

19. As with any claim applied generally to art, there will be exceptions, such as the attempt by "conceptual art" to achieve aesthetic meaning through content alone or by emphasizing content. We can understand what this attempt entails, and admire its aspiration, only on the basis of a generality to which it aspires to be an exception. Generalities should be construed, then, to apply "in most cases" or "in practically all cases," given the historical propensity (or compulsion) of artists to challenge any generality about art. Aestheticians, driven to generalize, attempt to fend off artists' attacks on generalizations by settling for concepts such as "art enough," or "when" rather than "what" art is, or "symptoms" rather than "preconditions" of art. When generalizations are understood to be "generally applicable" they allow us to make general sense of phenomena—including those phenomena which challenge the generalizations.

20. Compare the treatment in Ralph A. Smith, *The Sense of Art*, chapter 2, in which the views of Beardsley, Osborne, Goodman, and Kaelin are brought to bear on the issues I am discussing here.

21. Chapter I of Beardsley's *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* speculates on the origin of the concept of art.

22. For a detailed and exhaustive treatment of the many meanings of "feeling," "affect," "emotion," and their relevance to the experience of art, see W. Ann Stokes, "Intelligence and Feeling" (Ph.D. diss., Department of Music Education, Northwestern University, 1990).

23. For an early yet trenchant discussion of the gap between experienced feeling and conceptual language, see Otto Baensch, "Art and Feeling," in *Reflections on Art*, ed. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961).

24. The literature on this issue is so extensive that one hesitates to select examples. For a historical overview, see Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* under the index listings "Expression" and "Emotion." See also, Marcia M. Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1988), under the index listings "emotion," "feeling," "expression," "formalism," "formal properties," "intrinsic properties," "regional qualities," "representation," "resemblance," "subject matter."

25. Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 379-386.

26. Stokes, "Intelligence and Feeling," chapter 8.

27. Compare Dewey's discussion of this point in *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), p. 46, in which he deplors the fact that there is no word in English which includes both aspects of involvements with art.

28. See Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, pp. 335-344, in which he richly describes the role of the body in aesthetic knowing.

29. One need only browse in *Art Education*, the journal of the National Art Education Association, over the past half dozen years, to find article after article devoted to accusations and defenses on this issue.

30. For a helpful explanation of how these processes occur, see Harry S. Broudy, "Tacit Knowing and Aesthetic Education," in *Aesthetic Concepts and Education*, ed. Ralph A. Smith (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 77-106.

31. My arguments for why a comprehensive arts curriculum would be desirable, and suggestions for how it might be carried out, are given in Bennett Reimer, "A Comprehensive Arts Curriculum Model," *Design for Arts in Education* 90, no. 6 (July/August 1989), pp. 2-16.

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CHAPTER III

Toward Percipience: A Humanities Curriculum for Arts Education

RALPH A. SMITH

When we perceive the arts as "humanities" it is crucial that we interpret them as a demand that we pause, and in their light, reexamine our own realities, values, and dedications, for the arts not only present life concretely, stimulate the imagination, and integrate the different cultural elements of a society or of an epoch, they also present models for our imitation or rejection, visions and aspirations which mutely solicit our critical response.

—Albert William Levi

The major theme of this volume, cognition and arts education, is predicated on the belief that art is a basic form of human understanding. Although it may share features with other forms of knowing, artistic expression is distinctive enough to be appreciated for its own characteristic values. This view of art achieved prominence in the modern era with the writings of the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945). His *An Essay on Man* popularized a conception of knowledge that features six symbolic forms of human culture: myth, language, religion, history, science, and art. These forms of human culture constituted the characteristic work of man and defined what Cassirer called the circle of humanity. "A 'philosophy of man' would therefore be a philosophy which would give us insight into the fundamental structure of each of these human activities, and which at the same time would enable us to understand them as an organic whole."¹

The idea that there are varieties of knowing is now commonplace in conceptions of human understanding and learning. The theoretical

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assumptions and terminology of writers may vary, but the root idea remains the same: there are realms of meaning, ways of knowing, types of intelligence.² What is particularly significant about such theorizing so far as this volume is concerned is that art is increasingly accepted as a basic form of understanding. It seems only reasonable, then, to say that one of the principal functions of schooling should be the provision of instruction in aesthetic knowing. Such insight into the fundamental structure of art as we possess would provide the basic content or subject matter for teaching while the psychology of human development would yield suggestions for scheduling appropriate learning activities. Since other contributors to this volume discuss arts education from the point of view of human development, I will concentrate on the substantive dimensions of aesthetic understanding.

First, however, it will be helpful to indicate the basic situation around which we should organize teaching and learning in the arts. This situation is one in which persons confront works of art for the sake of realizing the worthwhile benefits such works are capable of providing. Typically we find works of art in a cultural institution called the art world; hence we may understand arts education as preparation for traversing the world of art with intelligence and sensitivity, which in turn presupposes capacities and inclinations I shall call "percipience." It follows that the goal of arts education is percipience in matters of art and culture.³ The learner, in turn, is appropriately viewed as a potentially reflective observer and art-world sojourner. I think a perceptive stance is appropriate because it is the one most persons take toward works of art in our type of society. To be sure, a number of theorists and practitioners continue to stress competence in creative and performing activities as the cornerstone of arts education. I, too, think such competence is important, but I view it as but one of several components of aesthetic learning that contribute to the development of aesthetic percipience.

One might think it a relatively straightforward matter to organize the components of aesthetic learning. But given contemporary cultural circumstances it is not. Pluralism reigns, and a multiplicity of objectives is accepted by many as a professional fact of life. How then does one develop a context for responding to art under such conditions? I believe a humanities interpretation of arts education can not only address certain cultural and educational needs of contemporary society but also feature what is necessary for sensitive and tactful encounters with works of art. Accordingly, this chapter describes two types of objectives for arts education: the more general objectives of

the humanities and the more specific objectives of arts education. The former are a response to the cultural crisis of our times that requires a restatement of the role of the humanities in the human career. The latter concern the more practical matters of teaching, curriculum design, and assessment.

A. The Humanities Today

Albert W. Levi, whose epigraph appears at the opening of this chapter, emphasizes that the humanities cannot be dismissed. They are eternally relevant because they are the liberal arts of communication, continuity, and criticism. He associates communication with languages and literatures, continuity with history, and criticism with philosophy in its ordinary sense of critical reasoning. This is Levi's redefinition of the traditional humanities for today's world. How did he arrive at it and why did he feel the need for reconceptualization?

Levi's writings on the topic are a response to many of the problems besetting contemporary society: the need to restore historical memory and to recall the ideal of human excellence; the need of a democratic, egalitarian society to come to terms with an essentially aristocratic tradition of learning; the need to articulate a plausible relation between the taught and the lived humanities; and the need to defend the humanities against their newest rival, the social sciences. In responding to these challenges, Levi, a strong believer in historical continuity, recalls two ways of interpreting the humanities and, in Hegelian fashion, suggests a third option that combines both.⁴

From the tradition of the Renaissance, Levi recalls a substantive definition of the humanities as subject matters. This definition is consistent with the tendency of Renaissance thinkers to recover and transmit the literary texts of antiquity. From the earlier tradition of the Middle Ages, he recalls a procedural or functional definition of the humanities that construed them as skills or ways of organizing and understanding human experience. These skills ultimately became known as the liberal arts. Levi's third option consists of a synthesis of these two traditions—the Renaissance and the Medieval—in which he defines the humanities procedurally as the liberal arts of communication, continuity and criticism, and substantively as languages and literatures, history, and philosophy. Thus almost two decades ago Levi foresaw, and steered to avoid, the trap of educational formalism into which E. D. Hirsch, Jr., thinks American schooling has fallen:

that is, the tendency to separate the teaching of skills from specific content or background knowledge.⁵

Now, if we subsume the creative and fine arts under languages and literatures, which is surely permissible inasmuch as we commonly speak of artistic expression as aesthetic communication, then we will have assimilated another "c"—the arts of creation (in which I include performance)—to Levi's redefinition. This emendation enables us to say that the humanities are indispensable and eternally relevant because they are the arts of creation, communication, continuity, and criticism. Teaching the arts as humanities would mean bringing to bear at appropriate times and junctures the ideas and procedures of these arts. Works of art would be understood as artistic statements created in the stream of time whose meanings and significance are disclosed through historical and art criticism. The basic problem for a humanities interpretation of arts education would be the orchestration of these arts of thought and action for purposes of aesthetic learning and curriculum design.

Ultimately, pedagogical considerations center on what is involved in understanding and appreciating works of art. And of any work of art we may ask the following questions:

1. Who made it?
2. How was it made?
3. When was it made?
4. For whom was it made?
5. What is its message or meaning, if any?
6. What is its style?
7. What is the quality of experience it affords?
8. What was its place in the culture in which it was made?
9. What is its place in the culture or society of today?
10. What peculiar problems does it present to understanding and appreciation?⁶

An awareness of these questions and a degree of competency in answering them are important in building a well-developed sense of art in the young. A good sense of art is, in turn, prerequisite to engaging works of art with intelligence and sensitivity and to traversing the world of art in a way that makes students less dependent on the judgments and value preferences of others. Armed with the perspectives required to address these questions, young people can venture into the art world with a measure of autonomy. What kind of a curriculum would be congruent with cultivating such percipience?

2. A Humanities Curriculum for Arts Education

In the following discussion "percipience curriculum" and "humanities curriculum" are used interchangeably. A percipience curriculum extends from kindergarten through twelfth grade and is part of a program of required general studies for all students. If, with Cassirer, we believe that art is a basic symbolic form of human culture, then all members of a democratic society deserve the opportunity to reap its benefits. This belief gives meaning to the idea of becoming human through art.⁷ I further assume that efforts to cultivate aesthetic percipience will have different accents at various points along the curriculum path. Aesthetic learning should also be cumulative in the sense that early learning should be foundational for what comes later. I am not recommending a lockstep series of highly specific behavioral objectives, but I am saying that it pays to know the lay of the land before exploring it in greater detail. Assessment of aesthetic learning will thus estimate the extent to which a learner's framework for understanding and experiencing art is expanding and developing in appropriate ways. Once more, I take for granted that the setting of learning tasks should be congruent with what we know about human learning and development.

I've said that arts education is concerned with whatever is necessary to get persons to confront a work of visual, auditory, or verbal art with a well-developed sense of art for the sake of realizing the benefits that works of art are capable of providing. Let us further supplement this image of a reflective percipient with that of the curriculum as itinerary and the aesthetic learner as potential art-world sojourner. Art-world sojourners should know, of course, not only where to seek aesthetic value but also how to realize it. True, when in the privacy of one's home we view a painting, listen to music, or read a poem, we don't ordinarily imagine ourselves as participating in the art world, which has a public, institutional connotation. Yet many of the same conditions and problems obtain whether we attend to a work in a private or in a more social setting. However, before we can prepare art-world sojourners we must know what it is that works of art do best. We must be clear about the special role they play in the human career. After all, why traverse the art world in the first place? Without coherent ideas about such matters, arts education will suffer from lack of purpose and the question of justification will go begging.

3. The Values of Art

Works of art are valuable for their capacity to bring about a high degree of aesthetic experience in a well-prepared beholder. Aesthetic experience is important for its twofold function of shaping the self in positive ways and providing humanistic insight. This is a way of saying that works of art have both constitutive and revelatory powers; they integrate the self and provide aesthetic wisdom.⁸

a) CONSTITUTIVE VALUES OF ART

Regarding the constitutive values of works of art—their capacity to shape personality in beneficent ways—we can trace a line of thought from Plato in antiquity to Friedrich von Schiller in the eighteenth century to Herbert Read and John Dewey and other theorists in the twentieth. In this literature, Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (1795) stands out as a work that celebrates art's constitutive powers.⁹ Writing during the political century of the great democratic revolutions, Schiller, a poet and playwright as well as a philosopher, believed that true civil and political freedom could be achieved only through the formation of an ennobled character, and that before citizens could be given a constitution one must see to it that they themselves are soundly constituted. How was this to be achieved? Schiller's response was through aesthetic education, which in his idea of it placed great importance on the study of the immortal works of the masters. The aesthetic, that is, was the key to the problem of political and individual freedom. Aesthetic education, which consisted of a middle state between the realm of brute force and the rule of law, was where character building was to occur. What was it about masterworks that released what Schiller called the living springs of human experience? Schiller's answer was their form, which meant not merely a work's shape but also its structure, balance, symmetry, harmony, and integrity. These qualities were at once the essence of the work of art and of the "properly constituted" self. In short, aesthetic education for Schiller did not exist in contrast to moral education; it had itself an important moral function.¹⁰

Aesthetic education performs a similar function in Herbert Read's thinking in which moral education essentially consists of education through aesthetic discipline. Where Schiller spoke of aesthetic education's contribution to an ennobled character, Read, in *The Redemption of the Robot*, designates grace as the end result. "Skemováno pro studijní účely"

says Read, "give priority in our education to all forms of aesthetic activity, for in the course of making beautiful things there will take place a crystallization of the emotions into patterns that are the moulds of virtue."¹¹

John Dewey likewise recognized the role of organic unification that art plays in both the perception of the external world and in the integration of human consciousness. In his *Art as Experience* art not only breaks through conventional distinctions and stereotyped thinking, which is in part a moral as well as an aesthetic function; it also composes psychological strains, conflicts, and oppositions into a greater, richer, and more harmonious personality structure.¹²

b) REVELATORY POWERS OF ART

Art has shaping or constitutive powers; it also is a source of humanistic insight. In revelatory theories, works of art are understood in connection with an artist's cognition of reality and criticism of life. Coming to prominence in the modern Romantic period, revelatory theories underline the exaltation of self, energized spirit, and self-discovery that we experience in encounters with great works of art. What is revealed through such experience is not scientific knowledge of verifiable fact couched in propositions or warranted assertions but rather the human truth of things expressed in aesthetic or dramatic form, a truth more like aesthetic wisdom. We avail ourselves of such wisdom whenever we contemplate artists' visions of man's relations to the external world, to others, and to himself. Giotto, Fra Angelico, Giovanni Bellini, and Raphael on religious commemoration, adoration, and inspiration; van Ruisdael, Poussin, Constable, and van Gogh on the transcendental values of landscape; Holbein, Rembrandt, Velázquez, and Ingres on human character in portraiture all testify to the revelatory powers of artistic expression.

Both constitutive and revelatory theories of art are inherently cognitive in the sense that they presuppose the exercise of significant mental functions—perception, memory, discrimination, analysis, judgment, and so forth—in the making and experiencing of works of art. Revelatory theories, however, contain a cognitive bonus inasmuch as they highlight a work's meaning as well as its potential shaping power. This does not imply that feelings or emotions play no strategic role in either group of theories. Simply to be told what a work means or that it has potential for shaping the self is of little help unless one feels or realizes for oneself in a personal sense a work's theme or thesis or actually experiences a sense of integration or

wholeness. This point—that knowing is suffused with feeling, that we know with our emotions—is featured in the cognitive theory of Nelson Goodman.¹³ If the contributors to this volume stress knowing in the arts it is not because they undervalue feelings and emotions. Rather, their intention is to counteract a narrow conception of the nature and role of cognition. The aim is not to overintellectualize the experience of art but to highlight the important role that intelligence and knowledge do play in it.

We may now consider a third option that combines the essence of both constitutive and revelatory theories. For this purpose I turn to the later writings on aesthetic experience by Monroe C. Beardsley. In these writings Beardsley specifically takes into account the cognitive character of aesthetic response, largely, he says, as the result of the influence on his thinking of E. H. Gombrich, Rudolf Arnheim, and Nelson Goodman.¹⁴

Aesthetic experience, writes Beardsley, is both compound and disjunctive. By “compound” Beardsley means that aesthetic experience cannot be reduced to a single feature, say, a pure aesthetic emotion or attitude of disinterestedness; rather it consists of a number of characteristics that tend to cluster. By “disjunctive” he means that experiences with aesthetic character separate themselves quite readily from ordinary experiences, even though the latter may partake of some aesthetic features. Accordingly, Beardsley suggests five criteria of the aesthetic, although he is prepared to admit the possibility of there being more or fewer features. These criteria are object directedness, felt freedom, detached affect, active discovery, and personal integration or wholeness. The following is a condensed account of Beardsley’s analysis.

1. The feeling of object directedness involves a realization that things in one’s phenomenally objective field of awareness—for example, works of visual, auditory, and verbal art—are working or have worked themselves out in fitting and appropriate ways. Presupposed is some presence or object to which attention is directed and which in turn guides perception. We regard intensely and seriously what is happening in a painting, a musical composition, a work of sculpture, a poem, a film, and if we feel the rightness of what is unfolding then
2. the first criterion of the aesthetic is satisfied. Felt freedom is a feeling of having suddenly put aside or pushed into the back of one’s mind troubling or obtrusive thoughts in favor of freely giving oneself to phenomena. It is a sense, says Beardsley, “of being on top of things, of having one’s real way, even though not actually having chosen it or

won it” (p. 290). One has willingly acceded to a change of attitude because of the pleasure or gratification garnered in doing so.

3. The feeling of detached affect implies the act of experiencing something at a certain emotional distance, which is necessary in order to avoid two undesirable outcomes. The first is losing ourselves in the object, in which case we would give up contact with its intricate and demanding form and content and thus with its peculiar richness. The second is fooling ourselves into thinking that we are perceiving real rather than imaginary or fictional objects. Implicit in the notion of detached affect is the tendency of works “to lend some degree of detachment to the effects they produce.” They give “an air of artifice, of fictionality, of autonomy and reflexiveness, of separation from other things, and so on” (p. 291). Not always, but often enough to suggest that detached affect is an important feature of many aesthetic experiences.
4. It should be clear that cognitive powers and knowledge are important ingredients of aesthetic experience. We freely give our attention to an object because we discern or feel something special that invites further scrutiny. Scrutiny in turn is unrewarded unless animated by perceptual skills and background knowledge. But it is in the feeling of active discovery, Beardsley’s fourth feature of aesthetic experience, that its cognitive character becomes most evident. Beardsley came to realize that one of the central components in our experience of art “must be the experience of discovery, of insight into connections and organizations—the elation that comes from the apparent opening up of intelligibility.” This opening up draws attention “to the excitement of meeting a cognitive challenge, of flexing one’s powers to make intelligible—where this combines making sense of something with making something make sense” (p. 292). This sense making is what aesthetic experiences have in common with other kinds of experiences. A feeling of discovery is not limited to our encounters with artworks; the scholar and the scientist know the same kind of exhilaration. When there is little to discover there can, of course, be little to make sense of, and aesthetic experience will be thin. This obvious fact is why masterworks rank high on the list of things that have the capacity to stimulate aesthetic experience.
5. If Beardsley’s notion of active discovery highlights the cognitive character of aesthetic awareness, his fifth feature, wholeness, draws attention to art’s constitutive powers. In discussing the ways in which the experience of an artwork can generate a feeling of wholeness, Beardsley concentrates on the coherence of aesthetic experience. By

made for it and the method is not oversimplified.¹⁸ To guard against the latter outcome, it might be helpful to see scanning within a larger pattern of response. Kenneth Clark, the distinguished art historian, once described his own perceptual habits this way. First, there is the initial impact a work of art makes, then a period of close scrutiny and examination during which one attempts to find what is actually in a work to be perceived and enjoyed. The phase of scrutiny is followed by one of recollection. Relevant kinds of information—biographical and historical, for example—are summoned in order to render a work intelligible. Additional periods of scrutiny and recollection then renew and revitalize initial aesthetic responses. The point is that aesthetic experience is difficult to sustain for very long, and the senses need time to regroup. What is more, although one's initial impressions of a work are fresh and spontaneous, they are often not a reliable key to a work's real character or import.¹⁹

At the end of phase two, far more than at the end of phase one, students should be able not only to convey to others the character of their first impressions (impact), but also to engage in formal analysis (scrutiny) and apply what knowledge they have acquired (recollection) in sustaining their interest in a work (renewal). When they practice the skills of aesthetic perception during what may be called the complete act of informed aesthetic response, learners experience, though not necessarily self-consciously, those additional features of aesthetic experience that Beardsley termed felt freedom, detached affect, and active discovery, that is, feelings of freely taking up a special point of view toward something for the sake of what can be discovered in doing so. During phases one and two it is, of course, appropriate to show and discuss works created by members of different groups and from other cultures and civilizations. A humanities curriculum, in other words, should have a multicultural dimension. However, I understand multiculturalism not as an ideological attack on the values of Western civilization but simply as a recognition that the study of alternatives is a revered humanistic objective, a way to avoid a narrow ethnocentrism.²⁰ Indeed, a well-developed sense of art implies an awareness of a broad range of artworks.

PHASE THREE: DEVELOPING A SENSE OF ART HISTORY
(GRADES 7-9)

Having learned how to perceive the qualitative immediacy, relational properties, and meanings of works of art, students are now

ready to examine works under the aspects of time, tradition, and style. In what should be a well-designed survey course, students discover how artists have both celebrated and criticized a society's beliefs and values. Learning still serves the same general goal of a percipience curriculum, but now the development of historical awareness deepens the learners' cognitive stock and helps them to expand their sense of art. Not only that; discovering something new about what is important and valuable and interesting to perception is intrinsically satisfying.

Phase three also contributes to an appreciation of the ways works of art reflect the growth of civilization. They do so by providing records of extraordinary efforts to impose form and style on raw, unshaped material.²¹ This is to say that works of art are preeminent symbols of man's struggle to free human existence from a life of necessity in order to enjoy one of freedom and leisure in which human powers can be cultivated for their own sakes. The study of such works further serves to emphasize that just as works of art have survived their severance from religion, magic, and myth,²² so also, we may say, do they transcend gender, class, and race. Finally, the study of art history leads to an appreciation of the idea of a tradition.

In contrast to the pedagogy of the first two phases of aesthetic learning, phase three by necessity is more formal and requires systematic instruction. Although there won't be time in a survey course to linger long over any particular work, students will develop important insights into the processes of historical continuity and change and will come to realize that continuity is by far the greater part of the story.

An appreciation of tradition and of continuity and change can, of course, be attained through the study of practically any culture or civilization. But it is only natural that American youth should be initiated first into the major cultural heritage of their own society. Even Richard Rorty, the philosophical revisionist, acknowledges this as common wisdom.²³ The "war against Eurocentrism" currently being waged by certain advocates of multiculturalism is thus ill-advised and counterproductive. It generates cultural particularism instead of promoting the nobler goal of cultural pluralism.²⁴ The latter, as I have pointed out, will be taken into consideration during the first two phases of the percipience curriculum.

PHASE FOUR: EXEMPLAR APPRECIATION (GRADES 10-11)

The purpose of phase four is neither skill training nor historical study so much as appreciation in the best sense of the term. This is also

the time to study works of art in some depth, without which any talk about excellence in arts education is mere rhetoric. During phase four, students pause simply to admire some of the finest achievements of humankind—great works of art resplendent in their beauty, form, significance, and mystery as nothing else is. It matters not, moreover, the ethnic origin or gender of the artist; we are talking about human excellence.

As I conceive of it, exemplar study also provides an opportunity to understand the role of contextual factors in appreciating art. One can appreciate a work of art on its own terms without much regard for the historical factors that helped to shape it, but we fail to give the arts their due as humanities unless, as Levi remarked, we pause to understand the ways they integrate the different cultural elements of a society or of an epoch. We may call this the figure-ground relationship of exemplar appreciation, with the artworks being the figure. But this relationship should not be reversed; contextual information is primarily an aid to appreciation. Most of all, a work of art should not be dissolved into its context.²⁵

Given the aim of cultivating an appreciation of artistic excellence during the fourth phase of aesthetic learning, it follows that examples of artistic excellence from different cultures are also candidates for appreciation. Although one would expect masterworks from the Western cultural heritage to be featured, efforts should be made to appreciate exemplars of artistic quality of non-Western cultures.

PHASE FIVE: CRITICAL ANALYSIS (GRADE 12)

Beyond exemplar appreciation the percipience curriculum offers critical reflection on the role of art in human life and society and on the innumerable conundrums such relations generate.²⁶ But the principal purpose of the last phase of aesthetic learning is to provide opportunities for young adults to fashion something of their own philosophies of art, to formulate beliefs and to stake out positions, at least tentatively, on such questions as the relations of art and morality, art and the mass media, art and the environment, art and politics, and so forth. Certainly not least among the questions that should be considered are those about artistic value and worth. When students address these questions the rich apperceptive mass they have built up through previous phases of learning will now be put to good uses. Given the public controversy that has attended a number of recent artistic events, there should be no difficulty stimulating the interest of twelfth-graders. In truth, older students are curious about artistic

controversies and their teachers' views on them. In senior seminars a start can be made in asking the right questions and sorting out the relevant issues.

Toward Needed Reform

The humanities justification of arts education presented in this chapter is grounded in a redefinition of the traditional humanities in procedural and substantive terms. Under this redefinition the teaching of the arts involves bringing to bear in appropriate ways and at relevant times the arts of creation, communication, continuity, and criticism. The mastery of these arts at levels suitable for the ages of learners eventually yields percipience in matters of art and culture, the ultimate goal of arts education. Aesthetically percipient, the well-educated nonspecialist can be expected to traverse the art world with intelligence, tact, and a measure of autonomy. A student achieves this level of percipience through a series of learning phases: exposure and familiarization, perceptual training, historical study, exemplar appreciation, and critical analysis.

Obviously, before a percipience curriculum could be implemented in the schools, major progress would have to be made in the reform of teacher education.²⁷ Prospective teachers of art, for example, would need considerably more work in the humanities. And there would have to be a greater commitment on the part of society to the importance of realizing a fundamental human right—the right to realize as fully as possible significant human capacities, including aesthetic capacities. Such capacities have been understood in this chapter in connection with the constitutive and revelatory powers of art that can shape the human personality in positive ways and provide humanistic understanding. These benefits have value not only for the individual but also for the society. A society is more likely to enjoy cultural health when inhabited by persons with aesthetic intelligence. Arts education is thus a critical necessity.

NOTES

1. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 68.
2. For representative works, see Philip H. Phenix, *Realms of Meaning* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), P. H. Hirst, *Knowledge and the Curriculum* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), L. A. Reid, *Ways of Understanding and Education* (London: Heinemann, 1986), and Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

3. I borrow the notion of percipience from Harold Osborne's *The Art of Appreciation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), chap. 2, "Appreciation as Percipience." The term "art world" is intended in the sense that Arthur Danto uses it in his *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). Commenting on the role of theory in constituting an art world, Danto writes: "To see something as art at all demands nothing less than this, an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art" (p. 135). By "percipience" I imply the ability to generate such an atmosphere with some skill and finesse.

4. Albert William Levi, *The Humanities Today* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), chap. 1; idem, "Literature as a Humanity," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 10, nos. 3-4 (July-October 1976): 45-60; idem, "Teaching Literature as a Humanity," *Journal of General Education* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 283-289.

5. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), chap. 5, "Cultural Literacy and the Schools." Cf. Ian Westbury and Alan C. Purves, eds., *Cultural Literacy and General Education*, Eighty-seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Ralph A. Smith, ed., *Cultural Literacy and Arts Education* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

6. Levi, "Literature as a Humanity," p. 60. Levi's questions are slightly amended for purposes of this discussion.

7. I refer here to Edmund B. Feldman's *Becoming Human through Art* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), one of the more substantive art education textbooks of the 1970s.

8. The following discussion is condensed from A. W. Levi and R. A. Smith, *Art Education: A Critical Necessity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), chap. 2, "The Arts and the Human Person."

9. Friedrich von Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. Elizabeth W. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

10. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 7, 9, 55, 215.

11. Herbert Read, *The Redemption of the Robot: My Encounters with Education through Art* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), p. 143.

12. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), pp. 252-53.

13. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), pp. 245-52.

14. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience," in *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, ed. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 285-97. All quotations are from this essay.

15. Harold Osborne, *The Art of Appreciation*, p. 36.

16. For a discussion of such principles, I have found the writings of Joseph D. Novak quite helpful. See his *A Theory of Education* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), and David P. Ausubel, Joseph D. Novak, and Helen Hanesian, *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View*, 2d ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978).

17. The following discussion is a condensed version of the accounts given in Ralph A. Smith, *The Sense of Art: A Study in Aesthetic Education* (New York: Routledge, 1989), chap. 6, and in Levi and Smith, *Art Education: A Critical Necessity*, chap. 8.

18. Harry S. Broudy, *The Role of Imagery in Learning* (Los Angeles: Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1987), pp. 52-53.

19. Kenneth Clark, *Looking at Pictures* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), pp. 16-17.

20. For example, in his *The Future of the Humanities* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1977), Walter Kaufmann writes that the objectives of the humanities are four: the conservation and cultivation of the greatest works of humanity, the teaching of vision, the fostering of a critical spirit, and thoughtful reflection on alternatives (pp. xvii-xxi).

21. This is the theme of Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) and *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 1988).

22. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 167.

23. Richard Rorty, "The Dangers of Over-Philosophication—Reply to Arcilla and Nicholson," *Educational Theory* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 41-44.

24. Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures," *American Scholar* 59, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 337-354. See also, idem, "Multiculturalism: An Exchange," *American Scholar* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 272-276 for the author's response to a critique of "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures" by Molefi Kete Asante that also appeared in the Spring 1991 issue of *American Scholar*. See also my "Forms of Multicultural Education in the Arts," *Journal of Multi-cultural and Cross-cultural Research in Art Education* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 23-32; and Rachel Mason, *Art Education and Multiculturalism* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), esp. pp. 1-2, "Four Types of Multiculturalism."

25. What one must avoid is what Hilton Kramer (*The New Criterion* 9, no. 4 [December 1990]) calls the postmodernist mode of analysis termed deconstruction, whose aim is "to deconstruct every 'text'—which is to say, every art object—into an inventory of its context and thus remove the object from the realm of aesthetic experience and make it instead a coefficient of its sources and social environment" (p. 7).

26. For a number of such conundrums, see Margaret P. Battin, John Fisher, Ronald Moore, and Anita Silvers, *Puzzles about Art: An Aesthetics Casebook* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), and the chapter in this volume by Marcia Eaton.

27. I have discussed some initiatives toward such reform in my *Excellence in Art Education: Ideas and Initiatives*, updated version (Reston, Va., National Art Education Association, 1987), chap. 5.

coherence he means both "the coherence of the elements of the experience itself, of the diverse mental acts and events going on in one mind over a stretch of time" and "the coherence of the self, the mind's healing sense . . . of being all together and able to encompass its perceptions, feelings, emotions, ideas, in a single integrated personhood" (p. 293).

What I have done in this section is to use Beardsley's theory of aesthetic experience to suggest an alternative to theories that stress either the constitutive or revelatory power of art. Just as Levi in his redefinition of the humanities combined the Medieval and Renaissance traditions of the humanities into a third option that features the liberal arts of communication, continuity, and criticism, to which I have added the arts of creation and performance, so I have combined elements of classic and romantic theories of art in describing art's peculiar values. Having now offered an answer to the question why the art world is worth traversing, I return to the more concrete question of curriculum design.

Phases of Aesthetic Learning (K-12)

At their best, works of art require years of study and half a lifetime of experience and growing familiarity may be necessary for their full appreciation. So opined Harold Osborne in his *The Art of Appreciation*.¹⁵ Aesthetic learning in the schools is likewise a long journey. It begins early and gradually extends into the middle and secondary years. Its overall purpose is the cultivation of percipience, which implies the possession of a well-developed sense of art. This goal is reached through a number of learning phases that culminate in a rich apperceptive mass. Such learning recognizes the demands of the current society and the subject of art as well as the requirements of the learner. These latter requirements are articulated in cognitive studies which assume that learning occurs most efficaciously when new information is related to a young person's conceptual framework. Concepts, organized in a hierarchy, undergo change as new information is assimilated. This view of learning means that teachers must have a good grasp of the conceptual character of art and an understanding of how to relate new information to the learner's existing schemes of knowledge.¹⁶

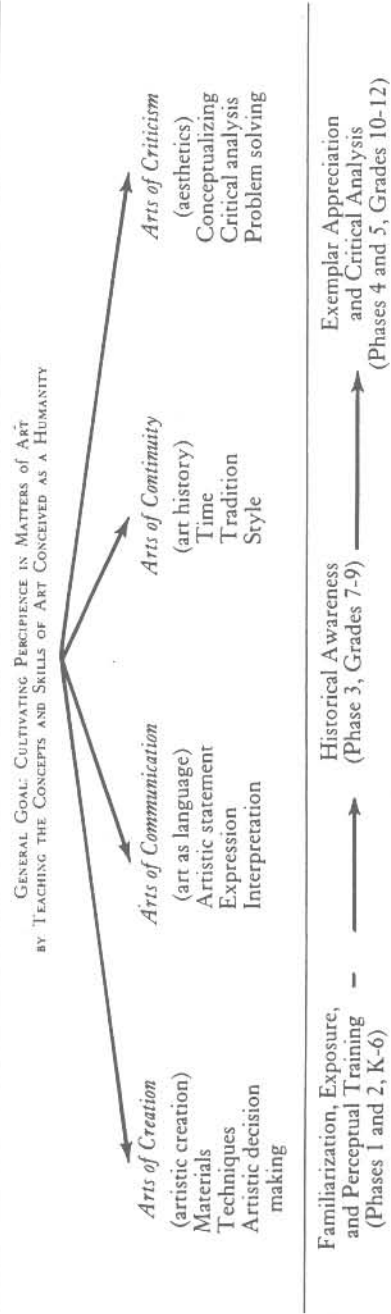
Learning in the arts will proceed from simple exposure and familiarization as well as making and perceiving in the elementary grades to more demanding historical, appreciative, and critical studies

during the secondary years. As particular objectives change, so will teaching and learning methods. Assessment will center on the progress that learners make in expanding their conceptual frameworks. The entire scheme is built on the assumption that phases of aesthetic learning are instrumental to the goal of greater percipience. It should not be thought, however, that this assumption implies aesthetic learning will lack moments of immediate enjoyment. Still, aesthetic satisfaction usually stems from the development and strengthening of new mental powers, which by definition are instrumental. I now briefly discuss five phases of aesthetic learning (see figure 1).¹⁷

PHASE ONE: PERCEIVING AESTHETIC QUALITIES (K-3)

Although very young children are hardly prepared to engage works of art in all their formal complexity and dramatic intensity, to say nothing about their thematic and symbolic import, they are sensitive to the simple sensory and expressive qualities of things, and the years from kindergarten through third grade are thus the time to exploit and expand this capacity. This can be done through exposure to the aesthetic qualities of all sorts of things, whether in nature or in ordinary objects or in works of the children's own making. During this phase it might be said that the general goal is an appreciation of the qualitative immediacy of life. The young learn to enjoy things for their freshness and vividness. They cultivate a delight in the looks, sounds, tastes, and smells of things around them. But since visual, auditory, and verbal works of art are the principal loci of such qualities, it is important that young students' attention also be directed toward artworks. Learners in the early grades should be encouraged not only to note their aesthetic qualities but also to understand that artworks are special objects found in special places that society maintains at considerable effort. Thus do young learners begin to develop an elementary sense of art and the art world. At the same time they intuitively acquire a sense of object directedness, a fundamental feature of aesthetic experience.

In short, formal aesthetic learning begins during phase one. The understanding the young bring to school undergoes modification and expansion. The job of building dispositions gets underway. An initiation occurs into the mysteries of art and into a cultural institution known as an art world. In making their own works of art, young learners also gain insight into the nature of the artistic creative process. They come to realize that a work of art is a product of an artist's having composed the special qualities of materials into an aesthetic



Teaching and learning proceed along a continuum from exposure, familiarization, and perceptual training to historical awareness, exemplar appreciation, and critical analysis, stressing discovery and reception learning, didactic coaching, and dialogic teaching methods. Evaluation of aesthetic learning concentrates on the development of aesthetic conceptual maps and the conditions conducive for doing so. Reprinted with permission from A. W. Levi and R. A. Smith, *Art Education: A Critical Necessity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Slightly edited.)

Fig. 1. A percipiency curriculum (K-12)

object that features medium, form, and content. They learn, in other words, the way of aesthetic communication. In terms of the humanities interpretation presented in this chapter, this is, in effect, to bring the arts of creation and communication to bear on the study of art. Learning during phase one should not be inordinately formal, and a child's propensities should constantly be kept in mind. And although all phases of aesthetic learning are instrumental to the achievement of a certain level of percipiency, there will, once more, be numerous moments of intrinsic satisfaction when ulterior objectives recede or are forgotten.

Much of what now goes on in the early years of school can suffice for achieving the objectives of phase one. However, if teachers plan these activities and lessons with the long-term goal of aesthetic percipiency in mind, they might go about their teaching in slightly different ways. The important consideration is that all learning should have point and lead in a certain direction, most immediately toward greater perceptual finesse in phase two of aesthetic learning.

PHASE TWO: DEVELOPING PERCEPTUAL FINESSE (GRADES 4-6)

A precise dividing line between learning phases cannot, of course, be drawn, but by the upper elementary years the young are capable of concentrating their energies and powers. They can perceive greater complexity in works of art, their own as well as those of more mature artists. Gradually, however, attention shifts more and more to the latter, for it is only by perceiving works of some complexity that perceptual skills can be honed and developed.

In addition to the immediate qualities of artworks, their complex webs of relations and meanings are now also brought more fully and clearly into view. It is time for looking at artworks more closely while simultaneously learning about the art world in which works of art find a home and caretakers. Still not inordinately formal, phase-two learning is more structured than that of phase one. Beside making, seeing, and listening, students during this period also begin to acquire a vocabulary or language for talking about art and its various components.

Although it is possible to teach even the very young a methodical way to do something, it is during phase two especially that some system can be introduced. Harry S. Broudy recommends paying close attention to a work's sensory, formal, expressive, and technical aspects. Scanning such aspects is a way to make initial contact with artworks, and it can be effective provided excessive claims are not