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Aesthetic Education: Questions and Issues

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·is chapter examines questions and issues that arise in formulating policies that bear on · philosophy and practice of aesthetic education. After mentioning different meanings of term aesthetic education, *subsequent discussion centers on three generative thinkers and ideas of a number of contemporary theorists. A final section identifies issues that present ıllenges to policymakers.*

THE MEANINGS OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION

An aesthetically educated person may be understood to subscribe to values and possess dispositions that in important respects are distinctive. The respects in which such values and dispositions are unique, and the methods by which they might be developed are, however, subject to interpretation. *Aesthetic education* may imply arts education programs that develop aesthetic literacy in matters of creating and appreciating art, the fostering of a distinctive sensibility irrespective of the subject or context of teaching, or combined arts programs unified by aesthetic concepts and principles. Although an aesthetic point of view can be taken toward practically anything, aesthetic education may also concern itself with interest in natural and humanly constructed environments and in objects and activities of everyday life, not to mention the art of living itself. Curriculum theorists have also examined various aspects of schooling—teaching, learning, evaluation, administration, and school atmosphere—from aesthetic perspectives. Several theorists (discussed under Contemporary Theorists) have interpreted aesthetic education as sustaining a close relationship with the branch of philosophy known as aesthetics because of the educational relevance of the latter's analysis of aesthetic concepts and methods of inquiry. In short, just as the reach of the aesthetic is extensive (Hepburn, 2001), so is that of aesthetic education. There are restrictive and more expansive senses of the terms. In this chapter, interpretations covering discrete school subjects such as art or aesthetic education will be designated domain interpretations in contrast to nondomain

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interpretations that are more expansive. Domain interpretations of aesthetic education may be regarded as programmatic definitions that highlight benefits associated with particular viewpoints. They thus are similar to definitions of art that, as Morris Weitz (1956) has indicated, are in effect invitations to entertain varieties of artistic excellence. Scheffler (1960, pp. 31) has also likened the logic of definitions of education to definitions of art. Consistent with this handbook's emphasis on art education as a subject and on interpretations of aesthetic education in the literature, this chapter devotes more space to domain interpretations of aesthetic education.

THREE GENERATIVE THINKERS: SCHILLER, READ, DEWEY

Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805)

Schiller was an 18-century German dramatic poet, philosopher, and man of letters whose career unfolded during the turbulent modern era when the power of the state and the privileged classes was coming under attack in the name of Enlightenment principles of reason, freedom, and democracy. Many thinkers of the time believed that history was steadily evolving in a direction that would grant individuals greater freedom and control over their lives. Although Schiller admired the ideals and promise of the French Revolution, he was dismayed by its cruelty and concluded that Man was not yet ready for freedom. He held that before the State could become properly constituted, its citizens had to harmonize their own conflicting impulses. Schiller drew ideas not only from the discipline of aesthetics—newly established by Alexander Baumgarten (1954) and systematized by Immanuel Kant (1952)—but also from his close association with the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He also relied on his own considerable strengths as a dramatic playwright.

In his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1954),[1] Schiller attempted to provide an account of the conditions that could release in Man what he called the living springs of human life, by which he meant those qualities of life that are realized in experiences of Beauty. Such springs of life would be set free in a fusion of sensuous and formal impulses, a reconciliation made possible through an integrating impulse that Schiller termed *play*. The experience of Beauty, in other words, was a necessary condition for the emergence of a full humanity. Schiller found the play impulse ideally exemplified in the integrations of form and content evident in the great works of the cultural heritage. That is, the instrument of aesthetic education "is the Fine Arts, and their well-springs are opened up in their immortal examples" (p. 51). Although he prescribed no particular curriculum or pedagogy, Schiller was persuaded that the fostering of aesthetic culture was the next phase in the evolution of civilization. The aesthetic path must be taken "because it is through Beauty that man makes his way to Freedom" (p. 9).

Modern philosophic analysis has questioned Schiller's metaphysics and psychology and wondered at his extraordinary faith in aesthetic education's ability to advance the cause of morality and human freedom (Beardsley, 1966a, pp. 225–230). The inspirational force of his message, however, was not lost on writers who continued to emphasize the civilizing powers of the arts and the role of art in integrating various human impulses. Above all, by recognizing the potential it held for achieving political and social stability—what he called the promotion of aesthetic culture—Schiller presented a strong justification for aesthetic education.

[1] Of the two standard translations of Schiller's *Letters*, the Snell (1954) version is referenced in the text because it was translated with the general reader in mind (cf. the translation by Wilkinson & Willoughby, 1967, which contains a lengthy introduction, German and English texts, and an extensive bibliography).

Herbert Read (1893–1968)

Read was a poet, critic, art historian, editor, philosopher, pacifist, anarchist, and educational theorist. But he is perhaps best characterized as a humanist in a world of politics who was at odds with received cultural, intellectual, and educational traditions that he thought were inhibiting the full realization of individuals' potentialities. He was appalled by the living and working conditions in the burgeoning factory towns of the industrial revolution, and he had come to believe that specialization, division of labor, and technical rationality were fracturing the sense of community he had experienced during his rural upbringing. His exposure to the horrors of World War I as well as his early literary training helped shape a poetic sensibility reminiscent of Schiller's. It is thus not surprising that Read evokes Schiller in his description of the kind of education that could ameliorate the effects of dehumanization or in his prescription for a fitting instrument for accomplishing it—the method of aesthetic education (Read, 1964, 1966). But there are differences as well.

As Read's educational writings (1956, 1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1966) reveal, he drew his inspiration not solely from Schiller but, like Schiller, also from Plato's theory that the pattern of moral virtue could found in the structure of the physical universe. The path to moral goodness therefore lay in individuals' repeating this pattern in their own lives. Plato had perceived certain laws of the physical universe—for example, the laws of harmony, proportion, balance, and rhythm. Because he had found these laws exemplified not only in the phenomena of nature and in all living things, but also in fine examples of music, dancing, gymnastics, poetry, sculpture, and painting, Plato recommended making the rhythmic arts basic in teaching the young.

Read combined Plato's and Schiller's ideas with those of writers prominent in his own time, for example, the social thought of Marx, Morris, and Ruskin and the psychological theories of Freud and Jung (Thistlewood, 1984).[2] The former group of thinkers sensitized Read to the dehumanization of society that was being wrought by an industrial machine culture, one of the consequences of which was a decline in the quantity and quality of humanly crafted objects. From the latter group he adopted certain aspects of psychoanalytical theory. For example, notions about the structure and dynamics of the unconscious played significant parts in his thinking about the artistic process and aesthetic education. The operations of the unconscious being essentially sensuous and sexual in nature—Read characterized his philosophy of education as a salutation to Eros (Wasson, 1969)—they stood in opposition to the constraints placed on human behavior by traditional moral codes. Read believed that dipping into the unconscious, especially into its potent image-making powers, opened up paths to greater self-realization. Thus, the crucible of the unconscious, which may be thought of as a cauldron of memory images, feelings, and inherited attributes called archetypes, was to supply source material for the creative imagination. Whatever impeded access to unconscious processes was therefore to be discouraged, for it was only by utilizing such processes as resource material that individuals could express their creative powers. Because Read thought that modern artists were particularly adept at plumbing the unconscious, he devoted a major portion of his career to championing their efforts.

Read's thought and career contain several complexities and contradictions that cannot be dealt with here. Suffice it to say that from his aesthetics, social philosophy, conception of psychological processes, and interpretation of modern art, it was but a natural step to an educational aesthetics aimed at freeing human experience from the repressive tendencies of contemporary life and schooling. In contrast to Schiller's emphasis on the value of studying the great works of the tradition, Read's pedagogy tended to demote the art object. He believed conventional modes of awareness encouraged passive responses and perpetuated a conception of inert knowledge.

[2] See Thistlewood (1984) for the evolution of Read's social and psychological ideas.

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Wanted instead was what Dewey called learning by doing. Read consequently favored pedagogy grounded in processes that emphasized creative self-expression. Given the idiosyncrasies of learners and the individual dispositions of teachers, Read's preferred method of aesthetic education was less a set of specific procedures than a selection from a collection of practices, in other words, whatever worked for a particular student.

The impact of Read's writing was literally global. It is especially evident in his influence on the International Society for Education through Art, which periodically confers an award in his name. As was the case with Schiller, the spirit of Read's message counted for more than his theoretical formulations. Few teachers had the patience or background to digest the theoretical intricacies of *Education through Art* (1956). And by the time Read published *The Redemption of the Robot* (1966), a summary for the general reader of his encounters with education through art, contemporary art education theory was beginning to move in a different direction.

John Dewey (1859–1952)

Dewey's roots and preoccupations resemble Read's. He had experienced early childhood in a rural environment, expressed concerns about dislocations caused by social change, and criticized educational traditions and institutions he believed were hostile to reform. He also held pedagogical ideas compatible with Read's, for example, the notion that art should be experienced for both its consummatory value and its potential for the transformation and reconstruction of experience.

Dewey's distaste for dualisms and his deep feeling for the unity of experience reflect the strong influence of Hegel. However, in the course of evolving a naturalistic empiricism, Dewey abandoned Hegel's metaphysics. Instead, he favored a Darwinian biosocial conception of human development that conceived experience as interaction between an organism and its environment or, in Deweyan terminology, doings and undergoings. Among the numerous dichotomies that troubled Dewey, there was one of particular relevance to this chapter, namely, what Dewey considered an unfortunate bifurcation between art and everyday life. This separation was epitomized by the pedestal conception of museum art discussed in *Art as Experience* (1934, pp. 7–9). His countervailing strategy called, first of all, for striving to reintegrate art into common experience. That effort in turn proceeded through two steps. The first was defining everyday experiences in a way that revealed their inherently dramatic character. The second was claiming that whenever experience exhibits a certain organization and possesses certain qualities it may be regarded as art. This meant that all forms of experience—intellectual, social, political, and practical—could under certain conditions be so regarded. Presumably the world of modern work with its typical disjunctions between means and ends could be reconfigured to provide experiences that qualified under Dewey's definition.

Not unlike Read who wrote eloquently about works of fine art while at the same time dethroning the art object for pedagogical purposes, Dewey alternated between two views of art. And according to some writers (e.g., Gotshalk, 1964, pp. 131–38), Dewey did so at the price of creating some confusion. He seemed to favor the view of the work of art as constituted by certain qualities of experience regardless of the context of that experience. But Dewey also discussed art in the conventional sense, namely, as humanly constructed material objects, as works of fine art. Much of what Dewey knew about fine art was learned from Albert Barnes, the director of the Barnes Foundation that is renowned for its collections of art and educational programs. Dewey's dedicating *Art as Experience* to Barnes reflects the extent of Barnes's influence on his aesthetics (Glass, 1997). Consistent with Dewey's view of experience, his pedagogical recommendations placed emphasis on the designing of problem-solving situations. Implemented in the University of Chicago laboratory school, they aimed at establishing continuity between the activities of school and society (Jackson, 1998; Tanner, 1997).

As these brief summaries of three generative thinkers indicate, a line of argument can be traced from the writings of Plato in antiquity to Schiller's ideas in the 18th century to those of Herbert Read and John Dewey in the 20th century. The unifying thread consists in these thinkers' conviction that aesthetic education should be integral to the upbringing of the young. Concentrating on the modern period, serious discussion of aesthetic education begins with the writings of Schiller, many of whose main concerns were taken up in different ways by Read and Dewey. All three writers were preoccupied with such problems as the dehumanizing consequences of political and social dislocation, the alienation inherent in modern productive processes and institutional arrangements, the reductionism in values, and the disruption of the continuity of nature and human experience. For Schiller, the violence of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution provided the impetus for his analysis of aesthetic education that set forth conditions for a more a humane and democratic society. For Read, it was the advent of industrialization and the alienation of the proletariat that prompted his recommending a pedagogy capable of reuniting in human experience what modern life and production methods had sundered. In his broadly defined view of art as a certain kind of worthwhile experience, Dewey's concerns were similar to Schiller's and Read's.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In an article on the history of aesthetic education, Ronald Moore (1998) organizes his remarks around two sets of questions that he thinks are representative of contemporary discussions of aesthetic education: questions about the role of the arts and aesthetic experience in the education of the young, and questions about the role of aesthetics (mainly philosophical aesthetics) in aesthetic education. Moore reviews writings from antiquity to the present in order to discover how philosophical theorizing about aesthetic education has interpreted the roles of the arts and aesthetic experience in both private and public life and what such roles suggest for the education of young persons. He concluded that this legacy of philosophical thought testifies to the seriousness with which writers have typically regarded the functions of the arts and the aesthetic in human experience. These functions, moreover, have been understood in connection with basic principles that unite the life of the individual with that of the state, principles that were to be comprehended within a context of theory embracing the exercise of both mind and sensibility. Growth in aesthetic literacy was believed to progress through a series of stages from simpler to more complex tasks and achievements, a notion that has become almost axiomatic in contemporary research on aesthetic development. Moore draws the conclusion that the reason the arts have occupied an important place in philosophies is that "they, more than any other topics of study, transcend limitations of time, place, and personality to reveal what human beings and their societies are and may be" (p. 91).

CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS TOWARD AESTHETIC EDUCATION

References to aesthetic education began to appear more frequently in discussions of arts education around mid-20th century. Read was still expounding his notion of aesthetic education as the method for education, and Dewey's ideas about schooling and pedagogy enjoyed favor with educators of a progressive bent, notwithstanding Dewey's dislike of the term progressive education. But with the death of Dewey in 1952 and Read's in 1968, theorists had begun to favor a less expansive and encompassing conception of aesthetic education, one that saw it as a substantive subject in its own right and thus deserving of a place in a program of general education.

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Although the lines of influence were not always direct, a number of writings anticipated later developments in the 1960s and beyond. For example, a year before Dewey's passing, Harry S. Broudy (1951), whose theory of aesthetic education was to have substantial influence on subsequent developments in art and aesthetic education, outlined the problems any educational aesthetics must address. Among these were the problems of explaining the peripheral status of arts education in the schools and the low level of taste prevailing in the society. Broudy also recognized the need not only for understanding the nature of aesthetic experience but also for identifying the criteria of aesthetic value and, most important, justifying aesthetic education. Further, in the 1950s, Thomas Munro (1956, pp. 3–24), who had a long association with the educational activities of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the American Society of Aesthetics, urged the establishment of close relationships between aesthetics and school learning. School arts activities were to provide data for aestheticians to interpret that could then be used to make recommendations for teaching art. Munro understood the aims of aesthetic education to be the furtherance of the artistic and aesthetic strains of human experience and the transmission of the cultural heritage in ways designed to help students develop a sense of vocation and a commitment to citizenship. Similarly, the writing team of David Ecker and E. F. Kaelin (1958) pointed out the relevance of aesthetics to the task of clarifying the purposes of art education programs, whereas Edmund Feldman (1959) went so far as to assert that all research in art education should take its lead from aesthetics in order to detect the philosophical assumptions underlying teaching and learning about art.

The writings referred to previously, and others in a similar vein, in effect set the agenda for the 1960s. Thus, Manuel Barkan (1962) conjectured that the future of reform in art education would lie in the effort to make the aesthetic life a reality for theorists, teachers, and students alike. Sensing what was in the air, Elliot Eisner (1965) wrote that the emerging interest in the aesthetic constituted a new era in art education. Eisner regarded aesthetic education as humane education in and through the arts. To achieve the aims of this kind of education, he thought it would be necessary to generate ideas by exploring not just the behavioral sciences but also the history and the philosophy of art. In the introduction to a book of readings on aesthetics and criticism in art education, Smith (1966) acknowledged the change in thinking about the scope of art education. Recognizing a need, he also established in the same year the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (1966–) which provided a forum for serious discussions about the nature and problems of aesthetic education.[3] Portions of Eisner and Ecker's (1966) book of readings likewise emphasized the relevance of aesthetic theory. A year later, *Art Education*, the journal of the National Art Education Association, devoted a special issue (Smith, 1967) to aesthetic education. These developments in aesthetic education were symptoms of a watershed in American cultural life and education. In the 1950s and 1960s, New York City became the center of the international art world; the national endowments for the arts and the humanities came into being; and unprecedented support became available for a rash of seminars, symposia, and conferences on arts education.

Interest in aesthetic education carried over into the 1970s, which well may be regarded as the decade of aesthetic education. Indicative is Brent Wilson's (1971) statement in a handbook devoted to examining the nature of educational evaluation. He said that "the central purpose of art instruction is to assist students in achieving reasonably full aesthetic experiences with works of art and other visual phenomena which are capable of eliciting such experience" (p. 510). Continuing their collaboration, Ecker and Kaelin (1972) identified a peculiarly aesthetic domain of educational research, the principal focus of which was on aesthetic experiences of works of art. In the 1970s, Smith edited two more anthologies that had a bearing on the nature

[3] In his history of art education, Efland (1990, p. 240) takes 1966 as a critical year for aesthetic education.

of aesthetic education. One (Smith, 1970) examined the relations of a number of aesthetic concepts to arts education and education generally, whereas the other (Smith, 1971) subsumed art-educational writings under the topics of aims, curriculum, design and validation, and teaching and learning. While in the 1950s Broudy had outlined mandatory questions to be addressed by any theory of educational aesthetics, he in effect answered them in his *Enlightened Cherishing* (1972). The reprinting of this book in the 1990s was a sign of its continuing importance.

The shift in orientation that was occurring in the field of art education also produced a number of textbooks that either stressed the idea of aesthetic education or were compatible with it. Feldman's *Becoming Human through Art: Aesthetic Experience in the Schools* (1970) was significant for its subtitle alone. The text, Feldman said, "can be regarded as either an art education text with a strong aesthetic bias, or an aesthetic education text with a strong art education bias " (p. v). Certain parts of Eisner's *Educating Artistic Vision* (1972) were also consonant with the idea of aesthetic education. But standing out as the most ambitious effort to reform art education in the 1970s—prior, that is, to the Getty venture of the 1980s and 1990s—was the aesthetic education program of the Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory (CEMREL).

In *Through the Arts to the Aesthetic: The CEMREL Aesthetic Education Curriculum,* Stanley S. Madeja (the program's director) with Sheila Onuska (1977) set out the scope and accomplishments of CEMREL's program and reviewed some of the problems it had faced. "Aesthetic education in its simplest sense," wrote the authors, "is learning how to perceive, judge, and value aesthetically what we come to know through the 'senses'" (p. 3). The St. Louis laboratory generated and supported an array of activities ranging from developing curriculum materials and sponsoring research to convening symposia and conferences. The laboratory's publishing program produced yearbooks on different topics (e.g., Madeja, 1977, 1978; Engel & Hausman, 1981). The program concentrated on developing curriculum units for the elementary years that were organized around the notions of integration, unity, and organicity. Although these notions reflect the influence of Read and Dewey, they were complemented by the findings of modern cognitive studies.[4]

If the 1950s can be regarded as having set an agenda for aesthetic education, the 1960s as having produced a literature that began to communicate the significance of its points of view, and the 1970s as having actualized some of the possibilities of implementation, the 1980s and 1990s were marked by initiatives to build further on established foundations. In a number of places, Vincent Lanier (e.g., 1982) designated aesthetic literacy as the end of art education, and Madeja and D. N. Perkins (1982) edited a series of discussions on the phenomenology of aesthetic response. Most noteworthy, however, was the extensive involvement in art education by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts (renamed the Getty Education Institute for the Arts; in the 1990s, it was ultimately dissolved), which was one of several operating entities of the J. Paul Getty Trust.[5]

Directed by Leilani Lattin Duke for 17 years, the Getty venture took its lead from theorists of art education who were convinced of the importance of integrating several interrelated fields of study for purposes of art instruction. The Center advanced an approach to art education termed disciplined-based art education. This approach stressed that the teaching of art should be grounded in the content and methods of art making, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics (Getty, 1985). Publications by Smith (1989), Brent Wilson (1997), and Stephen Mark Dobbs

[4] For additional discussions of CEMREL's aesthetic education program, see Barkan, Chapman, and Kern (1970), and a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 4*(2), 1970, Madeja, guest Ed.

[5] Following a change of leadership at the Getty Trust in the late 1990s, the Education Institute for the Arts was discontinued.

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(1998) provide accounts of the origins and evolution of the Getty's efforts. A book of readings edited by Smith (2000), which contains selections from an extensive annotated bibliography of the literature of DBAE, supports the conclusion that the selection of the discipline of aesthetics was felicitous. This branch of philosophy received the greatest attention from scholars and theorists of art education because of its usefulness for justifying art education and providing content and suggestions for teaching. Also noteworthy was the Getty's adoption of Broudy's philosophy of general education that advanced ideas about aesthetic education distributed throughout many of his writings. Broudy (1987) further contributed a monograph to the Getty publication program and participated as a faculty member in a number of its summer institutes.[6] Additional Getty involvements in aesthetic education in the 1990s included support for Michael Parsons and H. Gene Blocker's *Aesthetics and Art Education* (1993), a volume in the Getty series Disciplines in Art: Contexts of Understanding, and the reprinting of Broudy's *Enlightened Cherishing* (1994). The chapter in this handbook by Stephen Mark Dobbs presents a more comprehensive description of the Getty's activities in art education.

Smith's *The Sense of Art: A Study in Aesthetic Education* (1989b) also appeared in the period under discussion, as did *Aesthetics and Arts Education,* an Anglo-American anthology edited by Smith and Alan Simpson (1991), and yet another anthology, *Aesthetics for Young People,* edited by Moore (1995). Textbooks, for example, E. Louis Lankford's (1992) *Aesthetics: Issues and Inquiry* and Marilyn Stewart's (1992) *Thinking through Aesthetics,* also deserve mention. Furthermore, the 1992 NSSE yearbook, *The Arts, Education and Aesthetic Knowing,* edited by Bennett Reimer and Smith, contains chapters with discussions of aesthetic experience and learning. Finally, the publication of encyclopedia articles on aesthetic education by Eisner (1992),[7] Moore (1998), and Smith (1998, 2002a) attests to the existence of a substantive literature on aesthetic education.

CONTEMPORARY THEORISTS

For the greater part of the second half of the 20th century the foremost American philosopher of aesthetic education was Harry S. Broudy. Throughout his long career he consistently assigned an important place to aesthetic education in both his philosophical and his educational writings (e.g., 1961, 1964a, 1964b). In his major statement on the subject, *Enlightened Cherishing* (1972), he defined aesthetic education as an important kind of value education that addressed the perennial educational problem of teaching virtue, that is, the problem of developing norms and standards for individuals' pursuit of a good life. Part of such a life is what Broudy called *enlightened cherishing,* which he understood as a love of objects and acts that is justified by knowledge. Because Broudy considered human choices and judgments to be pervaded by aesthetic judgments and stereotypes, he recommended a perceptual approach to aesthetic education that was aimed at cultivating students' capacities to derive satisfaction and insight from works of art that express the meaning of the more complex and subtle forms of human experience. In short, aesthetic education as general education was to provide the context for students' acquiring both creative and appreciative skills, what Broudy termed the *arts of expression and impression.*

According to Broudy (1987), the fundamental importance of aesthetic education was further secured by the assumption that the imaginative perception of works of art develops a rich store of images that energizes and directs not only the experience of works of art but also the

[6]See Greer (1997) for Broudy's participation in the Getty's efforts to reform the teaching of art.

[7]Eisner's (1992) article on aesthetic education is identical to the one in the fifth edition of the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (1983).

perception and interpretation of other phenomena. The magnitude of Broudy's influence is evident in the philosophical guidance he provided for over 3 decades to numerous agencies, institutions, and programs concerned with art and aesthetic education. A special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (Vandenberg, 1992) contains discussions of his contributions to aesthetic education as well as a bibliography of his writings.

In a number of places, Maxine Greene (e.g., 1978, 1981) discusses the unique pleasure people seek to derive from works of art but are often unable to realize due to their lack of adequate knowledge and skill. Greene (1981) takes the goal of aesthetic education to be the development of aesthetic literacy, which she defines simply as the capacity to unlock the inherent values of works of art. She takes such values to consist in a greater perceptual awareness of the qualities and meanings of works of art, an expanded imagination and enhanced appreciation of ordinary life and natural phenomena, and an enlarged sense of personal freedom. Aesthetic education may also ameliorate the stringent technological imperatives of modern life and help individuals avoid stereotyped ways of thinking and feeling. She stresses that because aesthetic literacy implies knowledge of art and mastery of requisite interpretive skills, it is also necessary to foster a general grasp of aesthetics and a degree of critical acumen, both of which enable young persons to engage works of art more effectively. Above all, teachers must be sensitive to the subjectivity of individual experience. Generally speaking, gaining competency and sensitivity in the aesthetic domain allows persons to live more vivid, intense, and satisfying lives. The influence of Greene's thinking can be seen in her numerous writings about arts education and in her impact on the aesthetic education programs of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (Greene, 2001).

Smith's (1989b, 1991, 1992, 1995) interpretation of aesthetic education differs from most others in its explicit advocacy of a humanities point of view. He holds that because any well-developed sense of art presupposes not only some familiarity with artistic creation and performance but also acquaintance with aesthetic concepts, art history, and principles of criticism, teachers of the arts should strive for general knowledge in each of these areas. Smith considers works of art to be artistic statements that are distinctive for their dramatic forms of expression, their place in the history of artistic accomplishment, and their exemplification of the human impulse to impose significant form on unshaped material. He believes that works of art are prized particularly for their constitutive and revelatory values. By this he understands their capacity to infuse experience with aesthetic energy and to provide insight into a range of human and natural phenomena. He takes *reflective percipience* to designate the general goal of aesthetic education; it is a disposition that enables the young to traverse the world of art with a degree of intelligence, sensitivity, and autonomy. Discussions of Smith's contributions to aesthetic education theory, as well as a bibliography of his writings, can be found in a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (Hausman & Reimer, 2000).

David Swanger (1990), a philosopher of education and a poet, approaches his conception of aesthetic education through an examination of the relations of art, ideology, and society in a democratic culture. Ideology, understood as a set of beliefs that stubbornly resist change and the need to engage it are animating notions in Swanger's thought. Art's inherently radical and destabilizing power enables it effectively to exert pressure on the status quo, which it does by virtue of its freshness and creativity. By involving students in artistic activities under the guidance of a practicing teacher–artist, aesthetic education can encourage the young to seek and appreciate aesthetic values in other areas of life. As a secondary goal, Swanger suggests aesthetic education can help move a materialistic consumption-minded society toward a more conservation-conscious way of living that he terms *prosumption.*

In *Aesthetics and Education,* Michael J. Parsons and H. Gene Blocker (1993) combine educational and philosophical interests in explaining how aesthetics can contribute to the attainment of art education objectives. Aesthetics helps students understand the nature of

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aesthetic concepts as well as a number of conundrums that will enable them to develop their own views about the character, meaning, and value of art—in short, a rudimentary theory of art. In their discussion of multiculturalism, modernism, and postmodernism, the authors reject extreme positions in favor of more temperate and balanced stances. They defend the aesthetic as both a separate category and criterion of excellence and emphasize the importance of the arts for understanding the life of the emotions. The authors also stress the need for teachers to take into account stages of aesthetic development, a topic on which Parsons (1987) has done extensive research. The collaboration between a philosopher and an educational theorist that produced *Aesthetics and Education* was a distinguishing feature of volumes in a Getty publication venture. By bringing together scholars in the disciplines and specialists in art education, the series aimed to demonstrate the possibility of relating theory to practice.

H. B. Redfern (1986), a British philosopher who is familiar with the American literature on aesthetic education, assumes that aesthetic education has as its purpose the cultivation of aesthetic discrimination and judgment in the arts. Accordingly, the concepts of aesthetic experience, feeling, imagination, and critical evaluation figure importantly in her attempts to clarify a number of aesthetic issues. Redfern characterizes aesthetic experience as a special kind of imaginative attention that, owing to the nature of perception and the percipient's indispensable personal involvement, has both affective and cognitive dimensions. The refining of perception and judgment is in fact what makes aesthetic education possible. The basic pedagogic question then for any theory of aesthetic education is how to develop in students the disposition to regard things from an aesthetic point of view. More concerned to point out problems than to recommend practical curriculum suggestions, Redfern nonetheless questions whether young people should be allowed to leave school without having become acquainted with the great works of the cultural heritage or without having been instructed in the nature and application of critical standards.

By and large, contemporary American philosophers have not expressed interest in aesthetic education. Three notable exceptions are E. F. Kaelin, Monroe C. Beardsley, and Marcia M. Eaton.

Kaelin (1989) argues that art is important by virtue of the potential benefits that accrue when persons accept the imperatives of an aesthetic situation. Such a situation requires openness to the expressive surfaces of artworks and a willingness to permit their various aspects to control imagination and perception. In addition to reaping the rewards of intensified and clarified experiences, individuals also are helped in choosing their futures. They can do this by creating new forms of aesthetic value and by vicariously participating in the imaginative works of others. Kaelin further thinks that aesthetic experiences have potential for contributing to desirable social outcomes. For example, once persons, through the influence of aesthetic education, are disposed to enjoy aesthetic experiences, they may act to strengthen the institutions of the artworld, whose principal function he takes to be the preservation and replenishment of aesthetic value. Because individuals enter into aesthetic situations freely and solely for the sake of the unique advantages they derive from their interactions with artworks, art can lead them to a better appreciation of the value experiences available in an open society. They may also be made aware of the contrast in which their situation stands to the policies of totalitarian societies that closely monitor the creation and experience of art. Kaelin's thought is echoed in the aesthetic writings of Louis Lankford (1998) as well as in the guiding philosophy of the Getty-supported Southeast Institute for Education in the Visual Arts (see, e.g., Lindsey, 1998). Further discussions of Kaelin's contributions to aesthetic education theory as well as a bibliography of his writings can be found in a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (Spring, 1998).

In his discussion of the uses of aesthetic theory in the formulation of national and educational policy objectives, Beardsley (1982a) sets forth a concept of aesthetic welfare that subsumes a number of related ideas. The aesthetic welfare consists of the sum of all aesthetic experiences being undergone in a society at a given moment. The degree to which such welfare is being realized depends largely on the existence of aesthetic wealth within a society, which wealth is constituted by the totality of all aesthetically worthwhile objects as potential sources of aesthetic welfare. A democratic society should also be notable for aesthetic justice, which makes it necessary to provide through schooling and easy access to art opportunities for all individuals to participate in the life of culture. The existence of a condition of aesthetic welfare also presupposes individuals' trained aesthetic capacities to benefit from aesthetic experiences. To round out the picture there should be what Beardsley calls aesthetic auxiliaries, namely, teachers, cultural service workers, and others responsible for providing access to aesthetic value. Although teachers may find this account by itself useful in justifying and sketching the functions of aesthetic education, they may also find helpful Beardsley's discussion of the inherent values of art and his classification of types of critical statements and reasons. (1981, pp. 454–489).

In a later essay that discusses the relations of art and culture, Beardsley (1982) acknowledges a different kind of criticism, called cultural criticism, that typically takes interest in the nonaesthetic aspects of works of art. But he states that cultural criticism cannot avoid taking account of the judgments of aesthetic criticism. In order to do justice to each of a variety of cultural strands, cultural critics must be sensitive to the differences and divergences among them as identified and characterized by aesthetic criticism. Therefore, rather than eliminating or replacing aesthetic criticism, cultural criticism must embrace it and build upon it in order to "make room for, and preserve the distinctively aesthetic point of view (p. 372)."[8] Beardsley's influence is reflected in the writings of Smith (1989) and of those who found his analysis of aesthetic experience appropriate for conducting museum studies (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). Lankford's (2002) discussion of museum education compares Beardsley's, Csikszentmihalyi's, and Smith's understanding of aesthetic experience.

Yet another aesthetician interested in the theoretical and practical problems of aesthetic education is Marcia M. Eaton. In a number of books, articles, addresses, and workshops, she preserves what she thinks is worthwhile in the concept of aesthetic experience and demonstrates the practical uses of aesthetics. Essentially a contextualist, Eaton (1989) makes traditions, which she calls forms of life, central to her definitions of art, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic value. Traditions are an important part of what we think with during aesthetic experience because they not only provide the language for talking about art but also, in some instances, determine the manner in which we treat it. Hence, something is a work of art if it is a humanly made artifact that is experienced in such a way as to direct the attention of respondents to features considered worthwhile in aesthetic traditions. In other words, aesthetic experience involves taking delight in those intrinsic properties of artworks that traditionally have been considered worth perceiving and reflecting upon. A work's aesthetic value, it follows, resides in those of its qualities that traditions have stamped capable of rewarding interest and contemplation and of inducing delight. Eaton takes the aesthetic seriously and believes that having aesthetic experiences enriches life "not only by providing pleasure but by sensitizing, vitalizing, and inspiring human beings" (p. 9). In a work that refines and synthesizes earlier writings, Eaton (2001) discusses the close relationships between aesthetic and ethical merit and the significance of such relations for policies that would sustain a sound arts education, a healthier environment and community life, and aesthetic life generally. "A person leads an aesthetic life," she writes, "if he or she, through perception and reflection, tries to organize

[8]For other examples of his educational writings, see Beardsley (1966b, 1970a). See also Smith (1984) for the evolution of Beardsley's thinking about the nature of aesthetic experience.

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life in terms of patterns of intrinsic properties similar to those displayed by works of art, and delights in this reflection for its own sake (p. 113)."[9]

This *Handbook* is devoted primarily to matters of research and policy in education in the visual arts, but is worth pointing out that the field of music education has also produced a substantive literature on aesthetic education (e.g., Leonhard & House, 1959; Mark, 1999; MENC, 1971; Schwadron, 1967), and it finds its most systematic treatment in the writings of Bennett Reimer (1989, 1992). In a chapter in an NSSE yearbook, Reimer (1992) states that the purpose of aesthetic education is the development of the capacity for aesthetic knowing in its creating, performing, and responding aspects. Aesthetic cognition, a type of knowing that is sui generis, deserves a place among the important ways of knowing because it provides access to works of art that are exemplary expressions of subjective reality. Believing that the structures and forms of artworks capture the internal dynamics of feeling in a manner not available to other modes of knowing, Reimer describes four kinds of knowing that have pedagogical relevance. Two of these types constitute the essence of aesthetic knowing ("knowing of or within" and "knowing how") while the other two are auxiliary kinds ("knowing that" and "knowing why"). Music education is effective, claims Reimer, when it encourages, improves, and enhances not only musical reaction but also musical creativity and a serious understanding of music; and is most effective when it disposes the young to value the qualities and import of music. Further discussions of Reimer's contributions to aesthetic education and a bibliography of his writings can be found in a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (Richmond & Webster, 1999). The field of music education has also produced two handbooks of research comparable to this one (see, e.g., Colwell, 1992; Colwell & Richardson, 2002).

BEYOND AESTHETIC EDUCATION AS ART EDUCATION

The foregoing review of contemporary writings about aesthetic education centered primarily on domain interpretations of aesthetic education that, while paying some attention to the appreciation of nature and the environment, tended to concentrate on the teaching of the arts. Another literature takes a broader view of aesthetic education. Beyond respect for the continuing influence of traditional ideas, it reveals a keen interest in nature, the environment, and the arts of everyday living, as well as an eagerness to understand a spectrum of educational phenomena from artistic and aesthetic perspectives.

Environmental and Natural Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education

Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson (1998) indicate the spectrum of theoretical and practical issues that, depending on how they are resolved, can affect the direction of theoretical inquiry and, it may be assumed, policymaking for aesthetic education. Key questions revolve around the tenability of a distinction between environmental aesthetics and natural aesthetics and whether environmental aesthetics is the more encompassing notion. Moreover, if there are fundamental differences between experiences of the environment and those of nature, do they support an argument for two separate theoretical orientations? Also, what role should aesthetic appreciation play? Are concepts applicable to the appreciation of works of art also applicable to the appreciation of the environment and nature? Still further, what is the relationship between aesthetic and ethical values in policy decisions about such matters? Might aesthetic considerations contribute toward moral ends? There is evidence, the authors say, that an environment rich in positive aesthetic value can augment a sense of well-being in individuals

[9]For further examples of aesthetics applied to educational situations, see Eaton (1992, 1994a, 1994b).

and reduce physical and social ills—an important consideration, if credible, for policymakers to take into account. Finally, can the various areas of nature—woodlands, bodies of water, geological formations—be said to constitute genres, in the way we speak of genres in art? Contributors to the special issue coedited by Berleant and Carlson (1998) discuss the aesthetics of scenic and nonscenic nature, the character of appreciation and the role of imagination in the experience of the environment and nature, fact and fiction in talk about the environment and nature, and special topics such as forests and gardens.[10]

In introducing a symposium on natural aesthetics in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Stanley Godlovitch (1999) distinguishes between cultural and natural aesthetics; the former takes humanly fashioned artworks as the primary objects of inquiry and the latter an array of qualities that compose the phenomena of nature. Given the diminishing reserves of unmodified nature, the need is ever more urgent to preserve and replenish nature's qualities. Godlovitch (1999) assigns natural aesthetics the task of exploring issues involved in defining aesthetic contact with nature. Godlovitch thinks that the significance of such inquiry to aesthetic education is clear: "Insofar as aesthetic education aims further to enlarge our appreciation of the value of the world we inhabit, natural aesthetics reminds us of the irreplaceable riches outside our urban centers" (p. 2). Contributors to the symposium addressed such topics as the expressive powers of gardens, creativity in nature, natural sounds, and the appreciation of natural beauty.

Godlovitch's belief that there still remains much to be done in the area of natural aesthetics does not diminishe the value of work that has already been done and that may be said to have laid the foundations for general, natural, and environmental aesthetics. For example, Yrjö Sepänmaa (1986) constructed a model for environmental aesthetics and indicated at some length its practical applications. The model shows how the environment may be depicted and understood as an aesthetic object and points out the need for ethical as well as aesthetic judgments in the framing of environmental and educational policy. In a section on applied environmental aesthetics, Sepänmaa takes aesthetic education to be an umbrella concept that covers both art and environmental education, the common objective of which is the development of taste (p. 139). Having adopted Beardsley's (1981) scheme of critical statements, he thinks this goal can be approached via proper descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations of the environment. Marcia Eaton (1989, 2001) also discusses the uses of aesthetic theory in studies of the environment. She bases her argument on the sort of delight believed to be a major attribute of aesthetic experience. She then extends her definitions of art and aesthetic experience to the natural environment and highlights the distinctive qualities and pleasures inherent in experiencing it aesthetically. Also of interest are Eaton's comments about flaws found in environmental studies that rely primarily on legal, psychological, and quantitative methods in formulating policy recommendations. These shortcomings can be corrected only by complementing such methods with the aesthetic and ethical values distinctive of humanistic perspectives.

Aesthetic Dimensions of Education

Readers scanning the literature of education from the last decades of the 20th century will perhaps be struck by the intensity of efforts to articulate the qualitative aspects of practically all facets of schooling. One explanation interprets these efforts as a corrective to behavioral learning theory and its misapplication of quantitative criteria to features of teaching and learning that are resistant to such forms of measurement. Another suggests that a proclivity for the qualitative is a manifestation of a culture that, for better or worse, increasingly relies on aesthetic

[10]See Carlson (2000) for the appreciation of nature, art, and architecture; and Carlson (2001), for curriculum recommendations for teaching an appreciation of landscape.

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criteria for making judgments in a variety of contexts, aesthetic and otherwise (Barzun, 1974). Whatever the reasons, interest in the qualitative dimensions of learning is evident in Eisner's (1992) encyclopedia article on aesthetic education. After alluding to the history of aesthetics and defining aesthetics as philosophical inquiry into the nature of the arts and natural phenomena, Eisner discusses the influence of Herbert Read, John Dewey, Susanne Langer, Rudolf Arnheim, and Nelson Goodman on theories of aesthetic education. He discusses Langer's belief in the potential of artworks for presenting meaningful forms of feeling and notes Arnheim and Goodman for their views on the capacity of works of art to generate insight and understanding. In discussing Read and Dewey, Eisner draws attention to their broad conceptions of the aesthetic. Examples are Read's notion that artistic making is not confined to the arts but occurs whenever there is a satisfactory exercise of skill, sensibility, and imagination; and Dewey's insistence that experience may be regarded as art whenever its components have a dramatic organization. Although Eisner has contributed significantly to domain interpretations of art education, a sizable portion of his writing as an educational theorist has been devoted to illuminating facets of education from artistic and aesthetic viewpoints (see, e.g., Eisner, 1991). Endeavors like these, in contrast to domain interpretations that are more restrictive, may be regarded as reflections on the aesthetic foundations of education generally. Other chapters in this handbook deal with the qualitative aspects of education in greater detail.

Vernon Howard (1992), a philosopher and performing artist, borrows from both classical and modern philosophy in his variations on the theme of cultivating the sensibilities, an educational objective that he thinks has been neglected in learning theory. Such fostering of sensibilities, he believes, is possible in any domain of human development and constitutes "a kind of continuing 'aesthetic education'" (p. 152) that operates through a variety of perceptual and symbolic activities characteristic of the distinctively human. Howard organizes his argument around such concepts as imagination (the most important), practice, example, and reflection. Although indebted to Schiller and Dewey, Howard gives a special twist to his discussion with extrapolations from modern philosophical and psychological studies of the mind.[11]

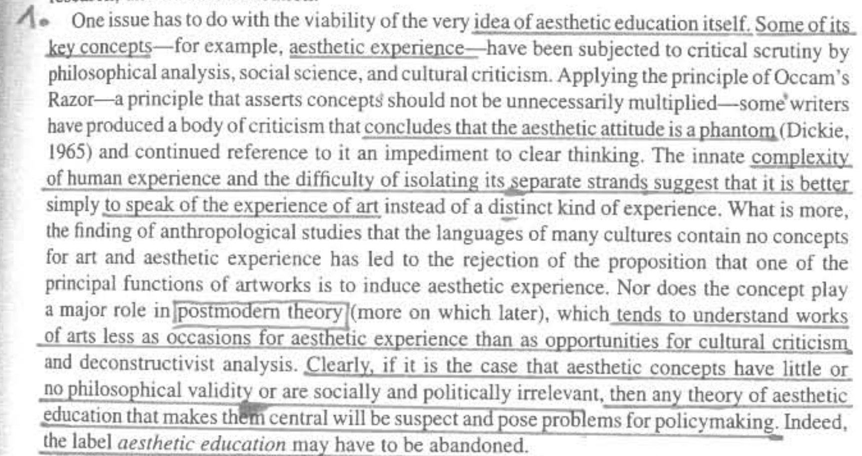
Donald Arnstine (1967, 1970, 1995) sees a fundamental similarity between aesthetic experiences and learning that he thinks is particularly important in developing new dispositions. Learning that approximates aesthetic experience is distinguished from rote learning and is educationally significant because it requires reconciling discrepancies and overcoming obstacles put in the path of the learner. Arnstine acknowledges that Dewey's method of intelligence is one fruitful way to develop dispositions, but he thinks having aesthetic experiences is another. He understands aesthetic experience in terms of the perception of form (essentially unified aspects of design and composition) and the intrinsic satisfaction such perception can afford. Because the experience of form not only is highly gratifying but also leads to the recognition of discrepancies between it and one's own ordinary experience, Arnstine speculates about the use of an aesthetic-experience model for learning in numerous educational contexts. Such a model, for example, permits seeing teaching as an art and teachers as dramatists and dramatic actors (cf. Travers, 1974, 1979). Although urging more frequent recourse to the arts throughout the curriculum, Arnstine clearly believes that a domain interpretation of art education is less important than accentuating the various aesthetic aspects of schooling. *Aesthetic Concepts and Education* (Smith, 1970) contains several essays along comparable lines, including Arnstine's. Authors indicate ways in which aesthetic concepts such as aesthetic experience, aesthetic argument and judgment, performance, play, medium, creativity, metaphor, and intention can illuminate various aspects of teaching and learning. A number of writers, however

[11] Also see Howard's (1986) imaginatively composed letter by Schiller to a later age (cf. Grossman, 1968, and Kimball, 2001, on Schiller's educational thinking). Kimball's article is representative of contemporary reevaluations of traditional aesthetic ideas.

(e.g., Beardsley, 1970, pp. 19–20; Gotshalk, 1968, p. 49; and Smith, 1970, p. 62), caution that the application of aesthetics to teaching and learning should not be pushed to the points at which analogies, metaphors, and parallels begin to break down. But the problem here, and ultimately a question for policymaking, is how much weight policymakers should give to nondomain, in contrast to domain, interpretations of aesthetic education.

QUESTIONS, ISSUES, AND RECONCILIATIONS

The questions and issues that bear on policymaking for aesthetic education are not necessarily unique to that subject area. Yet aesthetic education, as was pointed out earlier, requires special consideration because it has two major literatures—one that advocates domain and one that advocates nondomain interpretations. The following discussion will confine itself to domain interpretations of aesthetic education. They are more representative of contemporary writings about the field and also lend themselves more readily to effective policymaking. It is simpler, moeover, to make recommendations for a subject area than for something that is diffused throughout the curriculum. Although this restriction makes matters more manageable, there are still theoretical and practical issues that, depending on how they are resolved, will affect the substance of policy thinking. Thoughtful and responsible statements of aims, for example, are systematically tied to questions about curriculum design, teaching and learning, evaluation, research, and teacher education.



One issue has to do with the viability of the very idea of aesthetic education itself. Some of its key concepts—for example, aesthetic experience—have been subjected to critical scrutiny by philosophical analysis, social science, and cultural criticism. Applying the principle of Occam's Razor—a principle that asserts concepts should not be unnecessarily multiplied—some writers have produced a body of criticism that concludes that the aesthetic attitude is a phantom (Dickie, 1965) and continued reference to it an impediment to clear thinking. The innate complexity of human experience and the difficulty of isolating its separate strands suggest that it is better simply to speak of the experience of art instead of a distinct kind of experience. What is more, the finding of anthropological studies that the languages of many cultures contain no concepts for art and aesthetic experience has led to the rejection of the proposition that one of the principal functions of artworks is to induce aesthetic experience. Nor does the concept play a major role in postmodern theory (more on which later), which tends to understand works of arts less as occasions for aesthetic experience than as opportunities for cultural criticism and deconstructivist analysis. Clearly, if it is the case that aesthetic concepts have little or no philosophical validity or are socially and politically irrelevant, then any theory of aesthetic education that makes them central will be suspect and pose problems for policymaking. Indeed, the label *aesthetic education* may have to be abandoned.

Critiques of the aesthetic, however, are not the whole story. A serious body of argument opposes the elimination of traditional aesthetic concepts. The feeling is that something important is lost when theory overemphasizes social and political considerations at the expense of aesthetic values. This realization has generated a revival of interest in the idea of aesthetic experience and its continuing relevance to aesthetic education (Eaton & Moore, 2002). Eaton's writings on the importance of the aesthetic have been mentioned. Noël Carroll (1999, 2000, 2001) is another writer who believes that aesthetic experience is neither myth nor phantom. On the contrary, he claims it satisfies a basic human need and has evolutionary significance.[12] And in a variant of postmodern thought that departs from typical interpretations, George Shusterman (1992, 1997) advances a pragmatist aesthetics that recalls the ideas of Schiller and

[12] See Dissanayake (1988) for anthropological evidence of art's necessity.

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Dewey. He recommends giving serious attention to the kinds of aesthetic experiences provided not only by works of high culture (by which he sets some store) but also by works of popular culture and the arts of living.

T. J. Diffey (1986) likewise holds that the idea of aesthetic experience deserves systematic clarification and should not be summarily dismissed as something empty and nonsensical. Michael H. Mitias (1986, 1988) has further written extensively about the importance of the concept. In short, after a period during which traditional aesthetic ideas had come under a cloud, efforts are being made to salvage what is worthwhile in them—with, to be sure, some refinements in analysis and its areas of application. Policymakers and educational theorists therefore need not fear endorsing interpretations of arts education that feature aesthetic experience.

Even if, as a substantive literature suggests, the master concepts of aesthetic education are viable, there are still policy issues regarding aesthetic education's basic purposes. Nor can reflection on the objectives of aesthetic education ignore the functions of cultural institutions, the state and health of the art world, popular standards of taste, and so forth. In short, it is still necessary to answer the sorts of questions Broudy asked at mid-20th century.

Most important is that attempts to clarify the purposes of aesthetic education—that is, the benefits expected to accrue from such education—should be based on some understanding of the inherent values of art. Any such understanding has implications not only for methods of art instruction but also for research and teacher preparation. If, for example, it is proposed that the arts should be taught primarily for nonarts outcomes—say, the development of basic reading and mathematical skills, the amelioration of social problems, or the promotion of a political agenda—then assessment and research will have to discover the relationships between instruction in the arts and the realization of such extrinsic objectives. On the other hand, if it is believed that the arts should be taught for their inherent values, for the distinctive advantages that derive from studying and experiencing works of art, then policy for aesthetic education will reflect a clear conception of such values. Revealing in this connection is Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland's discussion in this *Handbook* of the distinction between core (aesthetic) and nonart values and the authors' report on what research shows on cognitive transfer—and, more significantly, what it fails to show—about the often-claimed efficacy of arts education for the development of a range of basic skills.

But if the core values of art are its inherent values, what are inherent values? In his answer to this question, Beardsley (1981, pp. 571–577) distinguishes between the more immediate and the more distant effects of art, that is, two kinds of inherent value. The more immediate values of art may be understood as the refinement of perception and discrimination and the development of imagination. More distant values may be said to consist of certain desirable psychological outcomes as well as the fostering of mutual sympathy and a readiness to shape human life on the model of art and aesthetic experience. The actualization of such values, however, if they are to qualify as the inherent values of *art*, must derive from the experience of the distinctive aesthetic features, qualities, and import of artworks. At a time when theorists of art education increasingly try to justify art education programs in terms of nonaesthetic and nonarts values (see, e.g., Clark, 1996; Efland, Stuhr, & Freedman; 1996; and Hutchens & Suggs, 1997), policymakers must ask themselves whether too high a cost is being paid in sacrificing art's inherent values. The question of the purpose of art and aesthetic education may thus come down to supporting aesthetic literacy versus promoting cultural criticism.

Exponents of art education who favor introducing students to cultural criticism or, alternatively, immersing students in cultural studies, believe themselves to be in the vanguard of a postmodern era. Because their position conflicts in major respects with the view holding that aesthetic education should strive to realize the inherent values of art as discussed earlier, some steps toward understanding what is meant by postmodernism would seem to be in order. Attaining such understanding is not easy. In his discussion of postmodern art, Christopher

Jencks (1987, p. 7) states that postmodernists themselves often do not know what the term means, and Irving Sandler's (1996) survey of postmodern art reveals a striking diversity of styles. Likewise, Linda Hutcheon (1993) says about postmodernism "that there is little agreement on the reasons for its existence or on evaluation of its effects" (p. 612). Interpretations of postmodernism, for example, tend to vary according to the national and cultural backgrounds of writers—say, French, German, or American.

In an effort to discern some common denominators, Hutcheon notes that the term *postmodernism* seems to refer to a period of artistic, cultural, and scholarly activity since the 1960s that represents either a continuation of late modernism or a rupture with modernist assumptions about such basic notions as knowledge, reality, meaning, truth, objectivity, communication, and value. The term postmodernism may refer variously to eclecticism in artistic creation and performance, the cultural logic of late capitalism, the condition of knowledge in an information age, a shift in emphasis in the kinds of philosophical problems studied, and the literature of an inflated economy. Characteristic of postmodern analysis is its use of standard linguistic conventions and traditional forms in order to subvert them. This strategy, says Hutcheon, combines both complicity and subversion with a liberal dose of irony and parody that often thwarts comprehension. With the objective of dissolving traditional hierarchies of value, she also points out that postmodernism further aims to undermine an array of conventional distinctions, for example, between genres, art forms, theory and art, and high and popular culture.

One strand of postmodernist thought, deconstructionism, is worth mentioning for its pronounced hostility to questions of value. One consequence is that discussions of the excellence and substance of works of art cannot even arise. Indeed, a judgment of something's being "great" is often considered risible. In commenting on deconstruction, S. J. Wilsmore (1987) goes so far as to say that "deconstructionist skepticism, taken to its logical conclusion, would deny the existence of art altogether. It ceases to express itself within the artistic forms of humanism, and ends in nihilism" (p. 338).

Despite all this, the posture of postmodernism has been enthusiastically endorsed by a number of art educators. David Carrier (1998), however, who reviewed several of their books sympathetically, was nonetheless prompted to say that "the problem with almost all discussions of postmodernism is that they are singularly ill-adapted to popularization" (p. 101). The premises of postmodernism, he writes, erects formidable obstacles to educational adaptations not only by virtue of its variety of its meanings and modes of expression but also through its denial of the possibility of objective judgment and the pursuit of truth. Carrier further notes that postmodernist art educators cast teachers in the role of agents of social change, but this is a burden many of them may be unwilling and unable to assume under the conditions of contemporary schooling. In short, postmodern interpretations of art education are prone to serious oversimplification. Such an assessment, along with those by Jencks and Hutcheon, helps to explain why Smith (1989b, pp. 89–103) agrees with critics of postmodernist theory who claim that it is excessively given to questionable hypotheses, often impenetrable prose, inherent contradictions, nihilism, and in some cases sheer dogmatism. In summary, postmodernist thinking has the potential for confounding, even for dissolving, domain interpretations of aesthetic education that are predicated on the retention of important distinctions and hierarchies of value.

Discussions of the relationships between policies for domain interpretations of aesthetic education and some of the most prevalent forms of contemporary thought are typically adversarial. Yet, more relaxed reactions to postmodernism can be found in the literature. Joseph Margolis (1986), for example, suggests that deconstruction is merely a cautionary tale that underlines the complex relations between language and reality but does not do much of anything else; it leaves the lives of individuals unaffected. We must, he says, keep doing what we have

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always done and must keep doing. Contra postmodernism, George Steiner (1985) continues to believe "that there are interpretations of works and meanings that can be perceived, analyzed and chosen over others," and that masterworks of the cultural heritage "exist in a hierarchy of recognition which extends from the classical summits to the trivial and mendacious" (p. 1275). Annette Barnes (1988) also thinks that it is possible to justify interpretations of artworks, albeit within a given culture that shares certain forms of life, customs, and traditions. Thus, we can "assume that we have better or worse understandings of texts—correct and incorrect understandings, not merely more or less ingenious or creative or workable ones—including texts of authors, critics, and metacritics" (pp. 104–105).[13] Similarly, it is still thought possible to disagree about the quality and value of experiences. Martin Schralli (2002), moreover, while recognizing an anticipation of postmodernist stances in Dewey's abstention from a quest for certainty, nonetheless finds the seeds of a constructive postmodernism in Dewey's description of what is involved in having a special kind of experience. Such experiences are "vital experiences in the ongoing experience of human beings that stand out" and "rise to such a level of felt integrity and completeness that they become remarkable and durably memorable" (p. 62). In other words and contrary to deconstructionist thinking, judgments of value remain tenable.

What is more, it may be the case that certain divergences between conventional and postmodernist views are bridgeable. Parsons and Blocker (1993, pp. 62–65) have perhaps pointed the way. Having clarified the relationships between facts and interpretations, reality and appearance, and objectivity and subjectivity—distinctions blurred or denied in postmodernist theory—they take the following view. Differences between truth and falsity and between reality and appearance are discernible relative to particular situations, and such discernment forms a basis for meaningful communication. Skepticism about the ultimate validity of such distinctions is therefore no excuse for avoiding the effort to recognize artistic traditions and their usefulness for gaining insight into the present. "Teaching," say the authors, "has always been the attempt to pass on our best understanding of the present so that our students will make sense of the future" (p. 65).

Resistance to the idea of aesthetic education comes from other quarters as well. Defenders of the status quo persuaded of the value of their own outlooks understandably feel no need to change their views. Others have criticized aesthetic education on the grounds that one of its key concepts, aesthetic experience, is too subjective for quantitative measurement (Efland, 1992). Yet, it is still the case that inferences about internal states of mind are commonly made and accepted as defensible. Eaton (1989) and Csikzentmihalyi (1990, 1997) are two writers who believe it is possible to assess whether a person has taken an aesthetic point of view toward something.

What then can policymaking for aesthetic education do in a period in which, as Samuel Hope puts it in his chapter in this section, writers about aims are at cross-purposes or, as Barzun (2000, p. xvii) has suggested, when culture is stalled? Considering the extremism and acrimony that often attend discourse about divergent viewpoints, the prospects for working out reasonable compromises might not appear to be good. Although the characterization is perhaps slightly overstated, the dispositions of traditionalists and progressivists seem irreconcilable; postmodernists and modernists often are not on speaking terms; proponents of high culture seldom have anything in common with those of popular culture; and defenders of the artistic accomplishments of Western civilization are assailed by its detractors. That there should be

[13] In deconstructivist writings, the term *text* initially implied the texts of literature. Eventually, however, other works of art were also so regarded, with similar assumptions being applicable to them.

disagreement about purposes is understandable in a democratic society that assigns the control of schools to states and local communities. But unchecked proliferation of options and ill will produce deadlock.[14]

The picture, however, is not totally bleak. Intimations of a possible rapprochement, or at least a workable approximation of it, may be detected in the literature of aesthetic education reviewed in this chapter. One prospect is offered by Parson and Blocker's effort to bridge differences between modernists and postmodernists and by Schiralli's propositions for a constructive postmodernism. Another is found in Kaelin's emphasis on the values of aesthetic communication and on the potential of aesthetic experience to ensure the proper functioning of cultural institutions. Also suggestive is Beardsley's concept of aesthetic welfare and his attempt to reconcile cultural criticism and aesthetic criticism, as are, some limitations notwithstanding, the national standards for arts education (MENC, 1994). All offer pathways and thus contribute substance to policy deliberations. Extreme postmodernist criticism of the deconstructivist type, however, is a cul-de-sac, as are social-science and cultural-studies conceptions of art education. If carried to their logical conclusion, the latter could result in the transformation of aesthetic education into sociology—an outcome about which, among others, Anita Silvers (1999) and John A. Stinespring (2001) have registered serious reservations.

In conclusion, although the preceding discussion of questions and issues in aesthetic education may have contained some judgments and alluded to some preferences, the primary concern of this chapter has been indicate the viability of the idea of aesthetic education and to present the questions and issues it poses for policymaking. What is promising at the beginning of a new century is the presence of features in the contemporary theoretical landscape that suggest continuing discussion about the meaning and nature of aesthetic education. Among these are the increasing volume of substantive writings on the subject of aesthetic education, the continued publication of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* that serves as a serious forum for writers, and the creation of a committee on aesthetic education within the American Society for Aesthetics.

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[14] The notion of stalemate or a stalled culture, writes Barzun (2000), helps to explain "a floating hostility to things as they are," that in turn "inspires the repeated use of the dismissive prefixes *anti-* and *post* (anti-art, post-modernism) and the pressure to *reinvent* this or that institution"(p. xvii). Also see Smith's (2001) Culture in a Bind. *Arts Education Policy Review 102*(3), 37–39, review of Barzun's (2000) *From Dawn to Decadence*.

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