or by claiming an art work to be good as an example of its kind [Chapter Four] - and, as such, denies the possibility that the value of an artwork is related to the uniqueness of the properties we describe by way of citing reasons for our evaluation. Osborne:

> Evaluation involves comparison of particulars under a common description and things cannot be evaluated in respect of features in which each is unique.[14]

Elsewhere,[15] Sibley has argued that when an aesthetic property is referred to in an aesthetic judgement, an aesthetic concept is used. When this aesthetic concept is applied, an aesthetic term is used. And when an aesthetic term is correctly used, the user has exercised his or her taste - that is, he or she has been perceptive, sensitive and discriminating. To use Sibley's example of the aesthetic term 'graceful': if someone were to refer to a curved line as being 'graceful' then that would require an exercise of taste, whereas if someone were to simply say 'that is a curved line' then that would not.

Ted Cohen criticises this as being an artificial distinction.[16] He argues that you do not need taste in order to apply the term 'graceful'. Possibly not, but, arguably, you do need taste in order to apply the term <u>appropriately</u>. Cohen goes on to criticise Sibley by making, what he assumes to be, an unfavourable comparison with Hume's theory of taste. Both, Cohen argues, ask whether and how judgements of taste can be

supported. Whereas Hume refers to the joint verdict of 'true judges', Sibley refers to a 'perceptive elite'. Both consider taste to be a special capacity to notice (delicacy of taste) and, in Hume's case, a capacity to feel (delicacy of passion). Sibley's (and Hume's) problem, as Cohen sees it, is that although some properties are in the object, some, such as beauty and sweetness, are not in the object, as such. Rather, they are in the sentiment of the subject. Could, then, two 'true judges' notice the same things in the object but 'feel' different responses to them? Presumably they could. It would seem, therefore, that a difference of affective response to an object implies a difference of perception. On the other hand, in theory if not in practice, it is possible and important to distinguish the purely sensory from the affective. Two people might both successfully detect the bitterness of an olive but whereas one enjoys the flavour, the other does not. Similarly, even though we can say that aesthetic properties are emergent or supervenient, and though we can still agree on all other properties of the object, it might be that A likes blue paintings and B hates them - yet both agree on the attribution of the phrase 'blue painting'. As ever, the distinction that seems to be suggesting itself here is that between aesthetic judgements qua quasi-objective critical evaluations and aesthetic judgements qua subjective and emotional responses of taste.

Cohen is partially justified in making his objection, but he does not acknowledge that the conclusion to be drawn from his objection are germane to the argument. Namely, that if their responses are different then surely their respective visual impressions - or at least the modes in which these impressions are received - must also be different. In this respect it might mean an aesthetic equivalent of colour-blindness or tone-deafness or dyslexia. In other words, as

concluded in Chapter Seven, it might be the consumer/subject rather than the product/object that is at fault.

Morawski holds a similar view to that of Sibley:

> The objectivity of judgement depends for its status not only upon its subject . . . but also upon its object. Thus the differences between taste and judgement are of a psychological and epistemological character . . . To ascertain the objectivity of both taste and judgement some reference must be made to the objective qualities remaining in some definite relations with the subject who responds to them.[17]

Perhaps a further distinction to be made here, then, is that between the cognitive and the aesthetic way of perceiving. On the other hand, if we relate our perception to our own personal experiences then this too can be non-aesthetic activity. In Edward Bullough's example, the man who watches Othello and thinks of his own external relation to the play, that is, to the unfaithfulness of his own wife, is not disinterested.[18] Perhaps one way of describing this difference is in terms of the attention that should be paid to the internal relations of the aesthetic object and its properties. Is it, then, to the perceived properties of the phenomenal object that we must attend? Or is it to the physical properties of the physical object? How would this account for perceptions of mood, or the contemplation of abstract ideas, for instance? Disinterest in this context raises more questions than it answers.

Whilst it could be argued that 'Form' can be an objective property - in virtue of, what Kant might call, its transcendentally ideal spatial and temporal relations with its percipient - it does not follow that this 'objectivity' is independent of the subject. That is, in Kantian terms, the pleasure produced by the free-play of the imagination is subject-dependent. Similarly, Kant holds that tertiary properties of sensation, such as colour and sound, belong to

the realm of intersubjective knowledge - judgements of sense - and, as such, are concerned merely with likes and dislikes. The important distinction for Kant here is between aesthetic judgements of taste about form - which may be of universally subjective validity - and aesthetic judgements about content which are, for Kant, merely subjective.[19] Thus I cannot claim my preference for blue over all other colours to have universal validity. Judgements of taste concerning non-dependent beauty, on the other hand, are, for Kant, universally legislative because they are concerned with sensibility. This is an extremely subtle distinction. Anything can be seen as being aesthetically beautiful, and a judgement of taste of this sort lays claim to the agreement of everyone.

The second part of this analysis implies that judgement can be either universally valid or invalid - independent of the individual judging subject. In this respect, Sibley seems to be in agreement with Kant. Where they part company, however, is over the objective - as distinct, in this context, from universal - validity of judgements of taste. Kant argues that because beauty is not a concept, there are, therefore, no properties such that any given object with these given properties must be considered beautiful. The pleasure felt from contemplating non-dependent beauty is, for Kant, subjectively universal. It is the necessary connection that Kant makes between the free-play of the imagination and the feeling of pleasure, that informs his use of the expression 'universal validity'.

Kenneth F. Rogerson, in his essay <u>The Meaning of Universal Validity in Kant's Aesthetic</u> reads this expression as meaning a rational expectation for agreement. The assumption is that if one person finds an object beautiful, everybody else will as well. Obviously I am over-simplifying Kant's position here, but, basically, Kant says that if I find a thing beautiful then

I will believe that others ought to agree with me, even if they do not. It is a matter of imputing rather than demanding agreement. Also, Kant requires that before a person can make a claim to the universal validity of his or her judgement, he or she must first attend to the object in a certain way, namely: (i) the subject must be disinterested; (ii) the subject must derive pleasure from contemplating the object; and (iii) this pleasure must be located in the free-play of the imagination and the faculty of understanding. If and only if these three criteria have been satisfied, then the subject can claim that everyone in like circumstances ought to experience pleasure also. The pleasure is therefore, strictly speaking, neither relative nor subjective. On the other hand, as Tanner rather amusingly comments with regard to Sibley's theory, it would be preposterous for someone to fall in love and expect - because of his loved-one's properties - every right-thinking and right-feeling person to fall in love with his loved-one also. So too, Tanner argues, it is absurd to expect that everyone of intelligence, sensibility and taste should respond in like manner and in the same degree to objects apprehended aesthetically. I do not think, however, that Tanner's comparison here is a fair one. After all, human beauty is, in Kant's sense, dependent. There are too many obviously subjective - physical, sexual and psychological - factors to be taken into account, which would not necessarily apply in the case of the aesthetic evaluation of a painting.

Ultimately, though, it is Tanner who levels the most telling criticisms of Sibley's theory. The criticisms are familiar ones which should, perhaps, be considered as cautionary footnotes to the theory. These are: (i) how much agreement is there concerning aesthetic judgements? and (ii) is there enough agreement concerning aesthetic judgements - of the necessary kind - to say that they are objective? . . .

One possible response to Tanner's criticisms can be located in Stephen Davies's essay The Rationality of Aesthetic Responses. On a slightly different tack, Davies concurs with Sibley's premise that the responder may justify his response by referring to properties of the work of art. But he also establishes premises by which (1) we can say that the work of art is the emotional-object of this aesthetic response, and (2) agreement concerning these aesthetic responses might be measured.

Davies argues that if the above premises were not the case - and that, instead, the work of art was the perceptual-object of the response and its cause - then the response could not indicate the responder's appreciation and understanding of the work of art. The work of art would merely be the occasion for the response. Furthermore, the responder's description of the work of art - whilst serving to identify the cause of his response - would not serve to justify the relevance of the response. It would not indicate that a) the responder believed that the work of art displayed the response-relevant properties; or that b) other people could identify the responder's response and hence that c) the responder could identify his own response - because the relevance of his response could not be justified.

For Davies then, the emotional-object instantiates the formal object of the emotional or aesthetic response. The work of art is the emotional-object of the aesthetic response. He offers an example of this (borrowed from Roger Scruton): Our response to a painting of a waif may be one of sadness, and this would correspond to our actual feelings toward an actual waif. The relation between the emotional-object and the actual emotion, then, is like that of make-belief to belief. Just as such representational subject-matter is the emotional-object of an aesthetic response to that subject (the waif), so in non-

representational painting our responses rest on response-relevant make-belief.

> If we accept that the emotion/emotional-object relation can be secured by the imagination in its quasi-belief form, there will be no difficulty in maintaining that aesthetic responses to representational art are rational to the extent that they may be supported by reference to features of the work of art (whose actuality is knowingly entertained rather than believed).[20]

Davies concludes that the rationality of aesthetic responses can be claimed on the grounds that a person can justify his responses by describing the emotional-relevant properties he perceives without belief in the work of art. Response can be identified according to what our description of the work of art says we would do if we believed we were seeing an actual scene that corresponded to the represented one, namely, feel compassionate towards the waif.

> Where the response is an aesthetic one, our access to another's emotional response is through that which he says rather than that which he does.[21]

Agreement could therefore be measured in terms of the degree of correspondence between these descriptions of response-relevant properties. Perhaps, then, we may conclude that the objective properties which determine aesthetic value may be resultant - a function of other properties x, y and z - as well as complex and simple, primary and tertiary, concrete and abstract. This, I feel, partially answers Tanner's criticisms. First, because the reasons given in support of the aesthetic judgements will be enough to conclude that they are objective if, second, they refer to objective properties that necessarily correspond to response-relevant descriptions.

In light of this we can return to the questions posed at the beginning of the last chapter and conclude that: first, the art object can be a sign of itself in virtue of its being a sign of its response-relevant properties; second, the art

object can be said to be a sign that designate a value, in virtue of its aesthetic value being located in both its primary and tertiary properties; and third, to ask whether or not there are a finite set of properties which constitute this aesthetic value is to ask the wrong question because response-relevant property values are not fixed but rather, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, are panaesthetic, that is, relatively objective. In the next chapter I shall discuss how this relative objectivity is in contrast to the absolute objectivity of science, but also how it is comparable in terms of the procedures by which it is communicated.

Chapter Ten

Absolute Objectivity

In the last chapter I argued that through reason-giving that refers to response-relevant properties our aesthetic judgements can take on a relative objectivity. In this chapter I shall discuss the extent to which the procedures for doing this are learned rather than intuited.

In recent years David Best has addressed himself to the question of whether or not art appreciation can be taught.[1] Unless art appreciation is objective, he argues, there is no justification for including arts and literature in education. Inasmuch as we are able to teach it as a subject and to set certain standards of knowledge, the possibility of citing reasons which refer to observable, objective phenomena is, for Best, necessarily implied. If 'beauty' is a term of appraisal rather than a purely descriptive term which refers to properties, then the question must be asked: Is beauty tied to objective standards of appraisal?

If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then we do not need to support our claims that something is beautiful. In Chapter Seven I discussed the ambiguous position held by Langer, namely that art objects symbolise, that is, objectify subjective emotion. In these and other examples the ambiguity arises from the relationship of the subject to the object. The two are mutually dependent. As suggested in Chapter One, an art object cannot appreciate another art object; it needs a subject, just as a subject needs an object. In what then, does this assumed-to-be polar opposition consist? To argue that art appreciation must be either subjective or objective, is

misleading or, rather, overly simplistic. Yet subjectivists do precisely this. A typical subjectivist argument might be: a) we each perceive artworks through our own senses b) we cannot perceive artworks through anyone else's senses c) our perceptions of artworks are our own and no one else's, therefore d) our perceptions of artworks must be subjective . . . . But these arguments are superficial inasmuch as all perceptions are subjective in the trivial sense of being ascribable to a subject even when they are perceptions of objective properties.

Best offers one possible response to this type of argument by pointing out that we accept judgements in science, mathematics and logic as being objective and yet these must also be perceived through the senses. Any judgement - be it scientific or aesthetic - requires perception, in that it is the product of a sense impression. Thus it follows that scientific judgements must be as subjective, in this respect, as aesthetic judgements. Such judgements may not be absolute or definitive - scientific laws are continually being modified and reassessed - but this is not to say that they are not objective. The objective need not be the absolute. Objectivity does not necessarily require certainty, or non-relativity. (Admittedly though, there is no guarantee that an objective 'approach' will result in the discovery of an objective truth. An objective approach is possible even if relativism is true.)

Best asserts that to compare aesthetic objectivity with scientific objectivity is misleading: to say that all actions can be objectively explained scientifically, is not to say that all objective explanations of actions are scientific.

> To put the matter another way, the important point to recognize is that whereas it is true that we should demand objective substantiation for statements made about artistic appreciation, not all objective substantiation is scientific.[2]

Here, Best is suggesting that we should not be asking whether aesthetic judgements are scientifically verifiable, but rather whether they are objective - which is not the same thing. The other usual objection to comparing aesthetic with scientific objectivity is, of course, that there are no recognised methods for resolving disagreements in aesthetics. Again though, this is misleading because much depends on the vagueness or otherwise of the aesthetic judgement. If we are asked to say whether or not we consider Pollock to be a Great Artist, we might say that we do not, because we consider drip paintings to have no aesthetic value. But if we are asked to say whether or not we consider him to be a good 'Action' painter, we might well say that we do. Furthermore, by citing objective properties of the drip painting we are able to give reasons for arriving at this conclusion.

Another weakness in the subjectivist argument is that if all judgements are equally valid, then we must admit of an unlimited number of possible interpretations which inform the judgement. The duck/rabbit drawing is interesting in this respect. Obviously, there are two possible ways of interpreting the shape; some people see it as a rabbit, some as a duck, but, as suggested earlier, if someone were to see it as an ironing-board, their interpretation should be deemed inappropriate. Their subsequent judgement of it should also be deemed inappropriate. They might say 'this is a useless drawing' and if asked why they think this, they might say, 'because it doesn't look much like an ironing-board'. However, if someone were to point out certain objective features of the drawing and then say, for instance, that 'this shape here is supposed to be an ear' then the person may then 'see' the rabbit after all, and consequently consider it to be a good drawing of a rabbit. Similarly, the way we 'see' the form determines the way we interpret the meaning of the content. Just as a person may be 'seeing' something that objectively is not there, then so may a

person make an inappropriate interpretation. This is to say that we cannot make a proper evaluation of a work until we understand it and we cannot understand it until we interpret its meaning.[3] The point I am making here is that whilst there may be no one correct way of seeing, there are incorrect ways of seeing. It cannot be proved that the same is true of aesthetic responses of taste, but, as I have stressed before, responses of taste are a separate activity from critical evaluations based upon an interpretation of meaning. Best again:

> An important characteristic of aesthetic appreciation is that it allows for an indefinite but not unlimited possibility of valid or intelligible interpretation.[4]

With regard to interpretation Best draws a useful parallel between science and the arts. Neither, he argues, yield infallible conclusions, but, rather, both ultimately depend upon the way in which objective features are interpreted. As I read him what he is saying here is that aesthetic judgement may not, strictly speaking, be objective - but then, strictly speaking, neither is scientific knowledge. The problem with this argument is that we at least know what we mean when we describe scientific knowledge as being objectively valid, but what do we mean when we describe aesthetic knowledge as being objectively valid? There is a distinction to be made between absolute and relative objectivity [cf. Bernard C. Heyl's theory]. Science is the standard by which we measure other claims to objectivity, but this need not infer that science is an absolute, paradigmatic standard. For the relativist there are still standards but the standards are flexible rather than fixed and universal (as would be the case for an absolutist). The difference is in the degree of the correctness of the judgement, not in the kind of correctness - because both depend upon human perception, which in turn depends upon interpretation. Furthermore, the implication seems to be that the way in which we interpret can be learned. Consider Ben

Shahn's point:

> Intuition in art is actually the result of prolonged <u>tuition</u>. The so-called 'innocent eye' does not exist. The eye <u>at birth</u> cannot perceive at all, and it is only through training that it learns to recognise what it sees.[5]

Best makes two presuppositions: that i) the credentials of knowledge can only be legitimately bestowed where objective substantiation is possible, and that ii) artistic judgements can be substantiated. A judgement, then, whether scientific or aesthetic, can only be substantiated or refuted by reference to what is externally observable, that is, to objective properties. Best again:

> . . . an artistic judgement should certainly be <u>personal</u>, in the sense that one should have experienced and <u>thought</u> about the relevant work for <u>oneself</u>. But that does not <u>preclude</u> objectivity. On the <u>contrary</u>, to be intelligible at <u>all</u>, a personal judgement <u>must be</u> objective. And to be worth while and enriching it must <u>be</u> informed, educated. Education of artistic judgement consists in progressively extending and refining the capacity for discrimination.[6]

Education in the arts, then, as in other educational fields, presupposes the possibility of being able to give reasons for the particular interpretations which inform particular judgements, by referring to objective criteria or data.[7] Certain objections have been levelled at this proposition, one of which [A. T. Winterbourne's <u>Objectivity in Science and Aesthetics</u>] suggests that it is the product of a falsely syllogistic argument:

> It is the misconstrual of this relationship [between intelligibility - explanation - and data] which gives rise to the thesis that increasing <u>information</u> generates better <u>explanations</u>. This unwarranted <u>equivalence</u> is affirmed because of the conflation of two propositions: first, the true proposition that information is independent of a given conceptual framework with, second, the proposition that there is no difference between information and explanation, which is false.[8]

But surely the antithesis of this, that a decrease of

information generates better explanations, would be manifestly false also.[9] If Best's analogy between scientific and artistic knowledge is applicable here then surely a legitimate comparison can also be made between the methods in which this respective knowledge is acquired, that is, to take on board all available information as being potentially relevant and then systematically to reject that which proves to be irrelevant or superfluous to the strongest, most appropriate conclusion. Both scientific and aesthetic judgement can be refuted and justified only with reference to that which is externally observable. Surely also, in terms of probability, the more externally observable data that there is available, the more likely it is that some will prove to be relevant. Disputes arising from questions as to what is and is not relevant might be resolved by an appeal to consensus opinion, that is, according to the availability of shared methods of assessment, or rather, intersubjective standards against which disputes might be resolved. Also, as suggested in Chapter Five, disputes can be resolved through 'strength of argument' and 'the test of time'. Such rational agreement or disagreement may not be universal but it may be objective because, first, science may be objective without being universal, and second, it involves interpretations which, by definition, admit of disagreement. (This said, however, it is also the case that scientific theories can be tested and so are in principle falsifiable, the same is not necessarily true of aesthetic judgements.)

In another essay Best illustrates this distinction apropos of standards [cf. point c below with the form of relativism sometimes used to define religious beliefs and the beliefs of primitive societies]:

> a) Objectivity requires shared <u>standards</u> within a community or school of thought. These standards can, of course, change. (Clearly disagreement, properly so-called, presupposes such shared standards.) b) Objectivity does not require shared <u>judgements</u>, or agreement in opinions. c) Objectivity does not

require shared standards between communities or schools of thought.[10]

Winterbourne dismisses the analogy with science on the grounds that in aesthetic judgements - unlike scientific ones - there are no shared decision procedures to facilitate the move from a given proposition to its proof. Clearly this is too sweeping a generalisation, and anyway, as Best suggests, to say something is objective is not the same as to say that it is scientific. Therefore, when Winterbourne makes a comparison between aesthetic and scientific statements - along the lines of: S thinks that a) the Mona Lisa is rubbish, and b) that water freezes at 100oC - he is doing so under false pretences. Obviously they are not the same type of statement, the former cannot be objectively proved or disproved simply by an appeal to consensus opinion, whereas, to an extent, the latter can. (It should be borne in mind, however, that consensus opinion is largely irrelevant insofar as the theory can be tested and shown to be false.) Again though, a fairer comparison than Winterbourne's might change the emphasis: S might say 'I think that the Mona Lisa is rubbish, but that does not mean that it is rubbish.' Or, to put the two statements on a more equal footing: 'I think the Mona Lisa is rubbish, because it is difficult to tell from it whether she is smiling or frowning, and such ambiguity of expression weakens the intensity of the portrait,' compared to 'I think water freezes at 100oC because someone told me it did'. With reference to [his] example, Winterbourne argues that the evidence which constitutes the 'meaning' of b) also forms grounds for believing it, whereas the 'evidence' of a) never, in itself, gives grounds for the acceptance of it qua aesthetic judgement. The relation of b) to its evidence may, he argues, be seen as a paradigm for what it means to understand evidence. But, again, examples of aesthetic propositions - rather than aesthetic judgements - which resemble Winterbourne's scientific one, and which invert his argument, can readily be thought of. For instance, S thinks

that a) 'mathematics is rubbish' and b) 'Picasso's blue period paintings are in fact painted lime-green'.

Best and Winterbourne do, however, seem to agree with the idea that both scientific and aesthetic judgements are based upon interpretation. Where they part company is over the question of the extent to which these interpretations are objective. The answer is a necessarily vague one, that old get-out clause: to an extent. Just as, to a lesser extent, they are also subjective. The respective judgements, then, should be made in relation to the extent to which the subjective interpretations are an irrelevance. In this respect, contrary to Winterbourne's argument, aesthetic interpretation, just as much as scientific interpretation, involves knowing what to leave out. Winterbourne:

> Scientific interpretation often consists in knowing what to leave out; aesthetic interpretation consists in reading things in.[11]

It should also be remembered, as Winterbourne is forced to admit, that in science, as in aesthetics, there are no indisputable 'facts' - if by 'facts' it is meant that an assertion of a proposition is supposed to be incorrigible with regard to all the possible frameworks in which the proposition might appear.[12] Furthermore, there is no absolute distinction between the various degrees of interpretative statement in science and the various degrees of descriptive statement that inform an interpretation in aesthetics. As Raman Seldon puts it:

> The attraction of a clear-cut distinction between an objective criticism and a subjective 'experience of literature' is evident: the criteria of scientific objectivity are more nearly satisfied as the subjective experience is phased out of the critical procedure.[13]

So, are we any closer to deciding whether or not aesthetic judgement can be taught? Can we, for instance, be taught to

read into, that is, interpret meaning, when the meaning is not objectively present? Perhaps the distinction here is between public and private response - perhaps where the two most consistently meet is where the most authentic judgement lies, as in the correspondence of response-relevant property descriptions discussed at the end of the previous chapter. Perhaps such contingent agreement is enough to facilitate a valid aesthetic judgement. Perhaps also we can avoid the subjective/objective antinomy by being taught to like alike (not that that would be particularly desirable!). We can, perhaps, judge according to certain criteria which, depending on the extent to which the criteria are satisfied, can permit us to say 'I can see why I ought to think it is good, but I still do not like it'. Or, as a variation on the theme introduced in Chapter One, 'I am no art expert, but I know what I ought to like'.

Much here depends upon reception theory, that is, upon what importance we should attach to the role of the spectator. It might be that the free-standing art object is complete in itself, that is, autonomous. Or it might be that art is fundamentally concerned with communication and so the product is incomplete until it has been consumed and responded to in a disinterested manner, by competent spectators. This is, of course, opposed to the view taken by radical subjectivists who hold that aesthetic judgement is actually concerned with incorrigible judgements of taste - which cannot be taught because everyone is his or her own authority with regard to his or her own taste. But, as Osborne puts it:

> Aesthetic interest leads to outward-turning forms of activity and inclines us typically to absorption in an object presented for perception, not an inward-dwelling upon our own moods and emotions.[14]

Osborne also offers a means of circumnavigating Kant's antinomy in that he still concedes that there must be a

personal, that is, first-hand response to the art object - but that this need not assume that there is a limitless number of possible interpretations because:

> Imagination must be held in leash and restricted to that sympathetic identification which facilitates the apprehension of what is there to be apprehended.[15]

Best, too, refers to this concession, only he does so in terms of an educated emotional capacity to become involved in a personally meaningful way. As Nick McAdoo also points out [in Aesthetic Education and the Antinomy of Taste] the implication of this objective thinking seems to be that aesthetic disagreements will tend to asymptotically disappear over time, as a capacity for pure, disinterested contemplation of the object improves. For this to be the case, it seems, we must accept the possibility that disputes can be resolved, that some judgements if not actually, absolutely valid, are at least more valid - or even less invalid - or perhaps better, than others.

Are we now any closer to answering the question set out at the beginning of this chapter, viz: can aesthetic judgement be taught? The only reasonable answer is to say that yes it would seem it can be to an extent, and that perhaps the best we can hope for is a state of compromise. In light of this it is worth quoting McAdoo by way of conclusion:

> We may regard the antinomy between aesthetic judgement and taste as embodying not an impossible logical demand but rather an inter-play between personal and public worlds, open to modification on either side - for if the personal response were not as corrigible as the judgemental one then it would be ineducatable; but equally, if the judgement lacked a basis in experience and the 'feeling of rightness', then it would be mere mechanical rule-following. Out of such interplay comes, in greater or less measure, I would argue, about as much agreement in judgement as we can hope for.[16]

In the next chapter I shall draw my arguments together by suggesting that the judgement-informing interpretations I have been referring to can be made about form as well as content.

Chapter Eleven

The Interpretation of Form and Content

In previous chapters I have argued that judgements may be supported by reference to objective properties. It may be that these properties can be described and interpreted and, because inspectable, such description and interpretation may be either appropriate or inappropriate. But what about less obviously physical properties, where reference is made not so much to content as to form? If form is separate from content in poetry then surely certain formal properties such as rhyme-scheme and diction can be appreciated independently of the ideas for which they are the vehicle - this pure-poetry-as-art-object view is typified by the notion that 'a poem should not mean but be'. But is such a separation possible? And what about painting? Can we ever separate the form of Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black from the content, namely that the arrangement in grey and black actually represents Whistler's mother? In this chapter I will argue that interpretation of 'form' - especially in music and painting - is not as arbitrary and subjective an activity as is commonly believed. I will then compare these formal interpretations with some apparently 'universal' interpretations of narrative content. Finally, I shall propose certain 'tests' which might illustrate this consistency of interpretation in practice.

First though, a word about the hermeneutical implications of Gestalt psychology. With its emphasis on the phenomenological objectivity of Gestalt qualities, Gestalt psychology has, in recent years, supported the argument for the autonomy of the work of art. I do not agree with this

argument [in the Croce and Collingwood sense of autonomy] but, this apart, I think Gestalt theories have some interesting applications.

It is assumed that, because of Gestalt, the patterns we perceive as abstract forms and shapes are universally consistent. For instance, when someone sees the pattern of two dots and a curve represented in a certain way within a circle, they will think of a face. In his essay On Drawing An Object Richard Wollheim discusses the figure-ground hypothesis of Gestalt psychology which holds that our capacity to discriminate elements within the visual field depends upon our ability to see them on something else, that is, say, black lines on - or behind or level with - a white background. This capacity permits us to 'see' representations and configurations, and to perceive three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional plane, as, for instance, with the aforementioned face. In this sense we discriminate the visual element in opposition to, or in contrast with, something else. Also, in this sense, emotional qualities or properties, such as sadness or happiness, could be seen as phenomenologically objective qualities of the Gestalt character of the form of an artwork; qualities that need only be recognised rather than felt. We can understand a tragedy without actually crying - failure to physically respond should not imply a failure to understand.

Gestalt psychologists argue that the human intellect does not perceive things in the world as unrelated fragments, but, rather, as configurations of elements, themes or meaningfully organised wholes. It has been suggested[1] that such a psychological theory of formal organisation, or organic unity, has precedents in Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement. More recently, though, Gombrich has suggested that when we interpret information from a painting we exercise consistency tests to

compare the messages we receive from various parts of the painting for their compatibility with the whole. But, in a broader sense, we are also comparing and modifying what we expect to see with what we actually do see. We attend to a 'good' work of art as a whole. In painting we respond to a combination of shape, texture, colour and subject matter; in music we respond to the combined gamuts of rhythm, volume and pitch; in literature we respond to the form, structure, and content, and so on.

However, when we encounter a second-rate painting, or piece of music, or work of literature, we become aware of the separate elements from which the whole is constructed, perhaps isolating one particular feature as being at fault, colour, rhythm or grammar, for instance. This might also be explained in terms of the simplicity hypothesis,[2] insofar as a shape, sound or sentence will seem right unless our attention is drawn to it. If it is 'right' we don't notice it, if it is 'wrong' it stands out from the whole like the proverbial sore thumb (although this might well have been the artist's intention). This could be one criterion by which we could attempt to justify an aesthetic judgement. Also, in this respect, Gestalt could explain our intellectual drive towards organising and ordering artworks into hierarchies of what is 'good' and 'not so good'; that is, towards making aesthetic value judgements.

When a critic makes such a value judgement it is usually supported by a justification - an appeal to consensus opinion which he or she hopes will correspond to the immediate intersubjective experience of the individual who, after reading his or her criticism, confronts the art object. In this way the critic could be said to be making an appeal to our 'collective subjectivity' or, to use Kant's terms, 'subjective universality'.

Although Carl Jung's theories are now regarded with a deal of suspicion, they - as well as Freud's - are important to this discussion not only because of the immense influence they have had on Modernist artists and writers but also because of the explanations they offer about the behaviour of the individual within the community, and of the community as a whole. From these theories it is tempting to construct a model whereby a 'sophisticated' individual is assumed to be a microcosm of the community, and art is assumed to have a Platonic essence which pervades all types - perhaps what Jung identifies as archetypal myths and symbols - from which it can be suggested that (in a Humean sense) the particular, subjective interpretations of this 'sophisticated' individual ought to represent an 'objective' communal standard of evaluation - through the faculty of the collective unconscious. According to Jung:

> . . . Certain images are endowed with an intrinsic and constant significance.[3]

But this is, of course, difficult to prove or disprove and as such is lacking in philosophical or psychological precision and authority. Yet, despite this, it continues to preoccupy the minds of philosophers, psychologists and artists alike. Its attraction seems to lie in the possibility that our response to art, and the creation of the artwork itself, is not as arbitrary as subjectivists would claim it to be. Perhaps, instead, as collectivists would have us believe, periods, nations, races, and classes are unified psychological entities. As well as suggesting that we see patterns and shapes as unified wholes, Gestalt psychologists also suggest that some formal aspects of art - lines, shapes and tones - have emotional qualities. They maintain that aesthetic perception involves an interpretation of emotional meaning through seeing these formal qualities as an organised whole. Whilst there will always be individual peculiarities in the perception

and interpretation of emotional and symbolic meaning - according to the subjective expectations and emotional attitudes of the percipient - there will also be a significant degree of agreement. Let us, then, consider some examples of aesthetic properties, emotional qualities, and feeling tones that have universal connotations for our occidental unified psychological entity:

1. If we are presented with drawings of a straight line and a slightly curved line and are asked which one we consider to be the more 'graceful', we will almost inevitably choose the curved line - perhaps because we associate the contours of the human body with gracefulness.

2. If we are asked to describe which of two pieces of music - one in fast tempo, high pitch and high volume, the other in slow tempo, low pitch and low volume - is sad, we would almost invariably chose the slow piece. Perhaps this is because sad people move slowly - the funeral march as oppose to the dance-step (cf. Langer's account of this in terms of music being a symbol of an emotion). There is also considerable agreement as to the application of certain 'shape' descriptions to music, for example, jagged as oppose to square. Charles L. Stevenson offers another example of this form of interpretation: He suggests that Debussy's Reflections on the Water is not related to the sound of the mood 'water' so much as to the way quietly shimmering water looks. He concludes that this resemblance between sound and sight is attended by a resemblance of mood as well.[4]

3. Infants do not have to learn that a slow, soft lullaby is supposed to be soothing and soporific. Similarly, we can talk of the varieties of musical intervals and chords in terms of being tense and cold, or relaxed and warm. Our response in such cases is not to the chord itself but to the composer's

choice of the chord within an organised structure. In a similar sense the minor scale has the effect of expressing melancholy - the major scale does the opposite. High pitch, as in Hitchcock films, suggests tension - perhaps because it evokes the screeching sounds that startled birds make. This effect can also be achieved through jarring tonal opposites as in the theme tune for Jaws. It can also be achieved through a quickening, thumping drum-beat, as in the palpitations of the heart. Conversely, a gentle, slow repetitive drum-beat can evoke feelings of security, as in the internal rhythms of the mother's womb. A light, tinkling sound, on the other hand, can be evocative of childhood, as in Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

4. If we are asked to look at two abstract shapes or configurations - one 'smooth', rounded, and biomorphic, the other 'hard', angular and geometrical - and are asked which one we would describe as warm and relaxed, and which one as cold and tense, there would be considerable agreement. There would also be considerable agreement if we were asked to say which shape we would describe as 'gold' and which as 'iron'. In this respect we can say that even abstract art has 'meaning' and that although my example need not be the one and only interpretation of this meaning it is certainly an interpretation which, because recurring, ought to be taken seriously.

5. If we are asked to choose which of the colours red and blue we think of as hot, or dangerous, or as a metaphor for violence, we choose red - because red is associated with fire and blood and traffic lights, just as brown is with earth and excrement and, in a less obvious, sociological sense, purple is associated with royalty. In this respect we can also talk of synesthetic metaphors, such as red being a loud colour, or of black being a heavy colour.

6. If we are asked which of the colours red and blue we think is advancing out of the picture plane and which receding into it, because of the laws of aerial perspective there is significant unanimity - with the illusion that red colours advance being a property of 'redness'.

7. If we are asked to decide which of two drawn lines, one horizontal one vertical, we consider to be the most 'restful' we would almost invariably chose the horizontal line. This is because we are subject to gravitation and, as such, our natural resting position is horizontal. We sleep horizontally and feel secure that we cannot fall from a horizontal position.

8. In the physiognomic perception of portrait painting we can attribute certain intrasensory associations: a frowning face can be said to be dark, cold and bitter; whilst a smiling face can be described as bright, warm and sweet. Also, television and film directors often rely on the 'subliminal' televisual literacy of their audience, that is, the ability to fill in narrative gaps, and to associate certain characteristics with certain camera angles. For example, extreme close-ups of faces suggest villainy by pin-pointing personal space invasion and facial tension which can be read in terms of the deceitful or guilty nature of the character.

Arguably, all these associations are universal for rational Westerners and, in most cases, Easterners as well. They are not relative within our culture, and are not subject to the variations of individual subjectivity.[5] In the above examples all the shapes, colours and sounds can be said to have an equivalent natural 'feeling tone'.[6] The emotions we associate with these properties - our equating certain sensations, warm colours and smooth outlines with feelings of well-being and contentment, slow music with melancholy, and so on - may be considered in terms of poetic cliche, but,

nonetheless, they do have a certain objective currency. Also, there are certain symptoms for these emotions - laughing, crying, blushing, and so forth - that can be considered objective to the extent that they are externalised, observable and universal. Surely this indicates that the familiar subjectivist line, as typified, for example, in the following quotation from Bleich, is inadequate:

> The assumption derived from the objective paradigm that all observers have the same perceptual response to a symbolic object creates the illusion that the object is real and that its meaning must reside in it.[7]

Furthermore, there is not only a correlation of associations but also of preferences. There have been numerous experiments conducted in America that point to this uniformity of preference for certain colours and shapes. One such is that of the psychologist Kate Gorden who found that of two groups of one hundred students there was a correlation of between 97-99% with respect to the pleasing qualities of certain rectangles.[8] Similarly, Robert Sadacca conducted an experiment whereby 178 students were asked to express preferences for certain colours and designs presented in a series of paired comparisons.[9] To avoid preferences being explained in terms of stereotype, half of the colours were concrete - that is, in relation to something specific such as a colour for a car - and half were abstract. Working on the principle that if B is preferred to A, and C to B, then if C is not preferred to A a 'circular triad' or reversed judgement has taken place, Sadacca discovered that of the 488 preferences made there could have been 420 'triads', half of which could have occurred by chance. In actual fact there was only 37.5 'triads'. Thus pointing to a consistency of preference which surely cannot be coincidental.

Is there a ready explanation for this? Perhaps there is. Whenever we see or hear a strange object or sound we are able to either consciously or unconsciously associate it with, or

relate it to, something familiar. We respond to situations in meaningful contexts, hence the Gestalt tendency to organise unfamiliar shapes and sounds into meaningful wholes. We project into these foreign objects and sounds some facet of our shared or personal past experiences. Are our perceptions, then, determined by our collective and/or private sensory experiences - what Kant describes as seeing things not as they are but as we are? Whether this view is true or not is, of course, one of the oldest and most problematic questions in the history of ideas. Does the existence of things consist in their being perceived? As in Berkeley's often quoted example: Does a tree falling in a forest make any sound? Consider Osborne's explanation:

> The . . . idea of organic unity takes account of the concept of emergent collective properties . . . Collective properties, or properties of collective wholes, are either reducible or emergent. Emergent properties of collective wholes are properties which are not logically entailed by the properties which its constituent parts manifest in other circumstances and the special relations in which they stand to each other in this particular whole . . . Judgments based upon apprehension of such collective wholes can reasonably claim universal intersubjective validity since their impact is upon a cognitive faculty of awareness . . . The power to appreciate in this way is an acquired skill . . . [10]

I agree. But what about the interpretation of 'private' meaning? Does there come a point where private significance overlaps with collective experience? If so, is this the point at which a good painting becomes a great painting and the good painter becomes a genius? In the case of Picasso perhaps we only come to appreciate his private symbolism when he uses it consistently through his work (and even then it is still often ambiguous as, for instance, when he take a mythological subject like the Minataur and invests it with private significance). How can we answer these questions? Perhaps one method would be to compare and contrast the responses of a number of individuals (under analysis) to the same work of art. As Gombrich suggests:

> If the theory of unconscious communication makes sense, it could be tested through the recipients alone - if their reports tally there was an intersubjective meaning - like a code for which there is a standard key.[11]

This 'code' is best explained in terms of what Jung calls the 'collective unconscious', or 'objective psyche'. It will be recalled that his 'discovery' of this myth-creating level of mind, came about as a consequence of his attempts to reconcile subjective myths - as expressed through the delusional systems of his psychotic patients - with external, objective reality. By comparing these myths with those of primitive societies and with those of institutionalised religions he concluded that the myths were a means by which people make sense of their world [cf. T.S. Eliot's theory of the objective correlative]. He cites as an example of this mythology the belief - held by apparently sane Christians - in the scientifically impossible Virgin Birth. But Jung's much-discussed example of his paranoid schizophrenic patient who, through half-closed eyes, could see the phallus of the sun from which the wind originated, is perhaps a more telling case in point. The patient's vision or projection was identical to one Jung came across years later in a previously unpublished Greek liturgy of the cult of Mithras. The patient could not have known this. Jung therefore concluded that there are certain myths and symbols which are archetypal. There are, of course, certain plausible explanations for these myths and symbols. The similarity of Hero myths, for instance, can be explained in terms of the similar life experiences, acts of bravery and so forth, that occur in different cultures. The symbols of the snake as evil; or the phallus as procreative power; or of the vessel as womb; or the house as a body; are similarly explicable. As is the concurrence of dream symbolism in different cultures, and at different periods of history . . . The problem with these symbols, though, is that a dream of a house may simply be a dream of a house and not of a symbolic

body. Also, because it has no predictive value, it is ultimately untestable from a scientific point of view.

The question that we should address ourselves to in relation to Jung's theory, however, is this: To what extent is our interpretation of symbolism in painting learned and therefore objective and to what extent is it instinctive - because determined by the collective unconscious - and therefore intersubjective?

Contemporary psychologists suggest that, because our everyday experiences are dependent upon previous experiences, we learn to react to symbols rather than to total original stimuli. Perception, in these terms, becomes a process of inference from past learned experiences. Such patterns of behaviour might be understood in terms of a conditioned response rather than an instinctive one. This is a useful explanation for the way we collectively respond to symbols in art.

It might be that there is a fixed code for the transmission of symbols. Symbolic meaning may be an objective 'property' of the symbol. The language of literature and music has a symbolic relation to what it signifies, and in a similar way painting has a mimetic relation to the signs in objective reality. It might be, therefore, that our perceptions of symbols are like our perceptions of objective reality. They might themselves be selections of reality, that is, essentially like the objects that are perceived, and therefore empirically verifiable. Alternatively, they might be like scientific hypotheses. According to Hermann von Helmholtz, perceptions are unconscious inferences from sensory and memory data; hence 'illusions' can be explained in terms of mistaken perceptual inference - we see what we expect to see. In comparing two

paintings, therefore, we tend to recognise similarities and stereotypes rather than differences.

In equating objectivity of symbolic meaning with universality of response I am merely suggesting one possible way in which questions of interpretation might be treated objectively. My next question is: Are these 'universal' responses discoverable empirically? And, once discovered, do they furnish us with objective criteria for a) interpreting a work of art and b) assigning a value to it? Like Gombrich I am uncomfortable with the notion that there is a collective spirit which governs the perception of art. Rather, like him, I suspect that it is inevitable that we will recognise a family resemblance between symbolic paintings that are developed at a similar time and place. In this respect the artist's private symbolic meaning becomes relevant only when it coincides with public symbolic, and therefore objective, meaning. Gombrich again:

> The point about . . . paintings is not that their creator, like all of us, has an unconscious in which these archaic modes of symbolization live on; nor even that like all of us he partakes in his mind of the qualities of Oedipus, Pygmalian, and perhaps of Bluebeard. The point is that he found himself in a situation in which his private conflicts acquired artistic relevance. Without the social factors, what we may term the attitudes of the audience, the style or the trend, the private needs could not be transmuted into art. In this transmutation the private meaning is all but swallowed up.[12]

I discussed in the opening to this chapter the objective Gestalt quality of reading two dots and a curve within a circle as being a face. Such physiognomic perception is surely universal. But there is also the phenomenon of pysiognomic fallacy to consider. That is, the apparently subjective ability to 'see' faces in clouds, or ink-blots, or wallpaper and so on.[13] In the appreciation of abstract art, this, like the ability to form myths, may be partially explained in terms of a compulsion to render intelligible the seemingly unintelligable.

According to Rorschach, if we see ink-blots as wholes then this indicates a preference for abstract ideas, whereas reacting to the blots as details indicates a preference for concrete realities. So, even with these apparently subjective interpretations of random patterns and configurations there is a seemingly universal standard by which responses can be analysed. There is also an intersubjective element insofar as we are able to point to different areas of an ink-blot and explain which part is, say, the hand, which part the leg, which the head, and so on. In this way other people can then 'see' the same figure that we subjectively 'see', even though its characteristics are not actually there but are only imagined to be there.

In his essay Aesthetic Perception and Objectivity, Virgil C. Aldrich argues that:

> Thinking physicalistically . . . one is required to say both that what grounds . . . aesthetic experience is the experience of physical objects, and that their physical objects have the sort of objectivity that precludes them from determining what subjectively (imaginatively) counts as aesthetic experience.[14]

What I take this to mean is that our aesthetic experiences are objective in virtue of the fact that they are provoked by physical objects; yet, paradoxically, they are subjective in virtue of the fact that they are aesthetic experiences. However, it could be argued that illusions, just like physical objects, have 'physical qualities' that can be imaginatively, but nevertheless objectively, 'seen'. Is, then, perceived aesthetic objectivity the same thing as physical objectivity? Are both prerequisites for aesthetic experience? Again, the distinction seems to be between what we can imagine 'with our eyes open' and what is physically there, and not simply determined by the imagination.

With reference to the duck/rabbit figure, Aldrich suggests that if we 'see' the duck aspect we can do so only if our eyes are open. We are not imagining it. However:

> If . . . you imagine something about what you see, 'see' is an observation term, and what you see is a physical object some of whose physical qualities you are overlooking in favour of other physical qualities it might have had . . . This is not to see it as anything, or to see anything 'in' it, in the aesthetically relevant sense. Such perception is not aesthetic. It is observation, not prehension.[15]

If Aldrich is implying here that what the imagination sees is aesthetically irrelevant if it does not coincide with what there is actually, imaginatively, 'out there' to see, then I would go along with this. However, Aldrich seems to be confusing the aesthetic experience to be had from seeing objective representations, that is, illusionistic and realistic ones, with the apparent subjectivity of imagining physical objects to be something other than what they actually are, that is, 'seeing as'. To the extent that a determinate aesthetic object may be physical or phenomenal it may be 'objectively' 'seen' as something other than it actually is.

Aldrich argues that what makes representations objective is the fact that it is objects that are represented. He goes on to argue that this is not the case for expressive content. Yet in some Modern Art surely the expression is physically objectified in terms of painted abstractions (as, for instance, with Rothko's 'melancholic' paintings)? The point is that as long as one observer can make another observer 'see' what he or she is subjectively and imaginatively seeing a physical object as; what he or she is reading into that physical object; and how he or she is interpreting its meaning; then his or her observations can be said to take on an objective currency. I suggested in Chapter Five that disputes among two experts might be resolved through an appeal to the objective properties of the art object in question. Disagreement occurs when these

properties are not perceived in a similar manner. As Pratt has convincingly argued,[16] the same stimulus when viewed from different angles and attitudes, will give rise to a variety of different perceptual organisations, a, b, c . . . z. The same critic may slip from one such angle or attitude, a to d, perhaps unintentionally, thus giving a different judgement, even thought the stimulus has not changed. When critics disagree it is perhaps, therefore, because one is judging b whilst the other is judging f.

But how could this objectivity be tested?

In his essays The Psychologist's Search For Scientific Objectivity In Aesthetics and The Construction of Objective Tests Of A Form Of Aesthetic Judgement, Gorden Westland identifies three methods - as used in experimental psychology - by means of which the objectivity, or otherwise, of aesthetic judgements might be established. These are: i) The mechanism of aesthetic apprehension, for instance, eye-movements during perception of aesthetic objects; and differences in individual colour perception. ii) Sociological studies of how people actually respond to aesthetic material, and to what extent there is agreement (this deals with the collecting of quantitive information about people's reactions). And iii) The construction of tests to measure certain aspects of aesthetic response and performance.

One of the problems that Westland associates with experimental psychology in this area is that tests are often dependent on 'reports' by subjects about their experience. They deal with the way people claim that they respond. Apart from eye-movement which can be objectively observed, these reports necessarily involve an element of subjectivity. Westland concludes that because of this the experiments can only ever really provide objective information about how people say they

perceive rather than about how they actually perceive. However, I would argue that if reasons have to be given for reports; and if these tests were conducted upon a large enough group; and if the results were treated statistically; then the reports would entail a degree of objectivity. It could be argued that, in a similar manner, science is the pooling together of individual attempts to understand experience. Scientific knowledge is, in this sense, the accumulation of personal 'reports'. It is the agreement of these 'reports' - or, as suggested in the previous chapter, 'interpretations' - that makes for objective scientific knowledge. Here, though, there is a shift of emphasis from previous chapters in this thesis. The point here is whether or not the tests can establish the objectivity of the aesthetic judgements of the subject. It does not necessarily obtain that the objectivity of the aesthetic value of the object is also being established. What is being investigated here is the response of the subject to the object, not the object itself.

Westland proposes an objective process of measurement which may afford a standard of judgement against which individual differences in appreciation might be measured. He proposes such a test along the following lines: Literary selections from various authors - some authors represented by one piece only, some by two or three - would be presented to a subject in a predetermined sequence, the subject has to then match the pieces according to common authorship. Thus the subject is either factually right or wrong in his or her selections. The scoring would be free from subjective judgement and the test would therefore be objectively definable. Because the subject is not asked to make value judgements, but rather to decide on ascertainable fact, the experimenter would be able to score the results according to facts.

This test is a useful one, as far as it goes. The problem with this test, though, is that, strictly speaking, it is not the subject's ability to make sound aesthetic judgements that is being tested. It is something more akin to an ability to discriminate style. Perhaps a more useful test could be constructed using more than one art form, and by asking more questions of the subject. By this I have in mind a similar test only using selections of paintings, and passages of music, as well as the selections of literature proposed by Westland. This might afford a better indication of the subject's judging ability. (I am assuming here, for the sake of argument, that similar aesthetic qualities are to be found in the three different art forms.)

In this test the subject would have to arrange the selections, according to artist, composer and author, for each separate test. He or she would then have to provide reasons for selecting as he or she did. Because some subjects might be less articulate than others these reasons could be selected from a multi-choice of six reasons, only one of which is 'correct'. For instance, with reference to selections of Van Gogh's work, reason 1. might be: 'Because the artist uses a monochrome palette'; whereas reason 6., the correct reason, might be: 'Because the artist expressionistically applies the paint in a thick impasto'. Finally, the subject could be asked to arrange the artists, composers and authors in order of talent. This would be judged according to criteria x, y and z, (for instance, those suggested in Chapter Four: technical ability, expressiveness, and so forth).

If the standard against which these judgements were made was set by the elite - of competent critics, judging over several generations - that I proposed in Chapters Five and Seven; and if the group doing the test was large enough; and if there were obvious differences in the styles (and indeed the

talents) of the artists, composers and authors selected (for example, Raphael compared to Lowry, Mozart compared to John Cage, Tolstoy compared to Shirley Conran) then, arguably, the test would measure more than an ability to discriminate style. It would measure whether or not the subject had discriminating, 'mature' taste, which, in this context, could be interpreted in terms of an ability to make sound aesthetic judgements. (I do accept here, however, that defining aesthetic value in terms of aesthetic experience may lead to circularity. By this I mean one might only be able to define the nature of aesthetic experience by concentrating on the aesthetic object and the nature of this aesthetic object might only be definable in terms of its capacity to elicit aesthetic experience.)

Arguably though, what this test would indicate is that competent judges arrive at (or ought to arrive at) the same conclusions; and that if there is a significant level of agreement among the members of the group for which the test is designed then the test could be considered objective. Admittedly, this may only be a measure of the subject's agreement with a standard. In other words, facts rather than values are being measured; and aesthetic judgements involve more than facts. Also, it could be argued that this test does not take into account the possibility that:

(1) Subjects may judge according to how they think they ought to judge, that is, they may claim to prefer Tolstoy to Shirley Conran when really, subjectively, they do not. Certainly this would undermine the objectivity of their judgement (although the fact that they have a concept of how they ought to judge, would be revealing!) by the same token, though, it would also undermine the subjectivity of their judgement. Also, it is difficult to determine the extent to which introspection affects the report, that is, the subjects' experience might be different from what they would be

experiencing if they were not paying attention to themselves. Perhaps it must be accepted, then, that there will always be room for error - a percentage of those tested, say 25%, whose judgements have to be discounted.

(2) The members of the group who judge 'incorrectly' may be proved to be correct by future generations of competent critics. But perhaps this proviso could be set aside if we were to add the qualification that our standard was context-specific, that is, not an absolute timeless standard, but rather a historically and culturally relative one.

A few words also need to be said about the conditions in which these experiments are conducted. The subjects should be presented with the selections of literature, music and painting, in isolation from the other members of the group. I say this because, as with the problem mentioned above (of subjects claiming to have responses that they do not have) there could be a tendency, in listening to the music at least, toward mob psychology.

A further cautionary note suggests itself here. To analyse art in this way is to murder in order to dissect. A good illustration of this is to be found in one of last year's biggest and most surprising Hollywood box-office hits, Dead Poets Society. In this film Mr Keating, a romantic English teacher played by Robin Williams, rails against the 'armies of academics going forward measuring poetry'. He invites his pupils to rip out a chapter from their text books entitled 'Understanding Poetry'. The author of this chapter, Dr J. Evans Prichard, believes that the greatness of a poem can be measured by plotting its 'total area' on a graph, with its formal 'perfection' on the horizontal, and the 'importance' of the poems content calculated on the vertical. Keating concludes that this is 'excrement', that poetry cannot be described in

terms of American Bandstand: 'I like Byron,' he mocks, 'I gave him 42 but you can't dance to it'. . .

With this point taken, then, would such a test as I have outlined above (on the Westland model) provide a means by which aesthetic value judgements of the form 'X is more aesthetically valuable than Y' could be made? According to what criteria, if any, can Tolstoy's writing be said to be more aesthetically valuable than that of Shirley Conran? Beardsley, among others, provides an answer. The key word in these sort of judgements is 'capacity'.[17] Beardsley argues, rightly in my view, that the statement 'X is a good aesthetic object' should be taken to mean 'X is capable of producing better aesthetic experiences', where 'better' means 'of greater magnitude'. Thus X can be said to be a better aesthetic object than Y in virtue of X's capacity to produce better aesthetic experiences than Y in an aesthetically sensitive person. It follows that the aesthetic value of X can be measured in terms of a comparison with Y and that the statement 'X is a good aesthetic object' means that 'X has aesthetic value'. To paraphrase Beardsley, then, a good art object has value if it has the capacity to produce a valuable aesthetic experience. The value of 'good' art, in this case, is an instrumental value.

Mr Keating might object that to attempt to construct tests to analyse aesthetic judgement is to trivialise the aesthetic experience and to miss the point. To the extent that I think statistics carry little weight in the field of aesthetics I must accept this criticism. However, the exercise is not entirely futile. It enables us to explain and therefore better understand the phenomenon of aesthetic judgement by analogy from the simple to the complex. The Mr Keating approach can never be anything other than simple.

Chapter Twelve

Conclusion

Before concluding this thesis it will be well to offer a few comments by way of refinement and clarification of my position. I will do this through a consideration of three questions that it has raised.

Question: How can aesthetic judgements be anything other than subjective? Answer: By being supported by relevant interpretations of form and content. Such interpretations may be relative to a given artistic, literary or musical genre, and relative to a given culture, but not relative to any given individual within the culture unless the subjective interpretations of the individual coincide with the intersubjective interpretations of the collective. There _is_ such a thing as an 'expert' critic and those who share the superior intellectual equipment of the 'expert' critic, and are similarly constituted, _ought_ to share his or her considered opinion.

Question: What if two such 'expert' critics disagree? Answer: The intersubjective validity of interpretive critical judgements is negotiable, relative to a given community. Initially the judgement is facilitated by a subjective response, it then acquires a more objective status through 'strength of argument'. Ultimately, it must stand the test of time. That is, survive protracted disputes among an elite of experts within the critical institutions (in this regard the judgements of certain 'eminent' critics such as Ruskin on Whistler, or Tolstoy on _King Lear_, or Eliot on _Hamlet_ have not withstood the test of time).

Question: How is this 'judgement' different from a response of taste? Answer: The aesthetic judgement is made in the form of a claim supported by a reasoned justification which refers to the objective properties of the work of art. I can only aesthetically evaluate Supper at Emmaus if: Supper at Emmaus, the object, has aesthetically valuable properties; I experientially take pleasure in contemplating these aesthetically valuable properties; and the aesthetically valuable properties of Supper at Emmaus and my experientially taking the Supper at Emmaus to have aesthetically valuable properties are cognitively related.[1] Responses of taste occur within the subjective dialectic on a more simple, lower level than the aesthetic judgements (qua critical evaluations) which they inform on the higher, more complex level. This distinction between taste and judgement might be considered in terms of the difference between an art object being admired and satisfying, and its being admirable and satisfactory. Taste may legitimately concern itself with this mysterious 'Factor X' known as 'beauty' but it is to the level of judgement that we must look to decide what is 'good'.

Judgements about the value of art are being made all the time. From Arts Council decisions about which dance companies are most deserving of subsidy; to the Booker Prize committee arriving at a 'democratic' decision; to simple domestic choices as to what paintings we can 'live with'. Aesthetic judgements, then, are the constant form of aesthetic experience. They are the means by which we seek to answer the perennial question: What is art? My arguments concerning the nature of these judgements have taken two forms: 1. That judgements involve the relationship between a subject and an object; and 2. that in order to judge appropriately we must first be able to appreciate, and that in order to appreciate we must make appropriate descriptions of, and interpretations of, our sensory perceptions of physical or phenomenological properties.

Aesthetic value in painting and literature is not something that necessarily reveals itself to the untutored eye. These are educated art forms which demand a degree of instruction. The various arts pertaining to the Modernist movement, for instance, require, for their comprehension, theoretical criteria different from those appropriate to traditional movements - as with, for example, the theories of 'fragmentation' and 'stream-of-consciousness'. How enjoyable would Eliot's The Wasteland be for someone who does not have the background knowledge required to understand its references? Literature, painting and, to a lesser extent, music are conceptual because they employ an intellectual and affective language. And all language is conceptual.

To sum up: I began, in Chapter One, by defining the terms subjective and objective, and by making a distinction between critical evaluations of content, and responses of taste to form. I compared the different types of statement uttered in each case, namely 'This is good' as oppose to 'I like this'. In Chapter Two I gave an exposition of Hume's objectivist Standard of Taste and criticised it on the grounds of its circularity. I discussed Hume's criteria for what makes a qualified judge - a delicate sentiment, practice, a strong sense, and lack of prejudice - and agreed with Hume's suggestion that not everyone shares the same capacity to appreciate. I also agreed with his associationist theory insofar as it concluded that general aesthetic terms could be used in reference to the particular qualities of the object to the extent that the meaning of the words was universally understood. Also, in relation to this, I discussed the Eighteenth century British Empiricist tradition, with particular reference to Burke's 'psychological' theories on imagination and reason. In Chapter Three I offered an exposition of Kant's 'subjectivist' Critique of Judgement and criticised it on the grounds that its claim that judgement did

not involve concepts was unconvincing and paradoxical. This theory introduced the terms intersubjectivity, universality and disinterestedness, and argued that aesthetic judgements were located in the faculty of understanding rather than the faculties of reason or sensibility. I took a critical look at Kant's four moments - relation, quality, quantity, and modality - and criticised his theory on the grounds that (i) 'the beautiful' does not admit of degrees of beauty; that (ii) his distinction between beauty and non-beauty is inadequate because the procedures for determining them are the same in each case; that (iii) judgements of non-dependent, non-conceptual beauty are ipso facto non-communicable; and that (iv) the determination of beauty cannot rest on pleasure alone because ugly objects can be pleasurable also. For this reason I found his definition of 'the good', as oppose to 'the agreeable' or 'the beautiful' more useful in virtue of its being conceptual. I also disagreed with Kant's argument that aesthetic judgements of taste are concerned exclusively with form. On the other hand, I was sympathetic to his view that aesthetic judgements ought to meet with agreement in virtue of their universal subjectivity. I argued that no 'ought' judgement can lay claim even to quasi-objectivity unless rationally defensible (pace Kant's procedure to rationally defend the intersubjective validity of aesthetic judgements in general whilst insisting that there are no universalisable reasons why any particular object should be deemed beautiful). I also agreed in part with his attempted resolution of the antinomy of taste, but noted that the resolution would be rendered more convincing if it were accepted that concepts were involved.

In Chapter Four I suggested that aesthetic judgements involved more than the pleasurable contemplation of beauty. I argued that not all judgements are equally valid, and I supported this argument by an analogy with the procedures of scientific judgement. I then outlined some 'relevant' concept-

criteria by means of which a strictly determinate quasi-objective aesthetic judgement might be made. I gave some examples of these criteria, such as genre criticism, 'improvability', and degrees of complexity, intensity and unity. This was followed in Chapter Five by a discussion of the reasons that can be given in support of a judgement when two 'expert' critics disagree. I argued that aesthetic judgements must be supported by 'relevant' reasoned justification; and that disagreements can be resolved through the traditions of protracted dispute practised by the critical institutions. I discussed the relation of generalities to particulars and considered whether or not the procedures of inductive and deductive reasoning could be applied to art evaluation. I argued that they could, but only in an extremely limited sense. I considered the case for generic judgements and concluded that art objects need not necessarily be 'unique'. In chapter Six I argued that judgements as to whether an artwork is 'good' or 'bad' are comparative, involve common-sensical, 'educated' interpretations, and, inasmuch as they refer to 'examples', are conceptual. In Chapter Seven I argued that 'valid' aesthetic judgements can be based upon appropriate interpretations of symbolic meaning. I examined the distinction between seeing and 'seeing as', and between reading and 'reading into'. I also examined the procedures involved in art and literary criticism and concluded that aesthetic judgements operated on two levels, with emotional responses on the first level informing the conceptual interpretations and evaluations on the second. I concluded that inasmuch as music, painting and literature involved 'language' codes that had to be learned, not everyone was capable of making sound critical evaluations on this second level.

In Chapter Eight I suggested that because judgements are made with reference to objective properties they could not be completely subjective. This was argued along similar lines to

Sibley's theory that the characteristic properties of aesthetic terms are dependent and, as such, do not require absolute proof but, rather, contingent agreement among an elite of 'experts'. Sibley's comparison of aesthetic terms with colour terms was criticised along similar lines to the criticism already levelled at Kant's term 'beauty', namely that colour terms do not admit of degrees - whereas painting A can be 'graceful' compared with B but not C. I also argued that different genres and art forms in different contexts required different 'experts', but that not all experts enjoyed the same status, as for instance with teenyboppers compared to opera buffs. I then went on, in Chapter Nine, to argue that judgements can be relatively objective according to the context in which they are uttered. A judgement may therefore be said to be panaesthetically relative to a given community. Also, because judgements refer to both primary properties which are objective and tertiary properties which are subject-dependent, they admit of a degree of subject-relative objectivity. In Chapter ten I compared this relative objectivity to the supposedly absolute objectivity of scientific judgements and concluded that the two were more alike than different, to the extent that both involved interpretation. I concluded that the objectivity of aesthetic judgements need not be absolute and definitive. I then argued that the procedures by which we interpret and judge are learned rather than intuited. Finally, in Chapter Eleven, I suggested that relevant interpretations can not only be made with regard to content, but also to form. In light of this I discussed the Gestalt phenomenon of seeing patterns as meaningfully organised wholes. I gave examples of certain formal aesthetic properties, emotional qualities and feeling tones that have universal connotations for our occidental unified psychological 'entity'. I concluded that our interpretations are not arbitrary, but, rather, that certain associations and ways of seeing are archetypal and 'universal'. I then attempted to convey this theory in more practical terms

- in the form of hypothetical tests - and concluded that a critical evaluation is a proposal of knowledge that becomes authoritative through its intersubjective efficacy.

Essentially, the theory I have advanced is both an instrumentalist and an 'institutionalist' theory (in the Empiricist tradition), that is, a theory which holds that definitions of art are socially determined. If I have at times seemed guilty of papering over the cracks - what Wittgenstein might call 'a craving for generality' - and if I have at times seemed to present an compilation of 'evidence' on the one hand, and a lack of finality in the conclusions to be drawn from this evidence on the other, then perhaps the time has come to take a deep breath and state quite categorically the conditions under which the type of aesthetic judgement I have been discussing can be made. This, in a strictly limited sense (that is, according to certain socio-cultural conventions) will suggest certain specific criteria according to which a contextual, comparative, instrumental, institutional, eclectic, hermeneutic and panaesthetic critical evaluation of an art object might be made. The main points of this definition are as follows:

1. That the judgement is an evaluation based upon the perception of an art <u>object</u>.

2. That the evaluation is based upon a <u>relevant</u> interpretation of affective, conceptual and/or symbolic meaning of form <u>and</u> content. That is, that the judgement is relevant to a given object and that in reference to this object the judgement can be 'tested' and understood.

3. That it is not enough for a critic to be simply a person of 'taste' as this is too vague a term to be of much use. The critic must also be suitably qualified. That is, be

educated in the particular field (culturally sophisticated); have aesthetic sensibility, and be perceptive, discriminating, rational (competent), creative (imaginative), unprejudiced, and aesthetically sensitive (contemplative).

4. That the judging subject states quite categorically what the art object is being judged as. That is, as an example of its generic kind - so that, for instance, a piece of music is not judged according to the criteria of painting. And that the object shall be judged according to its 'capacity' within a historical context, that is, it might be relative to a given age or culture - ethnocentric - but not relative within that given age or culture. [Beardsley makes a distinction, in this respect, between a relational and relativistic definition.]

5. That, in the above respect, such judgements will be panaesthetic, that is, culturally relative and universally valid for all members of a specified social group to the extent that all members 'ought' to agree with them.

6. That certain relativistic questions are satisfied. For example, who is it good for? what is it good for? what is it good as?

7. That the judging subject has the burden of proof, meaning that the critical (aesthetic) judgement will be the product of an intellectual process involving concepts which leads to a proposition which is subject to logical analysis. This is in virtue of the relevant and rational justifications that are volunteered in support of it. These 'reasons' might be corrigible and prima facie rather than absolute, but must refer to certain concept-criteria of value.

8. That, in the above respect, disputes arising from disagreement - about generic and interpretative matters - among

qualified critics might be resolved through strength of argument, and with reference to specific and general canons. Some judgements will, in this respect, be better than others. The better the judgement the more likely it will be to survive protracted disputes over several generations, within the context of 'traditional' critical institutions. This test-of-time principle might be considered in Darwinian terms as natural selection, or survival of the fittest. To this extent the judgements must be comparative, and relevant to the degree of certain aesthetic values. A judgement of this sort could be described as regulative, normative and canonic. Furthermore, the more 'testable' a judgement is, the more credible and valid it will be, and the more competent will be the critic who made it. Judgements are objective in character if there is potential or actual agreement between many critics within a strictly delimited cultural context.

9. That, in the above respect, the properties referred to in support of the judgement are publicly inspectable.

10. That the judging subject eclectically takes on board all relevant, corroborative information about the art object, and that he or she considers various critical approaches and theories, that is, he or she makes a judgement 'all things considered'.

Although this reads like a manifesto it is not intended as such. The intention is to show that when P says 'I am no art expert, but I know what I like', his mere liking does not constitute a critical evaluation. In order to avoid travelling down the solipsistic road of subjectivity I appeal to a communal authority which is almost, but not quite, objective. It might be that the 'objective to an extent' type of judgement I have in mind is, to all intents and purposes, an intersubjective judgement. But, again, it is not quite.

Intersubjectivity is a branch of subjectivity, it does not really take account of the properties of the object.

Are aesthetic judgements objective or subjective? From the foregoing deliberations I draw the conclusion that they are far from being wholly subjective. My title, more properly, should be: How objective are aesthetic judgements qua critical evaluations? However, as mentioned in the introduction, I wanted to avoid starting this thesis with the conviction that aesthetic judgements had to be one thing or the other. Upon re-reading the thesis it strikes me that this has, nevertheless, been my conviction. I have attempted to establish criteria by means of which the objectivity of aesthetic judgements can be conclusively demonstrated. This I have signally failed to do. As my research progressed I increasingly came round to the opinion that unless the conditions for objectivity were strictly delimited (as in the ten-points outlined above) the claim could not realistically be made. Moreover, in limiting the conditions I was simply moving the goal posts and arriving at a definition of something which, although interesting, could no longer be reasonably called 'aesthetic value judgement'. As a consequence of this I became much given to the use of scare-quotes, anecdotes, rhetorical questions, and facetious analogies. I also found that, to some extent, I was countering my own arguments as I went along. This style of question followed by argument and counter-argument followed by rhetorical question, seems to have left me sitting on the fence. But then, as Aristotle observes, the accuracy of conclusions necessarily varies according to the field under investigation.[2] I offer this by way of an excuse for the woolliness of my conclusions.

I suggested in the introduction that there is a dichotomy between objective critical evaluations which are concerned, for the most part, with content, and subjective responses of taste

which are concerned, for the most part, with form. Now, in most art forms it is often difficult, and sometimes (in the cases of music or dance) impossible, to separate the form from the content. In my opinion, therefore, good 'aesthetics judgements' should take into account both form and content, thus resolving the response/evaluation dichotomy, and thus, in turn resolving the subject/object dichotomy. I conclude that the assumed-to-be polar opposition of subject and object is artificial. Good aesthetic judgements occur at the point where the 'Apollonian' order of objectivity meets the, as it were, 'Dionysian' chaos of subjectivity. Such judgements are synthetically both objective and subjective. But not in equal measure. The scales are decidedly tipped in favour of objectivity. I have tentatively volunteered the term 'intersubjective' to describe this state of compromise, but, with its Kantian associations, it is not entirely satisfactory. It is with apologies, then, for the aesthetically displeasing use of language, that I must settle for the term 'quasi-objective'.

Notes and References

Chapter One

1. Parenthetically, one might note that the word 'aesthetic' has its origin in a Greek verb meaning 'to perceive', and not, as is commonly assumed, in an adjective pertaining to the appreciation of beauty.
2. Jessop, 'The Objectivity of Aesthetic Value', in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers, p. 275.
3. Morawski, On the Objectivity of Aesthetic Judgement, BJA, 6, pp. 316-7.
4. Loc. cit.
5. Westland, The Psychologist's Search For Scientific Objectivity in Aesthetics, BJA, 7, p. 350.
6. Pater, 'The School of Giorgione', in The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, London, 1888.
7. Cf. Joad, The Problems of Aesthetics, p. 466.
8. Ingarden, 'Artistic and Aesthetic Values', in Aesthetics, ed. Osborne, p. 40.
9. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 8.
10. Beardsley, 'The Instrumentalist Theory', in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers, p. 312.

Chapter Two

1. Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste', in An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory, ed. Ross, p. 84.
2. Hutcheson, An Inquiry Into the Origional of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, 1725.
3. Hutcheson, op. cit., p. 17.
4. Hume, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 87.
5. Ibid., p. 87.
6. Ibid., p. 88.
7. Ibid., p. 83.
8. Ibid., p. 85.
9. Ibid., p. 89.
10. Ibid., p. 84.
11. Ibid., p. 88.
11. Ibid., p. 87.
13. It should be noted here that in this context the defective state refers to the percipient rather than the artist. There are, for instance, examples of artists whose state was defective such as El Greco's defective vision, or Van Gogh's mentally disturbed perception.
14. Hume, ibid., p. 94.
15. Ibid., p. 91.
16. As with the projections in Rorschach's inkblot tests, or, elsewhere, what Gombrich refers to as the 'physiognomic fallacy', both of which I shall discuss in a Chapter Eleven.

17. In certain cases, however - Clement Greenberg's defence of Abstract Expressionism, for instance - it could be argued that the theory precedes the practice. I shall pursue this question in Chapter Four.
18. In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.
19. Burke, op. cit., p. 13.
20. Ibid., p. 23.
21. Ibid., p. 17.

Chapter Three

1. The second part of Critique of Judgement is entitled 'Analytic of the Sublime'. For Kant the sentiment of beauty is applicable to our sense of oneness with nature. Beauty is related to the purposiveness of nature. When we are overwhelmed by the magnitude of nature, we experience the sentiment of the sublime. However, I shall not dwell on the subject of 'the sublime' here.
2. Kant, 'Critique of Judgement', in An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory, ed. Ross, p. 109.
3. Ibid., p. 113.
4. Ibid., p. 118.
5. Ibid., p. 120.
6. Kant seems to as equally apply the term 'beautiful' to objects in nature as to man-made art objects. In fact he considers that natural or 'free' beauty is superior to art - and should therefore be the central object of aesthetic interest - because it is not dependent on intellectual concepts.
7. Kant, Ibid., p. 103.
8. Mccloskey, in Kant's Aesthetic.
9. N.B. Moral judgements are interested in Kant's sense, but not prejudiced in any pejorative sense.
10. In Chapter Six I suggest ways in which Kant's objective and logical concept of the object as 'the good', can afford a more relevant criterion for the judgement and appreciation of art, than is presently afforded by his exclusive use of the term 'the beautiful'. In brief, my point is this, that in appreciating art we make value judgements as to whether or not an artwork is 'good', not morally but aesthetically / artistically - this amounts to an assessment of whether or not it is an 'artwork'. To an extent these judgements are comparative and intellectual (for reasons I shall explain) and consequently objective and 'logical'. I hope to suggest that it is therefore meaningful to talk of a hierarchy within the category of 'good' art, as for instance with 'great' art at one end of the scale 'not-so-great' at the other. Everything depends upon what we are judging the artwork to be good as. Kant's definition of 'The beautiful' does not admit of degrees in this way.
11. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 109.
12. Kant, (trans. Meredith) Aesthetic Judgement, p. 52.
13. To say my statement 'this is beautiful' is universally communicable because it is a disinterested judgement seems to me analogous to saying my statement 'this bus is red' is universally

communicable because I who make the judgement happen to have normal colour vision. The 'because' in each case qualifies the judgement in some sense. This said however, it does not qualify it in the sense that Kant seems to have in mind: viz. the 'for me' sense. In other words, according to Kant, 'this is beautiful' does not need to be qualified in the way that a statement such as 'oysters are delicious' needs to be qualified. My reservations here may therefore be more to do with the wording of the statement, namely that it is misleading to say 'this is beautiful because it gives me disinterested pleasure' as oppose to 'this gives me disinterested pleasure because it is beautiful'.

14. McCloskey, op. cit., p. 54.
15. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 112.
16. Ibid., p. 112.
17. For example, Richard Wolheim in Art and its Objects.
18. Kant, (trans. Meredith) op. cit., pp. 172-3.
19. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 114.
20. Schaper, Studies in Kant's Aesthetics, p. 51.
21. Schaper is clearly right here, and perhaps Kant would not disagree. For him, the categories or a priori concepts (substance, causality and so forth) are not classificatory in the way that empirical concepts are (roses, cathedrals and so forth). In this sense nothing can be beautiful only under the heading of substance (or physical object) as something might only be beautiful under the heading of 'cathedral' or 'woman' or 'spaniel'.
22. Ameriks, Kant and the Objectivity of Taste, BJA, 23, p. 6.
23. McCloskey, op. cit., p. 16.
24. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 115.
25. Kant, (trans. Meredith) op. cit., p. 41.
26. Ameriks, op. cit., p. 13.
27. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 116.
28. Ibid., p. 119.
29. Loc. cit.
30. Kant, (trans. Meredith) op. cit., p. 45.
31. McCloskey, op. cit., p. 20.
32. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 120.
33. Korner, Kant, p. 48.
34. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 125.
35. Perhaps by 'examples' Kant only means particular instances of beauty which he might expect to find among those things whose alleged beauty has withstood the test of time. Nevertheless, for Kant, the proof of the pudding still lies in the eating.
36. This 'Emperor's clothing' principle may explain the seemingly unlimited tolerance that has been shown toward many dubious 'examples' of Modern Art.
37. Ibid., p. 126.
38. Schaper, op. cit., p. 20.
39. Kant, ed. Ross, op. cit., p. 136.
40. Ibid., p. 138.

Chapter Four

1. In his essay The Objectivity of Criticism of the Arts.
2. Whether the theories (of Italian Futurism) come before or after the production of the work of art, that is, whether the critical vocabulary is invented in response to the work, or whether the work is produced in accordance with (in order to test) the theories, is another matter which I shall not take up here.
3. Theodore A. Gracyk Having Bad Taste BJA 2, 30, 1990.
4. It may be that two paintings can reflect the same theories and have the same meaning, and that this meaning can be expressed in words. This would not necessarily mean, though, that the painting would become redundant once this meaning had been grasped (as in 'the heresy of paraphrase') because aesthetic value consists of more than the meaning of the narrative or the symbols. There are other considerations such as form and technique which I shall go on to discuss later in this chapter.
5. Wainwright, Journalism, p. 96.
6. Child, The Social-Historical Relativity of Esthetic Value, in The Problems of Aesthetics, p. 447.
7. Eichner, BJA, 3.
8. C.E.M. Joad., in Vivas, The Problems of Aesthetics.
9. Ibid., p. 302.
10. Beardsley, Reasons in Aesthetic Judgements, in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers, p. 245.
11. Ibid., p. 250.
12. It will be remembered that Beardsley's theory is an instrumentalist one in which the aesthetic value of a work of art can be measured in terms of its capacity to produce aesthetic experiences over a period of time and under specified circumstances.
13. Morawski, On the Objectivity of Aesthetic Judgement, BJA, 6, p. 324.

Chapter Five

1. Dickie, in Myth of Aesthetic Attitude - a criticism of Stolnitz's theory of disinterestedness.
2. Tsugawa, The Objectivity of Aesthetic Judgements, p. 10.
3. McDonald, ed. Elton, p. 10.
4. Tsugawa, op. cit., p. 13.
5. Aristotle, The Poetics, chap. 13.
6. Diffey, Evaluations and Aesthetic Appreciations.
7. Scriven, The Objectivity of Aesthetic Evaluation, The MONIST, 50.
8. Ducasse, The Subjectivity of Aesthetic Value, in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers, p. 283.
9. Scriven, op. cit., p. 167.
10. Righter, Logic and Criticism.
11. Ibid., p. 23.
12. Cf. Helen Knight, ed. Elton, p. 158.
13. I also go along with what Tormey goes on to say, with the proviso that it should not necessarily be assumed that everyone has the competence to corroborate tests and so, until they do, are not really qualified to make 'independent' aesthetic judgements qua

critical evaluations.
14. Tormey, Critical Judgements, THEORIA, 39, p. 42.
15. Tsugawa, op. cit., p. 20.
16. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. 223.
17. Tsugawa, op. cit., p. 20.
18. Pratt, Stability of Aesthetic Judgements, JAAC, 15, p. 3.
19. Tormey, op. cit., p. 46.
20. Jarvie, The Objectivity of Criticism in the Arts, RATIO 9, p. 78.
21. Hampshire, in Logic and Appreciation, ed. Elton, p. 163.
22. Jarvie, op. cit., p. 78.
23. This said, however, I am by no means sure that such a reassessed tradition of criticism or taste will always mean an improvement on the origional tradition, nor am I sure that there can be progress in criticism even if there is not in art. Progress for its own sake has little to commend it.
23. Ibid., p. 81.

Chapter Six

1. Pepper, The Work of Art, Indiana Univ. Press, 1955, pp. 17- 37.
2. Plato, Laws 669 A - B, trans. Bury.
3. I shall not pursue this distinction between 'good' and 'great' art here. However, I believe the distinction Walter Pater makes is a useful one.
4. Even Kant can be said to make an appeal, albeit a veiled one, to 'examples'. As McCloskey puts it (in Kant's Aesthetics, p. 72):

> Kant, unlike the man in the street, believes that there is a proper procedure for correcting judgements and settling disputes which is not a matter of appealing to generalisations about how other people judge, nor of adducing a priori, but a procedure which is based upon appeal to examples.

5. Interestingly, and ironically, for a response to be instinctive it must meet with four conditions, one of which is that it must be universal to a species. Instinctive responses (which are the paradigm of subjectivity) could therefore be said to have an objective element.
6. Jefferson and Robey, p. 12.
7. Cf. the Wittgensteinian notion that certain other abstract words, such as 'fate' do not have a visual counterpart. Also Lacan's notion of sign and signifier; as in the association of the word 'gentleman' on a WC with the drawing of a gentleman.
8. This may only be trivially true in the sense that language itself has to be learned, but I think it illustrates the point that validity in interpretation is not arbitrary.
9. Gombrich, 'Tradition and Expression in Western Still Life', in Meditations on a Hobby Horse, p. 97.
10. In his essay Having Bad Taste (BJA 2, 30, 1990) Theodore A Gracyk offers a longer, less apocryphal example of this. I think it is worth quoting at length:

Knowledge of eighteenth-century chamber music is not very helpful when one first encounters twelve-tone serialism or nineteen-forties bebop. When Western music scholars have studied the traditional musics of West Africa, they have imposed European concepts of basic pulse and metre (together with measures and bars) on the African rhythms. One scholar was then surprised to discover the widespread presence of rhythmic unevenness and irregularity in African music, and postulated an African 'tolerance' for it and an unconscious ability mentally to correct these unintentional irregularities. But the cultures in question do not employ the Western notion of linear time, and some scholars therefore suspect that there is no rhythmic irregularity to 'correct'. We misunderstand and distort traditional African music in assimilating it to our Western convention of constructing rhythms from short, repeating, even patterns. African music is also misunderstood by Westerners who think it deficient in melody, owing to our familiarity with a convention of not employing 'percussive' instruments to play melodies.

11. Just as the word 'sky' is not a statement, because it is not a proposition that can be true or false, so neither is a blob of blue paint on a canvas, cf. Gombrich, op. cit.
12. Although perhaps in this strictly limited sense it could be said to be 'false' when analysed in terms of our objective experience of the 'true' colours of landscapes.
13. Gombrich, On Physiognomic Perception, p. 54.
14. Berger, Permanent Red.
15. In a seminar given in 1988.

Chapter Seven

1. Cf. Charlton.
2. Isenberg, 'Critical Communication' in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers.
3. Jefferson and Robey, p. 12.
4. However, for all those thinkers who have subscribed to the principle of canons (Hume, Beardsley, Leavis) there have been just as many who dismissed the idea (Prall, Dewey, Richards, Croce).
5. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 28.
6. Bleich, Subjective Criticism, p. 213.
7. Langer, 'The Work of Art as Symbol' in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers, p. 179.
8. This is, however, a non sequitur because such norms might be relative. St. Augustine was able to suggest this, though, on the grounds that our perceptions of ordered objects are of the objects as they ought to be, and that our perception of disordered objects are of the objects as they ought not to be. If this were not the case, he argued, then the critic could not criticise and the artist could not correct as he or she went along. This correctness or incorrectness, St. Augustine would argue, is not only apparent to the senses but also to the intellect - in virtue of our having a concept of ideal order.
9. Cf. Northrop Frye's theory in The Stubborn Structure that there

are two ways of 'knowing' literature. The first is by having knowledge of literature, 'nous'; the second is by having knowledge about literature, 'dianoia'. He contends that it is to the latter objective form of knowledge that we must address ourselves, as the former is experiential and yields only subjective value judgements which do not constitute knowledge.
10. Gombrich, Meditations on a Hobby Horse, p. 153.
11. Hirsch, in Art and its Significance, ed. Ross, p. 344.
12. We can also say that certain perceptions are wrong, as, for instance, when we can see the duck/rabbit figure as either a duck or a rabbit but not as, say, an ironing-board, again this is discussed at greater length in Chapter Eleven.
13. Gombrich, op. cit.
14. Ibid, p. 68.

Chapter Eight

1. Sibley, in The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supplement, vol. XLIII.
2. Ibid., p. 35
3. Righter, Logic and Criticism, p. 17.
4. NB Osborne defines a connoisseur as being someone who is of discerning perception who can discriminate, compare and describe those qualities of which he is a connoisseur and reject things in which they are not present. But, in accordance with Sibley, Osborne adds that the connoisseur is not as a rule a man whose likings coincide with those of the majority. Appreciation Considered as a Skill, BJA, 9, p. 342.
5. Ibid., p. 40.
6. Ibid., p. 41.
7. Ibid., p. 42.
8. I am not saying here that 'graceful' is a relative term in the sense in which such terms as 'big', 'heavy' or 'expensive' are. I accept that it makes sense to say that, for example, every member of the Royal Ballet is a graceful dancer, even if some are more graceful than others, (and none is as graceful as the leading dancer of the Bolshoi). Another sense in which a judgement can be relative without being subjective is in the case of panaesthetic judgements discussed in the next chapter, that is, relative to a given culture yet still quasi-objective within that culture.
9. A criticism of this approach should be registered here. According to this reasoning the more experience the group has with objects of this kind, and the more agreement the group comes to, the 'more factual' will be the 'fact'. I balk at the idea that facts themselves may admit of degrees, as oppose to the evidence in support of the facts. Surely facts only differ in degrees of hardness in relation to the supporting evidence. It clearly makes no sense to talk of slightly false facts, so how can it make sense to say 'this is more of a fact than that'? When we describe one text as being more factual than another, we only mean that it contains more true statements and so more facts.
10. Sibley, Ibid., p. 42.

11. Ducasse, Subjectivity of Aesthetic Judgement.
12. Culler, in Seldon Criticism and Objectivity, p. 109.
13. Tanner, in The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supplement, vol. XLIII.
14. Sibley, op. cit., p. 57.

Chapter Nine

1. Obviously, a book could be written on the extent to which the judgement of Community B fails to be disinterested; similarly it would be tempting to be drawn into a debate concerning the objective status of moral judgements in this case, regrettably though, for reasons of space, these issues are too large to be canvassed here.
2. Cf. Tadeusz Pawlowski's lecture in 1988 about the 'Panaesthetic Conception of Value'.
3. Child, The Problems of Aesthetics, p. 453.
4. Bleich, Subjective Criticism, p. 296.
5. Judgements can be said to be relatively objective in another sense also. The properties do not belong to the self and so are objective and yet are relative insofar as they depend upon individuals. As Professor Koffka puts it, they are phenomenally objective and functionally subjective (or relative). The 'real object' of atoms and electrons is but a set of conditions which produce the phenomenal art-object in the spectator. See Heyl, New Bearings in Aesthetics and Art Criticism, p. 110.
6. Dickie, Evaluating Art, BJA, 25, p. 3.
7. Reid, Philosophical Works p. 492.
8. Berkeley took issue with this account on the grounds that we are only ever able to apprehend the object rather than have direct access to it - in other words we only ever apprehend tertiary properties. According to this account all we can ever apprehend are ideas.
9. Manns, BJA, 28, p. 122.
10. Osborne, Aesthetics, p. 14.
11. Manns, op. cit., p. 128.
12. A comparison might also be made here with Beardsley's notion of specific and general canons. See Chapter Four.
13. However, as Osborne points out, descriptive terms imply evaluation and evaluative terms rely upon description. Cf. also Wittgenstein's assumption that if we apprehend alike we will evaluate alike.
14. Osborne, op. cit., p. 17.
15. Sibley, Philosophical Review, Vol. 68, No 4.
16. Cohen, Aesthetic/Non-aesthetic and the concept of taste: a critique of Sibley's position, in THEORIA, 39.
17. Morawski, On the Objectivity of Aesthetic Judgement, BJA, 6, p. 320.
18. A brief word should be said here about Bullough's theory of aesthetic distance - probably the most significant Twentieth century interpretation of Kant's theory of disinterestedness. Bullough agrees with Kant that the aesthetic experience should be

divorced from practical concerns and suggests four ways in which we are distanced from a painting: 1. actual spatial distance; 2. represented spatial distance (as with perspective in the painting) 3. temporal distance; and 4. aesthetic distance. Bullough's theory provides interesting criteria for making value judgements, in that we can say an art work is bad if: the work of art is under-distanced so that its subject matter is too realistic (we experience real terror and therefore are not disinterested); or if the work of art is over-distanced so that it seems empty, absurd or artificial.

19. By this I mean that although Kant might concede that interpretations of content may be either correct or incorrect, and to this extent objective, whether or not an individual finds the content aesthetically pleasing, is a subjective matter.

20. Davies, The Rationality of Aesthetic Responses, BJA, 23, p. 40.

21. Ibid., p.43.

Chapter Ten

1. Best, The Objectivity of Artistic Appreciation, BJA, 20.
2. Ibid., p. 199.
3. It could be argued that all works of art have meaning, be it in the narrative or allegorical content of traditional art, or in the 'statement' being made by a blank canvas in abstract art, as in 'the medium is the message'. It could be argued that even abstract painting is meaningful in the Gestalt sense of seeing patterns as meaningfully organized wholes. Also, to the extent that music expresses the composer's emotion of, say, melancholy, it too can be considered meaningful. Needless to say literature is, by definition, meaningful - form being inseparable from content.
4. Best, ibid., p. 122.
5. Shahn, The Shape of Content.
6. Best, op. cit., p. 126.
7. Cf. Hume's 'delicacy of taste' here - viz. wine tasting is clearly a teachable skill and if this 'teachability' applies to such an obviously 'subjective' activity it must also apply to aesthetic evaluation.
8. Winterbourne, BJA, 21, p. 255.
9. It should be noted here that this only means that correct information is a necessary condition of correct explanation and not that it is a sufficient condition.
10. Best, A Reply to My Critics, BJA, 23, p. 152.
11. Winterbourne, op. cit., p. 259.
12. This needs qualifying. There are, of course, many 'facts' (such as 'oxygen is combustible') but they are only relatively true, that is, true until they are disproved (which they may never be, of course). It is difficult to think of any indisputable 'high level' theories though. After all, a theory is only considered to be factual relative to the theories that may supersede them in the future as, for instance, with Newton's theory being replaced by Einstein's. Also, along similarly relativistic lines, it could be argued, albeit perversely, that a 'fact', such as 'the sun will rise in the East tomorrow', is only really factual according to the laws

of probability, and even then it is relative to where you are in the world . . .

I gave some rough drafts of this thesis to a friend of mind who, despite being trained as a scientist, is what I would call a radical subjectivist. After reading my notes he concluded that although my arguments were appealing they were, nevertheless, built on sand. He justified this criticism on the grounds that we simply cannot make judgements about art because any 'reasoned justification' that is offered in support of a judgement will be at best superficial and at worst spurious. Order, he argued, cannot be imposed upon the subjective chaos of taste because there are no absolute laws to govern it. In mathematics, he argued, there are five irrefutable laws (A + B = A + B, A - B = A - B, A x B = A x B, A divided by B = A divided by B, and zero = zero) which amount to saying that like equals like. There is, he went on to argue, no equivalent to these laws in aesthetics (no two critics can be alike) and hence no possibility of objective judgement. He dismissed any coincidence of judgement (agreement among the elite of critics) as the workings of random improbability. The factors involved in human judgement (including, he argued, moral judgement, the relativity of defining concepts like 'torture' and so forth) are too many and varied to be anything but spurious - even if they are supposedly 'qualified'. I countered that I was not claiming absolute universal objectivity but rather seeking to answer the question: If the compromise of relative objectivity is the best we can hope for, is it enough to justify the practice of criticism? He doggedly maintained that it is not (thus rendering an entire academic industry redundant) and we agreed to differ.

13. Seldon, Criticism and Objectivity, p. 25.
14. Osborne, The Art of Appreciation, p. 31.
15. Ibid., p. 171.
16. McAdoo, Aesthetic Education and the Antinomy of Taste, BJA, 27, p. 317.

Chapter Eleven

1. Osborne, Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgement, JAAC, 38, p. 139.
2. As, for example, when we enter a strange room we assume the floor is going to be level, until and unless our receptor organs indicate otherwise.
3. Gombrich, 'Visual Metaphor of Value in Art', in Meditations on a Hobby Horse, p. 13.
4. Stevenson, 'Nonrepresentational Arts', in Aesthetics, ed. Hospers, p. 208.
5. Arguably these associations have more to do with the 'meaning' of the work of art than with its 'aesthetic value'. However, as I suggested in Chapters Six and Seven, the interpretation and understanding of a work of art may well be integral to our appreciation and evaluation of it, and, after all, there may be more than one form of interpretation, that is, of form, as well as content.

6. Such emotion-causing qualities are sometimes referred to as physiognomic qualities.
7. Bleich, Subjective Criticism, p. 98.
8. Gorden, 'A Criticism of Two of Kant's Criteria of the Aesthetic', in Essays in Honor of John Dewey.
9. As described in Caroll C. Pratt's essay Stability of Aesthetic Judgements, JAAC, 15, p. 7.
10. Osborne, op. cit., pp. 142-3.
11. Gombrich, Psycho-Analysis and the History of Art, op. cit., p. 33.
12. Ibid., p. 43.
13. In some respects similar to the 'pathetic fallacy' of attributing human characteristics to animals and inanimate objects in nature.
14. Aldrich, BJA, 18, p. 211.
15. Ibid., p. 213.
16. Pratt, op. cit., p. 7.
17. Beardsley, The Instrumental Theory.

Chapter Twelve

1. Cf. Iseminger on Dickie, Aesthetic Appreciation, JAAC, 39, p. 389.
2. Aristotle, in The Problems of Aesthetics, ed. Vivas, p. 445.

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