

THE NATURE OF AESTHETIC JUDGEMENT

In logical literature the words 'statement' 'proposition' and 'judgement' are usually used. Idealist logicians used the word judgement, in preference to proposition whereas the Realist preferred to use the word proposition and sometimes statement (and sentence). Kant also has used the word Judgement in his three Critiques. The use of the word proposition or Judgement, of course, depends on the attitude of the philosophers towards the words. Kant in his Critique of Judgement further distinguishes two kinds of Judgements, the judgement of cognition and the judgement of taste. It will be desirable to explicate the distinction between the judgements and propositions, and further distinguish between judgement of cognition and judgement of tastes and also contrast the *Concept of Judgement* with the *Concept of Rule*. This will help us to understand why Kant talks of Aesthetic Judgement and not of Rules of Aesthetics.

Bosanquet who can be regarded as a representative of the Idealist tradition thinks that Reality is not different from, or is being continuously modified by our activity of knowing. In our knowing we distinguish between the object of knowing and the ideas by which we enrich the object of knowing. The object of knowing is the logical subject and our ideas are the logical predicates. By means of our predicates we are continuously judging, i. e. enriching the subject. This is how the world of our knowledge continuously grows. The subject of such a judgement which is, of course, a subject of knowing, is indeterminate reality and with the help of predicate we are making it more and more determinate. What we call predicate is nothing but an attribute of the subject and in a sense one could say that more and more we perceive, we look at the subject, its predicates will become clearer and clearer. It means in a way we get the predicate through the analysis of the subjects; in another sense we can say that we are continuously superimposing our ideas on the subject. But since the world of knowledge is not different from the world of being, analysing the subject or superimposing our ideas on the subject does not make any difference to the subject, for the subject is reality, and what we predicate of it is evidently the part and parcel of reality. A

common sense philosopher or an ordinary man may analyse this situation in a different way, he may say that in our act of knowing or perceiving we are not adding anything to the subject. All the qualities, which we discern in perception are possessed by the object represented by the subject of logical proposition. We only come to know gradually the characteristics. I do not want to enter into the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic. The characteristics attributed to the subject may be synthetic but as a matter of fact they belong to the concrete object. And they are only perceived and discerned gradually in the knowledge process. For a common man the knower has no special status. His perception is natural in the sense that what he discerns by means of predicate are already there as qualities or characteristics of the subject. Such a judgement would be a cognitive judgement for an ordinary man, although Kant would say, that even for such a judgement, forms of intuition and categories of understanding would be presupposed. Since these forms and categories would be presupposed by every knowing being, a particular knower will add nothing to it and so these judgements will be regarded as cognitive judgements. These cognitive judgements have the same status as that of a proposition for a realist logician. Although these judgements are the judgements of a knower, what is being described is a state of affairs and therefore in such judgements the knower can be completely eliminated. And the results of the knower's judging can be put into the form, 'It is the case that....' 'It is stated that....' etc. It means that the original form of judging namely that, 'I know that S is P' can be changed into the form- 'It is the case that, S is P'. One can see that this is the form of proposition. But for a true idealist logician, it is not really S is P, but Ideas of P being imposed on Ideas of S. S is continuously growing on account of the imposition of 'P' ideas. Since there can not be Ideas without a sentient being there is nothing like a proposition, it is only a judgement. What we call being is nothing but knowing. Of course, the idealist logicians will have to make distinction between knowing proper and evaluating which I shall consider later. What is important here to know is that a judgement is not just a matter of binary relation, a relation between subject and predicate, but a ternary relation where the constituents are the knower, the subject and the predicate. In cognitive judgements the term knower is just ignored.

However when we come to the term judgement of taste, this term 'knower' cannot be ignored and therefore, just as a cognitive judgement may be turned into a proposition, a judgement of taste cannot be so turned. In a cognitive Judgement although a knower is judging a subject, the predicates which he is using for judging are objective predicates. In a sense we believe that they are characteristics which the subject inheres in it. In a judgement of taste, the predicates with which he judges the subject are not the characteristics which the subject inheres. They are the moods or the attitudes of the knower himself vis-a-vis, the subject. It is not only evaluation of the subject, it is also in a way the evaluation or description of the knower. Let me make my point clear by quoting here from Dr. S. S. Barlingay. He writes, in his paper on 'The Nature of Aesthetics and Moral Values'¹ that we have to distinguish between the following three sentences. 'It is raining heavily' 'It is raining unfortunately' and 'It is raining probably'. When we say it is raining heavily we are describing the state of affairs. The adverb "heavily" is describing the state of raining, but when it is said that it is raining unfortunately, it is not only describing the state of raining but also stating the state of our mind. The word, 'heavily' is the expression of our cognition, the word, 'unfortunately' is the expression of our mind, of the subjectivity. I need not discuss here the nature of the third sentence as it has no relevance here. Kant, then, is right in distinguishing at least two kinds of judgements, the judgement of cognition, and what he calls the judgement of taste. Idealist logicians may perhaps explain the judgements of cognition as if they were the judgements of taste or subjectivity. For them there is not external world, the world is merely a system of 'Ideas', a continuous evolution of Ideas. Therefore while a Judgement is passed on 'the Reality' it is merely making a more indeterminate idea, determinate with the help of a predicate which is a determinate idea. It is thus a Judgement which is subjective in nature and in the strict sense of the term is not objective, i. e. it does not refer anything outside the subject (although the subject here need not be an individual mind). The Realist on the other hand, are likely to misunderstand a judgement of taste as a judgement of cognition. A realist for example is likely to think that in a judgement 'This flower is beautiful', or 'He is good', Beautiful or Good is as much a characteristic of the object as are 'red' and man in the judgements, 'The flower is

red' 'He is man'. The Idealist may go wrong in the case of the judgement of cognition and Naive Realist may go wrong in the judgement of taste. It will be more appropriate to say that judgement of cognition is an expression of a state of affairs and is therefore, reducible to the state of propositions. Judgement of taste is not so reducible to a proposition. A judgement of taste of course may be a blanket term, in which it may be possible to distinguish several varieties, the aesthetic judgement being one of them.

When somebody says that 'X' is a man or 'Y' is a pillar, man or pillar is a name which describes the objective situation. It is a universal or a concept. It is thus possible to describe several universals like X, Y, Z as men or A, B, C as pillars. The words, men and pillars, give us a characteristic held in common by several individual objects. But when we say 'X' is beautiful are we doing the same kind of activity? Are we finding out some common characteristic called beautiful, which is held in common by several 'beautiful' objects.? Kant would not agree with such a statement and I think that Kant is right. It means that the analysis of 'this is beautiful' is far more complex. It, of course, gives vent to our attitudes, but we will have to remember that our attitude is not just a primitive attitude, it goes on evolving with the development of society and culture. Thus when we say, 'something is beautiful' it is a judgement, passed on the object, but it also depicts our attitude which is in its turn at least partially determined by the history and culture. It is, thus, that as Plackenov pointed out—A whiteman is likely to regard that a statue of Venus with certain features, as a paradigm of beauty and not regard something in the non-Aryan world as beautiful. Although the judgement is concerned with our attitudes, our attitudes, of course, are determined by certain objectivity.

The traditional and true Idealist Logicians do not distinguish between judgements and propositions. For example, in certain textbooks on Logic like, Joseph's Introduction to Logic, the word, Judgement, is used where the word, proposition, should be used. Thus the traditional propositions A, E, I and O are regarded as judgements. (If they are judgements they are only cognitive judgements). 'All men are mortal', 'some men are mortal' 'no men are mortal' and 'some men are not mortal', would be such

judgements. These, judgements (propositions) are classified under quality and quantity. In the strict sense of the term, however, we need not regard a negative judgement as judgement, for, when we judge we are making something indeterminate as determinate and positive. 'No man is mortal' need not be taken as a judgement although in Logic we so regard it. Similarly the so called particular judgements are not properly the judgements. The question is whether a sentence of the form, All men are mortal is a judgement. Here, I feel that if, all men are mortal, is taken as sum-total of X is mortal, Y is mortal, Z is mortal, then "all men are mortal" may be regarded as a judgement. But if all men are mortal is translated as, for any X, if X is a man, then X is mortal, we are not passing any judgement on X. It may give us an implicit rule or law about man's mortality. A judgement must be passed on a particular object. By a particular, I mean, a singular object. Thus I feel, the demonstrative pronouns like this (It) and particular objects must be the objects of judgements. Unless it is so, something would not be judgement. For the first essential condition of a judgement is that, it must give us something positive and determinate. In this sense then, only the singular propositions satisfy the conditions necessary for a strict judgement. I feel that when one talks of aesthetic judgements, the object on which the judgement is passed must exist; the judgement must be singular; any 'if-then' form of sentence would not give them the status of judgement. If any object did not exist, we would not be able to say that this is beautiful. 'If-then' form of sentences gives us rules, perhaps laws but they are not judgements. It may be noted, however, that a judgement may be directly passed as judgement or it may be deduced from some other premises as conclusion. Thus 'Socrates is mortal' can either be our direct judgement or it can be deduced by way of conclusion from the premises, 'All men are mortal' and 'Socrates is a man'. What kind of judgement is an aesthetic judgement? Is it just a judgement, or can it be a conclusion from certain premises, i. e. can it be deducible from certain rules or laws or from dicta and maxims? I feel that Kant distinguished between moral judgements and aesthetic judgements on this ground. He thought that judgements of the form 'It is good' or 'It is right' can either be direct judgements in the form of singular propositions or they can be deduced from certain rules of the form of universal propositions by way of logical deductions. When such deductions

are possible the conclusions of the deductions could take a form of a singular judgement. But the subject of such singular judgements would only have a status of possible, it need not exist, i. e. may not have existential import. On the other hand, when a judgement is passed on an object without being deduced by way of rule, the object on which it is passed must necessarily exist and must be determinate. I feel, that Kant thinks that aesthetic judgements are of the second type and so Kant called his book on aesthetics, 'A Critique of Judgement'. He clearly states that the specific rules of aesthetics are not possible.

According to Kant although we pass judgement in Ethics, such that 'X is good' and 'that action is right', these judgements are either directly derived from the principles or the maxims or even when they are not so derived, they implicitly presuppose a maxim or a principle. But so far as aesthetics is concerned we can only pass judgement, and the judgement is not derived or derivable from any maxim or rule. Kant is silent whether there is any principle involved in determining something as beautiful and so there is a problem whether 'beautiful' is a concept. Here what is important to know is that according to Kant there cannot be any system or science of aesthetics. What we can have is simply a collection of aesthetic judgements, without presupposing any rule about them, as was thought by Baumgarten who was brought up in the rationalist traditions of Wolff (German). If it was not within our power to frame rules 'a priori' about aesthetics, even if such an attempt is made it will only be inductive and the universality and necessity would not either be attached to it or even if it were attached, it would be only arbitrary.

Let us examine the significance of the new aesthetic phenomenon on which an aesthetic judgement is passed. Aesthetic judgement is passed on any phenomenon or object and therefore the predicate of such judgement would be beautiful or ugly (also sublime etc.). The copula of such a judgement would be 'is' or 'is not' and the subject of such a judgement would be such a phenomenon. Let us take an instance of such a Judgement. Let us assume a judgement like 'Venus is beautiful' or 'The Statue of Venus is beautiful' or 'The painting known as madona is beautiful' or 'The friscoes of Ajantha are beautiful'. The pertinent point here is whether we would and could have passed a judgement even

if there had been no Venus, no statue of Venus, no painting called Madona, and no friscoes of Ajantha. Of course, there is nothing like Venus. Nobody has seen her, but when we talk of Venus we talk of some specific structures interrelated together in a whole. And although it is not presented to us necessarily as a living woman still some general picture is brought before us. This is the picture of some 'beautiful' woman. When we imagine such a picture, we are perceiving the different structures together. And even if it is an ideal representation, nevertheless, it is a representation of some whole, the parts of which are actual. That is why the structures are moulded according to the cultural ideas of the people. If a Negro could imagine Venus of his dream, if he is not in contact with the Aryan Civilization, he would not imagine a particular kind of nose, a particular kind of complexion, a particular height. This means that even when we are just imagining, the subject of our judgement is mentally presented before us in a form of concrete structure. It is not of the form, 'if such and such parts are connected together in a particular way then the structure would be beautiful.' This second proposition will be of the nature of universal general proposition, and the first proposition, which is our judgement will be the singular proposition. A singular proposition is also a universal proposition, but its subject has a concrete structure. It cannot be reduced to hypothetical form, although the different parts of a structure whether real or imaginary are connected together in a necessary manner. I need not bring here whether there is any existential import in such propositions. What is important to know is that the structure we imagine is not an abstract one, it is concrete. When we are not talking of an imaginary object, like Venus, and we come across phenomena like 'the statue of Venus' 'Painting called Madona', 'The friscoes of Ajantha' one can easily see that the phenomena are existent i. e. if the phenomena are put in the place of the subject of logical judgement, they will have existential import. Perhaps the idealist logicians would say, even the imaginary phenomena would have existential import in their 'universe of discourse'. It is plain that we cannot pass a judgement on the painting called Madona in the absence of that particular painting. Similarly we could not pass any judgement on the friscoes without actually perceiving them. It means then that existence or presence of the object on which judgement is passed is a necessary condition of passing

such a judgement, unless such a judgement is derived from a certain rule. When Kant says that aesthetic judgements are singular, he means this or atleast should mean this — that, in some sense the presence of phenomena is a necessary element in the process of passing a judgement. A singular judgement is regarded by the traditional logicians as a universal judgement. In the traditional form of syllogism we do get a correct conclusion, 'Socrates is mortal' from the two premises, 'All men are mortal' and 'Socrates is a man.' Both 'Socrates is a man' and 'Socrates is mortal' are singular propositions. By combining a singular proposition like 'Socrates is a man' with 'All men are mortal' we can get a universal singular conclusion like 'Socrates is mortal'. But even by a far-fetched logic, one would not be able to reduce the propositions 'Socrates is a man' and 'Socrates is mortal' to the form, for any X, if 'X' is Socrates — then 'X' is a man or for any x, if x is Socrates, then x is mortal. In both these propositions the if-then part is illegitimate i. e., the singular propositions, though universal, cannot be reduced to the hypothetical form. It means, that the universality that we ascribe to the proposition like 'Socrates is a man' and 'Socrates is mortal' is within the framework of categorical propositions. It must be borne in mind that when Kant talked of logic he talked of traditional logic. Kant's book on logic bears testimony to it. So while explaining the concepts that Kant has used we must primarily use the books, which Kant has in mind, and must not thrust our own concepts on Kant. The traditional logicians did say that when we say that Socrates is man then the predicate, humanness, occupied every part of Socrates. That is why they regarded that the term, Socrates, in the proposition, 'Socrates is a man' and 'Socrates is mortal', is distributed. It may be noted that Kant talks of subjective necessity and universality in the context of Aesthetic Judgement. The subjective necessity according to me arises on account of the fact that when we say 'Socrates is a man' or 'Socrates is mortal' manness or mortality is inseparable from Socrates. It may be that people may say that it is an inseparable accident. But accident is a notion which can be properly used in the case of class. When this notion is used in the case of individuals, it is no more an accident; it becomes a unique character of individuals, if it is inseparable. Thus I may venture to say that what is regarded in traditional logic as an inseparable accident as a matter of fact becomes a 'necessary

element in the context of individuals.' It is perhaps this, that is meant by subjective necessity by Kant. When we talk of uniqueness we talk of certain organic unity or combination, but unless that combination is necessary, it does not become organic; it would merely be a combination of elements mechanically brought together.

Earlier I have said that no aesthetic judgement can be passed on a phenomenon which is not existent or not present. It is necessary to make a distinction between that which is existent, and that which is present. The existent may be present, but the present need not be existent. On account of our memory, a vivid image may be brought before our mind's eye and we might reconstruct it in our imagination, a new model of the elements from our own experience, selecting them from our own choice. In fact, that is what an artist does in sculpture, painting, poetry and even in an architecture. But the essential element here is that, though the object is broken into elements, the elements remain intact. Thus for example, an artist may select the height of an Asian girl and combine it with the waist of a Cambodian and may combine the complexion of both into one, and may also add to it a little curlyness of the Negro hair, but what he is combining are not the concepts, they are the real parts of the objects separated in imagination. They are 'Concepts' understood with properties of space and time. They are something like the schemata of Kant. Mere abstractions cannot be combined or recombined. The difficulty is that the concrete forms and the concepts which are abstractions are usually misunderstood as one.²

Aristotle and the ancient Naiyayikas had made a distinction in forms and concepts. Aristotle clearly distinguishes between *Ide* (*Idea*) and form, similarly the earlier Nyaya Logicians distinguish between *Samanya* and *Jati*, on the one hand and *Akrti* on the other hand. When we talk of *Akrti* or form, its spatio-temporal characteristics are retained, that is, the concreteness is not eliminated; what is eliminated is the special characteristics *Visesa guna*. Combination or recombination or separation of such things is possible because, although they are parts of our imagination, they are as vivid as the things. They can be pictured. One can see that when we use words there are certain words, which evoke some pictures before us. When I think of a horse, for example,

the picture of a horse is before me. And just as a horse can be cut in to pieces, similarly we can think of separate parts of the picture of the horse. When we think of stage drama, we for example, try to superimpose certain personality and the actions on the actor. This is possible because, although we are talking of action we are not talking of abstraction. It will now be clear, how we can think of the Venus although there is nothing like Venus—the most beautiful woman before us. When we talk of Venus, we combine the most beautiful parts of women together in our imagination, but the concrete shape of the woman is not given up. We are still talking of woman and not womanness which would be abstract. We can see that, when we talk of woman, the different element, the height, colour...etc. are uniquely imagined, put together and preserved. This uniqueness is necessary. If this necessity is ignored, and something is put instead, it will have a jarring effect. This necessity I regard as subjective necessity. The predicate, beautiful, cannot be used unless such necessity is present. Singularity (Universality) and necessity are therefore the most important aspects of an aesthetic judgement.

The peculiarity of an Aesthetic judgement can now be understood with reference to the two cases, which I have cited above (i) the statue of Venus is beautiful and (ii) The Venus is beautiful. In the case of 'the statue is beautiful' the element of the existent i. e. statue cannot be ignored. The judgement that the statue is beautiful, cannot be passed, ignoring the Statue element. The element of statue is a part of the configuration and the knowledge of statue, the particular statue, cannot be kept away from the analysis while analysing the judgement, that the statue of Venus is beautiful. This particularity or singularity is also present when we are saying that Venus is beautiful. The Venus is a configuration of the ideational parts which are particular i. e. about each such part we could significantly say 'this'; all these parts could be pointed out. I think this is essentially the difference between Forms and Concepts. A concept cannot be pointed out. There is no particularity or singularity about the concept, but there is a particularity or singularity about the form. Perhaps there may be gradations even in these forms. Some forms may be spatio-temporal, some forms may be spatial or temporal and some forms may be symbolic, as suggested by Susanne Langer. But whatever the forms may be, even if we are able to use a certain scale of gradation or gradations

in regard to these forms, the singularity or the basic particularity of the form is never lost. These forms cannot be generalised in the sense, the concepts or the class can be generalized. Just as, if we know that in the case of the isosceles triangle, that its base angles are equal and the sides opposite to angles are equal, and we apply the formula to any isosceles triangle, we cannot, knowing that one configuration is beautiful, pass on to the law or rule that the configurations of this kind are beautiful. The reason is that configurations that are beautiful are bound to specific particularity, and segregated from this particularity, they are no more configurations of the beautiful. Therefore, they retain the nature of judgement and unlike some moral judgements, they cannot be derived from some premises, rules or maxims as conclusions. In each judgement the standard or principle of beautiful may be imagined like Plato's formal cause, i. e. the principle of beautiful, vaguely formulated, but it would not be formulated in the way we arrived at concepts, such as man, mortal etc. It is merely the principle that we find in the configuration itself alongwith the vague element that is supplied by the past culture.

In another way also the aesthetic Judgement must be carefully understood. I have said that aesthetic Judgement does not behave just like Geometry. The reason is that there are two types of judgements as Kant suggested. When I say something is a table, it is a judgement. Its full form is 'I know that this is a table.' Following Barlingay, I would say that the form of judgement is that 'I know that...'.³ Idealist Logicians said that the subject of the judgement is reality. I think reality or a part of reality is not a subject of judgement but is a subject of a logical proposition. Now as stated earlier some judgements can be transformed into propositions. For example, the judgement 'I know this is a table' can be transformed in to 'This is a table.' or 'It is the case, that this is a table.' It means that the part 'I know' can be ignored in such cases. It is ignored because we are merely stating the case. It is our belief that my knowing or my judging does not make any difference to the case, my knowing or judging is not the case of human engineering, a human construct. But in the case of sentences like this is beautiful whether we explicitly state or not, the 'I know' part is integral to it, inseparable from it. That is even if I say that 'X' is beautiful, it is always of the form, 'I know' or 'I feel' that X is beautiful. It always remains a judgement and could never

attain the status of a proposition. Unless something attains a status of proposition, the subjectivity in it cannot be eliminated and where the subjectivity cannot be eliminated there cannot be inference or generality. Even if communication is established of subjectivity i. e. to others that 'I feel that X is beautiful', I cannot establish any rule, as to why anyone should feel that anything is beautiful. Aesthetic judgements unlike judgements of cognition, have always a status of judgement and never have the status of proposition which is required for framing a rule or for talking about certain logic or law.

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NOTES

1. S. S. Barlingay : *Philosophical Quarterly*, Amalner, 1964.
2. S. S. Barlingay : Distinguishables and Separables. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. II, No. 2. Jan. 1975.
3. S. S. Barlingay : *A Modern Introduction to Indian Logic* : Chapter on Judgement.