X

CRITICAL EVALUATION

The problems to which we now come have been put off as long as possible in the hope that a circumspect approach would make them more vulnerable. They are the problems that arise in evaluating, that is, in making normative statements about, aesthetic objects. In these last three chapters we shall inquire what, if anything, could be a good reason for asserting, or believing, critical value-judgments.

For example, the authors of an excellent book on Picasso have this to say about his epoch-making painting, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907, Museum of Modern Art, New York):

> *The Young Ladies of Avignon,* that great canvas which has been so frequently described and interpreted, is of prime importance in the sense of being the concrete outcome of an original vision, and because it points to a radical change in the aesthetic basis as well as the technical processes of painting. In itself the work does not bear very close scrutiny, for the drawing is hasty and the colour unpleasant, while the composition as a whole is confused and there is too much concern for effect and far too much gesticulation in the figures. . . . The truth is that this famous canvas was significant for what it anticipated rather than for what it achieved.[1]

Note first that they make a distinction between two ways of considering the painting: its significance as an event in the history of painting or in the development of Picasso's style, and its value "in itself," simply as an aesthetic object. Considered in the second way, they say, it is not a very good painting, and they give the following reasons: (1) "the drawing is hasty," (2) the color is "unpleasant," (3) "the composition . . . is confused," (4) "there is too much concern for effect," (5) there is "far too much gesticulation in the figures." Point 4 is not very clear, and perhaps points 4 and 5 are really one.

Several questions about this argument might occur to us at once. First, what is the critical judgment which these reasons are supposed to support? It is put in a rather casual way: "the work does not bear very close scrutiny." We cannot tell exactly what judgment this makes, but very probably it is at least a vague comparison: Picasso was later to paint better pictures in a style that developed out of the one in this painting, e.g., *Guernica* (1937, Museum of Modern Art, New York). Second, why is a "hasty" drawing necessarily a poor drawing? If "haste" refers simply to the amount of time the draughtsman took, then are there not excellent hasty drawings by Rembrandt, Paul Klee, and Picasso himself? Or does "haste" refer, not to the act of drawing, but to some characteristic of the drawing itself? Third, why is "unpleasant" color, "confused" composition, or considerable "gesticulation in the figures" necessarily a blemish in a painting? For example, could an admirer of the painting not reply that what is so interesting in the painting—its peculiar combination of ritualistic rigidity and dramatic tension—would not be there unless the figures were in those odd and melodramatic postures? For though the authors do not rate it among Picasso's greatest work, they surely mean to concede it some value, and indeed it is hard to see how it could have great historical importance if it were not good enough to show the possibilities of such a style.

The passage raises even more ultimate questions about the purpose of criticism itself. To what good end is this judgment of Picasso's painting made? Some critics hold that their business is just to describe and interpret, and thus help us to the fullest possible acquaintance with the complexities of an aesthetic object. Others hold that they should add a brief report of the degree of their own liking or disliking, and a prediction about the probable reactions of others—"I am no angler, but people who like fishing will enjoy this book." Other critics feel called upon to rate the work in some more objective way, absolutely or comparatively. Boswell says that in the long list of works, projected but never started, that Johnson gave to his friend Langton, there was the following:

> A Table of the *Spectators, Tatlers,* and *Guardians,* distinguished by figures into six degrees of value, with notes, giving the reasons of preference or degradation.[2]

That would have been an interesting document, an example of judicial, or evaluative, criticism at its most extreme, grading aesthetic objects like

[1] Frank Elgar and Robert Maillard, *Picasso,* trans. by Francis Scarfe, New York: Praeger, 1956, pp. 56-58.

[2] *Life of Johnson,* Oxford Standard ed., New York: Oxford U., 1933, Vol. II, p. 619.

meat, tobacco, or students. Whether such a project is even in principle feasible will be one of our later questions.

The normative problems are best approached with some caution. We shall begin by taking a survey of typical reasons that critics actually give, classifying them, and subjecting them to a preliminary logical examination, to see how far the problems can be clarified and simplified before we meet them head on.

§24. *REASONS AND JUDGMENTS*

An argument for a critical evaluation may be compressed into the following formula:

X is good
bad
better or worse than *Y*,
because . . .

Here *X* is an aesthetic object of any sort, poem or play, statue or sonata, and therefore the normative words, "good," "bad," "better," and "worse" are understood to be used in an aesthetic context. What follows the word "because" is a *reason* for the judgment. It is not necessarily a conclusive reason, in the sense that by itself it would warrant the conclusion, but it claims to be a relevant reason, in the sense that its truth has some bearing, along with other reasons, upon the conclusion. What sorts of reasons do critics give?

There are two groups of reasons that can be separated from the rest, and, tentatively at least, set aside as not of concern to us here. The first group consists of reasons that refer to the cognitive aspects of the work. Thus we find that the critical formula, above, is sometimes completed in such ways as these:

. . . it is profound.
. . . it has something important to say.
. . . it conveys a significant view of life.
. . . it gives insight into a universal human problem.

These statements praise *X* for making a contribution to our knowledge; let us say they are reasons for attributing a *cognitive value* to *X*. This kind of value we have already discussed in Chapters VIII and IX.

The second group of reasons is somewhat more heterogeneous:

. . . it is uplifting and inspiring.
. . . it is effective social criticism.
. . . it is morally edifying.
. . . it promotes desirable social and political ends.
. . . it is subversive.

These all seem to attribute—or in the last case, deny—*moral value* to *X*—if we count desirable social effects as moral. In what respects an aesthetic object may be morally valuable we have not yet inquired, but we shall, in Chapter XII. Meanwhile it seems legitimate to set aside this second group of reasons, too, and from this point on confine ourselves to those reasons that are neither cognitive nor moral.

We are left with a third large group of reasons that are peculiarly aesthetic, such as the reasons given for the judgment of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. And these in turn divide into three subgroups, each of which we must examine rather carefully. There are the reasons that refer to features of the aesthetic object itself: the composition is "confused"; there is "too much gesticulation." Let us call these *Objective Reasons*. There are the reasons that refer to effects of the object upon the percipient: the color is "unpleasant," that is, gives displeasure. Let us call these *Affective Reasons*. There are the reasons that refer to the causes and conditions of the object, that is, to the artist or his materials: the drawing is "hasty," if this means it was done in haste; there was (in the painter's mind?) "too much concern for effect." Let us call these *Genetic Reasons*. It will be convenient to use the word "standard" to refer to anything that is appealed to in a critical reason. Thus when a critic gives "hasty drawing" as a reason for a negative evaluation, he is assuming that careful drawing is desirable, and I shall say he is using carefulness of drawing as a standard.

We must now discuss each of the three groups of reasons, but in reverse order.

Genetic and Affective Reasons

I call a reason Genetic if it refers to something existing before the work itself, to the manner in which it was produced, or its connection with antecedent objects and psychological states:

. . . it fulfills (or fails to fulfill) the artist's intention.
. . . it is an example of successful (or unsuccessful) expression.
. . . it is skillful (or shows poor workmanship).
. . . it is new and original (or trite).
. . . it is sincere (or insincere).

I do not propose to discuss all of these reasons here, but I want to bring out some general points about them and show how I think they might be analyzed.[3] They raise many puzzling questions, of which the chief ones have to do with the concept of intention.

"André Gide's *The Immoralist* is a perfect novel, for in it he accomplished exactly what he set out to do." Or, "The first movement of Schubert's *Second Symphony in B Flat Major* is inferior to most of Mozart's first movements for in it Schubert failed to realize his intention." Such are

[3] Further comments are reserved for the Notes and Queries at end of chapter.

the frequent idioms of intentionalistic evaluation. We have already, in Chapter I, §1, dealt with intention as a standard of description and interpretation, but new problems are raised by this normative role. The method of evaluation that it supports consists of two steps: (1) find what the creator intended the work to be, and (2) determine whether, or how far, the work falls short of the intention.

I want to show that these Genetic Reasons, and in particular the appeal to intention, cannot be good, that is, relevant and sound, reasons for critical evaluations. The heart of the argument against them can be summed up briefly, and it is, in my opinion, utterly conclusive. But the summary may require some supplementary comment to be convincing, for there are several disguises that the intentionalistic standard can assume, and several devices for confusing it with other, and more persuasive, standards. Essentially, however, the argument is this: (1) We can seldom know the intention with sufficient exactness, independently of the work itself, to compare the work with it and measure its success or failure. (2) Even when we can do so, the resulting judgment is not a judgment of the work, but only of the worker, which is quite a different thing.

The first point is evident. If we have no external evidence of the creator's intention, there is nothing we can compare the work with, and it cannot fail to be a complete success, however poor; or, more accurately, the words "success" and "failure" cannot strictly be applied to it. Of the intentions of Shakespeare, Vermeer, the Etruscan sculptors, the makers of the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the composers of old folk songs, we have no evidence at all outside the works they left us. If fulfillment of intention were the *only* test of value, then we could not evaluate these works at all, and we would have no way of knowing whether they are good.

But suppose we do have some external evidence; in by far the greatest number of cases, it must be much too skimpy to enable us to say with assurance that the work falls short of the intention. For notice in the first place how good the evidence would have to be. If a man tells us he is going bowling, we infer his intention, for we can assume that most bowlers have the same intention, namely to get as high a score as they can. This is a standardized task with a constant goal (namely, 300); it can be set over and over again and formulated adequately in words. So, too, an archer or a billiards player can point out his target precisely and unambiguously. But it is a far different matter for a poet to tell us in words, outside his poem, what exactly he had in mind for it to be. Moreover, a task like the bowler's is a restricted one, in the sense that it can be controlled throughout by a single intention. But the act of writing a concerto is one in which the intentions change and grow constantly; which intention, then, is it that the product is to be compared with, and how can even an articulate composer describe that intention in words exactly enough to make the comparison possible?

There still remains, it must be admitted, a small area within which some comparison is possible. A painter could say to us, as he selects his canvas and opens his paints, that the picture he is about to paint will be cheerful and gay, and he might fall short of this goal if he does not know how to arrange the local conditions—shapes and colors—so that they will have that regional quality. If he is a good painter, of course, he may well abandon his original aim in the middle, having hit on some other possibilities that interest him more. But it is conceivable that he should fail, and that we should discover it. Or, again, a writer could tell us that he intends one of his characters to be a figure of mystery, or of dignified sadness, or of nobility, and he may be unable to construct such characters and prevent them from falling into inconsistency or bathos. But, again, few creators have left us such specific records in their notes and memoirs. We do not know whether Schubert started out by conceiving a B flat symphony in the hope that it would be different in some important way from what it turned out to be. And if we say that it is not a success *because* it is not as good as we wish it to be, we are not saying that Schubert did intend something better, but that he ought to have done so.

The second point is quite independent of the first. If we could determine the success of Gide in fulfilling his intention—if, for example, we take his word that he was content with his novel—we are no further along toward an evaluation of that work, for the question immediately arises whether it was *worth* intending. Gide may have been satisfied, but that does not mean we must be; and, conversely, Mendelssohn was never satisfied with his *"Italian" Symphony in A Major (Op. 90)*, but many listeners are. If someone performs a hard task, like constructing a ship in a bottle, we bestow praise on him for his competence or skill, and this we can do even if we privately think he was wasting his time. When we speak of a "skillful work," this is a judgment about the producer, and is logically irrelevant to the question whether the product is good or bad. So many words unfortunately conceal this distinction: consider, for example, the word "mistake." Suppose a critic notes in a painting some casual-looking lines or peculiar distortion of figures. He wants to know whether to praise them or not, and he asks whether they were a "mistake." Now if this means, "Were they intentional? Did the painter's hand slip?" the question is whether the painter was a bungler: in short, whether *he* deserves praise. But what the critic is probably interested in is another question: whether the line or the figure can be justified by what it contributes to, or detracts from, those features of the work that are valuable and desirable; for example, without the distortion, the figure would be less spiritual or less graceful. This is a separate question, for a bungler might by chance produce a good work, and a master might deliberately and with great pains draw a line that spoils his picture. It has been said that if Blake had

made his woodcuts with more skill their most valuable qualities might have been weakened.

The plausible arguments in favor of the intentionalistic method yield to attack when we bear in mind the distinction between judging the creator and judging his creation, and when we keep to a clear sense of "intention"; it turns out that either the appeal to intention is irrelevant to evaluation or that the apparent appeal to intention is a covert appeal to some other standard that is not Genetic at all. Before we leave the Genetic Reasons, however, perhaps we should consider briefly one more standard that is really complex and subtle in its ramifications, namely, originality.

Originality in art is commonly regarded as a good thing; the question is why. Now, first of all, we must note that it is Genetic, in the strict sense: to say that an object is original is to say that when it was created it differed in some notable way from anything else that was known by its creator to exist at that time. In this strict sense, it is clear that originality has no bearing upon worth: it might be original and fine, or original and terrible. Caravaggio was one of the most original painters who ever lived—but that does not make him one of the greatest. But suppose we confine ourselves to good works of art—including Caravaggio's—and ask whether originality is not a ground for admiring them more than we would on other grounds. Even here, we can easily set up test cases to divorce originality from value. Suppose there are two of Haydn's symphonies very much alike, and we do not know which he wrote first; are we going to say that *A* becomes better when we decide that it was the earlier, but reverse our judgment when newly discovered band parts give priority to *B*?

It is the composer's originality that counts, not the music's. We admire, and justly, the originality of Haydn and Beethoven and Stravinsky and Bartók, providing they wrote not only originally but well. But this admiration is based on something like an economic ground, or on the general welfare. After certain sounds have come into the world—after eighty-three Haydn quartets and, at latest count, a hundred and seven symphonies—for all their incredible variety within a certain range, we bow to the law of diminishing returns. It is more of a contribution to our aesthetic resources, so to speak, if another composer will enlarge the range of chamber music and the symphony, with original innovations, rather than work within the same range. For this we praise him, but from such praise nothing follows about the goodness of the work, except that usually, of course, we would not think that his originality *deserved* praise unless the results were valuable enough to suggest that the original idea was worth following up.

I call a reason Affective if it refers to the psychological effects of the aesthetic object upon the percipient:

. . . it gives pleasure (or gives no pleasure).
. . . it is interesting (or dull and monotonous).
. . . it is exciting, moving, stirring, rousing.
. . . it has a powerful emotional impact.

The Affective method of critical evaluation consists in judging the work by its psychological effects, or probable psychological effects, upon the critic himself, or others. As will appear later, I do not consider such Affective Reasons irrelevant to the judgment of aesthetic objects in the way I consider the Genetic Reasons irrelevant. This is a rather long story, which has to be worked out in the following chapter. At this stage, I shall only claim that the Affective Reasons by themselves are inadequate, because they are uninformative in two important ways.

First, if someone asserts that he listened to the slow movement of Beethoven's *String Quartet in E Flat Major* (*Op. 127*), and that it gave him "pleasure," or advised us that it would give us pleasure, I think we would consider this remark a weak response to that momentous music. And yet it is true in some very broad and tepid sense that it does give pleasure, just as salted peanuts and a cool dive give pleasure. We are constrained, therefore, to ask what kind of pleasure it gives, and how that pleasure, if pleasure it must be called, differs from other pleasures and gets its peculiar quality precisely from those differences. And this line of inquiry would take us into the second point. For an Affective statement tells us the effect of the work, but it does not single out those features of the work on which the effect depends. We could still ask, in other words, *what* is pleasure-giving about that music that is absent from other music, and this line of inquiry would be parallel to the first, since it would lead us to discriminate this sort of pleasure from others that have different causes and objects.

The same two questions could be raised about the general notion that seems to be implicit in the other Affective Reasons: the work is good if it leads to a strong emotional response of some sort. How does the emotional response differ from the strong emotional responses produced by telegrams announcing deaths, close calls with a skidding car, the serious illness of a child, or getting married? Surely there is an important difference, which the emotional-response reason must take account of to be complete. And what in the aesthetic object causes the emotional response? Perhaps some intense regional quality on which our attention is focused in the experience. Indeed, some of these Affective terms, as we saw in Chapter I, §3, are often really misleading synonyms for descriptive terms: they mean that the object has some regional quality to a fairly intense degree. And in that case, the reason is, of course, no longer Affective, but Objective.

I call a reason Objective if it refers to some characteristic—that is, some quality or internal relation, or set of qualities and relations—within the work itself, or to some meaning-relation between the work and the world. In short, where either descriptive statements or interpretive statements appear as reasons in critical arguments, they are to be considered as Objective reasons. The distinction may seem a little artificial here, for according to some theories certain types of interpretive statements, for example, "*X* represents *Y*," could be reformulated in such a way as to refer to effects of the work upon its percipients. But I put interpretations in with the Objective Reasons, though I do not assume that all the Objective Reasons that critics have ever given are good reasons.

Even if we confine ourselves now to Objective Reasons, we still have a very large variety, so it might naturally occur to us to wonder whether any further subdivisions can be made. I think when we take a wide survey of critical reasons, we can find room for most of them, with very little trouble, in three main groups. First, there are reasons that seem to bear upon the degree of *unity* or disunity of the work:

. . . it is well-organized (or disorganized).
. . . it is formally perfect (or imperfect).
. . . it has (or lacks) an inner logic of structure and style.

Second, there are those reasons that seem to bear upon the degree of *complexity* or simplicity of the work:

. . . it is developed on a large scale.
. . . it is rich in contrasts (or lacks variety and is repetitious).
. . . it is subtle and imaginative (or crude).

Third, there are those reasons that seem to bear upon the *intensity* or lack of intensity of human regional qualities in the work:

. . . it is full of vitality (or insipid).
. . . it is forceful and vivid (or weak and pale).
. . . it is beautiful (or ugly).
. . . it is tender, ironic, tragic, graceful, delicate, richly comic.

The first two groups of reasons do not seem to raise any difficulties that we have not already noticed in discussing the terms "unified" and "complex." It is obvious that critics very often explicitly advance the unity of a work as a reason for praising it, or assume that unity is a good thing; and I have never encountered the argument that a work was good because it was disorganized. I have read the following in *The New York Times* about the *Rhapsody in Blue:*

> The humor, gusto and sentiment are all there. The work is not tightly organized by symphonic standards, but its very looseness of design adds to its charm.

I think this has to mean, not that it is better precisely because it is loosely organized, but that its peculiar qualities, its "humor, gusto and sentiment," would perhaps be weakened by a more highly organized form. If a critic said that a work is poor just because it is too unified, I think his context would show he meant that it is too simple (that is, too lacking in interesting complexities) or too cold (that is, too lacking in intense regional qualities).

It is perhaps less obvious that critics very often explicitly advance the complexity of a work as a reason for praising it, or assume that complexity is a good thing. Sometimes critical theorists talk as though complexity was invented by modern critics and was unknown to Homer, Virgil, and Horace. But when it is said that a simple lyric may be a fine poem, I think this is because it may yet have a high degree of unity and an intense quality. And, indeed, certain regional qualities can only be had in aesthetic objects that are relatively simple—see the Jensen *Composition*, PLATE I, and *Municipal Lodging*, PLATE III—but in this case we do not praise them for their simplicity, but for their intensity.

The reasons in the third group are the most puzzling. There seems to be no doubt that there is such a class of actual reasons:

A: "This painting is good."
B: "Why?"
A: "Oh, it has such a sense of eternal calm and stillness about it."

I take "eternal calm and stillness" to refer to a pervasive regional quality here, as in the other examples, and I (tentatively) understand "beautiful" in the same way, though this very special term will have to be discussed at greater length in the following chapter. But there is one difficulty that presents itself at once.

You could say—with what justification we shall later consider—that a good aesthetic object must have *some* marked quality, and not be a sheer nonentity or a zero. The quality does not matter—it can be sad or cheerful, graceful or rugged, soft or stern, provided it be *something*. But this may be too broad. We can think of works with uncontrolled horror or disgustingness—realistically painted corpses, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, or the razor slicing the eye at the beginning of the surrealistic film, *The Andalousian Dog*. In these works we have intensity of quality, all right, but that does not make them good. It may be that certain qualities are simply not contemplatable for any time with normal human endurance, and that we must except these, if we can draw the line. Or it may be that it is not human regional qualities as such, but those we already value in human beings, that we accept as standards in critical evaluation. More likely, I think, it is that in certain works the intensity of the quality is achieved at too great a sacrifice of unity. This is perhaps what the critics meant by saying that in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* there is "too much concern for effect."

But again it might be argued that it is not just any human regional quality that is given as a ground of praise, for some qualities are cited as grounds of dispraise: pompousness, pretentiousness, ostentatious vulgarity; a work is bad *because* it is flashy, or labored, or sentimental. Now these terms are predicates, of course, but not all predicates refer to positive perceptual qualities. Where such characteristics as these are cited as grounds for dispraise, they can, I think, be analyzed as negative. Pompousness is the outward form of grandeur and greatness—it is a long symphony with enormous crescendos—combined with an inner emptiness, lack of vitality and richness. Sentimentality in a poem is not a sentiment, but a claim on the speaker's part to a feeling that he does not dramatize and present in the texture and objects of the poem. No doubt all these words are far too subtle to be disposed of so briefly, and no doubt their meaning varies; I leave many questions hanging in the air. But I suggest that so far as these characteristics are standards of (negative) critical evaluation, they refer not to intensity of quality, but to its absence, or to lack of unity or complexity: to slackness, faintness, flabbiness, the work's inability to live up to its own promises, declining power after a good start.

Merits and Defects

Now, suppose a critic supports a value judgment by pointing out some feature of the particular work in question: "Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' is less good that it would be if its theme were not so vague." The form of this declaration claims that this vagueness is a defect in this poem, just as one might say that the grandeur of its imagery is a merit in it. By "defect" and "merit" I mean features that detract from its value or contribute to it: they are defective, or "bad-making," and meritorious, or "good-making," features respectively. Similarly we might say that firmness without hardness is a good-making feature, and worminess a bad-making feature, of apples.

But this terminology of merits and defects raises an important question. Can a feature be a merit in one poem and a defect (or neither) in another? Or does calling the feature a merit in one poem entail, or presuppose, a general principle according to which it is meritorious wherever it occurs? Is grandeur of imagery always a merit and vagueness of theme always a defect? Now, notice in the first place that we are not asking for universal conditions of goodness and badness. A wormy apple may still be a good apple, if the worm's operations have been confined to a small sector, provided the apple has other qualities that are desirable in apples. The worm is a defect, but not a fatal one. So a poem, indeed the "Ode" itself, may be a great poem because of its good-making features even though it has some bad-making features. Thus if there is a general principle—stated as, "Vague themes are always defects in poetry," or, "Grand imagery is always a merit in poetry"—this principle does not mean

that these features are either *necessary* or *sufficient* conditions of goodness in poetry, but only that, other things being equal, their presence makes it better or worse.

It does not seem that the contribution of each feature of an aesthetic object can be considered in an atomistic fashion. This is true of many things in life; mustard depends on frankfurters, as a baseball bat depends on a baseball, for its maximum value; it is not, so to speak, a good-making feature of a picnic unless both are present. But then there *is* a general principle connecting baseball bats and picnics, though it is not simple: In the presence of baseballs, baseball bats are fun-making features of picnics—assuming certain sorts of picnickers. And similarly we might hold that to claim brilliant imagery as a merit in one poem is to commit yourself to some general principle about the capacity of grand imagery to help along poems, at least poems in which certain other features are present. But to commit yourself to the existence of such a principle is, of course, not to be able to state it. The critic may have a hunch that in the "Ode" the grandeur of imagery is a good-making feature, but then it would become a critical question whether it is always such or whether its being such depends upon being associated with other features. If we know what we mean by "good," as I hope we shall later, then this question becomes an empirical one.

Similar remarks hold for the merits and defects that fine arts and music critics single out for attention. For example, deep space is a good thing in some paintings, while flat space is a good thing in others; different qualities depend for their intensity upon each other. Exactness in perspective and in the size-distance relations of figures is needed in a Piero della Francesca or in a Rembrandt etching, where the violation of it in one part of the work would introduce a disturbing disunity; but its violation in a Cézanne still life or in some works by Tintoretto and Toulouse-Lautrec is a merit because of the qualities that are obtained in this way. Sometimes the critic can see these things at once, and with a confident perceptiveness. Yet an adequate justification for saying that any feature is a defect or a merit in any work would include an explanation in terms of some general principle about the value-contribution of that feature, alone or in combination with others.

A principle about defects and merits in one art we may call a *Specific Canon*. The next question is whether such Specific Canons can always be subsumed under *General Canons* that apply, not to poetry in particular, but to all the arts. Suppose, for example, a drama critic claims that it is a defect in a certain play that the action takes place over thirty years, and the story thus becomes diffuse. Now, again, he does not have to claim that the shorter the action of a play, the better it necessarily is; nor does he have to fall back on one of the neoclassic rules, such as that the action of a play should take no more than twenty-four hours; nor does he have to say that the best plays are always those whose action is the shortest

Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman*, Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*, Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.) But he could perhaps claim, if his reason were questioned, that, other things being equal, the shorter the time of action, the more unified the play will tend to be; and the longer the time, the more it will tend to fall apart. This tendency may be, in some plays, counteracted by other unifying features, unfortunately lacking in the play in question. Now, this argument would subsume the long action-time as a defect under a Specific Canon—"A long action-time is a bad-making feature in a play that has a large number of characters, striking changes of scenery, and no symbolic carry-over from act to act." But the argument does more than this, for it subsumes this Specific Canon for the drama under a more General Canon, by claiming that the long action-time is a perceptual condition of disunity. The General Canon is, then, something like "Disunity is always a defect in aesthetic objects," or, in other words, "Disunity is a bad-making feature of aesthetic objects." And this is the same Canon that was appealed to when *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was said to have a "confused" composition.

The classification of Objective Reasons that we have made so far, then, shows that at least a very large variety of them can be subsumed under three General Canons: the Canon of Unity, the Canon of Complexity, the Canon of Intensity. In other words, 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.

Applying the General Canons

The next question is whether in fact *all* Objective Reasons can be subsumed under these three Canons. This is, no doubt, a very bold question, for considering the subtlety and flexibility of critical language and the waywardness of some critical thinking, it would be almost incredible if it turned out that all the Objective Reasons given by critics were subsumable under three headings—unless the headings were so vague or so general that they could cover every logical possibility. But let us see what we discover if we examine some cases of critical reasoning with our threefold classification in mind.

Cleanth Brooks, in his well-known essay on Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears," compares this poem with "Break, Break, Break," and explains why he judges it to be a much better poem.[4] The former, he says, is "very tightly organized," whereas the latter brings in an "irrelevant" reference

[4] "The Motivation of Tennyson's Weeper," *The Well Wrought Urn*, 1947, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, pp. 153-62.

to the stately ships," and is more confused. Here he is clearly appealing to the Canon of Unity. He says that the latter "is also a much thinner poem," and is "coarser"; it avoids "the psychological exploration of the experience," whereas the former has "richness and depth" because of its "imaginative grasp of diverse materials." Here he is appealing to the Canon of Complexity; the first poem has more *to* it, both in range and in subtlety. He speaks of the "dramatic force" and of the "dramatic power" of "Tears, Idle Tears," and particularly praises the intensity of its final stanza, in contrast to "Break, Break, Break." And here he is appealing to the Canon of Intensity. Brooks raises the question whether the opening paradox of "idle tears" is a merit or a defect, but in the light of his discussion he concludes that it contributes valuably to the complexity of the poem rather than detracting from its unity.

Or, consider a comparison of Picasso's two versions of *The Three Musicians*, one in the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1921), the other in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (also 1921):

> The first . . . is the most moving of these, as well as the most solid and the most soberly coloured. The figures of the three characters are laid out in broad rectangular planes, while their faces give the impression of primitive masks. Only the harlequin, in the centre, with his yellow-and-red-checked dress and the curves of his guitar, serves to add a touch of cheerfulness to this sombre, eerie, hieratic work, whose structure bears witness to profound thought and incomparable craftsmanship. The other version . . . is painted in a different spirit altogether. . . . But though the composition is more varied and the colouring pleasanter, while more emphasis is given to depth and the decorative intention is more obvious, this variant lacks the dignified grandeur of the New York picture. . . . More complex, and fresher in colour, this final version has neither the severity nor the stark economy of the other, which impresses by its dignified generosity of conception.[5]

The traces of intentionalism here can probably be converted into an Objective terminology: "economy," we saw in Chapter II, §6, can mean variety of significance in line and shape, hence a kind of complexity; the "profound thought and incomparable craftsmanship" do not enter as Objective Reasons, but are (deserved) praise for Picasso. What do we have left? The two paintings are not compared with respect to unity at all; it is taken for granted that the composition in both is unified, and that this is one of the factors relevant to the high value attributed to both paintings. The paintings are compared with respect to complexity; it is a merit in the Philadelphia one that it is more complex, more varied, and richer in decorative detail, and that it has a depth lacking in the New York one. But this aspect is said to be over-balanced by the third comparison: the New York one has a certain difficult-to-describe regional quality, its "hieratic" sombreness, its "severity," its "dignified grandeur" which is

[5] Elgar and Maillard, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-06, 126-29.

far more intense than any regional quality present in the Philadelphia one; and this is claimed to be a considerable merit.

It would be instructive to compare a number of passages dealing with music, say in the writings of Donald F. Tovey, though I have not found a single passage that combines such a variety of reasons as those just considered. We might examine his analysis of Mozart's *"Linz" Symphony in C Major* (K. 425), or of Mendelssohn's *"Italian" Symphony*. But perhaps this comparative passage will serve:

> Thus, Schubert is apt to weaken and lengthen his expositions by processes of discursive development where Beethoven would have had a crowd of terse new themes; while, on the other hand, Schubert's developments are apt indeed to develop some feature of one of his themes, but by turning it into a long lyric process which is repeated symmetrically. Dvorák is apt to be dangerously discursive at any point of his exposition, and frequently loses his way before he has begun his second group, while his developments often merely harp upon a single figure with a persistence not much more energetic or cumulative than that of the Dormouse that continued to say "twinkle, twinkle" in his sleep. But none of these matters can be settled by rule of thumb.[6]

Here phrases like "discursive development" and "loses his way" seem to bear upon the unity of the work; "a crowd of terse new themes" and "merely harp upon a single figure" seem to bear upon its complexity; "weaken," "lyric," "energetic or cumulative" seem to bear upon the intensity of its qualities. Tovey assumes that it is relevant to take these into account in considering the value of music, though of course he is not trying to make any final disposition of these masters.

The three Canons, then, support a large number of critical reasons. This is not due, I think, to their being vague, for they are not too vague to be testable and usable, as I have argued in Chapters IV and V. Nor is it due to some concealed ambiguity that makes the set really tautological, like saying every aesthetic object is either complex or not. For it is easy to invent reasons that fall outside these three Canons, such as the Genetic ones, or these:

> . . . it was printed in a syndicated newspaper column.
> . . . it deals with Japanese pearl-diving.
> . . . it was written by a Communist.

Only these don't happen to be good reasons. We can find other critical formulae that do not at first glance seem to be subsumable under the three Canons, for example:

> . . . it is sincere.
> . . . it has spontaneity.
> . . . it violates (or is faithful to) its medium.
> . . . it fully exploits (or fails to exploit) its medium.

[6] Donald F. Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis*, London: Oxford U., 1935, Vol. I, pp. 13-14.

With such formulas there may be a preliminary question concerning their intelligibility; indeed, we have glanced at some of these terms already. But I believe that on analysis they will be found either to fall outside the group of Objective Reasons into intentionalism or affectivism, or else to connect indirectly with the Canons.

Nor is the plausibility of this conclusion due to the fact that the Canons permit free-wheeling rationalizations. It might seem that you could justify practically anything as a good aesthetic object: surely it must have *something* in its favor that can be connected with one of the Canons. Now, there is truth in this objection, but I do not think it is deplorable. We have not yet raised the question whether it would be possible to *grade* aesthetic objects in terms of some scale; at this point we are only asking what a critic could sensibly talk about if he were asked to name the good things or the weaknesses in an aesthetic object, and we ought to encourage the critic, as well as ourselves, to be as open as possible to the variety of good things that can be found in art. The Canonic scheme is generous in this sense, even if its principles are few. But at the same time it remains true that in some aesthetic objects one can point out numerous defects, and serious, that is, pervasive, ones, whereas in others one can find only a few; and similarly with merits.

For example, a certain college library has a plaque that contains the following lines, by W. D. Foulke:

> How canst thou give thy life to sordid things
> While Milton's strains in rhythmic numbers roll,
> Or Shakespeare probes thy heart, or Homer sings,
> Or rapt Isaiah wakes thy slumbering soul?

You could spend quite a while pointing out how bad this is, and you would have a hard time finding things good about it. From the point of view of unity, it breaks down on an elementary level; the addressee is giving his life to sordid things while Shakespeare is probing his heart and Isaiah is waking him up. This mixture would be tolerable, if the diverse images did not, on reflection, show a profound looseness in conception, the various poets being thrown together by the word "while." From the point of view of complexity, the poem is utterly lacking in subtlety; it contains dead spaces like "Homer sings"; and none of the possible connotations of "sordid" or "probes" get taken up and developed, but they are canceled out by the other words. From the point of view of its human regional qualities, it is feeble and half-hearted, even as moral advice. And it has no rhythmic, syntactical, or verbal life. These things cannot be truly said of Wordsworth's "Ode."

To sum up, the three general critical standards, unity, complexity, and intensity, can be meaningfully appealed to in the judgment of aesthetic objects, whether auditory, visual, or verbal. Moreover, they are appealed to constantly by reputable critics. It seems to me that we can

even go so far as to say that all their Objective reasons that have any logical relevance at all depend upon a direct or an indirect appeal to these three basic standards. This may be too sweeping a claim; at any rate, it is stated explicitly enough so that it can be attacked or defended. In the next chapter we shall have to consider possible lines of defense; one serious attack, however, first requires our attention.

§25. *THE NATURE OF CRITICAL ARGUMENT*

The fact that critics do often give Objective reasons for their critical evaluations is noteworthy, for it shows that they think of their evaluations as the sort of thing reasons can and should be given for. But this fact does not by itself settle philosophical problems about normative criticism; indeed, it creates them. For to give a reason for a statement is to claim that anyone who accepts the reason ought to accept the statement, or at least be inclined to accept it. And the justice of this claim must always rest upon some underlying principle of reasoning. When it is said that *P* is a good reason for *Q*, we can always ask *why*—in other words, what makes it a good reason. But what if there is no such justifying principle? In that case, we must reject the critic's claim to have a rational justification of his judgments, and conclude that the ostensible reasons are not reasons at all. This would be a kind of critical skepticism.

Consider the following miniature dialogue:

> *A:* "The painting is good."
> *B:* "Why?"
> *A:* "It is a subtly toned and sensitive landscape with great delicacy of line."

As we have seen, *A*'s description of the landscape could raise several questions, and the success of this reasoning depends upon adequate answers to them. But it is another point that concerns us now, and it is a hard one. In order to know whether *A*'s reason is relevant to his conclusion that the painting is good, we must know what "good" means in this context. Even without extensive analysis, some of which will come later, we can easily think of possible meanings of "good," meanings that it can plausibly be said to have in some contexts, that would make *A*'s reason quite irrelevant, at least as a *reason*, though it might turn out, in some odd way, to be relevant as a remark. This distinction might be illustrated by the following dialogue:

> *A:* "Will it rain soon?"
> *B:* "Just take a look at the sky."

B's reply is not an answer to the question, but it is by no means beside the point.

Our present problem, then, is this: what is meant by "good" and "bad" in these aesthetic contexts? But the phrase "is meant" can invite two rather different inquiries. On the one hand, we might wonder what critics actually mean when they use their value-terms, what definitions they would give if pressed, what rules of usage they tacitly follow. It might turn out that these terms have a fairly restricted and general meaning, or set of meanings; or it might turn out that they have a highly variable meaning, from critic to critic, or from context to context, in which case one can only try to indicate the range of variation and provide techniques for tracking it in particular contexts. But there is a second question: we might wonder what critics *can* mean, taking into account not only what they "have in mind," so to speak, but the logical and epistemological problems about the whole procedure of giving reasons for normative judgments. Thus, conceivably, we might conclude that critics do not succeed in attaching any distinct meaning to their normative terms like "good." Or it might be that in order to give our critical evaluations any persuasive force, we must use the word "good" in a way that prevents these evaluations from being supported by Objective statements.

In the following chapter we shall consider certain systematic accounts of the way in which "good" (in an aesthetic context) is, or can be, or ought to be, used. But before we come to them, we must undertake a preliminary inquiry. Certain philosophers have attacked the procedure of critical reasoning, or reason-giving, in fundamental ways. They have argued either that no critical judgments can be rationally defended, or that only certain limited sorts of judgment can be rationally defended. It is these skeptical doubts that we must now deal with.

There are two theories about the meaning of "good" (in an aesthetic context) that imply that the alleged critical arguments discussed in the preceding section are not genuine arguments at all. According to these theories, the relation of "This is unified" to "This is good" cannot be, as it is usually supposed to be, the relation of reason to conclusion. We must consider the two theories with some care, but their significance will be clearer if first we remind ourselves of a few general characteristics of reasoning.

It is almost universally agreed today that in the last analysis there are only two fundamental kinds of argument, deductive and inductive. Most of the arguments offered and accepted in ordinary speech, and in the writings of critics, are, from the logical point of view, incomplete. For example,

> This is unified;
> *therefore*, this is good

is a *non sequitur*, taken by itself. But the logician's view is that such arguments are felt to derive their logical force, their convincingness, from supporting premises that are tacitly assumed by all parties in the discus-

sion. In short, they are elliptical, and the logical task of determining whether or not they are sound cannot be carried out unless we first make explicit the underlying assumptions. In this process of making them explicit, we are guided by our concept of what constitutes a complete argument, and we will accept the elliptical argument if, when properly filled out, it proves to be part of a sound deductive *or* a sound inductive one.

There are many complexities in this matter that we must ignore here; they are more fully treated in a number of books on logic.[1] But if the foregoing assumptions can be made, certain consequences follow. To decide whether or not the elliptical argument from unity is a sound one, we must first make up our mind whether it is to be understood as part of a deductive argument or part of an inductive one. Now, we can make a valid deductive argument out of it by supplying a universal major premise:

> [All aesthetic objects with such-and-such a degree of unity are good.]
> This aesthetic object has such-and-such a degree of unity.
> Therefore, this is good.

But this means that the major premise has to be a Universal Canon, and unfortunately no such Universal Canon is true. We saw in the preceding section that the Canons of critical evaluation cannot be formulated universally, but only as general tendencies, or, in an alternative language, statistical generalizations.

There does not seem, then, to be any true set of Universal Canons that will enable us to transform elliptical critical arguments into deductive ones. But this difficulty does not arise with induction. For in order to transform our elliptical argument into an inductive one we need only a limited Canon. There are several ways of doing this, for example:

> [Such-and-such a degree of unity has a tendency to make an aesthetic object good.]
> This aesthetic object has such-and-such a degree of unity.
> Therefore, this aesthetic object is good.

Here the major premise is a tendency-statement, like the Canons we have discussed, and the conclusion, of course, does not follow necessarily from the premises. The most we can say, if we know nothing more about the object, is that we have some reason to think it good, though we cannot accept this conclusion with confidence until we know something about its complexity and the intensity of its human qualities.

Can we, then, understand critical arguments as elliptical inductions, justified ultimately by the general principles of inductive reasoning? It will be some time before we can give a satisfactory answer to this question, but meanwhile we must see that there are understandable grounds

[1] See, for example, Max Black, *Critical Thinking*, 2d ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1952, ch. 2; Monroe C. Beardsley, *Practical Logic*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1950, ch. 7.

for skepticism about this view. For it regards the reasons of critics as evidence for the evaluations, in the way, let us say, that facts about a patient's symptoms are evidence for the hypothesis that he has a certain disease. But at first glance, the statement "This is good" does not seem to be related to "This is unified" in the way "John has pneumonia" is related to "John's temperature is 104.2°." In applying the term "good" to an aesthetic object, the critic seems at least to be doing something more than what the doctor is doing with the term "pneumonia." Therefore, the suspicion arises that "This is good" is not the conclusion of a logical argument at all, and "This is unified" not in the strict sense a reason. And this suspicion has led to two theories about critical argument.

The Performatory Theory

The first theory about what is actually going on in critical argument begins with the analysis of a certain kind of verbal utterance. An utterance of this kind is one that does not give information about a previously existing state of affairs, but itself makes a difference in the world: it initiates someone into a secret society, or creates a knighthood, or makes a man a citizen. "With this ring I thee wed" is not a statement about the wedding, but part of the wedding itself, indeed, it *is* the act of wedding. The language of such utterances has been called *Performatory Language*. The same function can, of course, be carried out by nonverbal gestures: awarding the Congressional Medal of Honor, or laying a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Suppose, then, we were to try regarding the critic's judgment, "This is good," as an utterance of this kind, which does honor to the aesthetic object. Since it is not a statement, but an act, it is not true or false, and therefore it cannot be the conclusion of an argument; in other words, it makes no sense to speak of giving reasons to establish its truth. I shall call this the *Performatory Theory* of critical argument.[2]

The Performatory Theory grants that the key word "Why?" in a critical discussion is a request, in one sense, for a "reason," but insists that there is an ambiguity concealed in this word. For we speak of a reason for a statement, that is, a reason for believing or asserting that it is true; this is the sense in which a reason is part of an argument. We also speak of a reason for doing something, for going to the dentist, or for taking a job; and here there is no statement the reason supports, but rather an action whose performance is to be justified by the reason. In this latter sense, the Performatory Theory grants, critical evaluation-utterances may be just or unjust; they are not, however, true or false.

Unfortunately the principles distinguishing adequate from inadequate justifications have not been worked out for the Performatory

[2] Such a theory has been sketched by Margaret Macdonald; for reference see Note 25-A.

Theory. But we can see how they would go. The only justification for the act of awarding the medal would be the official judgment that the soldier's actions deserved it, just as the only justification for the first-base umpire's horizontal waving of the arms would be his official judgment that the runner arrived before the ball. In short, the Performatory act, while not itself a statement, presupposes, or rests upon, a statement—"This deserves first prize"—which is itself a normative judgment. And the critic's "This is good" is more like the judgment that justifies the Performatory act than the Performatory act itself. For the critic's pronouncement is not an official act like the art jury's decision to hang the painting in the exhibition. It is not authoritative, and changes the world not at all.

The defender of the Performatory Theory must of course deny that the justification of a Performatory utterance is itself a value-judgment; he agrees that if this is so, his theory is undermined. Consider the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor. The reason for this award is that the soldier performed an act "beyond the call of duty," where the call of duty is quite carefully defined in the military code. Here the reason seems to be a plain description, though there has to be a general rule governing the award, that is, a rule about the conditions under which it will be made. Similarly, why can't we say that "This is unified" specifies one of the conditions governing the benediction, "This is (aesthetically) good"? I don't think that this will do, however, even for the military award. "This act is beyond the call of duty" is not a pure description; it is already a value-judgment, for "beyond" means not only that the act was more dangerous or difficult than duty prescribed, but that it was a desirable act, an approved act. Or, if this is not strictly part of the meaning of "beyond," it is taken for granted, for unless the act was good, its danger would not justify the award.

The Emotive Theory

The second theory of critical argument does not go quite as far as the first, for it does not assimilate critical evaluations to nonlinguistic acts, but in its simple form it does deny that evaluations are genuine statements, and in its sophisticated form it holds that, though they may have a predicative element, they also have another peculiar feature that renders them incapable of behaving like ordinary empirical statements. Both forms we may refer to as the *Emotive Theory* of critical argument.[3]

The simple emotive theory is that, despite its grammatical form, a critical evaluation is not a statement, but a combination of two components, an exclamatory component, which gives evidence of the speaker's feelings ("Yum, yum!"), and an imperative component, which calls

[3] This theory has not been primarily discussed in relation to the critical uses of "good," but in ethics its classic exposition is that of Charles L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language;* see Note 25-B.

upon the listener to share the speaker's feelings ("Feel like saying 'Yum, yum!' too!"). When a critic says that a poem is good, he is evincing his own attitude toward it, and attempting to engender the same attitude in others. Since exclamations and imperatives are neither true nor false, a value judgment is not a statement, according to the Emotive Theory, and consequently it cannot appear as the conclusion of an argument. In other words, no reason can be given for it.

Now, as we have seen, critics often *think* they are giving reasons for their judgments, but, like the Performatory Theory, the Emotive Theory distinguishes two senses—in this case different senses—of the word "reason." For example, we might ask someone what the reason was for his being late for an appointment. If he says he had to take his child to a doctor, he *is* giving a reason, and no doubt a good reason. If he says he forgot the time, he is not giving a reason, but merely a *cause;* he is explaining, but not justifying, his lateness. According to the simple Emotive Theory, it is only in the second sense that the critic can give reasons. Suppose *A* says, "That is a poor poem," and *B* asks, "Why?" *B* is inviting *A* to try to come up with some true statement that will make *B* dislike the poem as much as *A* does. *A* must work on *B*'s feelings. He may say, "Its imagery is confused," if he thinks *B* already disapproves of confused imagery. Or he may say, "The author was once a Communist," or "Prince Rainier doesn't like it," or "It has sold a million copies," or anything else that is true and that will tap one of *B*'s prejudices. The only difference that the Emotive Theory recognizes between one "reason" and another is that one is effective and the other is not; if it secures the desired response from *B*, no more can be said for it, or demanded of it. There is no logical distinction between good reasons and poor ones.

To see whether this is an acceptable account of the actual process of critical argument, we must consider separately the two aspects of the theory, the imperative aspect, and the exclamatory aspect.

Is it plausible to consider judgments like "This is good" in an aesthetic context as disguised imperatives? It may of course be that the speaker hopes to influence other people's attitudes, and it may even be that he succeeds, but that does not make the statement an imperative. "I feel chilly" is not an imperative even if it leads someone to get up and shut the window; moreover, every statement that is asserted is an invitation to believe, but "It is raining" cannot be analyzed into "I believe it is raining. Believe it too!" If something is being implicitly commanded (besides belief) in "This is good," it is not easy to discover what it is. Perhaps the speaker means "Like this!" or "Stop disliking this!" but these are odd commands; how do you command someone to like something? Perhaps the speaker means "Repeat after me, 'This is good'!"—but if it is the verbal utterance that he is commanding, he is content with very little. It does seem as though it is hard to make out a good case for saying that "This is good" (in an aesthetic context) has a peculiar imperative component.

This conclusion can, I think, be strengthened by a broader consideration. Normative statements in general, including those we make about aesthetic objects, are of two sorts. Sometimes we make practical proposals: you ought to buy this recording of the *German Requiem* or *Don Giovanni* rather than that; you ought to go to this movie rather than that, or stay home and watch television. Let us call such judgments *Recommendations:* they propose solutions to problems of actual choice, and in the end we cannot escape such decisions about aesthetic objects—a topic to which we shall return in Chapter XII. To decide which of two recordings of an opera to buy, you must of course take a number of factors into consideration: the comparative cost, the difficulty of procuring them (including the fact that you are in a hurry and one will have to be ordered while the other is in stock), the differences in the recording, cuts made by the conductor, surface noise, performance. Normative statements about these factors—"The performance is excellent," "The surface is quiet"—are different from outright Recommendations. I may say that recording *X* is better in sound but *Y* is cheaper, and leave it up to you to make the final decision. These are judgments of goodness in such-and-such a respect: let us call them *Commendations.* A rational Recommendation will presumably be based upon correct Commendations, but a Commendation is not itself a proposal for action. The distinction tends to disappear in the extreme case: for example, if two recordings differ only in one respect, say the quality of the sound, then the Commendation "*X* has the better sound" strongly suggests the Recommendation, "Choose *X*," since it would be irrational to choose *Y* under the circumstances. Even in this case, however, the distinction is worth preserving.

Now, there is a good deal of sense in the view that a Recommendation has an imperative component: that, for example, a moral judgment of rightness or wrongness is an answer to a question like "What shall I do?"—though it is not wholly clear that the answer to this question is a simple imperative. But critical evaluations are not Recommendations, but Commendations; they provide relevant data for decisions, but they enjoin no decisions themselves, and it does not seem at all plausible to treat them as in part commands.

When we turn to the exclamatory part of the Emotive Theory, we encounter a different set of difficulties. It would no longer be regarded as plausible, I think, to say that "This painting is good" is an example of pure emotive language; that it has emotive import and emotive purport, but no meaning, in the sense in which these terms were introduced above, in Chapter III, §9. The Mixed Emotive Theory accepts this conclusion: that normative terms may have a meaning. But it insists that they also have emotive force, and that this introduces a peculiar complication into critical reasoning. For according to this view, when a term that is emotive appears in the conclusion of an argument, the argument always commits a certain kind of fallacy that prevents it from being completely logical.

To take a simple example, suppose we can find two terms—this was doubted in Chapter III—that have the same meaning but one is neutral and the other has negative emotive import and purport: say, "one who works during a strike" and "scab." Now to prove that *X* worked during the strike may be quite feasible, and *X* may be quite prepared to admit that this predicate applies to him. But suppose we then say this to him: "If two terms have the same meaning, then obviously either can be substituted for the other in any context without changing the meaning; if therefore you are one who works during a strike, then you are a scab." This argument is, of course, on one level, perfectly valid. Yet *X* will repudiate the word "scab" vigorously, and for a sensible reason: if he accepts it, and applies it to himself, he will be accepting its emotive purport, that is, in using the word, he will be showing disapproval toward himself, and this will be a misshowing, for he does not feel that disapproval. The argument is fallacious, because it introduces a surreptitious emotive effect into the conclusion that was not there in the premise.

Now the same thing happens with "This is good" in critical argument, according to the Emotivist. We might be prepared to accept the factual premise "This is unified" but balk at "This is good," because it would show approval that we do not feel. Therefore, all critical arguments, if taken as arguments, would be fallacious in this peculiar way. Therefore, they are best not taken as genuine arguments at all.

Now, we know what to do in general about the Fallacy of Surreptitious Emotive Effect; we can use neutral terms, or use the emotive ones in contexts that minimize their emotive effect, and get along reasonably well. Why can't a critical argument, then, do the same thing? If "warm, glowing colors" is taken to be emotive, in contrast to "colors on the red side that tend to be highly saturated," then let us use the less emotive term, or cancel out the emotive effect. But here, for the Emotivist, is the crux of the matter: for he claims that the emotive aspect of "good" is precisely its normative aspect. Take away the emotive effect, and you no longer have a critical evaluation; keep the critical evaluation, and you have the emotive effect, and the fallacy.

On what grounds, then, shall we decide whether the emotive aspect of a word is its normative aspect? This is by no means an easy question, and present-day philosophers are not agreed upon it. But one thing is clear, namely that if there are normative statements that are not emotive, and emotive statements that are not normative, then being normative and being emotive are not the same thing. And it seems to me that this is just the case. It is agreed that some emotive statements are not normative statements; it is, I think, agreed that not even all emotive statements that evince and evoke liking and disliking are normative statements. And it seems to me that some normative statements are by no means emotive, though this is more questionable. Granted that when someone says something is good he generally shows he is not entirely indifferent to it. Never-

theless, he can use the word in a perfectly calm manner—"In my judgment, it is good." This "good" can be nearly lacking in emotive purport. Granted, again, that when we hear the word "good" we may feel a tendency to respond in terms of liking, but not, I think, if we are more than a quivering sensibility; the word can be nearly lacking in emotive import.

The Emotive Theory in its sophisticated form introduces a concession like that of the Performatory Theory. Suppose we try to distinguish between various kinds of feelings evinced and evoked by "good" (in an aesthetic context): the "Oh, ah!" of aesthetic approval from the "Hurrah!" of moral admiration. If *A* says "Oh, ah!" in front of a particular painting, or if his "Oh, ah!" in front of one of the *Three Musicians* is louder than that in front of the other, why, then, though *B* cannot sensibly ask whether this is true or false, he can ask whether it is *appropriate*. To justify his utterance, then, *A* would have to argue that the painting has certain features that makes aesthetic approval, rather than aesthetic disapproval, or some other kind of approval, suitable to the occasion—as it is suitable to say "well bowled" at a cricket match but not at a baseball game. Knowing what sorts of emotive exclamation are suitable for particular circumstances is knowing how to *use* normative expressions, and a person who says "Oh, ah!" in front of a badly organized painting, while he is not saying anything *false*, is guilty of misusing the expression.

But any such attempt to introduce, even in this roundabout way, a distinction between justifiable and unjustifiable emotive utterances[4] must, I think, alter the Emotive Theory beyond all recognition and render it nearly indistinguishable from those psychological theories of value that we shall consider in the following chapter. For even if "Oh, ah!" does not become true or false, in the sophisticated view, the statement "The utterance 'Oh, ah!' is an appropriate response to Fauré's *Requiem*" is itself a normative statement that the theory has to take as true or false, and this statement is just the original critical judgment "Fauré's *Requiem* is good" that the Emotive Theory was supposed to analyze.

Relativism

So far in this section we have been considering the nature of critical arguments, but certain problems become more evident when we consider critical disputes—a dispute being a kind of double argument in which one critic gives a reason for, and another a reason against, the same judgment.

A: "*Long Day's Journey into Night* is a masterpiece of the theater."
B: "What is so great about it?"

[4] That is, to introduce what Richard Brandt has called a "Validation Thesis"; see his article, "The Status of Empirical Assertion Theories in Ethics," *Mind*, LXI (1952): 458-79.

A: "It has some very moving scenes, and it has a cumulative power; the people are real, the conflict is a detply human one."
B: "Yes, I agree that those things can be said in favor of it, but would you not agree that it is slow and ponderous and frightfully repetitious in its movement, and that the characters and conflicts are essentially rather elementary, for all the enormous length of the play? It seems to me the general effect is one of monotony and dissipation of energy, and I would not call it a masterpiece, even among O'Neill's works."

The two theories of critical argument just examined can also, of course, be applied to such disputes. The Performatory Theory would say that in this case *A* is honoring, *B* is refusing to honor, the play; but it is not clear where, if anywhere, the two disputants can go from this point. According to the Emotive Theory, such a dispute is to be understood primarily as a disagreement in attitude rather than in belief; it may include disagreements about the actual characteristics of the play, but what makes it a value-dispute is precisely that even when these disagreements are cleared up, there remains an irreducible opposition of *A*'s pro attitude and *B*'s con attitude. There is, however, another general view of such disputes that we must deal with before we conclude this section. That is *Relativism*.[5]

So carelessly is this term used in most discussions, for all its commonness and familiarity, that we shall have to begin by being more than ordinarily pedantic about it. I propose, first, to explain with some care how I think this term is best used to bring out the central problems in this area. The Performatory Theory and the Emotive Theory are theories about the nature of critical reasoning, or, in other words, they are accounts of the way in which the term "good" functions in an aesthetic context. Now there is another way of giving an account of "good" (in an aesthetic context), and that is to propose a *definition* of it. A definition is a sentence of the form:

"Good" (in an aesthetic context) has the same meaning as . . .

where the defining term makes more explicit the characteristics designated by "good." According to the Performatory Theory and the Emotive Theory, "good" cannot be defined, since it is not used to designate any characteristics of things. But if we do not accept these theories, then we are at liberty to ask the question, "What does 'good' mean in an aesthetic context?" or "What does it mean to say that an aesthetic object is a good aesthetic object?"

In the next chapter we shall deal with the main types of proposal in answer to these questions, and I do not want to anticipate the details of that argument. But Relativism is the view that only proposals of a certain sort are acceptable, and if this view is true it will simplify our prob-

[5] In aesthetics, the theory has been defended by George Boas, F. A. Pottle, Bernard C. Heyl; see Note 25-D.

lem in the next chapter considerably. That is why I take it up here. But though we shall use, as examples, some of the possible definitions of "good," we shall not concern ourselves with their plausibility as definitions, but only with one aspect of them.

Suppose we have two critics who dispute about a given aesthetic object:

A: "*X* is good."
B: "*X* is not good."

—that is, they utter sentences that are logically contradictory in overt form. But whether they are *really* contradictory depends on the definition of "good" that we accept. Suppose we were—and never mind the implausibility of these suggestions—to say that

"*X* is good" means "*X* is approved by the highest-paid critics."

Then our original model can be transformed, by substitution, into:

A: "*X* is approved by the highest-paid critics."
B: "*X* is not approved by the highest-paid critics."

According to the highest-paid-critics definition of "good," *A* and *B* are indeed contradicting each other when one says *X* is good and the other says it is not. And this is true no matter who *A* and *B* are, assuming they are talking about the same critics, the highest-paid in the world.

Now suppose, instead, we were to say that

"*X* is good" means "I like *X*."

Then when *A* and *B* utter their value-judgments, each is really saying what he likes or doesn't like, and our original model is equivalent to:

A: "I like *X*."
B: "I don't like *X*."

According to the I-like definition of "good," then, *A* and *B* are not really contradicting each other when one says *X* is good and the other says it is not. This is what I mean by saying that the I-like definition is a *Relativistic Definition,* whereas the highest-paid-critics definition is not.

A definition of "good" (in an aesthetic context), then, is Relativistic if according to that definition there can be two critics, one of whom says that an aesthetic object is good and the other of whom denies it—or one of whom says it is better than the other one says it is—without really contradicting each other. Note that the Emotive Theory does not give a Relativistic definition of "good," since it does not give any definition at all; but by an easy extension, we can, if we wish, call the Emotive Theory a Relativistic *Theory,* meaning that it is a theory about critical disputes according to which apparent contradictions are not real contradictions. If

the I-like definition is correct, *A* is making a statement, only it is about his own feelings. *B* could deny the statement if he wished:

A: "This is good."
B: "No, you don't."

The point is that he can't deny it by replying, "This is not good."

Relativism, we may then say, is the theory that "good" (in an aesthetic context) must be defined Relativistically.

The definition of "Relativistic" uses the clause "there can be two critics," and this is to allow for various forms of Relativism. The I-like definition is one extreme form, which we may call Individual Relativism, because it follows from this definition that *any* two critics who get into a dispute are really talking about different things and failing to contradict each other. But another form of Relativism, for example, Cultural Relativism, would make a distinction. Suppose

"*X* is good" means "*X* is approved by people of my culture,"

where "my" refers to the speaker. Now, if *A*, who says *X* is good, and *B*, who denies it, are both members of the same culture, that is, both Western Europeans or both Melanesians, they *are* contradicting each other; but if *A* and *B* are from different cultures, that is, one is an ancient Greek and the other is an Easter Islander, they are not contradicting each other. A Cultural Relativistic definition of "good" (in an aesthetic context), then, is one according to which speakers in different cultures cannot really dispute with each other, for whenever they try to get into a genuine disagreement by using the word "good" they will fail to do so; each can talk only about his own culture. In the same way, we can have other sorts of Relativism: Epochal Relativism (reference to the speaker's period in history), National Relativism, Class Relativism (reference to the speaker's social class), and so forth.

Which, if any, of all these possible definitions is the most suitable we shall consider later. Right now our concern is with a general prior question: Is there any reason why we are compelled to accept some form of Relativism? Must we rule out at this stage of the argument all Non-relativist definitions of "good" (in an aesthetic context)?

Now suppose a philosopher is trying to persuade us to adopt a Relativistic Definition of "good"; what arguments can he give? Well, first, he might try to show us that critics do in fact use their normative words in this way. He does not have to fasten upon one type of Relativism and say that it always applies. He may produce one critic, let's say *C*, who is always prepared to give reasons for his judgments when he is talking to another critic of his own culture, but never gives any reasons when he is disagreeing with Aristotle or with Hindu critics, thus revealing his clear awareness that his judgments make an implicit reference to his own culture so that he would not really be contradicting the critics from other

cultures. And the Relativist may produce another critic, *D*, who never gives any reasons for his judgments, even when pressed, because he means by "This is good" only "I like this now," and consequently is never really contradicting other critics, or even himself at a different time.

But *C* and *D* sound like caricatures here, because they would be extremely rare. As far as their introspected meanings go, and also their reason-giving practice, most critics do not appear to subscribe to Relativism, at least in any very settled and systematic way. And it is quite as open to them to say that if *D* means by "This is good" only "I like it now," he is using "good" in a very peculiar sense, and is not communicating, for other people will not take it in that sense, whatever he says. But the Relativist usually does not appeal to the introspections of critics. He says that apart from what they *think* they mean and do, the only meaning they *can* give to "good" is Relativistic; they must admit that there are always restrictions—individual, social, historical, cultural—upon the relevance of critical reasons.

Now, suppose we have a controversy, or an apparent dispute, between two critics, *A* ("*X* is good") and *B* ("*X* is not good"), and it goes on for a long time, each giving numerous reasons, relevant and irrelevant, each accepting the other's reasons, but clinging to his own judgment:

A: "It is ingeniously plotted."
B: "Granted; I still say it's not good. The characters are thin."
A: "Granted; I still say it's good. The style is clear."
B: "Granted; I still say it's not good . . ."

We may, after a time, begin to suspect that there is something wrong; it looks as if the difference of opinion is not going to be settled by reasoning. Perhaps it is a pseudo-issue. Now, if it is a pseudo-issue, it cannot be rationally resolved, but it can be *dissolved:* that is, its pseudo character can be made explicit by reformulating the argument—if the disputants will acknowledge the reformulation as equivalent to what they really have in mind.

There are two fundamentally different ways of dissolving this issue. First, we might say that they are really talking about different things; it is not the same *X* that both are referring to, for each is referring, not to some objective work, but to the way the object appears to him. In short, "*X*" for *A* means "*A*'s presentation of the work," and "*X*" for *B* means "*B*'s presentation of the work." This proposal for dissolution may be called *Particularism*, and defined this way: it is the theory that in critical disputes each disputant is always talking, and can only talk, about his own presentation, at that time, of the object. Therefore critics never really disagree.

We have already found reason in Chapter I, §4, to doubt the truth of Particularism; I bring it up here only to keep it sharply distinct from Relativism, with which it is often confused. If Particularism is true, Relativism cannot be formulated at all, for Relativism presupposes that the disputants are talking about the same object, only they are saying different things about it. Relativism is the second way of dissolving the issue: by saying that *A* and *B*, though referring to the same thing by "*X*," are using the word "good" in different senses, and therefore not contradicting each other.

Another way of stating Particularism would be to say that normative critical terms do not apply to aesthetic objects, but only to presentations of aesthetic objects. Suppose you hear a new musical composition over and over again, with brief pauses in between. The first time you will get some enjoyment from it, perhaps more the second and even the third time; after that the enjoyment may begin to drop off rapidly, down to positive displeasure, and you may even have difficulty forcing yourself to listen, by the fortieth time. Now, if the term "good" (in an aesthetic context) applies only to each presentation, we would have to say something like this: "The first presentation was good, the second better, . . . then they began to get worse and worse." But it is clear that we do not use the word "good" this way; it is not the "goodness" of the music that has changed, but we, that is, our capacity to take it in. It is the same music as before, but we are getting less and less adequate presentations of it, and we are getting less and less able to respond to the presentations.

The Relativist does not hold, however, that two disputing critics are referring to different objects—though he may sometimes commit the error of saying so. He holds that they have different attitudes toward the same object. But Relativism is a negative thesis: it is that no reasonable way—that is, no way through reasoning—can be found to settle the dispute, and therefore it is not a genuine dispute at all. The question now becomes: What empirical evidence can be offered in support of this claim?

The Argument from Variability

The evidence appealed to by the Relativist can be divided into two parts, as providing the grounds for two closely related, but distinguishable, arguments. There is an argument from Variability and an argument from Inflexibility. We must consider each of them.

The basis of the first argument is that tastes differ: the aesthetic objects that are enjoyed, admired, chosen, praised, and cherished vary considerably from age to age, from culture to culture, from nation to nation, from social stratum to social stratum, from family to family, from person to person. We find this even in an age and a region of strong pressures toward conformity. And especially in the history of the arts do we find enormous variations in the reputation of creative artists and their works: of Cherubini, Melville, Donne, Henry James, El Greco, and even Shakespeare, who in the Restoration period was thought much inferior to Otway. These facts, for which I shall use the general term "Variability of

taste," are well verified. But Variability must be kept carefully distinct from Relativism. Variability is an empirical fact; Relativism is a theory about the proper way to define the term "good." Now the argument, "Tastes differ; therefore, critical judgments are relative," is obviously invalid. It by no means follows from the fact that people like different aesthetic objects that they cannot do any more in judging them than record their likings.

And yet the Variability of taste cannot be lightly dismissed. It seems so broad and sweeping, it goes so deep, and moreover its capricious changes and its stubborn persistences seem, often, so independent of and so immune to any rational discussion. It is easy enough to be discouraged by it, and to conclude that the only thing we can do in talking normatively about aesthetic objects is to say how they appeal to us and others like us.

But the significance of Variability cannot be estimated until we break it down a little more. For what makes the variability seem so enormous is that the catch-all term "taste" lumps together a very heterogeneous collection of phenomena, some of which do, and some of which do not, have a bearing upon Relativism. For example, there is (1) variability of *preference,* by which I mean such differences as these: The content of symphony orchestra programs changes from season to season, from decade to decade, partly because people get tired of hearing the same things; or some programs do not change enough, because the season-ticket holders want easy access to music and are unwilling to make the effort required to become familiar with new works. But these conflicts can be set aside because they do not need to involve disputes about goodness (in an aesthetic context) at all; the decision whether to perform Beethoven's *Second* or Walter Piston's *Second* may be quite independent of any relative critical evaluation, assuming that they are both worth performing. Or, to take another sort of example, when we look about at some of the houses that have been built in this country—for example, Victorian Gothic monstrosities like Canonchet, the Sprague house at Narragansett, or the Carson house at Eureka, California—we marvel at the sheer ugliness that has been achieved, and we cannot imagine how anyone ever thought they were beautiful. But is there really a difference in critical evaluation here? We do not know that they were thought to be beautiful, after all; perhaps they were built by people who were not very sensitive either to beauty or ugliness, but anxious to spend money in a conspicuous fashion and create at any cost a semblance of Old World magnificence and aristocracy.

In short, variability of preference does not necessarily entail (2) variability of critical judgment. If more people like the poems of Anne Morrow Lindbergh than like the poems of Dylan Thomas or W. H. Auden, this does not mean they would all say that they think her poems are better poems. But suppose they did say this; then we would have what

I am calling variability of judgment, where the same thing is said to be good and bad by different people or different groups of people. Now, if I find that my judgment is different from that of 90 per cent of my fellow Americans, I might think that the democratic thing to do, instead of saying they are wrong, is to fall back on a Relativistic mode of speech that will remove the conflict, by withdrawing any commitment to a general judgment about the value of the poems. But I am not compelled to do this, nor is it genuinely democratic; for if I believe I have better reasons for my judgment than the 90 per cent have for theirs, it is my duty to stick by my guns.

The variability of unsupported judgments may be distinguished from another sort of variability: (3) variability of reasons. With this third group we get down to more fundamental matters. Suppose two people differ about something, say the length of a table; there is no fundamental problem as long as they both agree on the method of settling their disagreement. But suppose one has a tape measure, and the other a yardstick, and each insists on using his own device, but they consistently get different results; then their disagreement is not only about the length of the table but about the right way of determining its length. They differ in the reasons they will accept. And here, at last, we come to a kind of variability that might lead us to conclude that their argument is insoluble, and the only way of disposing of it is to introduce a relativistic definition of length: one means "length as measured by the tape measure," the other means "length as measured by the ruler." Both are right, after all.

Now, in the history of criticism, we do find examples of this third kind of variability—and it is the only kind, I believe, that need give us any concern here. Suppose a neoclassic critic finds fault with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* because it violates the unities of time and space, and a romantic critic praises it as a masterpiece because of the subtlety of its characterization. So far no trouble; they are getting their cards on the table; critical evaluation is at its best a group enterprise, for it may take a variety of talents and sensitivities to see what is good and what is bad in a complicated play. But suppose the neoclassic critic says, regretfully, that subtlety of psychological insight into characters is not a feature that counts either for or against a play—that the romantic critic might just as well have said it is a great play because it is laid in Scotland. And suppose the romantic critic says, with equal sadness, that unfortunately the unities are completely outmoded, and to condemn a play for violating them is as irrelevant as condemning it because it has five acts instead of four.

Now the dispute would be moved down into basic questions, and here, as in the measurement example, there would be a strong temptation to dissolve the dispute by adopting a relativistic definition of "good." If "good" means "in conformity to the standards employed by me and my epoch," then both critics may be right, and they are not really in conflict.

But this dissolution would be premature, just as it would be in the measurement example. For we need not be faint-hearted even about these basic issues. In the case of the table, we would suppose that either the ruler or the tape measure must be wrong, and we would suggest comparing them with a more ultimate standard—if necessary, with the one in the National Bureau of Standards in Washington. Should the two disputants refuse to have their devices checked and insist that they are right, we would not say that this makes them Relativists, but that they are too stubborn to learn the truth.

Can something like this be said about the critical dispute, too? The question now becomes: Is the unity of time and place a relevant standard, and is psychological subtlety a relevant standard? But this is where the argument from Variability comes in. For in the case of the table measurement, there is a generally acknowledged standard to which we can ultimately appeal. But doesn't Variability of aesthetic phenomena show that there is no such generally acknowledged standard in criticism? In this dispute there is nothing to appeal to for deciding which reasons are relevant: therefore, there can be no rational way of resolving it. Between two neoclassic critics, who accept the unities as a standard, there can be a genuine disagreement; but between the neoclassic critic and the romantic critic there can be none, as is shown by the fact that they will not accept each other's reasons.

But there are two questions about standards. First, we can ask whether or to what extent there is already agreement upon a standard: about the measurement of length there is agreement in this country. Standards are in the process of being set up in certain other fields, like the accrediting of colleges and universities, and—I have read recently—the grading of Christmas trees. In still other fields there are no standards at all. In criticism, the argument of the preceding section goes to show, I believe, that on very broad and basic levels, when we consider the General Canons, there are widely accepted standards, to which we can relate, as subordinate conditions, a large variety of more specific standards. For example, we can find room under unity for the neoclassic canons, taken as empirical generalizations, and under complexity for psychological subtlety. Therefore, the General Canons have a public and stable character to which appeal can be made.

But there is not now, of course, and perhaps never will be, complete agreement on critical standards. And the second question about standards, which had to be asked before the National Bureau came into existence, is whether there can be and should be standards. Nothing in the variability of taste proves that it is impossible—though there may be other reasons for thinking so—to propose certain standards of critical evaluation, and to give reasons why those standards should be accepted and given precedence over others. So this is then our main problem in the following chapter: we want to know whether the adoption of such standards as unity, complexity, and intensity can be justified.

The Relativist often carries the argument a step further. The only way we can justify a standard, he says, is to derive it from another, and more general, standard, as Special Canons are subsumed under General Canons. However, this method never takes the critic outside of standards, but only from one standard to another. Therefore he can never have *any* standards at all unless he adopts *some* standards without any logical justification as a start. Therefore all critical disputes rest ultimately upon standards for which no reason can be given, and to prevent futile debate, the normative terms of criticism should be defined in such a way as to acknowledge this fact.

It is the first premise of the foregoing argument that I wish to call into question. For there is another way of justifying standards than deriving them from other standards—namely, in terms of the consequences of adopting one standard rather than another. This is a way out, one that we shall explore at the end of the following chapter.

The Argument from Inflexibility

Before we conclude this chapter, however, we must give some attention to the Relativist's other line of reasoning, which I have called the Argument from Inflexibility. Aesthetic likings and dislikings have causes, we may assume, just as do all other psychological states, including believings and disbelievings. But it is sometimes possible to change our beliefs by giving reasons, that is, by making assertions and providing evidence for them, although we know that sometimes beliefs seem to be the result of deeper and more unconscious conditions that we cannot get at directly by argument, and these beliefs resist the attempt to reason about them. Now suppose it should be proved that our aesthetic likings and dislikings are completely determined by certain conditions—by our childhood upbringing, or cultural *milieu,* or, for an extreme example, by our "somatotypes."[6] Suppose, in other words, that endomorphs, or viscerotonic types, always prefer one sort of painting, while ectomorphs, or cerebrotonic types, always prefer another sort. Since a person's type, we may assume for present purposes, is fixed once he is conceived, and is not subject to our control, aesthetic preferences would also be fixed. They would be impervious to argument. It would therefore be absolutely pointless for a person of one somatotype to try to change the preferences of a person of another somatotype by arguing with him. I take the somatotype possibility as a simple one, but a thoroughgoing cultural or economic determinism would provide a basis for the same sort of argument.

But what sort of argument do we have here, and what is its legitimate

[6] Here I am thinking of the investigations of Charles Morris, reported in *Varieties of Human Value;* for references, see Note 25-D.

conclusion? Even if aesthetic preferences are completely determined by causes over which we can have no control, we are not forced to define "*X* is good" as "People of my somatotype like things similar to *X*." Indeed, it would be a waste. For if we really could correlate certain kinds of painting with certain somatotypes, then it would be possible to redefine "good" in another and Nonrelativistic way. We would, in effect, distinguish three senses of "good":

"$good_1$" means "liked by endomorphs,"
"$good_2$" means "liked by mesomorphs,"
"$good_3$" means "liked by ectomorphs."

Then if the question arises, "Is *X* good?" we would simply require that the person asking the question specify which of the three senses he has in mind, before we answer his question; but then, of course, the question would become completely empirical. None of these three definitions of "good" is Relativistic. Whether they are satisfactory or not we shall see later.

The Inflexibility Argument, though it does not force us to become Relativists, nevertheless would claim to show the futility of certain kinds of critical dispute. And so we must still ask whether this claim can be made out. We cannot argue people out of a liking for raw onions, it might be said; how can we expect to argue them out of a liking for Mickey Spillane, or Rock and Roll? But the utility of critical argument does not depend upon our being able to change people's likings and dislikings directly by giving reasons. We do not expect to make people honest or courageous merely by giving them reasons to prove that these are virtues, but this does not show that it is futile to discuss the desirability of these qualities, because there are *indirect* ways in which we can encourage and foster them, in ourselves and in others. If nothing at all, directly or indirectly, can be done to change aesthetic preferences, then there is no point in deploring them, true—and this is what the somatotype theory might say. But there is a great deal of evidence—some of it, indeed, included in the Argument from Variability—to show that individual tastes *can* be changed, that it is possible to increase subtlety of discrimination and range of enjoyment and complexity of understanding by appropriate training. And if it is possible to change, or to develop, tastes, then we cannot avoid the question whether they *should* be changed. The Relativist does not meet this question by redefining words so that it cannot be asked.

My quarrel with the usual arguments for Critical Relativism is that their evidence of Variability and of Inflexibility are seldom analyzed deeply enough. Granted that people have praised the *Mona Lisa* (ca. 1505, Louvre, Paris) for all sorts of different qualities; granted that eighteenth century readers seem to have enjoyed more abstract words in their poetry than did those of the Romantic era; granted that two reviewers of the latest novel will seldom rate it exactly the same. Still, all

such facts are of no significance until various distinctions are made. The fact that people like different things doesn't show that critical disputes are futile; if everyone liked the same things, there would be no critical disputes at all. It is the existence of divergent preferences that gives rise to disputes in the first place; the problem of Relativism is what can be done about the dispute after it arises. The central question is whether there is any conclusive proof that there are certain reasons for critical judgments which would be given or accepted by one group of critics but which another group of critics would consider completely beside the point, *and* that there is in principle no rational method of persuading either group that it is mistaken. I don't see that the Relativist can present such a proof. But it may be said that the burden is rather on the Nonrelativist to show that there is such a rational method. And it is this burden that must be taken up in the following chapter.

NOTES AND QUERIES

§24

24-A INTENTION AS A STANDARD OF EVALUATION. This is dealt with in some of the references given in Chapter I, Note 1-A, especially the articles "Intention" (*Dictionary of World Literature*) and "The Intentional Fallacy." Other articles in which intention is discussed mainly as an evaluative standard are listed below.

One of the classic defenses of intentionalistic evaluation is the essay by J. E. Spingarn, "The New Criticism," 1911, reprinted in *Creative Criticism,* New York: Holt, 1917, and in a general collection, *Criticism in America,* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1924. Spingarn's argument reveals how Crocean expressionism is a form of intentionalism (see Croce, *Aesthetic,* ch. 10). This "Spingarn-Croce-Carlyle-Goethe theory" is amusingly supported by H. L. Mencken, "Criticism of Criticism of Criticism," also in *Criticism in America.* Like Spingarn, Mencken seems to believe that it is the only alternative to moralistic criticism and genre criticism.

The Intentionalistic method is also defended, within limits, in the symposium on "Intention and Interpretation in Art"—it deals mostly with evaluation rather than interpretation—by Henry D. Aiken and Isabel C. Hungerland, *J Phil,* LII (1955): 733-53. In my opinion they mix evaluation and interpretation too much, and seem to hold that critical evaluation consists, or can consist, partly in judging aesthetic objects as "performances."

Eliseo Vivas, in his review of Wimsatt's *The Verbal Icon, Comparative Literature,* VII (1955): 344-61, has criticized "The Intentional Fallacy" and proposed as an alternative that every literary work has an "ideal" "im-

manent" intention that can be grasped by the critic's "intuition." Theodore Redpath, "Some Problems of Modern Aesthetics," Part I, in C. A. Mace, ed., *British Philosophy in the Mid-century,* New York: Macmillan, 1957, has argued that the "Intentional Fallacy" is mistaken in denying that we can ever know of unrealized aesthetic intentions. He is right in saying that the position there stated was too absolute, and in this book it is slightly relaxed. Nevertheless, in my opinion he evades the main question, which is not whether we can have reason to think that a work falls short of some intention, but whether we can get sufficient evidence of what the specific intention was to determine where, and how far, the work falls short of it; it is this evidence that I think is practically never available. C. J. Ducasse, *The Philosophy of Art,* New York: Dial, 1929, pp. 269-77, regards the intentionalistic standards he discusses as the only ones relevant to "criticism of a work of art considered as such" (p. 270). See also A. K. Coomaraswami, "Intention," *The American Bookman,* I (1944): 41-48; R. Jack Smith, "Intention in an Organic Theory of Poetry," *Sewanee Review,* LVI (1948): 625-33.

The notion of "defective communication," used by I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1925, ch. 25 and Appendix A, is an intentionalistic standard; so also is Croce's "successful expression," thoroughly examined by John Hospers, "The Concept of Artistic Expression," *PAS,* LV (1954-55): 313-44.

For an example of the intentionalistic use of literary history, see the account of Bishop Hurd's defense of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in David Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1956, pp. 261-66.

24-B ORIGINALITY. It is very common to condemn trite expressions, or clichés, in literature; to praise the "freshness" of a work; to change one's opinion of a work on discovering that it was a plagiary. But we can do away with originality as a criterion of evaluation if we can show that those appeals to it which cannot be dismissed as beside the point are relevant because they really appeal to Objective criteria. The cliché is not merely the familiar expression, but the familiar expression that does not quite fit the style of its context, perhaps.

For older treatments of the importance of "novelty," see Addison's *Spectator* essays, Nos. 411-414, reprinted in P. R. Lieder and R. Withington, *The Art of Literary Criticism,* New York: Appleton-Century, 1941, pp. 231-42; Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition,* 1759, reprinted in Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie, eds., *Criticism,* New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948, pp. 12-30. For a modern defense of the originality standard, see T. M. Greene, *The Arts and the Art of Criticism,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U., 1940, pp. 404-07. Compare I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1929, Part III, ch. 5; where the "stock response" is the poem itself, rather than the reader's misreading, the question is whether the poem rated low because of stock responses is being condemned for unoriginality or for more objective reasons. I have also read a good, but as yet unpublished, paper on originality by Richard Rudner, of Michigan State University.

24-C SINCERITY. In order to be applied to aesthetic objects in general, not merely those that contain predications, this term would presumably have to be defined in terms of some sort of correspondence between the regional qualities of the work and the emotions of the artist at the time of creation. When it is so defined, its irrelevance to the value of the object itself is fairly plain, though of course insincerity might be taken as a ground of complaint about the artist. The question of sincerity "should be forever banished from criticism," says C. S. Lewis, *The Personal Heresy,* New York: Oxford U., 1939, p. 120. See also Henry Hazlitt, *The Anatomy of Criticism,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1933, ch. 9.

24-D ARTISTIC FRAUDS. Some subtle problems about the relevance of skill, sincerity, and originality to critical evaluation are raised by those works in which the artist has concealed his own identity and attributed his work to someone else, for example: the "Ossian" poems of James Macpherson; the "Rowley" poems of Thomas Chatterton; the "Clara Gazul" plays of Prosper Mérimée; the fake medieval and Renaissance sculpture of Alceo Dossena; the *Sleeping Cupid,* which was formerly attributed to Michelangelo (Victoria and Albert Museum, London); the forgeries of Giovanni Bastianini, Rouchomovsky, and Ioni; the Vermeer forgeries during the second world war by Hans van Meegeren. In what way should it affect our evaluation of such works when we discover that they were not what they purported to be?

24-E AFFECTIVE CRITICISM. The general rejection of Affective Reasons in the paper "The Affective Fallacy" (for reference, see Chapter I, Note 3-B) was too sweeping, for in the last analysis, as I argue in Chapter XI, it does not appear that critical evaluation can be done at all except in relation to certain types of effect that aesthetic objects have upon their perceivers. David Daiches, "The New Criticism: Some Qualifications," *College English,* II (1950): 242-50, attacked the "affective fallacy" for rejecting emotional effect as a guide to value. Though he is quite right in saying that value cannot be separated from effect, he is mistaken in thinking that this justifies his general attack on the Canons of unity and complexity in literary criticism.

Can the concept of "sentimentality"—see I. A. Richards, *op. cit.,* Part III, ch. 6—be analyzed in objective terms?

24-F OBJECTIVE REASONS. (I) The main problem here can only be solved by a careful study of a large number of critical reasons; it is

whether all those reasons that have an Objective reference and cannot be dismissed as clearly irrelevant are in fact analyzable into the Canons of unity, complexity, and qualitative intensity. For example: (1) "A good song is one that is singable, and has music that fits the words." Unsingability—taking this to mean that no human being can perform it—is not on the same level as the other reason at all; it is not a judgment of the song, but a denial that there can be a song. Compare the concept of obscurity in literature: if it can't be sung, or if you can't read the poem, you can't judge it. (2) "I would rather listen to a bad symphony by Schumann than a good symphony by" someone else (Stephen Williams, in Ralph Hill, ed., *The Symphony,* Baltimore: Pelican, 1949, pp. 174-75); can this be given an analysis in terms of the three Canons?

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry,* rev. ed., New York: Holt, 1950, pp. 274-78, said that Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" is a bad poem, because, among other things, it presents a "picture thoroughly confused" (p. 275); their reasons were rather cleverly attacked by Jeffrey Fleece in "Further Notes on a 'Bad' Poem," *College English,* XII (1951): 314-20. Fleece's references to the "affective fallacy" were misplaced, however, and he turned his article into a general attack on "close reading as a critical practice," and argued that the presence or absence of complexity in "Trees" is irrelevant to its value, concerning which he took a relativist position.

(II) For examples of proposed critical principles, see the following: Harold Osborne, *Aesthetics and Criticism,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955, pp. 251-59, 268-89 (his standards for literature are "precision," "the art of concealing art," and the control of word-sound for enhancement of meaning); W. H. Hadow, selection from *Studies in Modern Music,* in Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger, eds., *Problems of Aesthetics,* New York: Rinehart, 1953, pp. 262-76 (he employs the "principles" of "vitality," "labor," "proportion," and "fitness").

Stephen C. Pepper, *Aesthetic Quality,* New York: Scribner's, 1937, chs. 1, 9, uses "vividness," "spread," and "depth" of "quality" as his critical standards (pp. 223-25, 246); these are interesting to compare with the standards defended in the present chapter. In *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U., 1945, he has made a more elaborate attempt to work out sets of critical standards and derive them from his "world hypotheses." In his concern for this grand scheme, he admits all sorts of standards, and seems to hold that the only criteria of relevance are those provided by the world hypotheses. But his "eclectic," or composite, standard at the end (pp. 140-41) is not far from the three General Canons.

An excellent exercise would be to expose and examine the underlying assumptions of Carl E. Seashore, "In Search of Beauty in Music," *Musical Quarterly,* XXVIII (1942): 302-08.

The role of Canons in criticism is discussed by John Holloway in the symposium, "What Are the Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts?" *PAS,* Suppl. vol. XXIII (1949): 165-94. On the "dramatic unities" as Special Canons, see Allardyce Nicoll, *The Theory of Drama,* London: Harrap, 1931, pp. 38-60. For a review of the problems of literary evaluation see René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature,* New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949, ch. 18.

An interesting set of materials on which to try out a classification of critical reasons, and especially the distinction between Objective and other reasons, is the flurry of letters that greeted John Ciardi when he wrote an unfavorable review of *The Unicorn and Other Poems,* 1956, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. When he was appointed Poetry Editor of the *Saturday Review,* he wrote an interesting article stating his principles of selection of poetry to be published, "Everyone Writes (Bad) Poetry," *Saturday Review,* May 5, 1956, 22. In the issue of January 12, 1957, p. 54, he criticized Mrs. Lindbergh harshly on Objective and quite defensible grounds, but in succeeding issues he was first largely attacked, then largely supported, by a stream of correspondence, to which the editors added an editorial reproving him, and Mr. Ciardi a spirited reply, "The Reviewer's Duty to Damn." The variety of reasons given in this controversy, and the variety of implicit assumptions about poems and about criticism, are worth some study.

24-G FAITHFULNESS TO, AND EXPLOITATION OF, THE MEDIUM. The principle of "Purism," as he calls it, has been discussed in some detail by Morris Weitz, *Philosophy of the Arts,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U., 1950, ch. 7, who rejects it. Even apart from the confusions in the term "medium" (see Chapter II, Note 6-B), it is extremely difficult to discover what Purism is supposed to assert. Apparently it says (1) that "No medium should be made to do what it really cannot do" (p. 121); there seems no danger of this; (2) that "it ought not to attempt what it is not able to do" (p. 120); sensible advice; (3) that "the arts ought to do what they can do best" (p. 28); "only" is understood here, and Weitz properly points out that there is no good reason for this view; (4) that "the arts ought to do . . . what distinguishes them from each other" (p. 28); a completely unsupported recommendation; (5) that the "expressive potentials" of each medium "should be realized as fully as possible" (p. 121); sterling words, so long as we do not require all the potentials to be realized in any one work.

T. M. Greene, *op. cit.,* pp. 407-13, has made a good deal of these critical formulas, which he considers fundamental, but his exposition of them alternates between harmless platitudes and dubious specificities. Thus, for example, he says, "The skillful painter uses his paint in a manner appropriate to paint" (p. 408). "Denial of the medium" is "the failure to exhaust the relevant potentialities of the medium," like music that "ignores timbre and dynamic variation" (p. 408); since it is obvious

that no creator can exhaust all the potentialities of a medium in one work, the application of this formula comes down to intentionalism: "the primary medium remains unexploited in proportion as the end in view in any specific composition could be more effectively achieved through a richer and more effective use . . ." (p. 409). "Idolatry of the medium," or "over-exploitation . . . of one aspect of it at the expense of other aspects," occurs, for example, when "the lithic character of stone may be so stressed that the chief, and almost the only impression we get of the work is this lithic quality" (p. 411). But since there is nothing wrong with "lithic quality" in itself, this second formula again comes down to intentionalism; the question is what the "objective" was and whether it could have been achieved "more effectively" (p. 411).

It would be worthwhile, however, to analyze some typical appeals to the medium in critical evaluation, to see whether, in so far as they are defensible, they can be subsumed under the three Canons, e.g.: the frequent dispraise of a movie made from a stage play because it fails to make more use of techniques possible in the movies but not on the stage; the view that it is a merit, not a defect, in Gothic architecture that it denies, or overcomes, the "natural" heaviness of the stone; Sir Joshua Reynolds' objection to Ghiberti's bronze gates for the Baptistery in Florence that the artist "overstepped the limits that separate sculpture from painting" and created large compositions, with many figures, "that might have been expressed with propriety in color" (the quoted words are those of J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, New York: Modern Library, 1935, Vol. I, p. 649); Rembrandt's mixing of etching and drypoint in his prints, especially of the last period, which some "Purists" might object to. On this last example, note that John Buckland-Wright, *Etching and Engraving*, New York: Studio Publications, 1953, is very harsh on Dürer as an engraver for not "treating the medium in its true sense of a sculpturesque, simple and direct linear technique" (p. 17) and thereby producing engravings that "are only too often a negation of the medium" (p. 18; see also similar remarks, pp. 173, 175, 225); but W. M. Ivins, *How Prints Look*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943, p. 143, dissents: "The fact that a particular print is in one or another process has no more bearing upon its artistic merit than has the fact that it was printed in the basement or on the top floor."

Dispraise of aesthetic objects on the ground of "excessive virtuosity" —a charge brought against Berlioz, Liszt, Swinburne, and Raphael, for example—seems also to make implicit reference to the medium. But it is not easy to say what is the real ground of condemnation, if any, in such a judgment.

24-H GENRE CRITICISM. The method of critical evaluation that begins by placing the aesthetic object in a species, or genre—it is an epic, a landscape, a sonata for cello and piano—and then judges its value in terms of certain supposed Canons for that genre, is little practiced nowadays, but its theoretical basis and implications are worth analysis. How is the genre of a work determined when it satisfies the Canons of no known genre? This question brings out the concealed intentionalism in much genre criticism. For example, Helmut Hungerland, "Suggestions for Procedure in Art Criticism," *JAAC*, V (March 1947): 189-95, has proposed that a painting should be judged in reference to the "style"-class to which it belongs; but it seems that the assignment of the painting to its class depends upon determining the "assumed objective" (p. 193), or what the painting (i.e., the painter) appears to be "concerned" with (p. 192). For a defense of genre criticism see R. S. Crane, ed., *Critics and Criticism*, Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1952, ch. 10 and pp. 13-18; and the examination of this view by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "The Chicago Critics: The Fallacy of the Neoclassic Species," *The Verbal Icon*, Lexington, Ky.: U. of Kentucky, 1954, pp. 41-65.

C. S. Lewis has some fun with the view that there are two main types of literature, "good" and "second-class," and that you must first place a work before you can decide whether it is good, in "High and Low Brows," *Rehabilitations*, New York: Oxford U., 1939, pp. 97-116.

24-I THE ARTIST AS CRITIC AND THE CRITIC AS ARTIST. It is often said that the critic must be an artist—for example, that only a poet can judge a poem—because he must be prepared to back up his critical evaluations with suggestions for improvement. In other words, if he says that a poem is poor, he ought to be able to tell the poet what is wrong with it, and therefore how it might be set right; but in doing this he is himself playing the role of a poet. This question is raised by Mortimer Kadish, "The Importance of a Choice of Context," in the symposium on "The Evidence for Esthetic Judgment," *J Phil*, LIV (1957): 670-79; he appears to hold that critical evaluations (at least negative ones) are themselves recommendations for improvement. While this cannot, I think, be maintained, it might be argued that the reasons given for critical judgments are equivalent to recommendations: that "The painting is poorly balanced because this figure is too far to the right" means the same as "If the figure were moved a little to the left, the painting would be better." Compare "This pudding is not salty enough" with "This pudding would be better if it were salted." But the reason does not seem to be equivalent to the recommendation, though the recommendation can sometimes be inferred from it. Moving the figure may not improve the painting after all, for it may detract from some other feature of the work that is now all right (for example, its central focus). The question of the logical connections between judgments, reasons, and recommendations, is important, but as yet little explored.

25-A THE PERFORMATORY THEORY OF CRITICAL ARGUMENTS. The performatory use of language was pointed out by J. L. Austin in the symposium "Other Minds," *PAS*, Suppl. vol. XX (1946): 170-75.

Margaret Macdonald, in her contribution to the symposium on "What Are the Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts?" with A. H. Hannay and John Holloway, *PAS*, Suppl. vol. XXIII (1949): 165-94 (her paper is reprinted, with some alterations, in William Elton, ed., *Aesthetics and Language*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1954, pp. 114-30), says, "to affirm a work good is more like bestowing a medal than naming any feature of it or of the states of its creators and audience" and is "not true or false" (Elton, p. 121); it cannot be established by deductive or inductive inference (p. 122). But I do not understand what she can mean by saying that the critic's Objective statements serve to "convey" or "present" the work, like playing a sonata to show how good it is, instead of being reasons for his judgment (p. 129).

25-B THE EMOTIVE THEORY OF CRITICAL ARGUMENTS. The Emotive Theory has usually been presented as an account of the way we use the word "good," in general; or particularly in moral contexts; but such an account is also an account of the way the word functions in normative reasoning. Much of the work done on the Emotive Theory of ethics can be transferred quite readily to "good" in an aesthetic context, but the distinction between Commending and Recommending needs to be kept in mind. For a vigorous and simple version of the Emotive Theory, see A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2d ed., London: Gollancz, 1946, ch. 6. The theory was brought to a form able to cope with many of the subtleties of ordinary language in Stevenson's systematic work, *Ethics and Language*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale U., 1944, from which all later discussion takes off. Later discussion has tended to concentrate on investigating the imperative element more than the exclamatory element. For example, R. M. Hare, in his excellent book, *The Language of Morals*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1952, makes a good deal of the imperative character of moral judgments (e.g., "That is wrong"), which are guides to action. He holds that an imperative sentence can be the conclusion of an inference (chs. 2 and 3).

Some of the problems raised by the Emotive Theory are brought out in the following discussions: Richard Robinson, H. J. Paton, R. C. Cross, symposium, "The Emotive Theory of Ethics," *PAS*, Suppl. vol. XXII (1948): 79-140 (Robinson's defense is curious in one respect; he thinks that we often do not intend by "good" to express emotions, but to refer to an objective characteristic of the work, but we are "habitually deceived"); Richard B. Brandt, "Some Puzzles for Attitude Theories," in Ray Lepley, ed., *The Language of Value*, New York: Columbia U., 1957, pp. 153-77; Winston H. F. Barnes, "Ethics Without Propositions," *ibid.*, pp. 1-30; Vincent Tomas, "Ethical Disagreements and the Emotive Theory of Values," *Mind*, LX (1951): 205-22; Asher Moore, "The Emotive Theory and Rational Methods in Moral Controversy," *ibid.*, 233-40. See also the interesting paper by Mary Mothersill, "The Use of Normative Language," *J Phil*, LII (1955): 401-11, who proposes to define "normative statement" in terms of the "expression" of the speaker's approvals or disapprovals.

25-C "GOOD" AS A COMMENDING WORD. Hare, *op. cit.*, ch. 8, argues that value-judgments have as their "primary function" that of commending, but he emphasizes the close connection between commending and choosing, and holds that all commendations are guides to possible choices. P. H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics*, Baltimore: Pelican, 1954, ch. 12, says that the "fundamental use" of the word "good" is "to express or explain a preference" (p. 163), but he also distinguishes some other uses of the word.

25-D RELATIVISM. My definition of "Relativism" is adopted, with some simplification, from the careful and rigorous analysis in Richard B. Brandt, *Hopi Ethics*, Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1954, chs. 6, 16, esp. pp. 88, 235. I am concerned in the text with what he calls the "logical thesis" of Relativism, and I take it to be a theory about the way critical normative terms are to be defined. My formulation of Relativism is, I think, equivalent to Brandt's, though in his version he refers to the possibility for the two disputing critics "both to be correct, or at least for neither to be incorrect" (p. 88), whereas I put it that they do not really contradict each other. For a further interesting discussion of Relativism in general, see Abraham Edel, *Ethical Judgment*, Glencoe, Ill.: Free, 1955, esp. chs. 1, 3, 4. He prefers the term "indeterminacy," though he does not define it very exactly; apparently a dispute is characterized by indeterminacy if there is no rational method of settling it; a question is indeterminate if there is no rational answer. He is concerned with the psychological, sociological, and anthropological data that, he holds, narrow the range of indeterminacy in ethics.

Bernard C. Heyl, *New Bearings in Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale U., 1943, Part II, ch. 3, offers one of the best-known defenses of relativism, based largely upon the argument from variability (see Part II, ch. 1). Relativism he conceives of as an alternative to "Objectivism" and "Subjectivism" (these types of theory we shall consider in Chapter XI); the form he proposes is a Social Relativism. Though he does not put it exactly this way, his position may be stated as a theory about the meaning of "good" (in an aesthetic context). He says that "artistic judgments of good and bad have intelligible meaning only when art objects are interpreted in the light of some critical system which should be made explicitly or implicitly clear" (p. 129); that two disputing critics who

employ different standards do not really conflict, since neither is wrong (p. 135); that a critical judgment is "binding" only for those who resemble the speaker in the standards they accept (pp. 137, 141). Thus his view seems to be that when a critic says "*X* is good," if he wants this statement to be empirically true and verifiable, he can only mean "*X* conforms to such-and-such standards, which I accept"; it follows that he can only be contradicted by a critic who accepts the same standards. It does not make sense, from this point of view, to say that standards themselves are correct or incorrect, but Heyl holds that certain sets of standards may legitimately be rejected on the grounds of lacking intelligence, sensitivity, sincerity, subtlety, etc. (p. 143). This is odd, because it would seem that a critic could have no justification for not accepting *all* the standards that survive these negative tests, in which case Heyl's definition would no longer be Relativistic, since any two critics would have the same standards. Heyl's later articles, "Relativism Again," *JAAC*, V (September 1946): 54-61, reprinted in Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger, eds., *Problems of Aesthetics*, New York: Rinehart, 1953, pp. 436-45, and "The Critic's Reasons," *JAAC*, XVI (December 1957): 169-79, restate his position more succinctly, with some new examples, and defend it further.

Frederick A. Pottle, in his instructive little book *The Idiom of Poetry*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell U., 1941, defends an interesting kind of Epochal Relativism. His argument might be summarized as follows: the important thing about poetry is that it arouses feelings, and its value is measured by the intensity of the feeling aroused; different historical periods have their feelings aroused by different kinds of poetry (in his terminology, each age has its own "sensibility"); therefore all criticism is "subjective," in the sense that the critic cannot talk about anything but his own sensibility, which he shares with his own age, and the effect of the work upon it (see esp. pp. 16, 34, 40). "All critical judgments are relative to the age producing them" (p. 5). Pottle's view is critically discussed by Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947, Appendix 1. It is interesting that Pottle sharply disassociates his Relativistic view of critical evaluation from his Nonrelativistic ethics. This is not in itself contradictory, but it raises the question whether reasons can be given for ethical absolutism that do not hold for aesthetic value.

George Boas, *A Primer for Critics*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U., 1937, ch. 6, reprinted in Vivas and Krieger, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-36, seems to hold a form of Personal Relativism, though his defense is very superficial and he even asserts that it is "impossible" for anyone to say, "What I desire is not desirable." See also Henry Hazlitt, *The Anatomy of Criticism*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1933, chs. 3, 4, 7; Arthur Child, "The Socio-historical Relativity of Esthetic Value," *Phil Rev*, LIII (1944): 1-22, reprinted in Vivas and Krieger, *op. cit.*, pp. 445-62; Abraham Kaplan, "The So-Called Crisis in Criticism," *JAAC*, VII (September 1948): 42-47.

25-E VARIABILITY AND INFLEXIBILITY. For evidence of historical changes in taste, and other forms of variability, see Heyl, *op. cit.*, 97-107; Rita Wellman's account of Victorian taste, *Victoria Royal*, New York: Scribner's, 1939; E. E. Kellett, *Fashion in Literature*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1931, esp. chs. 1, 3, 4, 20 (he provides some other material about changing reputations of certain authors and types of literature in *The Whirligig of Taste*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929); F. P. Chambers, *The History of Taste*, New York: Columbia U., 1932; Joan Evans, *Taste and Temperament*, London: Cape, 1939.

Charles Morris, *Varieties of Human Value*, Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1956, ch. 7 (see also his paper in Ray Lepley, ed., *The Language of Value*, New York: Columbia U., 1957), has investigated preferences in painting, and found interesting correlations with somatotypes and attitudes toward life. He does not, of course, defend any such simple somatic determinism as that used for illustration in this chapter. On the general somatotype theory, see William H. Sheldon, *The Varieties of Human Physique*, New York: Harper, 1940, and *The Varieties of Human Temperament*, New York: Harper, 1942.

See also Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York: Macmillan, 1899, ch. 6, on the "pervading guidance of taste by pecuniary repute" (reprinted Modern Library, p. 139; see also pp. 149-50), and David Hume's essay, "On the Standard of Taste," *Philosophical Works*, 4 vols., London: Longmans, Green, 1874-75.

25-F PARTICULARISM. The point of view to which I have given this makeshift name has not, to my knowledge, been systematically defended. But it can be illustrated by an amusing, though extremely unsubtle, little book the whole argument of which tacitly assumes the Particularist Theory: Theodore L. Shaw, *Precious Rubbish*, Boston: Stuart Art Gallery, 1956. Two points are made over and over again: (1) people are capable of appreciating only aesthetic objects of limited complexity at certain points in their lives and in the development of their capacities; (2) people get tired of aesthetic objects and want to experience new ones. But these do not prove that we can judge only particular presentations. For provoking remarks, see pp. 16-17, 44, 47, 74, 145-46. Note a frequent form of argument: for example, to David Ewen's statement, "No musician outgrows Mozart's music" (*Music for the Millions*, London: Arco Publications), he retorts, "Can you imagine anything more horrible than a constant and eternal diet of *The Iliad, King Lear, Jupiter Symphony* . . .?"

It is perhaps Particularism more than Relativism that Stephen C. Pepper is attacking in *The Work of Art*, Bloomington, Ill.: Indiana U., 1955, ch. 5.