

IS THERE A PROBLEM OF TERMINOLOGY IN ART CRITICISM ?

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Man differs from other forms of life chiefly in that his nature is historical and that he no longer lives in a closed, patent environment. In other words, he must interpret both his world and himself. The animal "lives" every individual concrete case of the generalized situations with which we are familiar, but is never aware of that fact. On the other hand, man recognizes the existence of such situations which make up a part of his world, forming a secondary zone. At a certain point, this duality brings about the problem that entered our traditions with Plato.

While an intellectualist past tended to link such universality only to discursive or logical reflection as a universality of ideas, all the basic elements are already manifest in prehistoric cave paintings. From the factual angle purely, we can observe that the aurochs or mammoth depicted are already either aurochs or mammoth per se, but the drawings diverge from rational universality in that ^{symbol} ~~sign~~, meaning, and the object~~and~~ depicted (insofar as the act of drawing has a magical significance) are inextricably interwoven.

The evolution of European civilization revealed a split between the two poles, previously juxtaposed as "art" and "theory", but together forming a vital part of human language and its interpretation of man. On the one hand, we have the artist's interpretation of image and form, of a sum of rhythmic articulations, reaching our consciousness as concrete objects or events in concrete situations, but at the same time transcending our everyday life. Here, form and content, drawing and meaning, are one. On the other, there are concepts in the form of isolated and imperceptible generalities, only to

be used in logical thought, in which case the content can be defined and does not coincide with the ~~sign~~^{symbol}. In a verse, the words have a specific meaning, partly because of their isolated, abstract content, and partly in conjunction with the other words with which they form a whole. The logical relationship is external, the aesthetic relationship is a mutual interpenetration with words and forms.

Between art and pure science, however, there extends the whole range of human expression and everyday language - semi-artistic or semi-scientific - where the words used borrow their content and sense through association, the context of sentence or argument. If the sentence were no more than the external relationship between words, mankind would be condemned to mere mathematical logic, such as that favoured by the exact sciences. This would imply the impossibility of any concept of life and humanity as being fields where wholes, interdependence and interpenetration play a role such that any attempt to think in isolated entities would remain a mere shadow; the same applies to the field of art criticism.

The term "terminology" implies a collection or system of ideas that can be singly defined. The art critic is a man whose particular subject is not an interpretation of human life, but also includes intermediate fields in which the argument determines the proposition and the proposition, in its turn, determines the words used.

Is there then a terminological problem for the art critic? To reply to that question we must begin by making a clear distinction between art criticism and the other activities usually carried out by the critic, e.g., art history. The question then becomes the following: Does art criticism in its capacity as an intellectual activity possess a specific morphology that does not cover other fields, such as the history and philosophy of art. It is obvious that the terms used in art criticism - apart from the current vocabulary of everyday

speech - are borrowed from other fields. In addition, the exact meaning of such terms ~~xxxx~~ stems from the activity - or consequence - of these other ~~xx~~ fields.

If we compare art criticism to art history on the one hand, and to philosophy of art on the other, we note that art criticism has a non-historical attitude, that it does not observe but evaluate, that it does not tend towards the general but to the particular, and finally, that it does not specialize. There remains only one field in which the art critic must create his own language, i.e. that of values. Therefore, his function can be seen more clearly where observation and evaluation merge, i.e. in the actual existence of the contemporary era and contemporary art. Whatever risks his work may entail, he is ~~xx~~ an art critic with values and concepts that are integrally based on contemporary history, even when he tries to study and penetrate into the art of former ages or of foreign civilizations.

Most misunderstandings arise because many of the terms employed, i.e. mannerism, realism, baroque, expressionism, etc., have a different meaning for art history, art philosophy and art criticism. The problem of terminology in art criticism ~~xxx~~ only has a real existence - apart from the distinction between the abovementioned homonyms - insofar as it reflects aesthetic values.

Finally, this leads us to an observation on the present state of the plastic arts and the need to shed light on the basic attitudes affecting them. While the problem is fundamentally a philosophical one, there is one factor which art criticism shares in common with all other contemplative activities of mankind when we recognize the fact that it is the primordial function of modern philosophy to reintegrate the aesthetic forms of interpreting man's existence into the universal relationships of humanity with the outside world and with itself.