
UNIT 1 ONTOLOGY OF ART

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

Let us remember the words of the great philosopher who said, “all philosophy after Plato are footnotes of Plato”. It is about the beginning stage of civilizational history, when people had limited knowledge and the words ‘physics’ or ‘Mind’ used to be entailing several meanings. The knowledge was then discrete, scattered. But with the growth of knowledge, the different spheres of knowledge became compartmentalized and departmentalized. Further growth of knowledge led to unification, organization of the different departments and a fast return to ‘globalization’, the repetition of history, as it were. The ‘globalization, though started in economic fields, it spread to several fields, gaining an interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, multicultural status, termed with a “applied” prefix. Art and aesthetics is no exception. By applying one subject with several aspects, a gigantic house of knowledge came into being, multiplying its values, importance, statured like a big Bunyan tree, with its vast number of branches, twigs. Now, applied arts/aesthetics is the talk of day.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In his paper ‘Ontology of Art’, Guy Rohrbaugh speaks about the basic question involved in this concept thus, “Ontology is the study of what exists and the nature of the most fundamental categories into which those existants fall.

Ontologists offer a map of reality, one divided into such broad, overlapping territories as physical and mental, concrete and abstract, universal and particular. Such a map provides the setting for further philosophical investigations. Ontologists of art seek to locate works of art in wider terrain, to say, where in our universe they fit in. Their governing questions, thus; “what kind of thing is a work of art?”

In another paper on the “Ontology of art”, Amie L. Thomason says that the central questions related to this may be put in the form of these questions, “what sort of entities are works of art? Are they physical objects, ideal kinds, imaginary entities or something else? How are the works of art of various kinds are related to the mental states of artists or viewers, to physical objects, or to abstract visuals, auditory or linguistic structures? Under what conditions do works come into existence, survive or cease to exist?” These questions should not be confused with mere definition, of art, for ‘ontology’ does not concern with or is satisfied with definitions, but it concerns the various entities accepted as paradigm works of art of different genres. A mere definition of art would lead to distinguish between art and non-art, but the work of art are of different kinds and have different ontological status.”

The ‘ontology of art’ revolves round the problem of ontological status of work of art with respect to the two aspects i.e. form and content aspect of work of art. This has been explained by an example (discussed later in this paper) suppose that A has on the desk before him David Copperfield. Is David Copperfield therefore identical with this book that A can touch and see? Certainly not, for another lies copy on B’s desk. And a single work of art cannot be identical with two distinct physical things. The obvious conclusion is that David Copperfield, the novel, is identical with no physical thing. It is not a physical object, any more than is a piece of music, which is clearly distinct from its performances. Perhaps the same is true of paintings, architecture. All these problems are related to the various theories of art which forms the main subject of discussion within the broad head of Ontology of arts.

1.2 ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING OF ‘ONTOLOGY’ AND ‘ART’

The expression ‘Ontology of art’ is an expression consisting of three words, eg Ontology, arts, and between these two words, we have a prepositional connective ‘of’. This entails that certain relation exists between the two words, ‘art’ and ‘ontology’. The question is, how to correlate the two; to accomplish this task, in the context of the world we live in, whereby man ranks higher to animals.

The words Ontology, metaphysics and philosophy are used in the similar sense, to relate to ‘beings’, ‘existence’ rather than physics or physical sciences. In this sense, the expression ‘ontology of arts’, means relating art to life, existence or being. In this sense, it means, applying art to life, existence or being. It is applied arts. The different forms of arts are nothing but the replica of the forms of being, it is expression of arts in its multi faced aspects as in music, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture etc. Art has a lot of functions to perform, it is also used to apply judgement of value. Making judgements of value requires a basis for criticism. “At the simplest level, a way to determine whether the impact of the

object on the senses meet the criteria to be considered art is whether it is perceived to be attractive or repulsive. Though, perception is always coloured by experience, and is necessarily subjective, it is commonly understood that what is not somehow satisfying cannot be art... (It) is often intended to appeal to and connect with human emotion. In the 19th Century, the artist turned to the ideas of truth and beauty, Ruskin is a aesthetic theorist, who championed what he saw as the naturalism of J.M.W. Turner, and art's role as the communication by artifice of essential truth that could only be found in nature. Art's definition and evaluation became problematic since 20th Century. Richard Wollheim's distinction of the three approaches, the Realist, whereby "aesthetic quality is an absolute value independent of any human view"; the objectivist, whereby "it is also an absolute value; but is dependent on general human experience" and the Relativist position, whereby "it is not an absolute value, but dependent on and varies with, the human experience of different humans." With the advent of modernism (19th Century) there was a radical break in the conception of function of art. In the 20th Century with the advent of post-modernism Clement Greenberg's (1960) article "Modernist Painting", defines modern art as "the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself." Greenberg applied this idea "to the Abstract Expressionist movement and used it as a way to understand and justify flat (non-illusionistic) abstract painting." While "the realistic, naturalistic art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art; modernism used art to call attention to art". After Greenberg several art theorist emerged, such as, Michael Fried, T.J. Clark, Rosalind Krauss, Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock etc. Greenberg's definition of art is important to many of the ideas of art within the various movements of 20th Century and early 21st century. Novitz held that the various definitions of art is not a problem, rather "the passionate concerns and interests that humans vest in their social life" are "so much a part of all classificatory disputes about art" (1996) According to Novitz, "classificatory disputes are more often about social values and where society is trying to go than they are about theory proper." Danto suggested a thought experiment showing that "the status of an artifact as work of art results from the ideas of a culture applies so it, rather than its inherent physical or perceptible qualities, Cultural interpretation (an art theory of some kind) is therefore constitutive of an object's art hood." Sometimes art is perceived as belonging exclusively to higher social classes, this taking art seen as upper class activity, associated with wealth, the ability to purchase art, and the leisure required to pursue or enjoy it. Fine art and expensive good is taken as a matter of higher culture push. The opening of Museums during French Revolution indicates a cultural push.

'Ontology of art' by Gregory Currie (N.Y. 1989. St Martin's Press) is the most imaginative, probing, lucid and sophisticated treatments of the ontology of art to appear in recent times. The book has two main theses around which he organizes his discussion (i) Action Type Hypothesis and Instance Multiplicity Hypothesis. Currie says that "the appreciation of art works is the appreciation of a certain kind of achievement." Thus he means to say that art is or art must be certain kind of achievement. Currie feels that an artist in composing or creating, discovers a certain structure of words of sounds of colours or whatever Currie calls features of the way which are relevant to what he regards as "fitting under aesthetic appreciation, the artist's heuristic path. His proposal, then, is, that works of art are action types of the following sort; someone's discovering a certain structure via certain heuristic path. Not all action types of the sort are works of art; but all

works of art are action types of this sort. Discoveries of the same structure via different heuristic paths are instances of different works, as are discoveries of different structure via heuristic path.” “Currie appears to assume that there is some sort of stable agreement among critics as to the considerations relevant to an appreciation and evolution of works of art.” Critics regard appreciations and evaluations abstract aesthetic appreciation and evolution as something of special sort. Currie does not do this; he uses the words “artistic” and “aesthetics” very much synonymously. There are some good critics who do not talk about the aesthetic features of works of art and about features that those works have by virtue of how they were produced but about very many other features as well. They speak about causal effects of works; most critics in the contemporary western world regard work’s evocation of anti-semitism as a demerit in the work...” What is peculiar of Currie is that he says, “artistic appreciation and evolution as more uniform, fixed, and narrow in scope than its actually is. Nonetheless, evaluations of artistic achievement do enter into the discourse of almost all of us about the arts”. The remarkable fact about Currie is that he views works of art as just action types. He says, “Distinct works possess the same structure”. In cases like that, “what differentiates the works are the circumstances in which the composer or author arrived at the structure”. It is essential to find a way of capturing this idea of circumstances in which the artist arrived at that pattern.

Currie holds that art needs strength and enrichment from other areas of philosophy. He tries to bring ideal from metaphysics and philosophical logic to bear on questions about the nature of arts (1989-1990). He has also shifted a step further in research on psychology, that art and mind are causally related. He says that art and mind are closely related but to agree on what the connection is, a different matter.

1.3 ONTOLOGY AND ITS RELATION WITH METAPHYSICS

It has been noted in the encyclopedia, that while the etymology of ontology is Greek, the oldest record of the word itself is the New Latin form *ontologia* which appeared in 1606, in the work of Jacob Lorhard (Lorhardues) and in 1613 in the Lexicon *philosophicum* by Rudolph Gockal (Goclenius) “The first occurrence of “ontology” as recorded in Oxford English Dictionary in 1721, which defines ontology as “Account of being in the Abstract”, though such an entry indicate that the term was already in use at that time. It is likely that the word was first used in its Latin form by philosophers based on Latin roots, which were themselves based on the Greek. The Concise online Oxford English Dictionary (Draft Revision Sept. 2008) gives as first occurrence in English a work by Gideon Harvey (1636/7-1702),. The concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (1997) John Bowker gives the following note, (GK on being + Logus, reflection) Reflection in philosophy and metaphysics on what truly exists or what underlies appearance by way of existent reality. The term was introduced in the 17th Century when the study of the being, as being was also called *Ostosphia*. In the continuity of Scholosticism, ontology was the term applied to the study of the *properties of being*, as such, in contrast to special metaphysics which studies aspects of being open to experience. According to Webster’s Dictionary ontology is a “branch of metaphysics relating to the nature and relations of being – a particular theory about the nature of being or kinds of existence “Ontology (the science of being)

is a word like metaphysics that is used in different senses. It is sometimes considered to be identical to metaphysics, but we really prefer to use it in a specified sense, as that part of metaphysics that specifies the most fundamental categories of existence, the elementary substances or structures out of which the world is made. Ontology will thus analyze the most general and abstract concepts or distinctions that underlay every more specific description of any phenomenon in the world e.g. Time, spaces, matter, process, cause and effect system.” Ontology is originally a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and organization of reality. It tries to answer questions like, ‘what is existence?’

1.4 ART AS PROCESS

This point has a great bearing on the ‘ontology of Arts’, the whole philosophy or metaphysics or ontology is rather essentially growing advancing process. The ontology of art as essence of arts is never a closed system, since arts depicts life and life itself is a process, it is an expression, self-expression, an artist is giving expressions to his emotional exuberance, emotional outbursts, or a process of keeping pace with process of artistic expressive creativity into any form of art, poetry, painting, music etc. Life is lived in bits, in moments, from moment to moment, as such no final theory can depict life in its multifacetedness, in every moment, life is facing a new ebb and flow, like the dictum of philosophy, “You can not bathe in the same stream even twice in a moment”, with every tick of watch, life proceeds to a forward march, so every piece of art has to undergo the process of pace with life’s pace. That is the heart and soul of art, an artist tries to or may try to take a equal pace to run along with life, but art’s pace may not run with equal pace with life, this makes art an un-ending shape, undending shades of art, poetry, painting, sculpture, music and so on. Hence there can’t be oneform of art. With changing life from moment to moment, various sphere as of arts are created, so art is an unending job. Neither science is closed house nor is philosophy is, nor is art. A Persian poet has said, philosophy is like a book of which the first and last pages are lost and a philosopher’s task is to search those lost first and last pages, which means, philosophic activity is never-ending search. William Shakespeare said in Hamlet,

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” Shakespeare holds that any philosophy is destined to be incomplete. The continuing advance of science and human experience inevitably leads to new words and ideas that require extensions to any proposed systems of categories. A. N. Whitehead’s motto is the best guideline for any philosopher or scientist “We must be systematic but we should keep our system open.” Whitehead is proponent of Process Theory.

1.5 MIMETIC THEORY OF ART

The word ‘mimetic’ means (a) of or relating to an imitation, imitate, (b) using imitative means of representation. There are several theories of art. M.H. Abraham divides literary theory as Minetic, *pragmatic*, *Expressive* and *objective*. H. Adams phases out the history of philosophy and literacy criticism as *Ontological*, *Epistemological*, *Linguistic* and *Socio-cultural*. The word ‘Mimesis’ is in use since Plato, but it is used by great theorists of Renaissance upto modern theorists too. Both Plato and Aristotle stick to mimetic theory of art, i.e. art as imitation

but in different ways. The clue as to how to differentiate between Plato's views and Aristotle lies in the explanation of ontological dichotomies of the 'Universal' and 'particular'. Do the universals exist independently of individuals of whom they can be predicated or if they are merely convenient ways of talking about and finding similarity among particular things that are radically different? On this issue there are three main positions, realism, idealism and nominalism. According to the realists – universals are real – they exist and are distinct from particulars that instantiate them. This takes three forms – *Platonic realism (universalia ante res)* *Aristotelian realism (universalia in rebus)* Platonic realism holds that universals are real entities, and they exist independent of particulars. Aristotelian realism holds that universals are real entities, but their existence is dependent on the particulars that exemplify them. Nominalists deny that universals are real. The term 'nominalism' comes from Latin 'nomen' (name) also called "termism" as also for three forms. Some noted 'nominalists' are 'William' of Ockham, D.C. Williams (1953) David Lewis (1983) H. H. Price (1953) W.V.O. Quine (1961) The discussion cannot be more elaborated.

1.6 EMOTION THEORY

It is found in general, that art comes out of man's sincere and intense feelings and emotions. Art as emotion finds its greatest exposition in the works of Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) and R.G. Collingwood (1889-1943) Both were filled with subtle insight to write effectively; both believed in the mental nature of art; that before art is placed for display to the public, it remained in the artist's mind. Croce starts with 'intuitions', In him, "the intuition is the knowing of impressions and their transformation by the active imagination into unified images or organic wholes", here, knowing and expression of those impressions are linked, were indivisible and could not be encompassed by intellectual criteria, Hegel's influence on Croce was great. In 1918, Croce included in intuition, "feelings for entire humanity: by mid-twenties", Croce, "included moral ideas." In 1936, he distinguished between art and non art, poetry and literature etc. Only intuition – expression was art, its externalization was secondary: externalization assists the communication of art, Collingwood continued. Art either has the emotions expressed (good) or repressed (bad) so that criticism is rather beside the point. It has been contended that art made no assertions, but simply is the unconscious being conscious. "The aesthetic experience, or artistic activity is the experience of expressing one's emotions, and which expresses them is the total imaginative activity...."

1.7 INTUITIONIST THEORY OF ART

Benedetto Croce and R.G. Collingwood's views are considered and termed as "The Croce-Collingwood theory of art". This does not mean that Croce's theory is either inferior or Collingwood views are flawed, but their contribution which is considered important lies in two factors (i) it describes the work as an intentional object (ii) though lesser in importance, it clearly describes one possible artistic process. Croce agrees that "language and aesthetics run parallel," he said, "Art must be language"; that "all the scientific problems of Linguistics are as those of aesthetics and that the truths and errors of the one are the truths and errors of the other". In the similar view, Collingwood's agreement with Croce is revealed by his statement that "we can answer the question" "what kind of thing must art be,

if it is to have two characteristics of being expressive and imaginative? Negatively, both agree that art is not a craft, and positively, that as intuition and imaginative expression, art is language; both argue that work of art as expression may be described as intuitional or imaginary object". The work of art is not merely the physical object before the audience and nothing more. It is an intentional object it is an object about which no existence claims are made, and it is essentially the subject of one or more mental acts. In phenomenological terms, for every mental act (*noesis*), there is corresponding object (*noema*) toward which consciousness is directed. Art per se is nothing without some corresponding mental act or intuition that confers upon the object, internal or external, the name 'art'. The difference between the two lies in the vision of artistic process, though both agree in general way the internal work of art and its externalization. Collingwood's position is an advance on Croce's position, he holds that externalization may occur simultaneously with expression: whereas Croce does not allow for that possibility. Secondly, "because of the structure implied in the first advance," the audience has a greater potential for realizing the artistic intuition than is possible within the confines of Croce's theory. On the point of externalization, there is a difference between the two Collingwood makes some improvement in Croce's views. For Croce, "the externalized object can not be considered to be art. At the audience level, the audience must traverse three stages to reach the original intuition which according to Collingwood, permits closer tie between the audience and the work of art as experience as he has improved upon Croce's theory by (1) allowing the simultaneity of expression and externalization and (2) by eliminating the stringent and unrealistic ordering of production and reproduction found in Croce. Collingwood speaks of or assumes two different theories, of aesthetic experience, one for the artists, another for audience' "for the artist, the inward experience may be externalized or converted into perceptible object; though there is no intrinsic reason why it should be. For the audience, there is a converse process: the outward experience comes first and this is converted into inward experience which alone is aesthetic."

1.8 PHYSICALITY/CONTENT THEORY

The content theory adopts an opposite position of Croce-Colling wood views on art. This question is raised, is an artwork a physical object? This question breaks into two aspects, and needs dual analysis, about the physicality (or non-physicality) of artwork and its status (or non-status) as an object. Wollheim contends that, the formulation of a theory of status of work of art would address issues of physicality and categorization. According to Collingwood the artists create art so as to express, but the artist's emotion prior to expression is unanalysable, arts existence is rooted in the artist's mind, which cannot be seen or heard but something imagined." Dilworth supports the content theory which means that ontology of art are just physical object, lumps of marble, pigment covered canvasses, sequence of sound waves, or marks on pages... The physical object hypothesis as Wollhein calls it, has also been criticized from several corners in several ways, like Collingwood etc. Also J. P. Sartre holds that works of art are never 'real' objects, though unlike Collingwood, he does not think of works of art as "imagined activities, but rather as imaginary or 'unreal' objects, created and sustained by acts of imaginative consciousness, and existing only as they remain the objects of such acts." The question is, do we have solid arguments to show that work of art are physical objects? Should works of art be identifiable

with mere lumps of matter that make them up describable purely in terms of physics? Normally, work of art have certain intentional, meaning – oriented, and/or aesthetic properties but the possibility of the plausibility of art being purely physical objects is dim and remote. It is suggested by scholars that it is impossible to deny all works of art are physical objects in either strong or weak sense. Wollheim and Wolterstorff accept that some sorts of art (painting, non-cast sculptures) are physical objects, but deny about all. In music, literature, or drama, there is no physical object. The option then left but to consider *some* or *all works* of art as abstract entities. Wollheim brings here the concept of ‘types’ and ‘tokens’ from C.S. Peirce’s vocabulary. The types are (as distinct from classes or universals) of which copies performances are tokens. Wollheim identifies multiple works with types. In Peirce’s term, there is difference between *type* and *token* sense of a word; in its token sense, a word is used to refer to a particular occurrence, in its type sense it refers to that of which tokens are occurrences. E.g. The word ‘photograph’ enjoys type-token ambiguity, since it can refer to either particular prints or that of which they are prints, viz. photographic works.. Peirce’s pattern is a ambiguous, points out Wollheim. “What can be said of all well informed tokens of type can be said of the type as well”.... Types are said to be both property-like in having token instances. and object-like, in serving as a locus for further predication and identification with other objects such as art work. It has been held that type-theory is really a family of views which share a common framework.

It is often agreed upon that multiple works are individuated, at least in part, by intrinsic qualitative and structural features. Kivy holds that in case of music, intrinsic features are all that matter. Some add extrinsic feature are all that matter. Some hold extrinsic features of tokens. This extension of extrinsic comes from recent ‘contextualist’ argument that historical contexts of a work’s production can affect its aesthetic features. According to Walton (1970), aesthetic properties of a work depend on its genre, genre in turn, is determined by contextual features. Levinson holds that even in different contexts similar or exactly similar can be made.

Wolderstorff instead of appealing to historical features suggest that some of the identifying qualitative features of types are not descriptive but normative. Type-theory has been criticized on various counts. For example (i) types, like sets are abstract objects (2) Type theorists by explaining the distinction between regular and multiple works in terms of universal particular dichotomy is forced to “identify multiple works with stable, inflexible, abstract items which do not stand with us in time as the singular works do” (3) if types are not susceptible to causal interpretation, it is difficult to understand how they could be created or destroyed. Levinson claims that types *exist* when tokens are *possible*, not *actual* as Aristotle holds. It is held that the types are not modally flexible in the way, for what is predicable of a type is necessarily predicable of it. D. Davies (2004) offer a twist on Currie’s idea that art works are event types. For the monist, Currie “the work of art is not a physical object produced, or a performance or even a structure that such objects and performance may share, but rather the way in which an artist arrived at that structure. Works are thus action-type, an individual’s arriving at a certain structure via a certain ‘heuristic’ by which Currie means that path which led the artist to that structure including both internal elements of the artists thought and external elements of art-historical context influencing the artist”. Dilworth holds that the propositional model to content-based artworks naturally leads to double content theory of art, which requires elaboration

John Dewey (1859-1952) took a somewhat broader view of artistic activity and stressed great works of art as examples of common human pursuit. There can be no one settled interpretation, but it arises from the interaction of artists with the medium, individual experiences with the cultural matrix it draws its life from the cultural life of the ‘community’.

1.9 TRIPTYCH THEORY OF ART

This theory was explained by Adam Gazdalski (2006). He explains this by taking an ‘empirical-outsider problem’ by not asking to himself ‘what art is ‘but’ why is it we argue over its use? In the outsider’s view, three general values of art arise; the first being that of Mimetic theory, which says that art is merely imitation of something real, that artists *mimies* what he/she attempts to create. Secondly, art is the evocation of or stimulation of emotions and feelings in the viewer, which is termed Romantic view of by art historians. Third, is the view that design, is the principle aspect in art taking a Designer’s standpoint. He says that mimetic theory is the oldest theory and its first type of art was in ancient cave man painting on walls. Elements of high level thinking, like depicting emotions and a strong sense of design came only thousands of year later. The result was that today’s art is more sophisticated and requires a further greater sophistication to fully understand and appreciate it. “The truth of the matter is that this triptych definition of art is not the end of the line, nor will its line ever be complete. Hypothetically it is possible that some day humanity will develop a sense that surpasses that of ‘design’, or mimification or ‘evocation’. If someday that happens, these will simply be another contributing elements to the grand scheme of art, and in my opinion anyone who denies themselves knowledge of any aspect of art is simply limits themselves, as either an artist or viewer of art”.

1.10 PERFORMANCE THEORY OF ART

David Davies wrote ‘Art as performance’, who is one of the chief exponent of this theory that the art works are not the products of generative performances but performances themselves. His aim is to “establish a secure conceptual foundation for the view of the arts and the art appreciation implicit in that recent literature which engages with late modernism. Jeanette Bicknell opines that performance theory may be said to be better than its competitors at making sense of the continuities and discontinuities between the traditional and late modern art. It is also meant to hold across the arts – applying equally to works in the visual arts, literacy works, music dance etc.

Davies’ performance theory is a result of his thesis at the university of Manitoba in 1979, whereby he has very finely argued for his contention, though it is not a work for ‘philosophical neophytes’ Gregory Curries account of art work as “action types”) (in 1989 – An Ontology of Art) is closest to Davies. He has used certain specialist vocabulary, like, ‘artistic statement’, ‘focus of appreciation’ etc. It is remarked by Bicknell, “An art work itself a performance, specifies a focus of appreciation, to ‘specify’ a focus is both to make the focus specific and to make it inter - subjectively available. Those features of an artwork’s provenance that directly relate to the goal of articulating an artistic statement enter into the identity of a work, and we have to decide which features “directly relate” on a case to case basis”.

A common sense view of art embodies an ontology, an epistemology, (to appreciate the art work, it is both necessary sufficient to perceive it”) and an axiology (value of art work derives from the value of experience we have it) Modern work challenge common sense views. Contemporary philosophers also reject that there is a single ontological category which can encompass all artworks, holding a pluralist view that some art works are artifacts, while others are “better understood as types or structures of some sort. “They favour what Davies calls” *contextualized* ontology, whereby a work’s provenance is partially constitutive of it. Variations are defended by Levinson, Margolis, and Danto. An important aspect of Davies’ methodology is that, anything treated in (institutionalized) artistic practice as “artworks” actually constituted art works”. Davies has referred to Goodman’s views as expressed in his book “Language of Art”.

1.11 INSTITUTIONAL THEORY OF ART

George Dickie is a leading figure besides others. This theory means “a work of art is an item that is incorporated in a certain way in the institutions of art, that is hanging in a gallery or museum. More precisely, a work of art is an object which has had conferred upon the status of a candidate for appreciation by someone acting on behalf of the art world “(Danto, Dickie) Dickie’s account contains fruitful reflections on methodology, including a proposal for a classification scheme for theories of art. He draws a distinction between ‘*psychological theory of art*’ and ‘*cultural theory of art*’. The former derives from distinctive innate mechanism embedded in human nature for the latter, art is ‘collective invention of human beings and not something that an artist produces simply out of his or her biological nature as a spider does a web.” “Cultural theories are said to mark a radical change in the way many of us now theorize about art.” He differentiates between cultural kind and natural kind and puts emphasis on the former and hopes that cultural anthropologists can discover the underlying cultural structure of art. He says, “a work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an art world public”, This statement epitomizes the cultural essence of work of art. He criticizes *S. Davies and Levinson’s views of Art: A natural kind theory* (like food etc) holds that ‘art’ first emerged as a result of ‘necessary and sufficient matrix for works of art’. The institutional theory is a cultural kind theory”. He traces the history of institutional theory from 1969 upto Dickie’s book, ‘*The Art Circle*’ which according to him is the best account of institutionalism. He also raises the question of the concept of art as a evaluative notion which can be neutral to classificatory sense of art. The chief contents of his theory can be summed up thus; (i) institutionalism provides a way of speaking of mediocre and bad art. these alternatives does not (ii) Dickie does not favour, the phrase ‘good art’ is redundant (iii) he does not favour, it might turn out that only one of the two theories of art, although they are almost identical in every respect except that one is aesthetically just noticeably better than the other... Finally, in ordinary language ‘work of art’ frequently means “of highest value” Dickie argues that traditional art work have value which no one thinks correct, the value they attributed to all art works need not be aesthetic value. He concludes by reformulating institutional theory of art “a work of art in the classificatory sense is an evaluable artifact of (a) kind created to be presented to an art works public”. “Dickie’s views may be read with Weitz’s “openness” concept of the theory of art as well as the views of A.C. Danto who was having five subjects in mind while writing on art as closer to philosophy, his work is very important for the ‘Ontology of art.”

1.12 FORMALISTIC THEORY OF ART

It envisages that all work's artistic value is determined by its form - the way it is made, its purely visual aspects, and its artistic medium. Formalism emphasizes composition elements, like color, line, shape, texture rather than realism, context and content. It takes context, its reason of creation, historical background the life of the artist etc as secondary aspect. Formalism is an approach to understand art and it is traced back to Plato, Who argued that '*eidos*' (or shape) of a thing included our perception of the thing, as well as those sensory aspects of a thing which the human mind can take in. '*Eidos*' of Plato included elements of representation and imitation for the reason. The *eidos* is inherently deceptive and the thing itself cannot be replicated. Clive Bell who wrote a book in 1914, 'Art', distinguished between the thing's '*actual form*' and '*significant form*'. The true nature of a thing is 'significant, or true inner nature of a thing, that recognition of a work of art as representational of a thing is a secondary importance. The structuralists hold that mental processes and social perceptions are more important and than the essence or 'ideal' nature of things. Things can be known as it is filtered through these mental processes. Later, word 'form' came to be used interchangeably with the word 'structure'. It has been remarked in this connection that, while "formalist manipulated elements within a medium, structuralists purposely mixed media and included context as an element of aesthetic work". While formalist focus on aesthetic experience, structuralists played down response in favour of communication. Structuralists focus on 'grammar' of art as far back as the work of Mared Duchamp. In many ways, structuralism draws on the tools of formalism without adopting the theory behind them.

1.13 REPRESENTATION THEORY

Many philosophers, ancient and modern have said "man as the *representational animal homo symbolicum*," the creature whose distinct character is the creation and the manipulation of signs – things that 'stand for' or "take place of" something else. It is through representation that people organize the world and reality through the act of naming its elements. Signs are organized in order to form semantic constructions and express relations." (Mitchell W 1955) Mictchell says, "representation is an extremely elastic notion (-1955), which extends all the way from stone representing a man to novel. It is associated with large fields. In literacy theory is covers aesthetics, (art) and semiotics (signs) it had evolved into a significant component of language, which is defined in three ways (i) to look like or resemblic (ii) to stand in for something or some one (iii) to present a second tune to re-present.

Etymologically from re-intensive prefix, *presentare*, to present to 'place before', to represent is 'to bring to mind by description, also "to symbolize, to be embodiment of. "A representation is a type of recording is which the sensory information about a physical object is described in a medium. The degree to which an artistic representation resembles the object it represent is a function of resolution and does no bear on the denotation in of the word."

Representation plays important role in literature, semiotics and aesthetics. Plato and Aristotole's literacy theory takes literature as representation which may be

verbal, visual or musical as being natural to human beings. The ability to create and manipulate signs is typical of man; memesis is natural to man, Plato was more conscious to the use of representation and thought literature is representation of life, yet also believed representation create world of illusion leading man away from “real things”. Man is more imitative than animals since from childhood he learns by imitation. Aristotle discusses imitation in three ways e.g. the object, the symbol being represented (ii) Manner – The way the symbol is represented (iii) means the material that is used to represent it. The means of literacy representation is language. In the system of representation and communication, errors, false hood and misunderstandings are natural. The representation (in memory, in verbal descriptions in images) not only’ mediates’ our knowledge (of slavery and of many other things) but obstructs, fragments and negates. C.S. Peirce held that logic is formal semiotic, it studies signs; he said all thoughts take time, all thoughts is in signs and sign processes (*semiosis*); sign is sign because it is interpretable. Logic has three parts, speculative grammar logical critic and speculative rhetoric or *methodentie*. There are three ways in which signs represent *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. Ferdinand de Saussure holds that semiotic examines the signs and types of representation that humans use to express feelings, ideas, thoughts and ideologies. In *semiosis* two things are fundamental, the signifier and signified. Saussure says tht signs are arbitrary relational and constitute our world. In many languages, writings systems, alphabet system “represent” spoken language, represent phonetic sounds as different sounds in the word ‘art, apple, gate margarine – ‘a’ letter sounding differently.

These theories of language signs etc play an important role in case of arts which expresses with the means of signs, symbols etc. A deeper analysis can be very informative but it is not possible to go into details.

1.14 ART AS INTERPRETATION

Oscar Wilde said, “It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible. “This calls for the prove importance of ‘interpretation’ the interpretation of art, art theories art works etc. This also involves the question of value of art according to Aristotle, art has a certain value, because it is a therapy, it is useful, medically useful, in that it arouses and purges dangerous emotions, Nietzsche said, “There are no facts, only interpretations “and by interpretation, he meant “a conscious act of the mind which illustrates a certain code, certain “rules of interpretation. It is what is called hermeneutics.

Apart from these, there are several other theories of which mention may be made of a few, e.g. Art as history, art as experience, art of conceptual, art as literacy criticism art as creativity etc. In the context of ‘ontology of art’ Carl Matheson and Ben Caplan has also mentioned some other theories viz., Product theory, Decontextualized Product theory the Contextualized Product Theory, The Indicated Structure Theory art as Communication etc, a description of which is not attempted due to paucity of space at our disposal.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Define the ontology of aesthetics.
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- 2) Explain various theories of art.
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1.15 LET US SUM UP

Both the words ‘ontology’ and ‘art’ have varies meanings and are applied to several fields of study, as such ‘ontology of arts’ has its applicational aspects as questions of “applied arts”. Applied arts refers to the application of design and aesthetics to objects of function and everyday use. As distinguished from fine arts, while applied art incorporates design and creative ideals to objects of utility (such as a cup, magazine or decorative perk bench) fine arts serve as intellectual stimulation to the viewer or academic sensibilities. In a creative context, the field of architecture and photography are considered applied arts. The fields of industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design, etc. are considered applied arts. The term ‘fine arts’ was first attested in 1787, as a translation from French term beaux arts and designates a limited number of visual arts forms, including painting, sculpture print-making. The word ‘fine’ relates to purity of discipline and excludes visual art forms. It has been remarked that the term ‘fine’ comes from ‘the concept of Final Case; or purpose or end, in the philosophy of Aristotle. The Final Cause of fine art is the art object itself, it is not a means to another end, except perhaps to phase those who behold it. Applied art comprise two different types – standard mechanic-mode products which have had a particular design applied to them, to make them more attractive and easy-to-use; and individual aesthetically pleasing but mostly functional, craft products mode by artisans or skilled workers. Artistic disciplines that are classified as applied arts, include industrial design, fashion design, interior design and graphic art and design (including computer graphics) as well as most types of decorative art (e.g. furniture, carpets, tapestry embroidery, batik, pottery, basketry, metal crook furniture, jewellery, mosaic art glass ware etc.). Illuminated manuscript also may be classified as applied art Architecture is also seen as applied art.

1.16 KEY WORDS

Arts : Wikipedia gives the following note on art. “Art is the product of deliberately arranging items in a way that influences and affects one or more of the senses, emotions, and intellect. It encompasses a diverse range of activities, creations, and modes of expression including music, literature, film, photography, Sculpture and paintings.”

Aesthetics : Arts is differentiated from aesthetics it has been noted in this regard, in Wikipedia, the meaning of art is explored in a branch of Philosophy Known as aesthetics and even disciplines such as history and psychology analyze its relationship with humans and generations.

Applied art : The term ‘applied art’ refers to the application of artistic design to utilization (resulting product) objects in every day use. The works of applied art are usually functional objects which have been ‘prettified’ or creatively designed with both aesthetics and function in mind; applied art embraces a huge range of products and items, from a tea pot or chair, to the walls and roof of a railway station or concert hall, a fountain pen or computer mouse.

The online dictionary defines applied art (n) “any type of art done with a practical application; the application of design and aesthetics to objects of function and everyday use.”

Type of art : Billy Sunshine says that there are many types and forms of art, music, poetry, gardening, photography, architecture and dance etc. According to Ethil Smith, “art is a non-verbal language of line and colour and movement, it is dreams and nightmares hammered into shapes and freed into abstract composition” Art exists in many types and genres. The types of art may be viz., (1) Abstract Art. The purpose of this type of art is to convey a feeling or sanction rather than simply depicting an image or scene. It was developed in the 19th Century and 20th Century (ii) Impressionism (iii) Expressionism (iv) Romanticism (v) Pointillism – This type of art is a style made up of tiny dots of colour, that as a whole, produce a recognizable image. It arose in late 19th Century. Gregory Pierre Seurat, Vincent Gogh and Chuck Close are important names. (vi) Art Nouveau which is a French word and means “new art” (vii) Cubism – this type of art is based on the geometric appearance of objects in painting. Famous names are Pablo

	Picasso, John gris and George Branque. (viii)
	Realism is a type of art that focuses on what is seen and not altered by the artist’s emotion or other factors.
Art and Skill	: “Skill is something you have and is able to do and art is beautiful work involving the skill that you have”.
Artifact	: “is any portable object used, modified or made by human”.
Object and artifact	: “An object is any normal object but an artifact is an object that is a symbol of art”.

1.17 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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