

## THEME 2

### PHILOSOPHY AND ART CRITICISM.

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To seek the relations between philosophy and art means to seek the contribution that art criticism makes to philosophy and the contribution philosophy makes to art criticism.

Philosophy contributes to art criticism by providing it with the instruments of logic it needs to change the emotive reactions raised by a work of art into considered knowledge of that work. To get to this knowledge of understanding it is necessary to grasp the relations - both external and internal - of the work of art with experience and thought as a whole, its birth with history, its existence seen through history and the way it transcends its own historicity and conditions future history.... And just as art criticism attains this understanding of relations with the help of philosophy, so in its turn philosophy gains from art criticism an understanding of works of art in their reality and singularity. Without this understanding, philosophy would be hard put to, to grasp the acting principles underlying the aesthetic activity which it proposes to change into categories of knowledge.

The meeting point of philosophy and art is their common interest in art. Criticism studies art in the individual and irreducible reality of various works; philosophy studies it in its theoretical universality. But philosophy is powerless to define this theoretical universality without developing the particular concepts which criticism provides through the analysis of different works of art. That is why art criticism is an internal and constitutive momentum in aesthetic philosophy. By putting philosophy in direct contact with a work of art, criticism enables philosophy to fulfill its proper function : and the function of philosophy is not to interpret or appreciate works of art (for this is the very function of criticism), but to formulate and put in order the universal principles governing this interpretation and evaluation.

In its turn art criticism does not pretend to formulate universal principles, but to make use of them as a help, (and only as a help) towards the understanding and appreciation of different works of art. These universal concepts (necessary to criticism but not all-sufficient to its function-) are philosophy's gift to criticism, and the latter makes use of them as instrumental in recognizing the theoretical guarantee and internal justification of works of art. Philosophy is itself, therefore, an internal momentum of art criticism. Philosophy and art criticism have their separate aims; the aims of the one cannot be confused with those of the other nor absorbed and transcended by one another; and so they go through a stage of research which is neither, at first, philosophy nor art criticism, but which derives from, and contributes to, both, by introducing art-criticism into philosophy and philosophy into art criticism.

This momentum of internal unity and indistinction common to the two disciplines can disappear completely and be completely assimilated either in the philosophical operation or, as the case may be, in the operation of art criticism. But it can also be very apparent even though transitory; just as it can also take the form of specialised research by originating a particular type of intellectual production, which always has a preparatory-value both for philosophy and for art criticism, but should not be confused with them. But whatever its subsequent development, the temporary unity of philosophy and art criticism is necessary to both for it helps them

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to avoid a parallelism which, leading them mutually to ignore one another, would finish by conferring on both the attributes of one or the other, or bring about a confusion between the two disciplines, or lead to the disappearance of one into the other, which would destroy the ideal parity. In fact, to guarantee this parity should be the main aim of the meeting and reciprocal interpenetration of philosophy and art criticism.