INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
DUCKWORTH, Harry Aidron, 1920-
DIALECTIC AS NECESSARY TO PERFORMANCE, UNDERSTANDING, AND TEACHING IN THE VISUAL ARTS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO STUDIO PRACTICES AT THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN AN EGALITARIAN SOCIETY.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1973
Education, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

© 1974
HARRY AIDRON DUCKWORTH
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED.
DIALECTIC AS NECESSARY TO PERFORMANCE, UNDERSTANDING, AND TEACHING
IN THE VISUAL ARTS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
STUDIO PRACTICES AT THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
LEVEL IN AN EGALITARIAN SOCIETY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
Aidron Duckworth, Des. R.C.A.

********

The Ohio State University
1973

Reading Committee
Paul R. Klohr
Ross A. Norris
Kenneth A. Marantz

Approved By
Kenneth A. Marantz
Adviser
Division of Art Education
Many factors have come together to confuse modern industrial societies in their attitudes towards the visual arts. In the earlier rural societies from which they sprang—"developed" is too mild a term for the precipitous changes that occurred—the hardships of life were to some extent offset by intense propitiatory religious devotion. This devotion appears to have been mediatiorially responsible for often superbly fashioned artifacts which were symbolic of the awe and fear with which man faced his existence; for festivals which combined religious observation and profane emotional release; for a close relationship between the spiritual and the temporal in that the precariousness and viciousness of life led to hopes and beliefs in the blessedness of the hereafter.

In time, and oscillating with political and economic conditions from age to age, the growing wealth and power of the ruling and mercantile elites produced a separation between themselves and the populations they manipulated and governed. These elites became materially less subject to the vicissitudes of life than the peasant and there developed a schism, a bifurcation of cultures. The peasant continued to practice his traditional way of life through grievous physical and spiritual necessity.

In the dry but appallingly eloquent language of statistics, the historians explain to us that, in eighteenth century French villages, the median age of marriage was higher than the median age of death. The average length of life was perhaps a third of ours, and appreciably less,
because of deaths in childbirth, for women than for men (it is only quite recently, and in lucky countries, that women on the average, have had a chance to live as long as men). The greater part of entire communities died of starvation, which appears to have been a common occurrence.¹

These figures are available for conditions in France only because of the meticulous maintenance of parish records there. There seems to be no good reason to suppose that they did not obtain for the greater part of mankind, as they still do in parts of Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Afganistan has been staggering through a three year drought and famine. At least 80,000 people have starved to death. Even in good times, nearly half the babies born in Afghanistan die before they are one year old.²

Meantime the wealthy classes developed an intellectual and psychological detachment from "folk" arts and customs. Ultimately the dramatic growth of industrialization resulting from scientific and mercantile expansion brought a domination of the agricultural way of life by the standards and demands of an urban, industrial, society. Urbanized peasants lost touch with art forms which had been part of the fabric of their lives. The cost of greater material security and ease is not yet known. Pessimistically, Herbert Read said of modern Western society:

"We must wait, perhaps for a very long time, before any vital connection can be re-established between art and society. The modern work of art . . . is a symbol.


²Newsweek, July 30, 1973, p. 32.
that perhaps comes of living through a genuine renaissance. But we may well be laying the material and human basis for one.  

It will be argued that there is no good reason to regard the intuition of an artist as being in any way different from the intuition of a scientist. Real similarities are believed to exist by some concerned artists and scientists alike, while differences are seen to be based to a large extent on prejudice. C.P. Snow says of this situation:

The non-scientists have a rooted impression that the scientists are shallowly optimistic, unaware of man's condition. On the other hand the scientists believe that the literary intellectuals are totally lacking in foresight, particularly unconcerned with their brother men, in a deep sense anti-intellectual, anxious to restrict both art and thought to the existential moment.  

Nelson Goodman believes the difference to lie solely in that which is imposed by the vehicle of expression.

The difference between art and science is not that between feeling and tact, intuition and inference, delight and deliberation, synthesis and analysis, sensation and cerebration, concreteness and abstraction, passion and action, mediacy and immediacy, or truth and beauty, but rather a difference in domination of certain specific characteristics of symbols.  

Despite the success of science the scientist does not know how he thinks, and he appears to be becoming increasingly respectful

---

7 Snow, The Two Cultures, p. 5.  
in the concept of form. They all mean and constitute identity. Indeed form may be plainly understood as identity. As Richard Blackmus strikingly put it: "Form is the limiting principle by which a thing is itself." Accordingly, losing form is equivalent to losing identity.4

Art has appeared to become separated from the central thrusts of community life; but at the same time it has sought, and has been encouraged, to take on a distinctive mantle of mystical intuition. Reflecting the cultural behavior of the wealthy, increasing numbers of people have begun to play the aristocratic game of art appreciation with the result that commercialism, dilettantism, and trivialization are rampant. In his book The Culture Consumers Alvin Toffler presents with abundantly researched (if emotionally flattering) efficiency the positive side of what Dwight Macdonald has described as a quality destroying Midcult which erroneously regards itself as High Culture.5 Toffler sees only good everywhere, but he nevertheless ends his book with the guarded plea:

The elitist contention that no democracy has ever produced a high-quality culture is irrelevant. It is a non-sequitur to assume that what has not been done cannot be done. It is a contention born of fear and of a secret yearning for the simplicities of the past. It forgets that we approach the challenge with greater resources. It ignores the remarkable progress we have already made. We are not enjoying the exhilaration


that perhaps comes of living through a genuine renais­sance. But we may well be laying the material and human basis for one.⁶

It will be argued that there is no good reason to regard the intuition of an artist as being in any way different from the intuition of a scientist. Real similarities are believed to exist by some concerned artists and scientists alike, while differences are seen to be based to a large extent on prejudice. C. P. Snow says of this situation:

The non-scientists have a rooted impression that the scientists are shallowly optimistic, unaware of man's condition. On the other hand the scientists believe that the literary intellectuals are totally lacking in foresight, particularly unconcerned with their brother men, in a deep sense anti-intellectual, anxious to restrict both art and thought to the exist­ential moment.⁷

Nelson Goodman believes the difference to lie solely in that which is imposed by the vehicle of expression.

The difference between art and science is not that between feeling and tact, intuition and inference, delight and deliberation, synthesis and analysis, sensation and cerebration, concreteness and abstraction, passion and action, mediacy and immediacy, or truth and beauty, but rather a difference in domination of certain specific characteristics of symbols.⁸

Despite the success of science the scientist does not know how he thinks, and he appears to be becoming increasingly respectful

⁷Snow, The Two Cultures, p. 5.
of the intuitive processes which operate below the level of conscious­
ness.

We have no direct access to what it is we know, no rules or generalizations with which to express this knowledge. Rules which could supply that access would refer to stimuli, not sensations, and stimuli we can know only through elaborate theory. In its absence, the knowledge embedded in the stimulus-to-sensation route remains tacit.9

Rather than mystify ignorance science purports to examine it. But interpretation is variable.

... all knowledge, all science, all learning, all history, all thought are unstable, cannot be made stable, ... For "thought" is but the activity of "mind"; thought is but another term with which to refer to interpretive variability. No language, no sign system, therefore, is isomorphic with the world, or can be. No sign system has the same structure as the world.10

The mysteries and balances of nature are not easily revealed. If they should one day be thought to be so, then it will be only because thought as we know it will have ceased to function.

In black and white terms the struggle appears to be between those who are respectful of a scientific vitality which believes in the self-transcendent nature of thought and man, and a part of society which feels disfranchised and believes itself to be moved by more spiritual impulses. But the latter may have allowed themselves to be overawed by their own sense of impotence. And yet, although:

---


It is true, . . . that theoretical controls are relatively more fixed in scientific behavior than in artistic; . . . no one has yet given a logical explanation of the formation of workable hypotheses. At rock bottom they may be nothing more than hunches or lucky guesses, not to say complete accidents. An idealist like Croce would take this to be an indication of the fact that the imagination must function even in the controlled experiments of basic scientists. The only difference from the behavior of the 'lucky' artist . . . , is that the model which comes to form in the scientist's mind is capable, if successful, of being applied to many repeatable instances, whereas the intuition of an artist is of a unique, unrepeatable object . . . .11

Under the banner of the autonomy of art there are practiced all kinds of activities some of which may be more than trivially significant but few of which feel themselves obliged or subject to the verifications common to all other human activity. And yet, as with all purposive activity, artistic endeavor rests upon an accumulation of experience which is probably neither more nor less capable of identification than that of a medical practitioner.

. . . we may easily underrate the amount of dull and repetitive work even the freest craftsman is compelled to do, though he work under ideal conditions. Indeed, the overemphasis on the creative movements in art, the tendency to picture esthetic creation as one long, fervent, spontaneous activity, without severe toil and painful effort, without a constant mastery of technics, is one of the sure indications of the amateur and the outsider.12

Seen in this light, higher education in the visual arts often appears to be doing little more than jog along with the current


cultural movements of society. It might be reasonably supposed that, in the university departments, serious thought would be directed towards the nature and problems of art in society. In such considerations the impact of technology would be implicit. The exercise of such thought is described by Jacques Barzun as "... the hygiene of the mind ..." without which the intellect is deprived of its capacity to "... safeguard the living minutes from the inanities of trumpery art."

Intellect, ... should protect against facile enthusiasms, exaggerated estimates, and the disillusion to follow--no small advantage in a time when so much effort goes into furbishing ancient fraud and new foolishness with a modish glamour; and when excessive information gives everyone the gullibility of the learned, far more dangerous than the gullibility of the innocent.13

The advocacy of such pressures will seem to some people to be a going over to the enemy. But it may be that the enemy is not an enemy at all—that he is as behaviorally responsive to our common environment as the rest of us. This cannot be discovered until he is squarely engaged.

Whatever the cause of the connection between one work of art and the next in a stylistic continuum it is not to be located in the works of art themselves. A stylistic continuum is not a self-contained process. The only process is to be located in the artist, in the emergence not of novel configurations in works of art but of novel patterns of behavior in the artist.14

14 peckham, man's rage for chaos, p. 10.
This may be recognized as being very close to Deweyan pragmatism.

Herbert Read puts the case even more strongly when he says:

We must begin again, modestly, patiently. From our historians we must expect a more exact analysis of the social conditions which have produced art in the past. From our psychologists we must expect a more exact analysis of the creative process in man, not merely in the individual artist, but as a process occurring between man and man, for art is not only creation, but also communication. And from our educationists we must expect a remodelling of the educational system which will preserve and refine man's innate sensibility, . . . 15

Mysticism has a long and sometimes respectable history, but, like psychoanalysis, its pedagogical method is protracted and deliberately obscure and it is consequently elitist. A policy of deliberate obscurity is by definition antithetical to a scientific approach, however much the scientific discipline is in itself conducive of a kind of elitism. This essay will not attempt an analysis of mysticism. Its purpose is, rather, to examine some of the assumptions which support a view that art is qualitatively quite different from most other human activities, and especially from science. Its findings are that these assumptions may have contributed to the development of a structure and vocabulary which is lacking in substance. If this is so then a way will have been cleared towards more prescriptive studies.

. . . "creativity" or the "creative imagination" . . . , among aestheticians and art historians and literary critics, only serves to elicit validation

15Read, Philosophy of Modern Art, pp. 69-70.
by affective congruence. In the humanistic tradition "creative" gives one such a warm and expansive feeling that it seems impossible that it is but a name for what it purports to describe and explain. Terms like "order" and "unity" are terms of the same sort. They make the members of the cultural group who use them have the affective experience of meaning without forcing them to go to the trouble of finding out whether they have understood anything or not.\(^\text{16}\)

In the name of good sense and good education the attempt is made to reconcile the intuitive and the dialectical methods of inquiry through an analysis of some aspects of the meaning of form, content, and the nature of the mediating process. The results are put into the context of some of the educational theory of Dewey, Whitehead, Bruner, Hausman and others in order to underscore an existing, if not widespread, recognition of the pressing need for more enlightenment in the teaching and evaluation of fine art at the tertiary level of education.

It has been suggested that there are times in the following text when an author is quoted as a supporting authority who is elsewhere criticised disapprovingly. Where it has occurred it has been retained for the reason that there is little writing that is infallible, little that is not given to occasional ambiguity and even foolishness in the view of some reader. Senator Lowell P. Weicker of Connecticut has wisely said "Every person tells a portion of the truth."\(^\text{17}\) Each of us puts together the portions of the truth

\(^{16}\) Peckham, \textit{Man's Rage for Chaos}, p. 310.

\(^{17}\) Lowell P. Weicker, \textit{Interview with Frank McGee, "Today" show, July 24, 1973}.
as he perceives them, and since "... perception is not mere passive response to stimulus but a creative, dynamic act, an act of interpretation."¹⁸ truth seems to be neither general nor absolute.

¹⁸Peckham, Man's Rage for Chaos, p. 41.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To refer to a person or his work in the text or bibliography of a study is to acknowledge an indebtedness. Whether the information gleaned appears to support or to oppose a premise the additional viewpoint has in some way stimulated thought and modified the premise.

A purpose of a specific acknowledgement of the kind now to be attempted is to draw attention to some of the individuals who, either directly or indirectly, play an important role in the life of the preparation of any work. I would like to pay this small tribute to the examples of generosity and critical intelligence offered me by Professors Klohr, Pratte, Reagan, Rosen in the fields of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education at the Ohio State University. In the Division of Art Education I benefited beyond measure from long, unstinted hours of discussion permitted me by Professor Norris; and in retrospect I believe I owe most to the patient, cultured intelligence of Professor Marantz who not only set an example of high responsible concern as my advisor and Chairman, but who appears to have trod well that difficult pedagogical path between imposing and exacting discipline of thought. Most patient, perhaps, has been my wife, without whose active moral support none of this would have been possible.
VITA


1957-62 ......................... Teacher of Design and Basic Design,
                              Kingston College of Art, England.

1965 ......................... Visiting Professor of Sculpture,
                          University of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois.

1965-68 ......................... Head of Sculpture Program, Syracuse
                          University, Syracuse, New York.

1968-69 ......................... Free-lance Painter, Lecturer, Writer,
                          San Francisco, Berkeley, California.

1970-72 ......................... Professor of Fine Art, Head of Depart-
                          ment, University of Natal, Natal, South
                          Africa.

1972-73  ......................... Graduate Student, The Ohio State
                          University, Columbus, Ohio.

1973-  ......................... Professor of Fine Art, Chairman,
                          University of South Dakota, Vermillion,
                          South Dakota.

PUBLICATIONS


Some Writings, Syracuse: Privately published. 1968.


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Fields: Sculpture
Design
Painting
Art Education

Minor Studies History of Art
Photography
Philosophy
Philosophy of Education
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the Problems of Translation, Explanation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement as Dialectic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and the Doubtfulness of Immanence</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Intangible Nature of Content</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. AN EXAMINATION OF SOME ASPECTS OF FORM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Form and Content Dilemma Illustrated</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form as Modified by the Medium of Expression</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive Knowledge</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief, Behavior, and Tacit Knowledge</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Common Identity of Intuition and Dialectic</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. AN EXAMINATION OF CONTENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Views of Content</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content as Emulation</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Content of Doodles</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Skill as Content</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content as Innovation</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content as Product, and as Expression of Function or Behavior</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and the Unfamiliar</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unfamiliar as Norm Transgression, Crime</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE MEDIATING PROCESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art as Work</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Distrust of Art</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Extinction of Folk Art</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rational and the Irrational</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Autonomy of Inferential Knowledge</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Passive Nature of Consciousness</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations in Dialectical Approach</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**V. A BACKGROUND TO SOME EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IN FINE ART**

- Instinct and the Genetic Code                                     | 73   |
- Imagination and the Creative Process                              | 76   |
- Aesthetics and Norm Transgression                                  | 78   |
- Implausible Slogans and Dogma                                     | 80   |
- Elitism, Intellectualism and Distinctive Excellence in an Egalitarian Society | 86   |
- Art Education and Society                                          | 90   |
- Curriculum Responsibilities and Instrumentalism                   | 95   |

**VI. ART AS BEING SIMILAR TO OTHER ACTIVITIES IN LIFE AND MEASURABLE IN SIMILAR TERMS**

- A Technological Society and the Art Teacher                       | 99   |
- The Innate Character of Aesthetic Experience                       | 104  |
- The Necessity of Dialogue                                          | 106  |
- Resistance to Responsible Dialogue as an Aid to Exploitation       | 109  |
- Intent and Context in Expression and Recognition                  | 111  |
- Of Speculative Freedom                                             | 114  |

**VII. CONCLUSION**

- The Cyclical Nature of Learning--Teacher Guidance and the Discipline of Precision | 117  |
- Expository and Hypothetical modes of Teaching                     | 123  |
- Content as Competence                                              | 125  |
- The Educated Intuition                                             | 128  |
- Individual Expression and Individual Excellence                    | 131  |
- Pedagogical Confusion in the Visual Arts in Higher Education      | 132  |
- Resolution through Relentless Questioning and Behavioral Discipline | 134  |

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**                                                      | 138  |
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some of the Problems of Translation, Explanation, and Interpretation.

It seems that it is impossible to make translingual or transcultural statements with any certainty that the translation is an accurate reflection of what was said, or intended, or done in the original language or culture.¹ Each language is peculiarly suited to the needs of the community it serves, and if a translation is made into the language of another community whose needs are in many ways different from its own it is certain that misunderstanding will occur. There are clearly some experiential concepts which are natural to one community and completely unknown to another, such as snow to Eskimos and jungle to an Amazonian Indian. In such cases the use of language developed for other purposes to explain a concept—which only experience can make comprehensible might well be a fruitless academic exercise. There may be other needs and activities which appear to be similar if not identical in both cultures, in which case translation might be undertaken with great confidence, but the confidence might be misplaced. In ancient Rome the word "art" had a meaning closer to manipulative skill than to its modern poetic, aesthetic connotation.²

²Ibid, p. 5.
It seems to be very difficult to explain why a particular thing is done. Each individual even in a homogeneous society is likely to find a somewhat different reason to explain his own involvement in common-place, commonly shared activities. In any community, at a given moment in its history, the values the community places upon particular activities reflect conditions and ideas and aspirations which change as economic, political, and cultural conditions change. Some values are in a cosmic sense arbitrary: they relate to particular conditions. In the 11th Century the nominalist Roscelin declared roundly that universals are nothing but *flatus vocis*, that is, in modern colloquial terms, hot air. For him and for many other people "things" are always particular.

At a particular time in a culture there are people who increasingly specialize in their own activities to the exclusion of much that is happening about them. If this specialization is very pronounced, and the society is complex, then there arises a problem of trans-professional comprehension. Much of the knowledge which stems from long experience of a particular activity is seldom verbalized, indeed some of it is ostensively learned, and thus has not been nor perhaps can be verbalized. This "naming-

---


cum-pointing" as Polanyi calls it:

Conceals a gap to be bridged by an intelligent effort on the part of the person to whom we want to tell what the word means. Our message had left something behind that we could not tell, and its reception must rely on it that the person addressed will discover that which we have not been able to communicate.5

There thus seems to be no way to comprehend some of what is being communicated between members of a particular profession except by joining them. If such specialization should seem to be perceptually limiting the paradoxical remark of Scott Fitzgerald that "the well-rounded man" is the most limited of specialists since "... life is much more successfully looked at from a single window"6 offers another perspective.

If the probability of such trans-lingual, trans-cultural, and trans-professional difficulties is conceded, then it will not be hard to appreciate the problems and hazards facing an art-historian, an aesthetician, a teacher of art. If analyses and judgements are made they are made in the language and according to the perceptual and conceptual mores of the culture or professional group of the analyst. It may be argued that this is perfectly alright since there is no other way to do it. But there is a difficulty of which the following anecdote is illustrative. An Englishman walked into a store in Tokyo and asked


the girl behind the counter for the paper lantern in the window. The girl could not speak English but, after she somehow came to understand that he wanted a lantern she brought him all but the one he wanted. Irritated, he eventually fetched it himself and the girl giggled. It turned out later that the one he admired was an advertisement for toothpaste. The man was pleased with his find and took it back to England.

It can be said that this man had an emotional response to the advertisement which was the more pure because he could not understand the verbal information it offered. But it is also possible that his response was based on a barely developed Western conception of Japanese calligraphy. If this is so then the man can be said to have reinforced what in all probability was a crude misconception. Without making too much of this particular incident it is nevertheless a useful illustration of a popular but misguided application of a belief in the superiority of what is called an immediate response over a mediated response. The realist Courbet said "Beauty, like truth, is a thing relative to the time in which it is seen and to the individual fit to conceive it." 7

In this view immediacy subsumes a conscious or unconscious comprehensive familiarity with what is being experienced if the response is to be more than trivial.

A closer examination of what occurs when an immediate judgment is made about a somewhat unfamiliar art object may at first

dispose an observer to conclude that a judgement made from a basis of comprehensive familiarity is "real," whereas a judgement made in an absence of such familiarity is indicative of imaginative activity. If perception of any kind can be considered to be resultant upon something given by the senses then this situation may be transformed into a claim that a judgement based on comprehensive familiarity is indicative of an experience or perception of real sensa, while a judgement based on little familiarity is indicative of largely imagined sensa. But R. G. Collingwood will not have this. In concluding an examination of the nature of sensation and imagination he says:

Sensa cannot be divided, by any test whatever, into real and imaginary; sensa cannot be divided into real sensations and imaginations. That experience which we call sensation is of one kind only, and is not amenable to the distinctions between real and unreal, true and false, veridical and illusory. That which is true or false is thought; and our sensa are called real and illusory insofar as we think truly or falsely about them. To think about them is to interpret them, which means stating the relations in which they stand to other sensa, actual or possible. A real sensum means a sensum correctly interpreted; an illusory sensum, one falsely interpreted. And an imaginary sensum means one which has not been interpreted at all; either because we have tried to interpret it and have failed, or because we have not tried. These are not three kinds of sensa, nor are they sensa corresponding with three kinds of sensory act. Nor are they sensa which, on being correctly interpreted, are found to be related to their fellows in three different ways. They are sensa in respect of which the interpretive work of thought has been done well, or done ill, or left undone.8

8 Collingwood, The Principles of Art, p. 194.
Judgement as Dialectic

From this analysis it may be concluded that a judgement about an unfamiliar object of art is a judgement made without adequate interpretive effort, or possible thought, relative to other "actual or possible sensa." The object remains in a state of relational isolation mitigated only by what exists in a viewer himself as he relates his present response to any previous, possibly inadequate, response he might have had. This might be regarded as a somewhat realistic approach, but even in idealist terms such a judgement is lacking an adequate two term relationship, or dialectic.

It may be that a viewer will deny the need for a dialectic. If he is an artist himself and a follower of Zen philosophy he may insist that his own work is also devoid of dialectic—that it is pure immediacy. Any attempt at mediation would, in Zen Buddhist doctrine, be generally called "the affective contamination or the interference of the conscious mind predominated by intellect." It might be impossible to discuss his work with this artist if it were claimed to be an expression of the Cosmic Unconscious and therefore not available to dialectical examination. But Western scientific skepticism insists that there must be something to discuss since this man does not exist in a vacuum; he does not do his work with nothing; it is not totally unrelated.

---


10. Ibid., p. 13.
to anything else. If these conditions were in some strange way
to obtain, the work would seem to be impossible to describe or
even to perceive in the sense that perception with comprehension
occurs. "'Signs being little considered in themselves or for their
own sake, ... the mind often overlooks them, so as to carry its
attention immediately on to the things signified,' where nearly
all our interest lies."\(^{11}\) Perception with comprehension seems
possible only where relative correspondence occurs, although
through habit or perhaps ostensive learning this may not be rec­
ognized. "Hence it is we find it so difficult to discriminate
between the immediate and mediate objects of sight, and are so
prone to attribute to the former what belongs only to the latter."\(^{12}\)

Thus, if an artist has grown up in a society with which we
are familiar we may assume that his experiences have been to some
extent similar to our own. What is of interest to us is probably
in what way they differ; and the degree to which his response to
common experiences has been unlike, or perhaps more acute, than
our own. In relating to the same or similar experiences it be­
comes possible not only to understand more readily the inter­
pretation that is being offered, but to evaluate the quality of
the perception itself. The relationship between a viewer and an

\(^{11}\) Colin Murray Turbayne, Editor's Commentary, in *Works in

\(^{12}\) George Berkeley, *Works on Vision*, ed. Colin Murray Turbayne,
art object is thus in part mediated through a commonality of cultural context. This relationship is triadic.

... the route from stimulus to sensation is in part conditioned by education. Individuals raised in different societies behave on some occasions as though they saw different things. If we were not tempted to identify stimuli one-to-one with sensations, we might recognize that they actually do so.¹³

If it is noted that common interests and common experiences are the mediating factors in business and social intercourse it may be more readily conceded that only in this way can any intelligible relational situation occur.

This view of intelligible understanding is one which stems from common-sense, and from a scientific asceticism in which myth and mysticism are subjected to cool analysis. In opposition to such search for causality, principles, and methodologies of discovery are proponents of intuition and instinct who reject as fruitless pretentious to intellectual objectivity.

We must learn to discount to a large extent those social and intellectual values which have been the proud aim of the whole classic tradition. The bloody and embittered history of a world which for more than two thousand years has depended on the supremacy of ideological values of some sort is no recommendation of their efficacy in promoting human happiness. We might at least try the experiment of educating the instincts instead of suppressing them; the cost of failure could not exceed what the world has already endured, and is now enduring.¹⁴

Common to attitudes of this kind is a belief in a teleonomic prin-

¹³Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 193.
¹⁴Read, Art and Society, p. 108.
ciple which guides at least the affairs of man, if not all cosmic affairs. This principle might be framed in the context of an ideal deity, or of a Bergsonian rejection of a concept of an ultimate goal in favor of "... life's essential spontaneity..." through which "Only instinct can give direct, global insight into... life's phenomena." Such a principle is wholly impenetrable and thus unexplainable; accordingly man's only recourse is to strive for a passive harmony with this monistic or pluralistic force. As an example of such belief Zen Buddhism has already been mentioned. For Benedetto Croce "... art and criticism were both passive forms of immediate knowledge." With the exception of a relatively short courtship with a concept of art as a three-term dialectic Croce viewed the activity of thinking as being detrimental to the true intuitive nature of art.

For Renoir as for the Fauves intuition was an innate sense of harmony with nature which can only be corrupted by the activity of thought. Not only is this concept close to religious belief, but no real distinction is drawn between form and content. The intuition and the expression of it must be an indivisible act; only in this way will a work of art achieve pure concrete representation of feeling. The act of objectification is not symbolic.

17 Ibid., p. 134.
in the sense that it is an ideated convention; it is asserted to be spontaneous expression unaware of any mediating influence.\textsuperscript{18} This unawareness is a questionable concept, but it is believed by devotees of intuitive perception that a work of art is essentially a statement about the subjectivity of the artist himself. This subjectivity is, in Jung’s psychological theory, consubstantial with innate archetypal imagery. "The innate archetypes, he said, act as frameworks into which each people and each individual pours his own specific experiences."\textsuperscript{19} Technique, consciousness of line, chromatic conventions are all rules private to the emotional nature of the artist.\textsuperscript{20} In 1908 Henri Matisse wrote:

> What I seek to get above everything else is expression . . . I cannot distinguish between the feelings I have and the artistic technique with which I translate it . . . The expression is the whole disposition of my picture, the place the volumes occupy, the space about them, the proportions, all have their part.\textsuperscript{21}

With this concept of immediate expression it is clearly impossible not to claim the same immediacy of perception for a spectator. It seems logically inevitable that if there is no mediation possible in the production of a pure work of art, no mediation is possible in its apprehension. But this raises problems for the

\textsuperscript{18} Gauss, \textit{The Aesthetic Theories of French Artists}, p. 63.


\textsuperscript{20} Gauss, \textit{The Aesthetic Theories of French Artists}, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{21} Gauss, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 61.
spectator and for the aesthetician. Gauss condenses such problems as set out by L. Stein as follows:

Is the emotional reaction of a spectator before a painting the same as the artist's? Is there no place for individual reaction to works of art? If all spectators and the artist find an emotional coincidence before a work of art, then is not art a language, a thing of public experience? If this is so, then is not an attempt to make a calculus of that language or to explore it semantically, as the neo-impressionists tried to do, a justifiable and necessary labor? Or are we back to a mystical interpretation of art which says much but explains little, telling us finally that art is inexplicable? These painters fail to see their theory opens up numerous questions.22

Science, and the Doubtfulness of Immanence

Metaphysical and generalized philosophical attempts to explain form and content are viewed with suspicion by scientists. Biologists, neurologists and students of mind, being directly concerned with the nature of the operation of the human organism, must necessarily be particularly sensitive in this regard. D. C. Dennett concludes a study of content and consciousness with the remarks:

The feature that is central (if not quite universal) in the personal mode of discourse is Intentionality, and it is this feature that persistently tempts the theory builder into positing man-analogues as elements in his analysis, thus obviating the analysis entirely. In his purest form the little man in the brain takes on the guise of brain-writing reader, an intelligent, communicating system capable of understanding messages. Positing the brain-writing reader is almost irresistible, for if we cannot understand central states and events of the nervous system as bearing content, as being messages of some sort, it is not

---

22Gauss, Ibid., p. 65.
clear how we can understand them at all. The temptation must be resisted, however, . . . The solitary audience in the theatre of consciousness, the internal decision-maker and source of volitions or directives, the reasoner, if taken as parts of a person, serve only to postpone analysis. . . .

From a biological standpoint Jacques Monod is equally skeptical of an ontology-guiding cosmic teleonomic principle through which, as purpose is more closely achieved, invariance must become more closely absolute and evolution eventually cease. He asserts that, scientifically, there can be no such concept; he observes man as having emerged by chance, and on the basis of a conservative invariance he reproduces himself according to a biological blue-print which assimilates and transmits the consequences of experience in the generative process. The blue-print evolves. Purpose is modified by challenge. He sees a linear order of precedence: emergence; invariance as a tested key to survival; evolution responsive to changing challenge; purpose as a rationalization of a perplexed intelligence. In this framework there can be no beautiful ultimate, only an end which is as accidental as the beginning. In language which would serve uncannily as a description of the emergence of a work of art he says:

> Among all the occurrences possible in the universe the a priori probability of any particular one of them verges upon zero. . . . Not only for scientific reasons do biologists recoil at this idea. It runs counter to our very human tendency to believe that behind everything real in the world stands a necessity rooted in the very beginning of things.

---

Against this notion, this powerful feeling of destiny, we must be constantly on guard. Immanence is alien to modern science. Destiny is written concurrently with the event, not prior to it. 24

The Intangible Nature of Content

This introduction has moved from the individual to the general and back in its brief exposition of the bafflement of man when he confronts his own existence and the interpretation of data provided by the senses, be they symbolic or natural. Looked at from afar and with complete objectivity it might well seem that the differences between different methods of approach to the achievement of further understanding may be expressions of the same content in different forms. It seems content cannot be known as a tangible measurable entity; and this is the great paradox. A great many people believe they know whether somebody else is talking sense or talking nonsense. Some people profess to know when a work of art has content and when it does not—just as an engineer will believe he knows when a fellow engineer has a feel for his work. The tacit, or speculative nature of the knowledge concerning this knowledge is succinctly expressed by W. T. Stace when he says:

While the motivation of men by purposes is a plain fact, the suggestion that minds and desires and thoughts are "non-material" is not a plain fact. It is a speculative theory which may be true or false. So also is

24 Monod, Chance and Necessity, p. 145.
the opposite view that minds and desires and ideas are material things or are in some way reducible to them.25

The Form and Content Dilemma Illustrated

For many people there seems to be a necessary relationship between form and content. To such people it makes little or no sense to attempt to conceive of an abstract phenomenon, or experience, which can be identified as form in total isolation from what it gives form to. The reverse would also seem self-evident—that it is improbable that whatever is termed content can be conceived at all without that which makes it perceptible. That is, without form content can make no claim to existence, and without content form cannot come into being. These are far-reaching philosophical claims and in this essay an examination of them will be restricted to their application to works of art.

In quoting Hanslick, Berndtson says "An indefinite feeling is incompatible with the nature of aesthetic form, which always is individual and determinate." But this might be interpreted as signifying a mere plastic consciousness. For Gleizes and Metzinger, it seems, form does not have content in its natural state as it exists in the "world before us". Moreover, they believe that form is only discernible by an artist: "To discern a form implies, aside from the visual function and the faculty of being moved, a certain

development of the spirit. The exterior world is amorphous to
the eyes of the majority."\(^2\) When an artist observes a form he may
decide to sculpt or paint it, in which case the content will be
"The immeasurable sum of affinities glimpsed between the visible
manifestations and the tendancy of his spirit". But although what
he produces is an interpretation the reminiscence of natural forms
cannot be absolutely banished.\(^3\)

Clive Bell is more severe. He insists that a representative
element in a work of art is irrelevant to the statement of pure
form the artist is making. "For, to appreciate a work of art we
need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas
and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions."\(^4\) Bell's vision is
of an "ultimate reality" which is expressed through the form,\(^5\) but
there may seem to be a problem in reconciling his formalism with
a recognition of an artist's work as being "... bound by his
emotion."\(^6\) The content is acknowledged but there seems to be a
confusion between a formal and an expressionist theory of art.
Furthermore, if a person can "... tell by the quality of a

\(^2\) Gauss, The Aesthetic Theories of French Artists, p. 72.
\(^3\) Gauss, Ibid., p. 73.
\(^4\) Clive Bell, "Artistic Representation and Form", in Aesthetics,
p. 56.
\(^5\) Berndtson, Art, Expression and Beauty, p. 128.
\(^6\) Berndtson, Art, Expression and Beauty, p. 127.
single line whether or not a man is a good artist." It may be either that he has a peculiar gift or that his experience provides him with this acuity of perception.

Berndtson describes "artists and aestheticians" as variously regarding form as structure in relation to material, emotions, or to concepts. For Otto Baensch there was no question but that form was an expression of content, and that the necessity, or inevitability, of a work of art is dependent on the fitness of form to content. But he did not believe it to be possible to analyze or prove the existence of content:

Why a work of art with a certain rhythmic-formal nature forces us to become aware of just this specific emotional content and no other, remains obscure. . . . We, as beholders, do not know why we perceive just such a content with the form; the artist does not know why he gives the content, which he shapes, just such a form.

Interestingly, where Croce declares "The impossibility of choice of content . . ." Baensch reverses the dilemma in declaring that an artist does not know why he gives the content just such a form. For these reasons a more detailed examination of these two terms will be undertaken before an attempt is made at the identity and role of the mediating process in its relation to form and content.

---

7Bell, "Artistic Representation and Form", p. 58.
8Berndtson, Art, Expression and Beauty, pp. 53-54.
Form as Modified by the Medium of Expression

It is claimed by Paul Stern that "Form and content are unequivocally coordinated, ...".\(^{11}\) In order to avoid further metaphysical assertion this examination of form will depart a little from a consideration solely of works of art. Berndtson has noted that the term "form" may refer to materials, emotions, or concepts. The form of the human body normally refers to the shape and volume which are defined by the skin and hair which covers, and is revealingly stretched over, the complex organic structure of man. If it is said 'well of course the content here is the collection of bones, muscles, sinews and so forth which are the mechanism of the body', this response will rightly be thought to be simplistic. The muscles, bones, and sinews can be claimed to be individual forms which contribute to the larger form—they are thus not contained by the larger form, they are constituent parts of that form.

It is easy to continue this argument to the structure of bones and muscles themselves, although it is less easy to apply it to what is contained within forms which do not reveal the form of their contents, e.g. the ribcage. The thought might nonetheless occur that in the final analysis the content is life itself. Although the skeleton cannot be said strictly to express what is commonly understood as human form a recently dead person most certainly does. It might therefore seem that in some cases form can

be perceived as a single organic whole in regard to which the concept "content" is inapplicable. With an absence of the various movements which signify life, however, the content of the form "corpse" could be said to be death.

If the human arm, or leg, can be conceived of as constituting a single organic wholeness of form in which the concept "content" seems inapplicable, then the same would apply to sculptured wood or stone. When a sculptor carves a figure or form, what is contained within the outer surface of his work is generally solid material. Even supposing the sculpture were hollow and translucent and intentionally filled with an affective substance, this substance would not be referred to as the content of the sculpture, but perhaps as its contents. The point seems to be clear that whatever is internal to a form in a physical sense it is not this that is referred to when the term "content" is used. At all events, a woodcarving which is carved from a single piece of wood is clearly a physical, organic whole, although the form it had in its previous live state as part of a tree has been changed to conform to another requirement. Perhaps this is a clue to a lingering doubt concerning the form-sufficiency of a work of art.

If form follows function, as design dogma has it, then it may be there is a concept of "requirement" which can be physical or non-physical, and which might even be extrinsic to itself, which constitutes content. A more detailed examination of content must come later, but meantime it does seem that the form of a human limb, or of a wood-carving, conforms to a requirement which is extrinsic
to itself. The form of a leg follows a functional requirement which is exercised in concert with other parts of the body; a wood-carving may be said to serve the function of representing the ideated feeling in the mind of a sculptor, although this is a concept which will be examined in more detail later.

A musical or prose composition is presumably also somehow representative of feeling. D. E. Berlyne observes that what L. B. Meyer says in his book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*

... tallies quite remarkably with recent developments in motivation theory, although his book makes no reference to recent work in information theory or the psychology of music, and the meaning that gives rise to emotion, can come not only from extra-musical associations—from representational content—but from relations between elements. The relations in question depend to an important extent on the expectations that come from long acquaintance with a musical language and consequent recognition that some sounds are more likely than others to follow, or accompany, a given sound. Consequently, the composer is able to stir up or assuage emotion by playing on these expectations. He can conform to them or deliberately violate them. He can express passages whose subsequent development is predictable or passages that leave the listener at a loss to tell what will come next. He can cause a sense of disturbance to be succeeded by one of illumination and relief, as a later sequence of sounds reveals how an earlier sequence is to be interpreted.\(^2\)

This quotation contains claims which will be examined in some detail later. Of non-objective expression Leo Stern says:

"... even non-objective art continues to pursue art's social role in fixating thought in aesthetic

form, pinning down the most ethereal conceptions of the age in vitalized designs, and rendering them accessible to the apparatus of sense.\textsuperscript{13}

Although the form of a dissertation cannot be said to have the physical nature of a limb, or of a wood-carving, it may have a functional or an aesthetic nature which it would have in common with a leg or a wood-carving. A description of the form of a dissertation might be that it has a title, an introduction, an argument, a summary, a conclusion. But, as Schwarz has said, this might be regarded as being merely the garment of a subject-matter idea rather than its form.\textsuperscript{14} The form of a dissertation does not have the corporeality of a leg or a wood-carving; it would seem to refer, rather, to the way ideas are expressed through words and through no other medium. The use of words will demand a logic and a style peculiar to words. Gilbert Ryle says of prose form:

\begin{quote}
The discoveries of the physical sciences no more rule out life, sentience, purpose or intelligence from presence in the world than do the rules of grammar extrude style or logic from prose. Certainly the discoveries of the physical sciences say nothing of life, sentience, or purpose, but nor do the rules of grammar say anything about style or logic.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}


\end{footnotes}
If the form of a dissertation is peculiar to the nature of words, and the form of a leg is peculiar to the nature of bone, muscle, and sinew, and so forth; then a claim that form conforms to a requirement extrinsic to itself cannot be wholly true. If a bridge is to be erected to cross a river this might be done using wood, or steel, or rope, or concrete, or some combination of these materials. If it is successful the finished bridge will serve the purpose of enabling dry passage across the river, but the form of the solution will be in part intrinsic to the materials employed. Form would thus seem to imply more than function alone, or the way in which an idea is expressed alone; it seems rather to be the synthesis of an idea which is expressed through the medium of a material which impresses its own characteristics upon the expression of the idea.

This may look convincing, but if this 'truth to materials' concept is applied to the forming of a dissertation it may seem to be not quite so easy to lump the organic and the concrete with the inorganic and the plastic. That is to say, to lump rope, steel, wood as a means of expressing an idea together with words as a means of expressing an idea. And yet if expression of any kind is an objectifying or communication of an idea or feeling, and that idea or feeling can be expressed through the form of mime, charcoal, paint, words, wood, music and so forth; then the idea will exist in the chosen form. The form can thus be assessed not only as to its suitability to the expression of a particular idea and the
success of the attempted expression, but also as to its truth to its own internal logic, or structure, whatever the medium employed.

To say this is to say that form has two contents, (1) the logic of the medium employed and, (2) an idea or feeling which it is its purpose to express. This is not to support the 'truth materials' admonition in a narrow sense, however. If an idea is taken to be of a feeling, of which external representation is to be made then, for example, a joyful feeling caused by the fresh promise of a mild Spring day might be expressed in verbal, graphic, or dance forms; or even in simple behavioral forms such as spontaneous laughter. For a clear, conscious expression of such a feeling, as opposed to an effortless, unconscious expression of body language, determinacy through distinction is necessary. Berndtson says:

A work of art is a form and is therefore determinate. It is a unique individual and is thus highly determinate. A work of art cannot be substituted for another: each has a character peculiar to itself and distinct from that of any other.\(^{16}\)

The material for the act of representation is a sympathetic knowledge of the medium and the process. Whatever the form used, if either of the two kinds of content is inadequate to the representation the form will be to that extent deficient. For example, if there is demonstrated a mature awareness of the logic of a medium but the statement appears to lack specificity in the sense that it is not representative of a particular feeling, the form will be as

\(^{16}\)Berndtson, Art, Expression and Beauty, p. 55.
weak as if, in spite of there being a clearly identified particular feeling, the means are inadequate to the making of the representation. The form of a dissertation is no different in its nature. Dennett remarks:

Verbal expressions, however, are not the ultimate vehicles of meaning, for they have meaning only in so far as they are the ploys of ultimately non-linguistic systems.¹⁷

Thus the form of a dissertation is an expression of a dialectical relationship between an idea or feeling and a material-as-language with its own logic.

**Intuitive Knowledge**

As has already been indicated, this presentation of form as a consequence of a dialectical act has some vigorous opponents. In the words of M. E. Brown in describing Croce's early thought "... art is the simple, passive knowledge of individual impressions;"¹⁸ where "Because these impressions have no form at all until the artist looks at them, his very glance would be a kind of knowing, the first and only order the impressions would have."¹⁹

For Croce and his kind the activity of thinking must be avoided as a harmful act, it distorts what is essentially primitive and immediate; feelings pass by means of form from "obscure regions

¹⁷Dennett, *Content and Consciousness*, p. 88.


of the soul into the clarity of the contemplative spirit.\textsuperscript{20} Croce is quite categorical about this when he says:

\begin{quote}
Intuition or representation is distinguished as form from what is felt, and suffered, from the flux and wave of sensation, or from psychic matter; and this form, this taking possession, is expressed; and nothing else (nothing more, but nothing less) than to express.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

This is a concept of passive cognition of pure intuition, and intuition can be demonstrated only by direct expression. Although Croce allows that "...content is always formed, the form is always filled, the feeling configured and the image felt."\textsuperscript{22} they in effect form one identity without distinction or dialectic. This is the concept of the finitude which cannot be transcended which was rejected by Monod. If it were merely an assertion of the essentially personal, a rejection of attempts at formalization into general theory, it would still need to take note of the empirical nature of syntactical knowledge. As it stands, this view can do nothing more than recommend fortitude and blind guidance by a cogniscenti which is unwilling to examine carefully the processes which lead to an acuity of particular perception and thus narrow the field of the unknown and, perhaps, the unknowable. Before abandoning a difference between what might be termed an archaic and a modern view of the nature of the problem, it could be fruitful to a further clarifica-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21}Ibid, p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{22}Brown, Neo-Idealistic Aesthetics, p. 30.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
tion of a concept of form to examine an aspect of the nature of belief.

Belief, Behavior and Tacit Knowledge

Belief which is formless appears to be a contradiction in terms. To say "I believe A", or "I believe in A", generally implies that some emotional or intellectual disturbance has been resolved and formalized. "Doubt is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief."23 If, on the other hand, I merely proclaim "I believe" it may be asked of me what I believe or else it may be assumed that I am referring to something which has already been formulated and is commonly understood among the people to whom I address myself. So it is necessary that in order that other people may comprehend my statement of belief it must be couched by me in some form which is compatible with their understanding of the proper manifestations of that belief. If I express belief in the values of Christian doctrine and yet openly practice adultery, theft, cruelty, and vindictiveness it will be suspected that I neither understand the Christian ethic nor do I understand the forms in which it is customarily demonstrated.

It may be argued that this is too extreme and even arguable a concept of form. But for as long as a member of a society is obedient to the forms of behavior expected by that society he has

great liberty in affairs which have not yet been formalized by it. Alternatively he may even sometimes transgress the spirit of the established forms as long as he understands and outwardly observes the forms themselves. As was exhibited in the Watergate affair, transgression without respect for form is culpable. The question as to whether the forms themselves are static or mutable is still relevant, but relevant too is the concept of understanding.

To the extent that the form of the teachings of Christianity can be said to be based upon the interpreted and chronicled experiences of one man in relation to the accumulated wisdoms of diverse ancient cultures, the formalization of these teachings appears to that extent to be rooted in empiricism.

It is perfectly true that in living beings everything, including genetic innateness, comes from experience, whether it be the stereotyped behavior of bees or the innate framework of human cognition. Everything comes from experience, yet not from ongoing current experience, reiterated by each individual with each new generation, but instead, from the experience accumulated by the entire ancestry of the species over the course of its evolution.23

Because such teachings express this complex accumulation of experience stretching over countless generations of man, their forms tend to take on a mantle of dogmatic immutability. In such circumstances it would seem to be quite impossible for anybody to wholly, consciously understand much about the behavioral forms and customs of society. Since man has survived tolerably well with

23Monod, Chance and Necessity, p. 154.
them, it seems to be sensibly accepted by a great majority of the members of a society, seemingly at something like a tacit level of understanding, that their observance of its forms is beneficial to the individual and to the group.

This is a concept of form as dogma rooted in empiricism. So little of it can be visible to rational scrutiny that the great body of it is taken on trust, or acceptance through tacit understanding. This is described by Michael Polanyi as operating "... on an internal action that we are quite incapable of controlling or even feeling in itself."25 He appears here to be at one with Croce's concept of the static nature of intuitive knowledge, and he confirms this impression when he says that man shapes his knowledge "... with a view to a reality with which he is seeking to establish contact."26 But he later makes this claim which would seem to place him clearly among the theorists of thought and form as self-translation:

Any tradition fostering the progress of thought must have this intention: to teach its current ideas as stages leading on to unknown truths which, when discovered, might dissent from the very teachings which engendered them.27

The Common Identity of Intuition and Dialectic

Interestingly, a conclusion might now be drawn that there

26 Ibid., p. 77.
27 Ibid., p. 82.
may be no fundamental difference between so-called intuitionism and a dialectical method of self-translation in the realization of form. In both processes, if there are two processes, it seems possible that cognition occurs after the event. In other words, much of an activity is spontaneous while it is in process. Both methods are expressive of content. Superficially, and particularly as affecting teaching methodologies, however, the differences are so great that they are often, in practice, irreconcilable. Since expressionist mysticism does not lend itself to any but ostensive forms of pedagogical experience, this essay will concern itself chiefly with an examination of the possibilities of a dialectical methodology. In such an attempt these cautionary words of Gilbert Ryle are well kept in mind:

The fears expressed by some moral philosophers that the advance of the natural sciences diminishes the field within which the moral virtues can be exercised rests on the assumption that there is some contradiction in saying that one and the same occurrence is governed by both mechanical laws and by moral principles, an assumption as baseless as the assumption that a golfer cannot at once conform to the laws of ballistics and obey the rules of golf and play with elegance and skill. Not only is there plenty of room for purpose where everything is governed by mechanical laws, but there would be no place for purpose if things were not so governed. Predictability is a necessary condition of planning. 28

Pragmatic Views of Content

A view of form as described in the last chapter may appear to be tolerably acceptable, but that such an appearance is deceptive is demonstrated by much sophisticated and unsophisticated thought and work which consciously and unconsciously describes or attempts to produce form in art without reference to an exotic concept of content. Examples of such work range from child art through many adult 'primitives' to theoreticians such as I. A. Richards who objected to an aristocratically esoteric view of art.\(^1\) Richards might have claimed that there is nothing more mystical about art than about an automobile, the content of both being "... part of and continuous with life."\(^2\) In The Principles of Literary Criticism he asserted that "Until Whistler came to start the critical movements of the last half-century few poets, artists, or critics had ever doubted that the value of art experiences was to be judged as other values are."\(^3\) Later, in support of a theory of aesthetic emotion, or content, as a

---

\(^1\) Reid, "Beauty and Significance," p. 39.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 39.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 39.
"synaesthetic," by which he meant an equilibrium between impulse and emotion, he claimed that only through a synthesis of relationships can the full richness and complexity of our environment be realized. John Dewey was of a similar mind when he said:

To say emphatically of a particular person that he has soul or a great soul is not to utter a platitude, applicable equally to all human beings. It expresses the conviction that the man or woman in question has in marked degree qualities of sensitive, rich and coordinated participation in all the situations of life. Thus works of art, music, poetry, painting, architecture, have soul, while others are dead, mechanical.

If the last sentence of this quotation from Dewey should seem obscure in its meaning, he is clearer at the beginning of Art as Experience where he complains that misconceptions about art result from both a false identification of a work of art with an object, and the obstructive effects upon fresh insight of classic paradigms. He claims a primary task of a fresh philosophical view of the arts to be: "... to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience."

Berlyne treats content as exploratory behavior, of which


more will be said later, but Skinner says: "A world in which there is no need for moral struggles will offer none of the reinforcements of a successful outcome. . . . Art and literature will no longer be based on such contingencies." This concept of drive-reduction will be referred to again later but, meantime, experience of the world as it is would seem to indicate that man is some distance from Skinner's ideal world—even if it is thought to be desirable. Thus; with the possible exception of Skinner, pragmatic views of content appear to be contained within normally valuative criteria rather than its negation—or its elevation to rare esoteric levels of perception.

Amos Chang ascribes to content a spiritual quality. Basing his belief on the teachings of Laotzu, he posits life as being a balance between the tangible and the intangible; between the physically real and the spiritually real. Where there is imbalance towards the tangible he sees monotony, and where the imbalance is towards the intangible he sees a lack of vitality. The intangible cannot be manufactured, it exists physically in empty space and can be observed only with faith. This appears to be an interesting mixture between the pragmatic and the spiritual, but since this essay will not attempt an analysis of faith, spiritual concepts of content will not be mentioned further in this chapter.

--


Content as Emulation

For many amateur artists and beginning art students form is an object or an activity which already exists. It is the business of art to copy it. Quite simply a person like this generally paints and draws and so forth because such activities already exist. There are models in existence which excite his admiration and ambition. This is Whitehead's "stage of romance" in which "The subject matter has the vividness of novelty; it holds within itself unexplored connections with possibilities half-disclosed by glimpses and half concealed by the wealth of material."\(^{10}\) A beginner may wish to be able to draw like Leonardo da Vinci, or Norman Rockwell, or Saul Steinberg, or like a favorite comic strip artist. It is possible that he will have a conceptual leaning towards the subject matter of his chosen exemplar, but the sheer technical difficulties of performance are often so great that at least for a while they are likely to bring him to a position where he regards them as being of paramount importance. Alternatively, if he rather soon comes to believe that he can draw as well as a chosen exemplar it is probable that he is merely copying—the possibility of content having escaped his attention.

It was argued in the last chapter that content is implicit to form. It now appears that some would-be artists do manage the seemingly impossible feat of achieving form without content. But

---

in their case content might be said to lie in a striving towards emulation. If this is true the argued relationship still holds good, although if emulation is to be included within the embrace of the concept "content" it might seem to be a rather comprehensive embrace. Perhaps it was wrong to classify attempted emulation as content. But if it is wrong then it seems that there are some things or reasons which are content, and others which are not. It was said that the concept of content might escape the attention of some people who were nonetheless striving towards emulation. This is puzzling. If it is true, as has been suggested, that there is a content which is a kind of conscious striving, or attempt to emulate, and it can also be said of a person who emulates successfully that the possibility of content may have escaped his attention, then it seems there are at least two kinds of content. Perhaps they can be shown to be like the two kinds of content which emerged from the last chapter.

The Content of Doodles

There may be a distinction to be found between graphic work which is intended for an audience and which has a model or exemplar, and work which is done apparently thoughtlessly but wholly privately, like a doodle, which is a fidget. In effect this would be to distinguish between work done with a conscious intent to affect, and work done without such conscious intent.11 It would seem to be a possible distinction. But there are some doodles that are

complex or otherwise fascinating, and others that are banal. If it is asked what is meant by these two words "fascinating" and "banal" it must be admitted that they are value judgements meaning "good" and "bad". So if a doodle is described as fascinating it seems clear that a judgement is being made—that the attention of the observer is being held, and even held strongly. Now if the doodle occurred without conscious intent, perhaps as an apparently compulsive fidgety accompaniment to a telephone conversation or a conference, then it is most unlikely that what is admired is technical skill, or craft, or successful emulation.

The doodle might be a methodical, intricate pattern, or a strange animal or person, or a complex structure which is dismissed as autistic by its author. But to an attentive observer it may reveal an attention to apparently unpremeditated detail which transmits a vivid sense of purposeful reality. This reality is what Schiller described as "Schein". "Schiller was the first thinker who saw what really makes 'Schein', or semblance, important for art: the fact that it liberates perception—and with it the power of conception—from all practical purposes, and lets the mind dwell on the sheer appearance of things."\(^{12}\) If the reality is not a result of conscious skill or craft, then it seems it must be representative of some quality or idea in the mind of the doodler. The attention of the observer is held by something compelling but not wholly

understood. If this something is to be described as content, which seems unavoidable, then it seems there can be no exclusion of work which is done without conscious, intentional awareness from a class of work which is said to have content. Dennett is very forceful about this. He declares:

\[\ldots\] awareness is not the home or origin of intentions or volitions. In fact we have only limited and fallible access to the mechanisms that direct our behavior. Nothing that goes on 'in awareness' can be construed as an act of will or volition, and nothing that is subconscious would fit the ordinary connotations of these words.\(^{13}\)

It may be that the banal doodle can be discarded from this examination. A strong point about the category of things called doodles has already been made. Yet it may be that a banal doodle also has a part to play. It may not be just that the doodler has no talent as a draughtsman, for such skill has already seemed to be irrelevant to a judgement upon this activity. It may be that he is conscious that his doodling will be seen by other evaluating eyes and so he is inhibited. It may be that his doodles are interesting not so much to an artist-observer as to a psychiatrist. This is by no means to imply that he is sick, but that his work, as well as that of the fascinating doodler, may well be consistent and to be revelatory of character traits or preoccupations and so forth in their authors. Thus no doodling of any sort can be said to be devoid of content in that it all reveals something about

\(^{13}\)Dennett, Content and Consciousness, p. 174.
the doodler although little of it may be significant as art. This point is emphasized by Waelder. He says:

... psychoanalytical interpretations of a work of art, by dealing only with the content and not with the quality of execution, are equally applicable to great art and to trash and so do not come to grips with the problem of art, i.e. of artifacts of quality.¹⁴

As a result of this examination of doodling a kind of content which is other than a product of conscious striving has been affirmed. But there remains a doubt that attempted emulation can be counted as content. It sometimes happens that a teacher or an experienced artist looks at an object of art-work by a student and observes that it appears to lack content. He might say that the form is well handled, the work is technically good, but it looks dead.

Pictures do not really pulse and breathe; ... Yet the metaphors of "life" and "organic form" in art are so strong that I have known a serious, reflective artist to be actually shocked at such philistine statements as I have just made, calling those terms metaphors.¹⁵

The same might be said of some doodles but this is a different situation. The student is presumed to be working consciously towards a degree of maturation beyond his present state; there may be a particular artist, or school, with which he wishes to be identified; there is consciousness of technique. An observation about content would thus seem to be less simple and more prone to

¹⁴R. Waelder, "Motivation and Resolution", in Psychology and the Visual Arts, p. 98.

qualifications than was the case with a doodle. Dewey, who uses the term "significant form" sees it as a problem of selection; "Unless the meaning of the term is so isolated as to be wholly occult, it denotes selection, for the sake of emphasis, purity, subtlety, of those forms which give consummatory significance to every-day subject matters of experience."\(^{16}\)

**Technical Skill as Content**

When the teacher described the technical aspect of the work as good it may be that he had in mind the technical similarities between the work of the student and some other work it resembled or was intended to resemble. If it is assumed that this teacher is serious, responsible and experienced, there are left two alternative possibilities: either he is using the term content in an occult, ostensive sense, or he is saying the work is non-significant in a pragmatic Deweyan sense. Whichever way, the inference is that an attempt to emulate must succeed beyond the point of faithful, technical reproduction if it can be said to have content.

The question being asked is reducible to asking whether technical skill can be regarded as content. When a man is observed to have technical skill it may be that he is being measured against standards of production or process to the exclusion of any innovative capacity.\(^{17}\) For example it is desirable that a plumber or a banker

---


\(^{17}\)Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, pp. 15-17.
or an airplane pilot should have technical skill. In part this means that it is desirable that if things go wrong in their special fields they should be sufficiently familiar with the tools and procedures they have learned to operate to make corrections with smooth efficiency. Technical skill in a medical doctor or a sculptor would be similarly demonstrated by an ability to work according to accepted standards of performance. But if it is asked about a man how good he is at his work and the reply is 'Well, he is technically very good' there is a possible suggestion that there is something missing. On the other hand if it is conceded that a man is 'Really good' the probability is that an ability to go beyond technical skill is implied.

Content as Innovation

Although it is impossible to define a clear borderline between conformity to accepted standards of performance on one side and an ability to individualize, interpret, and thus innovate on the other side, a distinction along these lines is commonly observed by artists and other people highly developed in their own fields. The implication is that work done by artists who conform to accepted practices may have something missing, whereas work resulting from individual perception contains that something which may be recognizable only by people experienced in the field of art.

"The poet . . . in proportion as he understands his business gets as far away as possible from merely labeling his emotions as instances of this or that general kind, and takes enormous pains
to individualize them by expressing them in terms which reveal their difference from any other emotion of the same sort.18 There seems to be no reason to doubt this, but Gombrich19 warns of the specialism which may lose touch with the subtleties of reality. There remains also the problem of criteria for judgement, here Gombrich has also pointed out:

... that art is not produced in an empty space, that no artist is independent of predecessors and models, that he no less than the scientist and the philosopher is part of a specific tradition and works in a structured area of problems. The degree of mastery within this framework and ... the freedom to modify these stringencies are presumably part of the complex scale by which achievement is being measured.20

If there is substance in what has just been said it follows that art students and amateurs must and do attempt to conform to existing and barely understood criteria in the work they do. In such a condition individualized consciousness and interpretation would seem to be hardly possible since these imply a comprehensive understanding of the tools, the models, and the concepts inseparably related to what is being interpreted. From the point of view of an experienced artist, therefore, a new work of art which seems to contain that something not measurable only by successful conformity or technical criteria would probably best substantiate itself by

18Ibid, p. 113.

19E. H. Gombrich, "Representation and Reality", in Psychology and the Visual Arts, p. 218.

some kind of demonstration of cognizance of the conventions it has moved beyond. An ability to make such an interpretation, or move, he might say is a particular ability peculiar to each individual. What Dewey says of a perceiver of art applies as well to an artist:

There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His "appreciation" will be a mixture of scraps of learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration and with a confused, even if genuine, emotional excitation.21

There are several difficulties about what has been said so far, of which one is a limitation of the possibility of content to work which moves beyond conventional criteria. Another difficulty is the exclusion of the possibility of content in the work of many students and amateurs; another is a seemingly impregnable elitism attached to the ability to recognize content if it is there. At least it now seems clear that neither technical skill nor an attempt to emulate are alone sufficient conditions for the existence of content.22 It also seems possible that an ability to innovate or interpret or modify existing conventions are at least factors contributory to the existence of content.

21Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 54.

Content as Product, and as Expression of Function or Behavior

Since an artist "produces" it might be fruitful to examine the word production, as a kind of flank attack upon this problem of content. Production implies a product, and if content were a product reducible to systematic manufacture there would surely not be such difficulty in describing it. It was said earlier that content is something the individual alone can produce; this means that it cannot be produced by a careful copying of something else nor can it be reproduced by careful technique unless a masquerade is intended. If this is so it seems not to be a tangible thing like a physical form, or a verbal composition, since both of these can be analyzed and reproduced, even as a new synthesis based on the findings of the analysis. This possibility was demonstrated by Van Meegeren in his paintings of what purported to be early works of Vermeer. What occurred in this instance was that another person's identity as style was usurped to the apparent eclipse of the forger's own identity, or style, as an experiencer of and a contributor to a 20th century rather than a 17th century class of painting, or cultural expression. Subsequent to Van Meegeren's confession of his fraud it appears to have become possible through the consistency in the body of his fraudulent work to identify the interpretive intelligence which was Van Meegeren from that of Vermeer, or anybody else. To this important extent it must be conceded that Van Meegeren expressed his private perception of a possible "... precedent class for Vermeer, ..."23

23 Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art, pp. 110-111.
then, is essentially an expression of individual perception. There emerges a reflection that possibly the value standards of our society are questionable in that Van Meegeren felt himself forced to cheat in order to gain acceptance as a brilliantly creative visual historian.

Perhaps part of the difficulty of the identification of content hinges on the idea that a painting or other work of art is a more or less skillful copy of something, that it is a product that serves a decorative purpose. Nobody talks of a chair, or a curtain, or a radio, or an automobile as having content, although this may be a conventional error. It seems probable that for a great many people a painting that is hung on a wall is no less a product and is no more expressive of content than many other products. If this is so, and if there is a widespread tendency (which might be conscious or unconscious) to relate content to function in a scale of values, a painting is likely to rank below a hi-fi or a dune buggy. A painting may thus be regarded as being in some way suitable and skillful, or pretty, just as a chair may be regarded as being fashionably acceptable.

Morse Peckham advances the concept that all human behavior is styled, and that "Culture is patterns of behavior; and artifacts, including works of art, are merely the consequences or de-

---

24 Langer, Problems of Art, p. 95.
Emotive value cannot be confined to one category, or even to a restricted group of categories, except through social convention. "... art is a disjunctive category, established by convention, [it is] not a category of perceptual fields, but of role playing." This role playing aspect of artistic production and appreciation has, in Morse Peckham's opinion, passed largely unnoticed "... principally because everyone concerned with the problem of art has been so bemused by the divine and magic myth of artistic creation." Thus, he can argue,

The museum and the concert hall, the theater and the opera houses, are stages, or settings, not for art, but for the perceiver's role. In all human behavior we take our cues not only from other performers but also from the situation.

So, he concludes, "A work of art is what the perceiver observes in what has been culturally established as a perceiver's space."27

In a tangible sense it must be conceded that a painting is a product. It was produced and it exists as a physical reality. Although it can be said to exist as representative of an idea in somebody's head, this can be said of all products. The motivation for production and acquisition is thus functional. If this is true then it cannot be surprising if the concept of content is not widely understood. Yet it exists, and it is understood, even if it is not identified as such, in other more familiar activities such as surreptitiously or candidly watching behavior if it is

---

26 Ibid., p. 11.
27 Ibid., pp. 60-69.
thought a family quarrel is brewing; or an awareness that somebody just returned home is very much more pleasant than usual. In these circumstances the unusual is observed and interpreted. A flushed face may be accurately interpreted as rage, embarrassment, or shame. Arnheim says in this connection:

Kindliness or aggression, straightshooting determination or hesitation, are expressed in the curves of the physical movements (or traces of movements) which accompany such mental attitudes.28

In 1709 George Berkely observed:

... we see shame or anger in the looks of a man. Those passions are themselves invisible; they are nevertheless let in by the eye along with colors and alterations of countenance which are the immediate object of vision, and which signify them for no other reason than barely because they have been observed to accompany them. Without such experience we should no more have taken blushing for a sign of shame than of gladness.29

In a not dissimilar way it is possible to interpret a painting. A Rousseau may seem to express a mature innocence; a Marisol sculpture a mild mockery of an inarticulate suburbanite. But it is not technique, or product, or composition, or esoteric, elitist criteria which are being discussed. It appears to be the emotions, or the feelings, of one person in some way communicated to another person. If an activity is observed to be conventional it seems that normality is assumed and attention is not aroused.

... to create anything at all in any field, and especially anything of outstanding worth, requires


29 George Berkeley, Works on Vision, p. 49.
nonconformity, or a want of satisfaction with things as they are. The creative person—the non-conformist—may be in profound disagreement with the present way of things, or he may simply wish to add his views, to render a personal account of matters.30

Content and the Unfamiliar

From this it seems that if normally familiar feelings are expressed nobody is surprised and nobody is very interested. This seems odd, and a little disturbing, but it may be intrinsic to a conditioned or genetic psycho-physical sensitivity to danger. This would throw the expression of content into a behaviorist light. At all events it need no longer be a semi-mystical entity understandable only by the initiated. It is understood by everybody to some extent and, to the extent that it is a signal of emotions abnormal to the customarily expected ones, it is likely to be in some way disturbing. Berlyne concurs with this observation when he says: "Curiosity occurs when the subject finds himself exposed to novel, surprising, ambiguous, problem-raising or otherwise conflict-inducing patterns."31 Yet Berlyne seems to discount the concept of sensitivity to danger as wholly explanatory of response to unexpected stimulation when he says:

Since the Second World War there has been a flurry of experimental work on what has come to be called "exploratory behavior"... This term encompasses a varied conglomeration of activities, and only future research can tell us how best to

30 Ben Shahn, The Shape of Content, p. 88.
classify them. They include forms of behavior that are commonly placed under headings like "curiosity," "play," "entertainment," and "recreation." What exploratory activities have in common is that they comprise devices by which higher animals and human beings seek exposures to biologically neutral stimulation. By "biologically neutral stimulation" is meant stimulation that is not apparently accompanied by beneficial or noxious effects of parts of the body other than the central nervous system. So exploratory activities contrast with activities like seeking food or escaping pain. Exploratory activities are accordingly often said to be carried on "for their own sake." They are said, especially by Russian writers, to be "self-reinforcing." What this presumably means is that they are carried on for the sake of internal consequences, not because they change the external environment so as to make it more favorable to the needs of the organism, but because they give rise to patterns of activity in the brain with particular characteristics.32

Gombrich, in examining "attention", says: "It is clear that the distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar must be of utmost biological importance, . . ." 33 If this focussing of attention on the unfamiliar is as widespread as seems indicated, it might provide a key to much that has been said so far about content. From the evidence of Freud, Jung, Adler and their many successors34 it seems most probable that we notice and in some way process much more than we are consciously aware of.35 In each of us both the noticing and the processing is to some extent different and peculiar to the individual but, in order to

32 Berlyne, "The Psychology of Aesthetic Behavior."


make family and community life work for the maximum good of the
majority of its members, people are conditioned, or they condition
themselves, to conform to family and community norms. If accepted
norms are observed there is no threat; but if an individual trans­
gresses a norm by in some way asserting his individuality he imme­
diately excites attention. It seems possible that this trans­
gression may be what is called content; and yet this would in­
clude every sort of excess and crime.

The Unfamiliar as Norm Transgression. Crime

It must be conceded that every act, by its very nature as
act, has content. But when the term content is used in reference
to works of art it seems to be understood to have a meaning which
is something like "extra-ordinary." It is now posited that this
extra-ordinary quality which frightens some people into refusing
to identify it, and excites other people into active recognition
of what is before them, is an act which transgresses conventional
criteria, or norms. The act, or the desire to experience it, is
private to the individual and its consequences may be "biologically
neutral." It may impel him either to:

... seek external stimulation containing the
information that he needs to remove his uncertainties
and resolve his conflict, or else to engage in ide­
tational processes that will lead to a solution of the
problem. He may well deliberately expose himself to
troublesome patterns for the sake of the challenges
with which they present him, if the difficulty of
assimilating them and the satisfaction from over-
coming the difficulty are properly balanced. In other words he will choose those that are maximally interesting. 36

What is maximally interesting to an individual may be regarded as cultural transgression, and reflection will reveal that transgression of norms is a danger to the society that functions by them. However, since norms are based on experience and experience changes, norms also change. The problem for each individual and for each society is how much transgression it is willing to, or can safely, accept.

Communities dislike dissent and innovation . . . Yet changes, for better or for worse, in the ways of life of communities have usually been brought about, not by spontaneous simultaneous changes of heart and mind, but by a lead given by individuals or by minority groups— . . . 37

Transgressions which seem to be based on a lack of understanding or respect for the norms of a society in which they occur are likely to be punished by that society. Monod 38 ascribes the survival of the tribe to a severe application of its laws to its members in order to ensure its survival, and Peirce says:

The method of authority will always govern the mass of mankind; and those who wield the various forms of organized force in the state will never be convinced that dangerous reasoning ought not to be suppressed in some way. . . . Following the method of authority is the path of peace. Certain non-

---

36 Berlyne, "Motive and Resolution", p. 143.


38 Monod, Chance and Necessity, pp. 166-167.
conformities are permitted; certain others (considered unsafe) are forbidden. These are different in different countries and in different ages; but wherever you are, let it be known that you seriously hold a tabooed belief, and you may be perfectly sure of being treated with a cruelty less brutal but more refined than hunting you like a wolf.39

Since society is a product of countless generations of changing norms a transgression which demonstrates a knowledge and respect for existing conventions can expect to attract the interest of at least some of its responsible citizenry. It is this latter distinction which differentiates an acceptable content from a crime; it is also that which differentiates a mature content from one which intends only emotional excitation. These both demonstrate motives which are asymmetrical in their understanding of the complex balances of society. In an account of the Gestalt theory of "the whole-qualities of systems" Arnheim says: "... by organizing sensory facts according to the laws of 'Pragnanz', unity, segregation, and balance, the artist reveals harmony and order, or stigmatizes discord and disorder."40

Conclusion

With this theory there is a pulling together of various of the seemingly broken threads of the earlier parts of this examination of content. A doodle may hold the attention of an observer pre-

40Arnheim, "Gestalt and Art", in *Psychology and the Visual Arts*, p. 258.
cisely because it is revelatory, perhaps in a symbolic way, of an individuality in an otherwise conformist, well-adjusted, intentionally anonimous person.

The fact that the human brain is constantly carrying on a process of symbolic transformation of the experiential data that comes to it causes it to be a veritable fountain of more or less spontaneous ideas.¹

This person may reject his own doodle as autism precisely because he chooses to suppress any expression of his individuality which is divergent from the norms of society. But if a society is to survive, it seems it must respect its own conventions and at the same time be able to responsibly transgress or interpret them when it becomes necessary to do so. Technical efficiency in the exercising of existing norms is not enough. It seems that an experienced artist who looks in a new work for evidence of a cognizance of the conventions it has moved beyond is to be equated in this way with a law-maker, a scientist, and a responsible citizen. He is looking for evidence of the dialectic which is necessary to a balanced synthesis. Jerome Hausman quotes James Ackerman:

... variations or innovations tend to be almost imperceptible in stable cultures and to be more abrupt and radical in fluid cultures. Some innovations are incorporated into traditional styles, and others become the root of new styles which often grow alongside the older ones. Poorly adapted innovations either are summarily rejected or, if they are potentially viable lie dormant to act upon a later, more congenial environment. So while the individual imagination

¹Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1942) p. 43.
generates change, society, including artists, guides its fate and direction; but only by post facto selectivity; the environment can prompt imaginative solutions by posing challenging problems, but cannot itself formulate solutions.\textsuperscript{42}

Thus content is decisively coupled with work which moves beyond conventional criteria; but it is a concept which includes a requirement that the conventions which are transgressed shall be understood and respected. In saying this it becomes clear that there is no logical or practical reason why student or amateur work should not have content. Insofar as content is defined in terms of context, or knowledge and respect for what is being transgressed, it is a process which may start very early in life and is never ended. This is reflected in Giovanni Gentile's concept of self-translation.\textsuperscript{43} It may be that there are, simply, some people who through fear, habit, unconcern, or some other factor do not engage in a particular activity, such as art. For them a formulated conception of content in a work of art may be unimaginable, or psychologically unacceptable.

There is no longer any real cause to regard discussion about art, or an ability to identify the presence of content in art, as an act of exotic or esoteric elitism. This belief is no less strange an aberration than it would be to regard a discussion about banking,


\textsuperscript{43}Brown, \textit{Neo-Idealist Aesthetics}, p. 154.
or a particular aspect of science, between specialists in those fields as an exhibition of purely mystical gifts. It would be contrary to common sense not to recognize that some people demonstrate a peculiar perspicacity in certain fields, but there is no common sense reason to believe that this would be possible without long, serious, comprehensive study of their particular areas of interest. Snobbery and exclusiveness, fashion and commercialism exist, but they are extrinsic to a consideration of the fundamental nature of content in art.

To me form and content are inseparable. Form is formulation—the turning of content into a material entity, rendering a content accessible to others, giving it permanence, willing it to the race.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{164}Ben Shahn, \textit{The Shape of Content}, p. 62.
CHAPTER IV

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE MEDIATING PROCESS AND THE "WORK" OF AN ARTIST

Art as Work

There appears to be a great deal of confusion among some artists, aestheticians, and members of the general public concerning the nature of art in relation to the nature of work:

... in work, what occurs is the creating of a real object copying a desired and merely imagined object. But in art what occurs is the creating of an object, whether real or imaginal, and of a nature not antecedently known which in a unique way corresponds to something that was not an object at all, viz., to a feeling.1

This is pure mystification of the work of an artist and obscures the fact that all creative work can be described in the same way. Dewey asserted caustically:

Only the psychology that has separated things which in reality belong together holds that scientists and philosophers think while poets and painters follow their feelings. In both, and to the same extent in the degree to which they are of comparable rank, there is emotionalized thinking, and there are feelings whose substance of appreciated meanings or ideas.2

There must be many possible explanations of this strange phenomenon although only three will be discussed in this chapter: (1) that


2Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 73.
gross materialism is exclusive of the concepts of vitalism and animism which would seem to offer a natural key to some people to the understanding of content in art\(^3\) (2) the separation of intellectual and physically-emotive activity to the extent that an intellectual may tend either to reject the physical and emotional as unworthy of serious consideration, or to make a purely intellectual and therefore self defeating effort to understand them.\(^4\) An artist may tend either to be scornful of intellectual pretensions\(^5\) or sometimes attempt an intellectual understanding of his work and philosophy;\(^6\) (3) the divisions based on material wealth and industrialization which have resulted in the successful destruction of traditional organic associations of art and society by a profit-hungry elite armed with the persuasions and weapons of technology.\(^7\)

These are not themes which will be pursued at any length in this essay, but they pertain to the subject of this chapter which is the possibility and nature of a mediating process between form and content in a work of art. In each of the three categories there are inherent different and sometimes conflicting possibilities of approach to the examination. In (1) a rejection of


\(^4\)Dewey, Art-as-Experience, p. 115.

\(^5\)Gauss, The Aesthetic Theories of French Artists, p. 41.

\(^6\)Ibid, p. 50.

spiritual in favor of material explanations for life and the activities of life leads on the one hand to a stern scientific rejection of metaphysics and myth.

... metaphysics is a subject much more curious than useful, the knowledge of which, like that of a sunken reef, serves chiefly to enable us to keep clear of it.8

It leads on the other hand to popular revivals of magic activities which are ignorant of their depths of discipline or of their roots.9 Dewey describes them as enjoying the "drama of life without the latter's liabilities ..."10 Thus, from the same tendency there stems a tough-minded determination to take a long hard unsentimental look at ourselves by men like Monod and Dennet, while would-be Bergsonian and Zen mystics deny the possibility of disciplined intellectual understanding giving more than relative knowledge of the world. From these contrasting positions opinions as to whether an artist is working are likely to be reached for contradictory reasons. A pragmatic scientist is likely to see neither method nor social responsibility in much of what artists do, or are taught to do, in contemporary society and a mystic must see an artist as by definition denying intellectual and physical struggle as being counter to a possibility of communion with nature and therefore of cosmic understanding.11

8Pierce, Philosophical Writings of Peirce, p. 40.
Academic Distrust of Art

With reference to the second category mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter: the disciplinary separation between an academician and a working artist is so great that a philosopher or an historian is likely to pay tribute to art in a strictly academic but not logical way. Great works of art are acknowledged to exist despite the messy metaphysics which seem to surround their production. But the apparent perennial willfulness of artists in their rejection of classical canons of artistic expression leaves many disciplined academics distrustful and irritated by much current art. A customary stance for such academics is to reject contemporary art as pretentious and unworthy of serious attention. Some of the causes of this will be examined later but, as Christ-Janer and Wickiser point out, academic suspicions of practicing artists are of long standing.

Suspicion of the arts did not begin in our time. As we know, current wisdom in ancient Greece considered art as skill or as a mirror. Art was considered poor philosophy, but philosophy excellent art. The charm of art was thought to be dangerous, because it was pleasurable and a drain on reason. Plato called the sculptor a common workman, not to be thought of as fine or noble or wise. Plotinus thought the love of beauty to be metaphysical homesickness. Medieval Christians thought art to be a liar who steals wholesome qualities from experience. 'Poets', they said, are pernicious, for because of the sweetness of their modulations, souls fall from grace.'12

Christ-Janer and Wickiser sketch further the modulations in the attitude of academicians towards art through to the present time. Broadly, the attitude of the ancient Greeks has continued in Western society and today C. J. Ducasse is still capable of declaring that an artist is not competent to theorize about art. In discussing the "me" and the "I" as different phases of the self George Mead characterizes the "me" as "answering to the organized attitude" of others while the "I" is expressed in novelty. From this premise he continues:

In the artist's attitude, where there is artistic creation, the emphasis upon the element of novelty is carried to the limit. . . . That attitude is, of course, not essential to the artistic function, and it probably never occurs in the extreme form in which it is often proclaimed. In contrast, John Dewey will have none of this isolating the artist from the rest of society. He says:

.. fine art consciously undertaken as such is peculiarly instrumental in quality. It is a device in experimentation carried on for the sake of education. It exists for the sake of a specialized use, use being a new training of modes of perception. The creators of such works of art are entitled, when successful, to the gratitude that we give to inventors or microscopes and microphones; in the end, they open new objects to be observed and enjoyed. This is a genuine service; but only an age of combined confusion and deceit will arrogate to works that perform this special utility the exclusive name of fine art.

---


On the side of the artist there has been for the last century and a quarter a strife which is well illustrated by French art of that period. Gauss traces an "intelligible pattern" from realism to non-metaphysical analytical neo-impressionism which saw aesthetics as a science of art; and then a turning to symbolism, led by Gaugin, which was opposed to scientism and realism and yearned instead for an idealized past. The fauves and Renoir rejected the intellect for intuition, but with Cubism there was a return to realism and thence to "rationally conceived structure." Finally the Surrealists rebelled once more, and in the wake of Dada and Freud affirmed the primacy of psychic activity in art. More will be said of some of these movements later. The fluctuation from the rational to the irrational may seem bewildering, but it was reflected in philosophical fashions during the same period. If there is clearly a lack of deductive logic, this seems to be a condition of the times, and of man himself, rather than one which is peculiar to artists. This observation may appear to make dubious the profitability of an attempt to affirm a mediating process between form and content, but before examining that more deeply the third mentioned possible source of confusion about the nature of the work an artist does will be considered briefly.


17 Ibid, p. 98.
The Extinction of Folk Art

Without falling into the trap of the idealized nostalgia of the symbolists, there is still remaining evidence of the folk art that flourished in all Western countries prior to industrialization. This activity appears to have been unaffectedly integral to a rural, unmercifully vicissitudinary agricultural way of life. From the fifteenth century on it ran parallel to the growing intellectual idealism of the arts by the ruling and wealthy merchant classes. The destruction of the folk art that was swiftly brought about in England towards the end of the nineteenth century is described by Collingwood as follows:

Until the close of the nineteenth century, the rustic population of England had an art of its own, rooted in the distant past but still alive with creative vigour: songs and dances, seasonal feasts and dramas and pageantry, all of magical significance and all organically connected with agricultural work. In a single generation this was wiped out of existence by the operation of two causes: the Education Act of 1870, which as imposing on the countryman an education modelled on town-dwellers' standards, was one stage in the slow destruction of English rural life by the dominant industrial and commercial class; ... 18

In conditions where traditional folk-arts flourished it seems there was little distinction between the work that was done in the fields, the work that was done in the smithy, and the work that was done on the loom or at the potter's wheel. Aesthetically rewarding as much of this work is to perceptive modern man, it is not hard to conceive of the scorn with which such rustic skills

might be viewed by some contemplative minds of those times. With hindsight it is easy to say those minds were in some ways in error, but the point that is being made here is that since all the arts were organically and ritually related to community life the suspicion of an idle esotericism could not arise, except as directed at hucksters of any kind. When this organic integration of the arts with social life was destroyed art became, for a great many people, an affectation and symbol of wealth and temporal power, but with little intrinsic meaning or purpose, or capacity for quality, in any sense which was comprehensible to the workman and peasant. It was not serious work in the sense of serving for them a co-existent spiritual and material function.

With this as background it is now possible to approach the question of the mediation that occurs between a feeling and some kind of representation of the feeling, or, in other words, between content and form. In this context it makes little difference whether the content is expressive of the sensitivity to the interior logic of the material to be used to represent the feeling, or of the feeling itself. In the outline of recent French movements in art it was suggested that with such an example of apparent anarchy any attempt to assert an element of rationality might be profitless. It was also suggested that this is a condition not necessarily peculiar to artists, but perhaps a basic condition of man with which organized society must contend. But since man does regard himself as to some extent a rational being, and despite his limitations there
is widespread social and scientific evidence of his rationality, a hope for further understanding cannot be so easily dismissed as profitless.

The **Rational** and the **Irrational**

A curious aspect of the schism between academicians and artists is a belief held by many members of both sides that academicians are rational and artists are irrational. It is believed by some artists that an image is much more universally understandable than a word, but there can be little disagreement that verbal language is much more flexibly adaptable to social needs and intercourse than are two-dimensional or three-dimensional imagery. It seems, however, that this useful flexibility is then taken to mean that verbal language is superior to imagery for the expression of thoughts and feelings; that because it can demonstrate a logic in construction and, together with mathematics and scientific symbolism, it is a vehicle for logic itself, thought can be conducted only through verbal language.

Langer speaks directly to this point when she says:

> . . . there is an unexplored possibility of genuine semantic beyond the limits of discursive language. . . . Clearly, poetry means more than a cry; it has reason for being more than articulate; . . . We are dealing with symbolisms here, and what they express is often highly intellectual. Only, the form and function of such symbolisms are not those investigated by logicians, under the heading of "language."¹⁹

Dewey declares that it is only superstition that holds that be-

---

cause the meaning of painting and music cannot be translated into words, therefore thought is monopolized by words.20

On the Autonomy of Inferential Knowledge

It might be reasonably asserted that the limits of our conscious knowledge are defined by the present limits of a medium of expression, but consciousness may serve little more than a monitoring function somehow selecting for particular attention incoming stimuli, and outgoing response signals which have already been processed. It is rather in this line that Dennett says:

I, the person, do not make an inference (consciously), so it is tempting to say that I just know what these reasons or causes are, and then the case is easily confused with the cases of genuine experiential certainty, such as my infallible, non-inferential knowledge that I am in pain, which have a different evidential status altogether. Perhaps in cases of inferential knowledge we should not say that I make the inference, since it is made subconsciously, but it is made, and this is enough to give my knowledge of these reasons and causes a mediated evidential status.

Dennett continues on the following page:

... not only is it the case that when I do something for a reason, what I do is caused, but what makes a reason my real reason for doing something is that the events of information processing which cause what I do have among them an event with the content of my real reason, whether or not I am aware of this content.21

Looked at in this light all experience is processed subliminally before it re-emerges as expression, or representation. The

20 Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 74.
21 Dennett, Content and Consciousness, pp. 161-163.
part of this process which might still be described as discursive in the philosophical sense is that which is in some way monitored by consciousness. It seems to be fairly common experience that as a result of such monitoring revisions and corrections of representations are judged to be suitable to a particular circumstance. Even if, as it is claimed sometimes to happen, no correction is made to a representation, there has nonetheless been a judgement to the effect that no correction is necessary. Although Vivas cautiously edges towards this view when he says: "It is not an exaggeration to say that in respect to its hidden factors we know nothing about the creative process, except that it does occur, . . ." he is determined to have conscious effort give it its first push.22 Ducasse too, although seemingly not clear about how or when critical control is exercised, is positive that there is a judgement, and that it must be a favorable one. Yet he leans surprisingly towards Ryle's "ghost in the machine"23 and even towards a Crocean mysticism when he says: "The obligation of art is a categorical imperative, uttered, as it were, to ourselves by ourselves. It is the obligation imposed by the laws of one's inward being, to give birth to that which one bears darkly in oneself."24

22Eliseo Vivas, "Naturalism and Creativity," Creativity in the Arts, p. 91.
24Ducasse, "Creative Art, Work, and Play," pp. 73 & 79.
On the Passive Nature of Consciousness

It will be seen that from what has been said so far there has been an implicit closing of the gap between intuition and rationality. And yet there are still questions. One of these questions concerns what Collingwood terms the "corrupted consciousness" where consciousness permits itself to be bribed, or corrupted, in the discharge of its function. In the metaphor used above, the monitor of consciousness is perceived as a neutral agency somewhat similar to the senses. If it is considered that a man who has lost a leg may sometimes feel sensations in the missing foot; and imagined episodes, whether asleep or awake, create momentary impressions that things are being touched, tasted, heard, and so forth, then the role of consciousness would appear to be a passive one. If a part or the whole of a body is anaesthetized, then consciousness is also to that extent anaesthetized. So, to talk of a corrupt consciousness is to anthropomorphize a function of the human organism. It is, again, like talking of the corruption of Ryle's ghost in the machine. This is not to deny that there is some kind of process involving relating, choosing, suppressing, and so forth, but to suggest that it is an autonomous activity occurring prior to consciousness. Ducasse appears to believe that ulterior purposes may be served but there is a balance which is made between the internal critical process and

perhaps the degree to which the organism finds satisfaction in responding to external or internal criteria which determines the nature of the representation, or expression.

Variations in Dialectical Approach

Although the argument so far has gone some distance toward a variation of the position of intuitionists there is still their sometimes expressed belief that there can be no change in what is subliminally understood if the expression of it is to be pure. Ruling out the possibility of a supervening corruption there still remain two modifying factors which are difficult to overlook. One is that each individual appears to process what is taken in by the senses in a slightly different way. The other is the modification imposed upon expression by the nature of the material employed.

---

26 Ducasse, "Creative Art, Work, and Play," p. 79.
27 Collingwood, The Principles of Art, p. 139.
This was discussed in chapter two. A mystic claims that both are handled below the level of consciousness, and it seems he may be right. But he tends not to acknowledge either the personal nature of the act of recognition of correct representation, or that the influence of the logic of materials used modifies expression. The prior understanding of the materials used is also modified by experience, such activity being a dialectic, or discursive process of expression, observation, and correction. Truth is relative. Nietzsche's concept of a "fully determinate inspiration"\(^{29}\) appears to telescope and then deny a process which is most commonly experienced in attempted expression of feelings through any medium of representation.

It might still be asserted by an intuitionist that a fully synthesized "whole" can exist and that attempts to reach it are therefore not to be considered as accretions to further understanding but, rather as subtractions from misunderstanding. This, as was argued earlier, is a concept of a finite ideal which is ultimately attainable. In the experience of human endeavors it is a concept which is not only mystical, but often sentimental and a means of evading further thought or action. The idea of subtraction of misunderstanding is attractive and persuasive, it is precisely a part of a dialectical process and in ordinary experience the result of a process is, sooner or later, subjected

\(^{29}\)Vincent Tomas, "Creativity in Art," in Creativity in the Arts, p. 105.
to further process. There seems to be no sensible reason to suppose that this succession of "real and living doubt," followed by examination and resolution, followed by more doubt, can achieve finitude. It might cease due to weariness or extinction, but that is not finitude in the sense that process is complete as process. In considering something akin to this problem Ducasse says:

The process of correction (if any) which culminates in the acknowledgement of the product as adequate statement of oneself is, however, susceptible to two different interpretations. It may mean that the earlier attempt at objective self-expression was not completely successful; but it may also mean that it was successful objectification of a self which, when it confronted us clearly, we disowned and repudiated in favor of another, namely, of the self which found adequate objectification in the "corrected" product—the product being then better describable as objectification of a correction itself. . . .

It has been argued that a mediating process occurs between the receipt of incoming stimuli and an expression of the consequences of such stimulation by an individual, and that such objectification, or representation, aims at the satisfaction of an unease, or doubt. In the absence of a belief in finitude it also seemed logical that each successful resolution through clarification by representation of a present doubt leads to an awareness of further depths and ramifications of doubt. The process is thus self invigorating. Henri Lefebvre says in this vein:

---

30Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, p. 11.

31Ducasse, "Creative Art, Work, and Play," p. 79.
Far more than a mere process of thought, dialectic exists prior to mind, inheres in being. It obtrudes itself upon mind. First we analyze the simplest stirrings of thought; of the most abstract, the barest thought. In doing so we discover the most general categories and their concatenation. These we must next connect to the concrete movement, to the given content; we are then made aware of the fact that the process that involves the content and the self clarifies itself for us in the workings of the laws of dialectic. Contradictions in thought come not from thinking alone, from its weaknesses or incoherence; they come also from the content. Their interlocking tends toward the expression of the total movement of the content and lifts it to the level of consciousness and of reflection.  

Arnheim speaks to the concept of satisfaction of doubt from the Gestalt position when he says:

By describing the tendency towards balance as a basic effort of the organism to assimilate stimuli to its own organization and by showing that balance is, quite in general, a state sought for by physical forces wherever they interact in a field, the artist's striving for balance is revealed as just one aspect of a universal tendency in nature. From this point of view, pleasure appears as a psychological correlate of balance, not as its cause.  

Berlyne, however, suspects the Gestalt school of oversimplification in this respect. Commenting on their principle of Pragnanz, which identifies "... a tendency for the brain to prefer 'better' patterns and to distort less 'good' patterns in such a way as to make them 'better.'" He says:

We do not always maximize simplicity, regularity, and coherence. There are times when we actually go out of our way to seek their opposites. Experimental findings ... actually indicate that human beings and even

---

32 Monod, Chance and Necessity, pp. 36-37.
animals will, if given the opportunity, avoid both extremes of the simplicity-complexity, regularity-irregularity, order-disorder dimensions. This is especially clear when we consider aesthetic material. A work of art or other aesthetically satisfying stimulus pattern must possess just the right degree of structure, and not too much or too little, if the dangers of confusion and incoherence, on the one hand, and of insipidity and banality on the other hand, are to be overcome.34

Like any other purposeful individual35 an artist who is involved in creating and not in imitating is aware of his own purpose through the urgency he feels. Unlike a worker who is directed towards a preconceived goal there can be no identification of a result until a conclusion is reached. At this time, as Vivas so neatly puts it:

In the process of artistic creation the formulation of the conception and the solution of the problem are, I suspect, identical, and the creative process consists at once in creating and discovering what one wants to say.36

Thus; a conclusion in art is the moment when an artist discovers that he has succeeded in achieving a satisfactory expression of his own present feelings. Without the dialectic of representation these are but mute, undeveloped potential. Unless an artist achieves lucidity in his representation, it is not only unlikely that he or anybody else can know what it was he tried to express,37 but he cannot clearly move beyond it. If this

34 Berlyne, "The Psychology of Aesthetic Behavior."
35 Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 73.
36 Vivas, Creativity in the Arts, p. 92.
appears to be a truism, it seems it may be so only to those who have experienced lucidity.

To the degree that a work lacks coherence and lucidity, to the degree that it is not a unified whole . . . to that degree it will fail to be a creative work of art. \(^{38}\)

**Conclusion**

The arguments in this chapter cannot be offered as having an absolute necessity. They are based on commonly observable activity, and attempt to cut through some of the imagined barriers which seem to exist between an artist and the community in which he lives in contemporary Western urban society. Attempted also is an exposure of the apparent absurdities, pretensions, and sentimentalizations which surround the idea of what happens when an artist works. As Monod says: "'... knowledge is necessarily implied in all action, while reciprocally, action is one of the two necessary sources of knowledge.'\(^{39}\) The activity of thought is as mysterious as life itself. To give it too much prominence, to posit that it is limited in a conscious way to a small number of culturally prized discursive human activities, is detrimental to further understanding of the whole range of human activity, and to further understanding of art in particular. To deny the benefits of conscious intellectual attention in favor of in-

\(^{38}\) Tomas, *Creativity in the Arts*, p. 101.

articulate emotionalism is equally limiting. An active recogni-
tion of an essential relationship between emotion and intellect
would appear to offer possibilities for the lowering of some
traditional obscurantist attitudes where responsible exploration
might be expected to be found.
CHAPTER V

A BACKGROUND TO SOME EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IN FINE ART

Instinct and the Genetic Code

From what has been said so far it is abundantly clear that, given man's present state of knowledge there can be no categorical assertion about the nature of form or content and that which is called in this essay the mediating process. R. L. Gregory has said that philosophies are divided between those that are metaphysical and those which are empirical. The former hold that we are born with some kind of knowledge of the world; the latter claim that all knowledge is derived from sensory experience. In this essay it has been shown that both points of view may contribute to a central truth. If a newly born animal can display behaviors which contribute to its survival prior to any possible knowledge gained empirically, then it is reasonable to suppose that at some level such so-called instinctual behavior may continue throughout its life. There is no reason to believe that man is an exception, and Gregory indicates similar thinking to that of Monod when he calls such instinct "a state of knowledge won by ancestral disaster." What is learned by an individual cannot be directly in-


2 Ibid., p. 190.
herited by its descendants, but the genetic code can become modified to provide a capacity to respond appropriately to natural objects encountered for the first time by an individual.

In this view the limbs and the senses and the mind are useless unless they are employed to the effect of serving and preserving the organism of which they are an intrinsic part. Through the sense perceptions the organism is capable of perceiving that a particular experience is compatible with or dangerous to its survival. This urge to conformity or conservatism or harmony may be basic to the aesthetic experience. When an aesthetic condition is experienced it may therefore be that an immediate apparent cause of sensation is only partially contributory to the inner feeling of harmony. Aldrich says:

"... by attending exclusively not to how the physical objects feel (to the visual and auditory touch) but to the "feel" itself, one gets lost in the contemplation of a system of elements which, physically speaking, are nowhere. Such contemplation and such an object are necessary factors in aesthetic experience."^3

Aldrich seems to be expressing in a metaphysical way an exploratory activity which may be occasioned by apparently biologically neutral needs. These needs may be genetically inherited and the concept of biological neutrality be reducible to a genetic memory which seems no longer to be necessarily applicable.

M. Davidson supports the theory of a tendency towards biological harmony when he describes experiments carried out by Loeb

---

and Ewald in which it was discovered that in lower organisms:

A stimulus acts upon the animal's sense organs, and through these on the organs of locomotion, in consequence of which the animal turns until its body is symmetrically stimulated and equilibrium is established between the two sides. These movements occur mechanically, as a result of physical and chemical changes in various organs, with no real effort on the part of the organism.\(^4\)

In an examination of "pleasure" Bergson offered a similar theory:

What do we mean by a greater pleasure except a pleasure that is preferred? And what can our preference be, except a certain disposition of our organs, the effect of which is that, when two pleasures are offered simultaneously to our mind, our body inclines towards one of them? Analyse this inclination itself and you will find a great many little movements which begin and become perceptible in the organs concerned, and even in the rest of the body, as if the organism were coming forth to meet the pleasure as soon as it is pictured. When we define inclination as a movement, we are not using a metaphor. When confronted by several pleasures pictured by our mind, our body turns towards one of them spontaneously, as though by a reflex action.\(^5\)

In an empiricist view of nature it is unthinkable that there could be instinctive recognition of artificial forms. Since such knowledge "... could not have become genetically coded... there is no good evidence for this kind of innate immediate knowledge."\(^6\)

A metaphysician is still free, however, to assert that there is nothing new in a great many of the experiences we face during our


\(^6\)Gregory, Eye and Brain, p. 191.
lives. Although the twentieth century has shown this to be an increasingly doubtful claim, he may still cling to the concept of an instinctual search for harmony. A mathematician, Peter Hilton, says:

We are always seeking to find order in the chaos around us and this presence of order distinguishes music from noise, art from daub, song from screech. In our scientific work we are also looking for order and pattern, and it is, I claim, irrelevant to this issue whether we impose the order and pattern on the world of our experience or find it there—the activity is the same.7

Imagination and the Creative Process

For Hilton the imagination is something like the mediating process being discussed in this essay, and he detects no difference between its activity in the arts or the sciences. He claims:

While it is a platitude that creation in the arts is impossible without the full play of a fertile imagination, the same is true of creation in the sciences. The imaginative leap into the unknown is just as crucial.8

It will be seen later that not all people agree with this observation. Furthermore the metaphor or a "leap" may well be inadequate to most instances of imaginative creation. With some claimed exceptions a truer but less engaging metaphor would be a consistent and persistent imaginative "creep" which makes little leaps

8 Ibid., p. 30.
from time to time but which also discovers that a spectator who
has not noted the successive stages of the process is persuaded
that a big leap has occurred.

Our minds . . . grow in spots; and like grease spots, the spots spread. But we let them spread as little as possible; we keep unaltered as much of our old knowledge, as many of our old prejudices and beliefs, as we can. We patch and tinker more than we renew. The novelty soaks in; it stains the ancient mass; but it is also tinged by what absorbs it. Our past apperceives and co-operates; and in the new equilibrium in which each step forward in the process of learning terminates, it happens relatively seldom that the new fact is added raw. More usually it is embedded cooked, as one might say, or stewed down in the sauce of the old.

If, like Monod, James sees resistance to change as a kind of innate, self-preserving conservatism, Kuhn makes the practical observation:

By ensuring that the paradigm will not be too easily surrendered, resistance guarantees that scientists will not be lightly distracted and that the anomalies that lead to paradigm change will penetrate existing knowledge to the core.  

Hilton quotes Medawar as pleading for more mutual understanding between scientific and humanistic endeavors:

There is a strong, indeed, an indispensable imaginative element in scientific discovery and the imagination exercised in science is not essentially different, so far as I can see, from imaginative activity of other kinds. Conversely there is, or ought to be, a strong critical element in humane learning. . . . I think it a matter of empirical fact that humanistic and scientific educations provide alternative diets

---


10Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 65.
which can both of them sustain intellectual life and growth, and that the energies we spend in bewailing the gap between the sciences and the humane arts should be spent on developing and displaying the imaginative element in science and the tough-minded element in humane learning, so that people no longer persist in thinking the one all facts and the other all fancies.  

Aesthetics and Norm Transgression

Medawar appeared to believe that there is no, or at least not the same kind of, aesthetic experience communicable to an observer of a scientific discovery as is communicable to an observer of a work of art. In chapter three of this essay it was argued that content, and to that extent the possibility of an aesthetic experience, is decisively coupled with work which moves beyond existing criteria. When Morse Peckham says it is only when a rare genius comes along that a problem is seen and acted upon beyond the limitations imposed by a conventional paradigm he is, according to Kuhn, telling only a part of the story. Kuhn observes that anticipations of revolutionary vision may occur, but that unless they coincide with crises they are likely to receive little attention. Then Kuhn says:

\[\ldots\] one suspects that something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself. What a

---

11 Hilton, "Arts and Sciences; Differences and Similarities," p. 31.
12 Ibid., p. 31.
14 Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 76-91.
man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also
upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience
has taught him to see.\textsuperscript{15}

Initially, only the anticipated and usual are ex­
perienced even under circumstances where anomaly is
later to be observed. Further acquaintance, however,
does result in awareness of something wrong or
does relate the effect to something that has gone
wrong before. That awareness of anomaly opens a
period in which conceptual categories are adjusted
until the initially anomalous has become the antici­
pated. At this point the discovery has been com­
pleted.\textsuperscript{16}

Hilton asserts it to be his own personal experience "... that the excitement derived from a real insight into a new piece
of mathematics developed by others is similar in kind to the ex­
citement that accompanies one's own discoveries, ..."\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast it is possible that an expression of belief in a so-
called intuitive grasp of a work of art is sometimes little more
than a naive affirmation of fashionable togetherness. But it may
be more than just fashionable. It was argued in chapter one that
there seems to be no way to comprehend some of what is being com­
municated between members of a particular profession except by
joining them. (p. 3) Thomas Kuhn sees this kind of tacit knowl­
edge as "... the tested and shared possessions of the members
of a successful group, and the novice acquires them through train­
ing as part of his preparation for group membership."\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 113.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Hilton, "Arts and Sciences; Differences and Similarities," p. 32.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 191.
\end{itemize}
of a situation implies comprehension, and to comprehend a work of art is to be familiar with a great number of factors including materials, image, intent, method of expression, and context, without which congruence of experience intuition must be suspect. This is not to reduce comprehension to a formula, or system, but to state again that since a painting is not a natural object there can be no genetic preparation for response towards it. It would seem that the affected unapproachable mysticism which is encouraged by some artists and aestheticians stems from inadequate analysis, poor teaching, or a lazy self-deception.

Implausible Slogans and Dogma

Selected views of some scientists have been presented and they have been undogmatically exploratory. Alan Ross, a professor of English, talks of students who turned to English after completing degree courses in one of the sciences. He was "... very much struck by the qualities which they brought to their reading; an immense curiosity, ... clear and eager minds, a lucid and economical way of writing, and a great intolerance for nonsense."¹⁹ This might appear to be an unusually unbiased observation. There is similar exploratory thinking in the visual arts, although it is sometimes little more than confused special pleading. For example exhortations such as the following require some clarification: "Education should use the artist's in-

tuition which will serve as the most gracious and far-sighted
guide."; "We need the wholly educated teacher ..."; "... we
must overcome our fears of unleashing the creative imagination
in the present." The authors of these statements believe that,
unlike science, art does not become outdated. In that event
it may seem surprising that scientists are so well grounded in,
and respectful of, earlier scientific discoveries. Christ-Janer
and Wickiser also appear to believe that knowledge is only a means
for the artist to be able to express, or form, his experience.
Croce might have sympathized with this view but the dynamic effect
of action upon knowledge remains once more an ignored factor in
expression.

Later in their article Christ-Janer and Wickiser say:

The art act is essentially a creative search to
establish the questions that form the myths of our
time. It involves the total person with all his sen-
sibility, his kinesthetic control, his intuition, in-
sight, apprehension, intelligence and many other facets
of which we are unaware. ... the basic difference
between the arts and the other disciplines is creative
imagination.

These are fine, brave but in practice empty words seemingly overly
influenced by T.V. commercials. To take the last point first:
no evidence has been put forward by the authors to support the
claim that creative imagination has no place in disciplines other

20 Albert Christ-Janer and Ralph L. Wickiser, "Higher Educa-
tion and the Arts," p. 51.

21 Ibid., p. 49.

22 Ibid., p. 55.
than art. Second, without a methodology to verify that a "creative search" has been undertaken, and is successful, a claim that it exists in a particular field is hard to substantiate. Such a claim is therefore nothing but rhetoric. Third, the teaching of the visual arts at the college and university level is to a great extent handled by men and women who, by the standards outlined above, are mostly inadequate as educators. That is to say, the standards outlined by the authors are so all-encompassing and yet devoid of specificity that a great deal of experience, maturity, and wisdom would be required to interpret and apply them. It seems that Whitehead might have been just this kind of person; but it is apparent that not only does it take a long time to achieve these qualities in order to be able to nurture them in students, but it is rather clear that there are not many such people anywhere, in the arts or in the sciences. The authors seem lamentably to have fallen for their own myth-making propaganda.

It is unfortunate that much verbal imagery or rhetoric which was designed for morale raising has so often solidified into unquestioned slogan and dogma. Christ-Janer and Wickiser are not alone in their moments of easy optimism. Other examples are: that art programs help to improve the social order "... by helping students understand the power of visual forms to shape the feelings of people."23 The gap between this theory and one

---

23 Laura Chapman, "Curriculum Planning in Art Education," (address presented to the OAEA Conference, Columbus, Ohio, November 1969).
that propounds ". . . that of all school activities the art class, at least, should be one where the students are at ease and enjoying themselves."²⁴ suggests a need to clarify goals. There is a claim that "... without art we do not really perceive the value of anything, ..."²⁵ and another that it is education in art that develops the "... full potential of the child." David Ecker points to a weakness in this latter claim. He observes that the element of choice is being ignored; that the child has the potential "... to be dishonest and deceitful or ... to be honest and straightforward."²⁶ In a brief survey of claims made for art education, Lanier declares them to be little more than speculative.

Asserting that "In terms of conceptions of value in art, our intellectual capital was fully accumulated by 1950, ..." Lanier sites skeptically the concepts of the transferability of creativity in art to other disciplines; art as revelatory of intuitive metaphysical truth; art as a medium for the inculcation of transcendent moral principles; art as a promoter of international understanding; art as essential to the teaching process.

... except for the limited relevance of the artist-teacher concept, the other assertions about value in art are ... primarily speculative. There


is either no substantial supportive evidence for them, or their content is so distant from the uniqueness of art that they are unimpressive to most art educators.27

Extending Lanier's metaphor a little further, some of the intellectual capital accumulated by 1950 has appreciated in value. The pragmatism of Peirce and Dewey leads to Kaelin's observation that if thinking "... arises in an unsettled and ends in a settled situation" then:

... the perception of the finished status of the art object must correspond to the settledness of the problematic situation; the final perception must in some sense satisfy the inquirer that his problem is solved. Thus, the workability of the hypothesis and the success of the expression are the correlates standing in analogous relation. Since the success of the scientific hypothesis is to be judged in action, there is no reason to suppose that the success of the total expressiveness of the work of art is to be judged in any other way. In other words, both kinds of situations must be lived, or experienced, if the problem is to be felt in the first place, and if the hypothesis or pervasive quality of both kinds of situations are to succeed in settling the respective kinds of problem in the second. Judgement, then, must begin with the experience of the finished quality of every problematic situation; and to be able to judge we can do no better than follow the phenomenologist's prescription to go back to the things themselves as they appear to our vision.28

A basic question a scientist might ask of the work of a fellow scientist might be: what is he doing? and then: how is he doing it? and then: what are the precedents? This is not to say that scientists reject intuition, this has already been disclaimed, 27


but that they are necessarily practical. If they are not to de-
vour their lives in day-dreams they must be acutely aware of the
realities of empirical verification—and of the spade-work that
has already been done for them.

The same kind of empirical verification seems not to be avail-
able to an artist. And yet an art activity can be as serious and
consuming a search for a resolution of a disturbing problem as
is a scientific activity. In such a case it would seem possible
also to ask of the artist what are you doing? how are you doing
it? what are the precedents? Dewey is clear that "The real work
of an artist is to build up an experience that is coherent in
perception while moving with constant change in its development."\textsuperscript{29}
It seems the same might be said of a scientist, and indeed it was
said by a man with a scientific turn of mind which was at the same
time exceptionally imaginative. If a skeptic is inclined to re-
tort that not all scientists are imaginative it would be hard to
prove that all painters, sculptors, musicians and so forth are
imaginative. If the nature of the arts and their contribution
to our society are to be faced with clarity it might be necessary
to ask whether what is being flogged is not a dead horse, or at
least a very limp one in need of different methods of resuscitation.

Edward Mattil reports that despite the Rockefeller Panel Report
on the Performing Arts in 1956 that popular interest in all the arts
in America is burgeoning, an important factor which emerged was that

\textsuperscript{29}Dewey, \textit{Art as Experience}, p. 51.
the activity is almost all amateur and, with very few exceptions, the professional artist continues to be "... only one step away from poverty." Lewis Mayhew says of what appears to be a portion of the same report "The national potential significance of the arts is well revealed..." by such as the following excerpt from the report:

Many social and political forces have combined at this moment of history, both to compel interest in the arts and to justify that interest in practical terms. The intersection of these forces provides an unparalleled opportunity for the arts and the nation, particularly since it occurs at a moment when a surge in the vitality in the arts themselves has brought their needs and their delights to the attention of the national consciousness, as never before... The panel is motivated by the conviction that the arts are not for a privileged few but for the many, that their place is not on the periphery of society but at its center, that they are not just a form of recreation but are of central importance to our well-being and happiness. In the panel's view, this status will not be widely achieved unless artistic excellence is the constant goal of every artist and every arts organization, and mediocrity is recognized as the ever-present enemy of true progress in the development of the arts.

Elitism, Intellectualism, and Distinctive Excellence in an Egalitarian Society

It is not clear what is being revealed in this last statement that so excites Mr. Mayhew. It might even be suspected by a cynical


like Dwight Macdonald that it is little more than beautifully phrased expansive rhetoric which is reducible to an august pronounce-
ment about the desirability of achieving the co-existence of quan-
tity and quality in the arts. As such it might seem to exude a
naive belief that culture can be organized and disposed of in a kind
of Detroitization of the arts. There have been illustrious prece-
dents for the stimulation of artistic endeavors by conscious patron-
age and direction, of which the efforts of Charles Le Brun for Louis
XIV is a conspicuous example, although in the essentially elitist
atmosphere of the French court there was naturally no inclination
towards popularization. Perhaps it is in a national American sus-
picion of elitism that a part of the problem lies. Earl Edgar states
it very clearly when he says:

    Equality, in democratic theory, has been intended
to mean an ideal, a set of rights, not an empirical
generalization about human nature. Equality is basi-
cally a moral assertion, and the attempt either to
prove or refute the equality of man as psychological,
physical, economic, or social fact has been one of
the more futile exercises in political theory.32

This observation logically applies with equal cogency to the practice
of art, to educational endeavor in the arts, to a mature under-
standing of the arts in a democracy. It may be that an anti-elitist
posture is directly relevant to the concerns of this essay.

    . . . Intellect is readily associated with aristoc-
racy and power. We should therefore expect that in an
age of egalitarian democracy anti-intellectualism would

increase, for everyone now has the right to resent whatever looks like privilege and eminence.\textsuperscript{33}

A problem basic to a democratic form of organization is a conflict between two ideals: individuality, and equality. Both of these ideals stem in part from a rejection of the powers of absolute sovereignty and elitism, but whereas an individualist is ideally respectful of other individuals in a social group, an assertion of equality tends to deny the practice of individuality and it becomes the empirical generalization Edgar denied. Mead addresses himself to this issue when he says:

\begin{quote}
It is often assumed that democracy is an order of society in which those personalities which are sharply differentiated will be eliminated, that everything will be ironed down to a situation where everyone will be, as far as possible, like everyone else. But of course that is not the implication of democracy: the implication of democracy is rather that the individual can be as highly developed as lies within the possibilities of his own inheritance, and still can enter into the attitudes of the others whom he affects.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Mead believed that in an individual there is that which distinguishes him from anybody else.\textsuperscript{35} It is this individual content which is potentially in conflict with any society and specifically with a society with an ethic of equality. Although Mead proposes a solution he confesses that:

\begin{quote}
As democracy now exists, there is not this development of communication so that individuals can put them-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{33}Barzun, The House of Intellect, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{34}Mead, Mind, Self, and Society, p. 326.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 324.
selves into the attitudes of those whom they affect. There is a consequent leveling-down, and an undue recognition of that which is not only common but identical.\textsuperscript{36}

On Mead's analysis a democracy is thus in practice prone to a resistance to an expression of a content which has moved beyond a level of average expectation and experience.

Edgar, too, is sensitive to the dilemma facing a democratic educational ideal, and he seems not to resolve it when he talks first of "The potentials of a democracy as an environment favorable to the fine arts consists in its emphasis on shared values, ..." and then later describes the egalitarianism which is suspicious of distinctive excellence.\textsuperscript{37} He points out that the arts have been aristocratic both in the system of patronage that supported them and in the discriminatory nature of the standards of judgement in which they have existed. Edgar's earlier comment should not be forgotten, however; that egalitarianism is an ideal of opportunity and not of accomplishment. There is no grudging of admiration for a millionaire or a great sportsman or a movie star, and Ernest Van den Haag's comment is applicable to many societies:

The mass of men dislike and always has disliked learning and art. It wishes to be distracted from life rather than to have it revealed. It wishes to be comfortable in traditional and possibly happy and sentimental tropes, rather than to be upset by new ones. It is true that it wishes to be thrilled, too.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid}, p. 328.

\textsuperscript{37}Edgar, pp. 31 & 37.
But irrational violence or vulgarity serves for that, and for release, as sentimentality does for release. 38

This appears to be as true of the idealized society of ancient Greece as to contemporary America. In the trial which was to result in his condemnation to death on the charge of corrupting the youth of Athens Socrates said:

Kindly tell us Meletos, how do you say I corrupt the young? It seems plain from the indictment which you made that it is by teaching them not to believe in the Gods which the state believes in, but in other new spirits. Don't you say that it is by teaching this that I corrupt them?

To which Meletos answers: "I do say so, and no mistake about it." 39

Art Education and Society

Mattil is more conciliatory to science than are Edgar (scientific knowledge is useful insofar as it is used "... in the service of values illuminated by the sensitivity and discrimination of the artist.") 40 or Christ-Janer and Wickiser. He says: "Some of the most impressive arguments for balance have come from scientific leaders who have urged a partnership of the sciences, humanities and the arts." 41 And when he declares: "The problem of teaching artists today is complicated by the fact that no one can say for

---

38 Ibid., pp. 37-38.
41 Mattil, "Teaching the Arts", p. 68.
sure what art is for or what form it should take. Mattill makes a salutary contribution to honesty. But when he says "... the cultural explosion could lower overall quality in the arts." It is not so easy to understand what he means. Short of a few scattered 'primitives' and some residual effects of transplanted folk art there has traditionally been a widespread insistence in America upon utility with a rather small leisured minority taking an interest in academic fine art. Art courses in higher education were, until recently, considered to be more appropriate for extra-mural activities which would not interfere with the serious business of education. Daniel Bell is on record as saying recently "I hate sensibility. I hate perceptivity. All I care about is mind."

The observation attributed to John Quincy Adams seems appropriate in this respect. It was to the effect that his generation must learn the arts of war and independence, so that their children could learn architecture and engineering, so that their grandchildren could learn fine arts and painting. Other careful analysts report similarly. Hausman says:

From the time of Walter Smith's arrival in the 1870's, the focus of art education was upon the train-

---

42 Ibid, p. 72.
43 Ibid, p. 68.
ing of skills in drawing and the crafts. A nation involved in the "important business of growing up"—expanding and developing its frontiers, and building its industry and agriculture had little or no time for the fine arts. Education was tied to utilitarian principles; education in the fine arts could be only part of our leisure time activity or, at best, an activity of moral enlightenment. It was not until the 1920's that John Dewey and the Progressive Education Movement started to formulate a viewpoint of art forms as the resultants of a creative process and the centrality of such a process to educational goals.47

What Mattil may be saying, therefore, is that a setting of standards of taste virtually by popular acclaim will not necessarily endanger existing popular standards of quality, but that by its overwhelming abundance and acceptance low quality work in the arts could come to be mistaken for high quality. Mattil may be facing us with the alternatives of shallow novelty on the one hand, and of a passive conformity on the other. Perhaps, in practice, these two alternatives collapse into one.

Christ-Janer and Wickiser remind us that whereas the arts appear to most people to be "... esoteric, impractical, or superficial.48 these charges are commonly levelled at many activities which appear to lack immediate utility. Often it is work requiring complex processes and sustained intellectual and imaginative concentration that is viewed with popular suspicion. From these observations it may be speculated that it is work of which neither the content


nor the form is understood which tends to arouse suspicion. Whitehead observed that "progress is founded upon the experience of discordant ideas." His concern is with "beauty" and he finds that although beauty lies essentially in a resolution and concordance of feelings, it can also be supplied by discord in the "... positive feeling of a quick shift of aim from the tameness of outworn perfection to some other idea with its freshness still upon it." There seems to be implicit here an active and a passive sense of beauty. The active sense has an inherent danger of novelty and an exaltation of change for the sake of change; the passive sense a danger of a tendency to cling nervously to the security of an "outworn perfection". Considered in this way it seems less easy than ever to draw distinctions on aesthetic grounds between art and science. Another aspect of this difficulty is that even in the individual-orientation of Western society there is still a great deal of what Collingwood called "magical" activity, that is, activity which conforms to the expectations and accepted standards of society. Here again there appears to be no real difference between the arts and the sciences; if anything the sciences might fairly claim to be the more imaginatively dynamic.

It was argued in chapter two that the presence of an acceptable form will generally allay suspicion. Its frequent absence in much

---


50 Ibid, p. 257.

51 Collingwood, The Principles of Art, p. 68.
contemporary artistic activity may well be part of the basis of the mutual contempt between the arts and the sciences noted by T.R. Henn, although mutual ignorance would seem to be a far more potent factor. Henn identifies the animosity as an uneasy defensive defiance which, on the arts side, relies upon "... undefined emotional assertions about 'values' ... " which have not been tested and "... whose contribution to the art of living they find it difficult to explain."\(^52\)

This might help to explain a general resentment or criticism of art courses by college administrations and academic faculties noted by Anderson.\(^53\) It would seem that it will not be until fine art faculties resolve some of the problems concerning their function and methodology that mutual respect can begin to develop.

\[52\text{Henn, "The Arts v. The Sciences", p. 16.}\]
\[53\text{Mayhew, "The Arts and Access to Higher Education", p. 114.}\]
\[54\text{Goodman, Languages of Art, pp. 111-112.}\]
Curriculum Responsibilities and Instrumentalism

In this latter respect Mattil observes the importance of curriculum development specifically in terms of identifying population needs. Presumably with an eye to receptivity resulting from need and experience he advocates differentiation between novices and advanced students; between students who are being prepared as teachers and those who are to be artists; between those who are to practice in one form or another and those who will be audience. If a response to this suggestion is that these categories are arbitrary and impractical Mattil might reply that these particular distinctions may be arguable but that the problem should not be dismissed for such negative reasons. Henry Dyer bluntly claims that "The paucity of testing in the arts is functionally related to the paucity of education in the arts." This is an example of academic and scientific skepticism of the arts, but if such words as "responsible pedagogical thinking" were used in place of the word "testing" in Dyer's statement, it might strike home rather uncomfortably.

In something of an instrumentalist vein Edmund Feldman urges art instruction which encourages the discovery of questions which are worth asking and which permit no more than:

... a temporary separation of idea and technique, of form and content. We should recognize that discoveries in the realm of form and technique ... become

55 Mattil, "Teaching the Arts", p. 72.

educationally and humanly viable only when we insist that they be joined with meaning, ideas, questions. However, as art students are encouraged to create surfaces and objects, without critical analysis and interpretation, they begin to approach the condition of some sectors of our industrial economy, where goods are manufactured and foisted upon a vast public as an expression of the immense technology . . . and, alas of the emptiness which lies behind that technology."57

From this cry of protest Feldman may be seen to believe that serious art is inescapably, essentially a form of social comment, a means of expression of social ills and ideals and observations. He reinforces this impression when he says:

In a sense, all works of art perform a social function, since they are created for an audience. Artists at times may claim that they work only for themselves, but they mean by this that they set their own standards. The artist always hopes, secretly perhaps, that there is a discriminating and perceptive public which will admire and prize his work. Consequently, works of art which have been created in response to the most private and personal impulses nevertheless function in a context which calls for a social response and, hopefully, social acceptance.58

When Feldman defines instrumentalism he again appears to be sympathetic towards the concept of art as a tool in the service of a purpose outside itself.

A strong argument in favor of the instrumentalist theory lies in its implied analysis of artistic creativity. The instrumentalist recognizes that art which formerly served some purpose outside itself is now prized for its formal or expressive qualities. These qualities are present, he believes, because they had to be "built into" the art object so that it would


function adequately in the service of church, or state, or aristocracy. In other words, the creation of excellent works of art calls for proper motivation, the motivation of a cause, or institution, or profound psychological need.

Feldman goes on to state that "Instrumentalists are unwilling to accept the view that aesthetic values exist independently." of such motivational prompting, although he warns of the vulgarization of instrumentalism when it is employed for purposes of propaganda. The significance of this warning lies not in its particular reference to instrumentalism, however, but in its truth concerning all work, all "isms". For example, it is not in the least difficult to conceive of a formalist or an expressivist working in a self-transcendent way, that is in a way in which the work ceases to be an object and becomes instead, at the very least, a sounding board against which the artist tests the development of his germinal concept. It is also not difficult to conceive of a work of any kind being debased through "second-handedness" in the sense that Whitehead uses it, or through other kinds of misapplication.

Few teachers in the arts would admit to not thinking responsibly about their teaching, but many would admit to great confusion of method, purpose, and standards. Without alternatives and contradictions school would be likely to be a dull and unproductive place. But where confusion creates what Henn called "uneasy defensive defiance" growth is inhibited. Some teachers of art might vent a


suspicion that the cultural surge noted in the Rockefeller report may be little more than dilettante leisure-filling activity, and that the interest exhibited by administrators is based on a preparation for increased leisure in society. This might be a dismaying thought for a teacher who believes art to be more than trivially functional; but this is precisely an example of the need for pedagogical analysis and the aim-identification mentioned by Mattil. If, as the instrumentalists have it, art is functional, then it seems inescapable that artists and art teachers must face the responsibility of identifying the intentions and the context, and from these judge the success of the resultant action, of whatever form the visual expression might take.
CHAPTER VI

ART AS CULTURE-DEPENDENT BEHAVIOR

A Technological Society and the Art Teacher

Irving Kaufman emerges from his essay *Attitudes and Practice* a passionate and concerned but also apparently somewhat confused man. His cry of despair about "... the pressures of the mass culture and a depersonalizing economy ..."¹ is tied directly to the standardizing, individuality crushing effects of technology.

Using a text by Jacques Ellul he says:

> It begins to appear with crushing finality that a new necessity is taking over from the old. ... It is easy to boast of victory over ancient oppression, but what if victory has been gained at the price of an even greater subjection to the forces of the artificial necessity of the technological society which has come to dominate our lives? ... The further the technical mechanism develops which allows us to escape natural necessity, the more we are subjected to technical necessities,²

The evil that Kaufman perceives is the more diabolical in that it is insidiously and inevitably a part of pedagogical theory and practice, where "... prevailing cultural biases of society make themselves felt even in eloquent attempts to alter those same cul-

---

² Ibid, p. 266.
biases and conditions."³ Aligning himself with the black prognostications of Lewis Mumford, he points to the danger that:

On a rather profound level, our current society is increasingly relying upon this technological development, developing the complex and esoteric disciplines of systems analysis, cybernetics and automation, all of which promise even greater and more intricate, but for all that, still mechanical and essentially mindless operations.⁴ All this is caused by a profit-hungry technology which manufactures a mass culture and imposes it upon "the citizenry".⁵ At best this seems to be a struggle against a felt but not clearly identified monster. It sounds something like a return to animism, the evil spirit of technology is bent on the destruction of the citizenry.

Quoting Herbert read:

It is not a cheerful prospect for the arts, though there will be more and more artists in the sense of the word used by the entertainment industry. It will be a gay world. There will be lights everywhere except in the mind of man, and the fall of the last civilization will not be heard above the incessant din.⁶

Kaufman attacks transient 'isms' in the arts and enthusiastic amateurism in much teaching of the arts.

A favorite in art education is the proliferating beliefs that stem from relating creativity and the appreciation of art to democracy. There are the readily accepted tenets that every child not only deserves but needs the experience of art, that it pro-

---

³Ibid, p. 259.
⁴Ibid, p. 265.
⁵Ibid, p. 271.
⁶Ibid, p. 270.
motes fraternity and democratic sentiments, that it is the obligation of culture to find those common denominators of form and fancy so that the pleasures of art are bestowed upon one and all, that art is the implied panacea for personality problems, and so on. Then the researchers go out and research so as to create these truths. . . . But are they really involved with art, with genuine aesthetic symbols or is all that glitters in their minds not gold?

The passage has been quoted at length because of its vigor and importance. It is to Kaufman's discredit, however, that he fails to move beyond mysticism in his suggested remedy. But as a mystic he is also inconsistent. Like a good intuitionist he says "If there is a logic in art it is intrinsic, dependent upon its own laws of aesthetics, emotions, expression and imagination . . . "8 Using conventional intuitionist language and metaphor he says again:

Art is a symbolic transformation of human feeling, not a mechanical response to experience. Genuine art grows out of a viable and changing relationship to life, not out of any deterministic equation. It devours the world as a basis of motivation moving the heavens for inspiration and the more hellish pits of introspection. It consumes all cultures and even transcends the self in creating the perceptual forms of experience.9

The problem Kaufman poses to a sympathiser is to identify the art, or the "genuine art", which achieves so much and which the teacher is to "create a climate for". Art is claimed to "exist in a state of grace" and, "... consequently, it is an obligation for

---

7 Ibid, pp. 261-262.
8 Ibid, p. 268.
9 Ibid, p. 268.
art teachers and for teachers in general to sense and respect the autonomy of art." And yet in the same paragraph a teacher of art is to apply "... the inherent attributes and processes of art,..." and in order to go beyond mechanical and technological methods "... enter into the realm of art itself." In spite of its autonomy and state of grace it cannot "... exist in isolation from other factors of culture,..." So art is to be understood only in a state of grace, and yet it has attributes, there are methods to its attainment, and it is related to the social culture in which it exists. This appears to be a personal form of pragmatic mysticism, but it is unresolved. The bewildered and dismayed teacher has been legitimately warned of the dangers and follies of a wholly technological society but he is exhorted to achieve a "... harmony of contraries..." and "... it is the art teacher's great vocation to achieve exactly that."¹⁰

Yet it is salutary that Kaufman denounces so roundly the myth that art is the panacea for all educational, social, and personal problems. Read is more vehement still when he says of pedagogical method and intent in higher education:

"... art schools are not only perpetuating a defunct tradition; they are luring thousands of young men and women into an obsolete vocation where they can only experience poverty, disillusion, and despair."¹¹


¹¹Read, The Philosophy of Modern Art, p. 67.
Shahn too observes that a merely kindly, altruistic fostering of art in the universities may render it meaningless. Reward and recognition are:

... not to be confused with the settling up of something not unlike a nursery school in which the artist may be spared any conflict, any need to strive quite intently toward command of his medium and his images; in which he may be spared even the need to make desperate choices among his own values and his wants, the need to reject many seeming benefits or wishes. For it is through such conflicts that his values become sharpened; perhaps it is only through such conflicts that he comes to know himself at all.12

This is reminiscent of Kuhn's advocacy of a methodological resistance to change as a toughening and deepening factor where paradigm modification is attempted.13 If art has tended to become a cultural aspirin, cheap, but insidiously destructive of specific application, and perhaps of intelligent perception of effective alternatives, it is easier to understand the impotence that is felt by many teachers of art, and by a public which is bewildered alike by talk of mystical vocation on the one hand and a blatant acquiescence to commercial fashion on the other. Cultural back-seat driving and facile optimism are themselves aspirins, sometimes deceiving their practitioners that they are applying remedies when, in fact, because of timidity or confusion they are avoiding a direct confrontation with the problem.


13Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 65.
At least a part of the problem stems from a curious belief that has caught the imagination of many aestheticians. Clive Bell preached with a puritan passion that the art experience is shut off from the experience of life, even from human interests. Harry Broudy claims much the same when he says that the aesthetic experience "... is savored as a particular and for itself." while scientific knowledge is contained within functional contexts. These are surely examples of dangerous oversimplifications which have paralyzed clear thinking in the arts for a century. It is a safer and healthier generalization to say that all human activity is functional and that some of it, in whatever field, achieves heights of imaginative discovery and elegantly expressed insight which excites the wonder of the performer and the admiration of perceptive spectators. The necessary conditions of such perceptive admiration are knowledge of the intention and of the medium of the activity, and an ability to judge the success of that activity in relation to other past activity and, perhaps, future possibilities of activity. The belief that an experience can exist purely and of itself is the height of absurdity and has led to a proliferation and justification of much verbal and visual confusion, if not irresponsibility. It is perhaps to something like this that Kenneth Keniston refers when he says:


To post-modern youth, . . . most of what is taught in schools, colleges and universities is largely irrelevant . . . New ways of learning are sought: ways that combine action with reflection upon action, ways that fuse engagement in the world with understanding of it. 16

And Max Kosloff says: "Ultimately, a theory that concerns itself with the tempo and rhythms of visual art cannot avoid the obvious conclusion that the act of looking has a past." 17

To be fair to Broudy he is insistent that what is called aesthetic experience, or response to aesthetic cues, is common among all kinds of people. What the ordinary man "... does not know is that this is what the experience is to be called." Broudy further proposes that "If by value education we mean the development of enlightened preferences for one mode of life rather than another, then the role of art in value education is beyond question." Observing that much emotional education comes through a commercialized mass-entertainment media, he believes the feelings of masses of men possessing power are so immature as to be "... as explosive a threat to rational democracy as a people illiterate in science. Considering how closely actions and feelings are connected aesthetic illiterates are more dangerous than intellectual ones." In this last sentence Broudy exposes once again his prejudice. It seems he cannot really conceive of an aesthetic experience as being potential to all activity that is relative to perception and knowledge. He

16 Kenneth Keniston, "Youth, Change and Violence", in Concepts in Art and Education, p. 213.

17 Max Kozloff, "The Inert and the Frenetic", in Concepts in Art and Education, p. 188.
observes a danger in relentless pressures towards the literal, factual, and scientifically terse which occurs at the expense of aesthetic and imagination modes of experience. What fails here to make clear is that there are different ways in which pressure may be brought to bear; some ways as Whitehead pointed out, are destructive of imaginative understanding, but it is only through pressure of some kind, and preferably self-pressure, that any heights of aesthetic and imaginative experience will be achieved. Whitehead says, tersely as a scientist can "Fools act on imagination without knowledge; pedants act on knowledge without imagination." It seems that Broudy is warily uncertain of his position when he finally says:

That The aesthetic, cognitive, moral, and religious experience were one, is highly probable; the aesthetic as a distinctive domain is a late development of sophisticated abstraction. So there is something to be said for the common man's instinctive demand that the primordial unity be restored. This sentiment will probably have more weight with educators than with artists, but it has too much weight to be shoved aside.

The Necessity of Dialogue

Running through much of aesthetic theorizing there is thus emotional antagonism towards anything smacking of a rational methodo-

---

20 Ibid, p. 98.
logy. In evasion of direct and open inquiry, it seems that thinking not only becomes confused but (and perhaps consequently) the processes of thought which operate in scientific disciplines and in ordinary life are claimed to be of an entirely different nature from whatever governs activity in art. Since so very little is known about these processes anyway it is a claim which can be maintained only through mysticism. It is a circular position when mysticism is used to support mysticism. Rudolf Arheim is free of such inhibition when he says:

Among those who cultivate the senses—especially among artists—not a few have come to distrust reasoning as an enemy or at best an alien, and practitioners of theoretical thought like to think that their operations are beyond the senses. Therefore, both parties view the reunion of sense and reason with diffidence. I could not go along with the view that the arts are to be kept locked up in a sacred precinct, privileged with their own exclusive purposes, laws, procedures. Rather I am convinced that art cannot exist anywhere unless it is a property of everything perceivable. I also must expect many an experimentalist to feel uncomfortable with the idea that productive thinking ignores the property lines between the aesthetic and the scientific.22

Edmund Feldman expresses clearly his belief in the inescapable necessity for what he calls "dialogue". For him this dialogue is no different in artistic activities than it is in the "... continuous series of transactions ..." which characterizes all human activity. As an artist works Feldman observes him to be in con-

stant dialogue with himself, his competitors, and so forth, . . .

"all are implicated in an imaginative but nevertheless real conversation." He concludes this statement with the common-sense claim:

To regard any art object as a mere collection of forms, as a type of distant stimulus which initiates the events culminating in perception, is not only an impoverished idea of art from a humanistic standpoint but an untrue one as well. Anyone who has had serious experience with the creation of art knows how intensely he has questioned himself in the course of making the decisions which result in the forms the world sees. So this questioning—of himself and of others—is implicit in the artist's work. Whatever else art is, it is also a record of the artist's dialogue with the world.23

Feldman also claims no special knowledge or exotically restricted area of cognition. He grants nothing beyond a recognition that once passed our sense organs "... all of our systems are brought into operation." Although this might sound vague he appears to be observing an organic wholeness of activity in work which is both production and response. Beyond this he makes the interesting claim:

The events which constitute their involvement do not occur with the speed of events in a modern computer, but they occur fast enough for us to be virtually unaware of a time lapse between their successive explosions. That is why visual art requires shaped space in order to govern essentially temporal sequences of excitation in the cells of a person viewing a work of art. By dialogue in the perception of art, therefore, we also mean the neural and physiological responses of an organism to shaped spatial events.24


Lest this might be construed as a kind of physical gnosticism, Feldman is emphatic that a work of art may be understood only if the language it uses is understood. This involves a knowledge of the social context of a particular work and thus a sensible intimacy with the dialogue the artist has conducted in the process of its production. Through this an observer is able to judge how well "... a work responds to the questions an artist has asked in the course of creating it." Without this familiarity with the language, context, and dialogic form Feldman sees little value resulting from exposure to art objects. Faithful "... recitation of authoritative interpretations and judgements about art," he sees as not only irrelevant but often evasive. To these brave words he adds a neat and sensible warning conclusion that such activity is "Often ... an unwitting effort to sustain attention to art in the absence of anything better."

Resistance to Responsible Dialogue as an Aid to Exploitation

From what has been said it seems that at least a part of a resistance to an acceptance of the importance of a mediating thought process in the production of a work of art stems from a fear of scientific vigor and technological rapaciousness. Included in this latter is the automated obedience required by industrialization of its workers, and the thought-reducing, responsibility-sapping intentions of a profit-hungry, amusement oriented mass media. In

face of this powerful onslaught of man's attempts to reduce his fellow men to a state of simplicity suitable to manipulation by machines and systems, there is seen to be safety only in total resistance, or dropping out.

No individual who cherishes the richness of individuality can fail to be critical of much of the cultural vulgarization of human society which has resulted from the industrial application of scientific knowledge. But, by being resistant to clear thinking, would-be defenders and promoters of human liberty through free expression of feeling would seem to be weakening their own position. Not only do they risk losing the respect of scientists who are sensitive to the dangers of a rampant technology but, in negating the possibility of there being even minimal criteria of credibility in the arts they remove any sense of social coherence or responsibility from the artist. In this situation a trivialization and commercially exploitable esoteric modishness is a necessary condition of survival. The activity no longer serves traditional purposes; rather than becoming a viable alternative or antidote to technology it becomes on the one hand a tool for a science of manipulation, and on the other hand a refuge for the feeble of purpose, of mind, or of energy. Somewhere in between there seems to be a body of confused people who, by their mystification and isolation of art from identifiable human concerns serve the purposes of commercial exploitation probably as effectively as do the disciplines of technology.
Seen in this context there is no alternative but to attempt to drag art firmly back into society. Society cannot be made to accept something it is unwilling to receive, but there appears to be a growing awareness of a dangerous frivolity in much commercial and academic activity. Keniston believes:

It would be wrong simply to label this trend anti-intellectual, for many new radicals and not a few hippies are themselves highly intellectual people. What is demanded is that intelligence be engaged with the world, just as action should be informed by knowledge.\(^26\)

To quote Jerome Hausman:

Our studio classes must be conceived as laboratories for the exploitation of ideas, materials and techniques within the student's symbolic framework. Works of art could then be removed from the necessity of being "masterpieces," of somehow being given a stamp of approval by someone or some thing apart from life that makes them "worthy" of being seen.\(^27\)

**Intent and Context in Expression and Recognition**

The form of art is unpredicatable; it varies with discipline, material, and content at any moment in time. Ross Norris has argued that the term "art" is analagous with the term "unicorn" and as such it is indefinable. He perceives that discourse about art, while necessary to understanding, is necessarily an examina-

\(^{26}\) Keniston, "Attitudes and Practice," p. 213.

tion of provisional views. Evaluation can therefore be based on no fixed properties but only on as clear a presentation as possible of intent. As Hausman says "Art is not produced in a vacuum; no man is independent of his predecessors. Artists, like all other men are born into a stream of traditions and events."

Thus, with a knowledge of intent, and a context of current and past work, it is theoretically possible to arrive at a responsible qualitative assessment of a work of art. Any tendency towards absolute confidence, however, must be tempered by the empirically verifiable knowledge that an individual whose work has moved beyond currently accepted criteria will often receive recognition only tardily.

Art experiments are challenges to the paradigm, but there is no way of knowing ahead of time which of the challengers will win the field and which will not last out the decade.

Yet if a studio class is no longer oriented towards production of "works of art," but rather to the achievement of mature visual expression, then clarity may become an expected requirement. Where there is innovation, or paradigm modification the onus of interpretation is then as equally on the performer as on the viewer. Open and intelligent awareness of and reference to sources will

---


tend at the same time to remove mysticism and provide fuller bases for evaluation. A revelation of genuine maturity, as opposed to a facile but often pressured creativity, can come only with an understanding of the nature of that which is being expressed, the medium in which it is being expressed, and the thought processes which mediated between them. That is, maturity of expression can be perceived only where there is maturity of perception, "... a sign is not a sign unless it is interpreted." 31

This program may seem to some people to be prosaic and dangerously submissive to a suspect rationality. Yet it is nothing more than a rationalization of commonly observable everyday behavior. For the health of society through the health of a mature, responsible expression of feeling by the individual those people who prefer obscurantist preciosity, should no longer be permitted to play so dominant a role in the direction of the visual arts. This cannot be achieved by decree, however, nor can it happen overnight. Recognition and acceptance once more of the visual arts by society as being intrinsic to its material and spiritual life will have to be demonstrated as well as preached.

Once the arts and the sciences are seen to involve working with— inventing, applying, reading, transforming, manipulating—symbol systems that agree and differ in certain specific ways, we can perhaps undertake pointed psychological investigation of how the pertinent skills inhibit or enhance one another; and the outcome may well call for changes in educational technology. 32

31 Peckham, Man's Rage for Chaos, p. 88.
32 Goodman, Languages of Art, p. 265.
If it should seem strange that the "spiritual" has been identified and acknowledged, the term is used to embrace all that may be tacitly or genetically or in some other way influential upon our actions. Despite the overwhelming success of science, particularly in the last half century, there seems to be not only an imbalance between that and man's knowledge of his own integral relationship with his environment, but it also seems that increasingly greater areas of unexplored complexities of life are revealed as scientific search continues. There appears to be no waning of enthusiasm or excitement among scientists, and some are clearly struck with reverential awe by the seemingly inexhaustible nature of their inquiry and the delicacy of balances it reveals. Some scientists may seem to be arrogantly and insensitively confident, but in what way can artists claim to be different?

**Of Speculative Freedom**

It seems to be not too great an exaggeration to say that all mankind is puzzled about the nature of life; the amount of time and energy devoted to speculation about it, and the medium employed, varies from individual to individual. The evidence that so excites the energies of a scientist is that, despite the doubtfulness of the claims of rational thought, disciplines of rational behavior have brought a rich harvest in scientific fields of endeavor. Intuition has played an increasingly recognized role, but:

... it is wrong to look at intuition as "all a la mode and no pie." The good intuiter may have
been born with something special, but his effective-
ness rests upon a solid knowledge of the subject, a
familiarity that gives intuition something to work
with. Certainly there are some experiments on learn-
ing that indicate the importance of a high degree of
mastery of materials in order to operate effectively
with them intuitively. 33

Despite a cultivated adulation, Western art movements have, since
the earlier revolutionary years of this century, brought in no
such harvest. Instead there has tended to be regurgitations and
further digestions of those earlier challenges to custom. This
has been accompanied by well-promoted merchandizing operations
directed towards the purposeful and profitable adoration of a
few individuals, with an astonishing absence of questioning, as
Feldman put it in a different context, of the emptiness which lies
behind much of it. 34 If it is claimed that perhaps man needs the
imaginative absurdities of art to check and balance the unimag-
inative realities of science, then this would seem to be merely
another example of confused thinking.

At present . . . the trend is toward an art that
accommodates itself to a prepared taste, that is to
say, a trend toward an elevated commercial art, such
as currently dominates architecture, fiction, the art
film. The roaring solitude of the artist of twenty
years ago has been giving way to the solitude of the
artist-citizen behind the deadpan with which he plays
his social role. This is another way of saying that
the solitude of the artist is being normalized; it is
becoming no less impure than that of the scientist,
the company man, the teacher. This development may

33Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education, (New York:

be expected to deepen, since no sector of a culture can escape assuming to some extent the form typical of that culture as a whole.35

This last sentence offers a disquieting prospect to any thoughtful person. It is not that artists were ever more pure than scientists or teachers, but that there seems to be an assumption of the inevitability of increasing deadpan conformity to currently promoted behavioral patterns. It has been argued in this essay that conformity, or conservatism, is an essential element in man's survival. But the exploitation of biological and psychological discoveries by the few in order to manipulate the many, on a scale made possible only by modern means of communication, is a major factor to be identified and dealt with if modern society is to withstand the attempted enforcement of unquestioning uniformity. Paradoxically, the will to transcend norms, whether for survival or for "biologically neutral" reasons, has appeared also to be an essential element in man's make-up. It is an element which must be reckoned with even if it is not generally prized, and it is an element which applies to all men and to all activities of men in apparently unequal but unpredictable proportions.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Cyclical Nature of Learning--Teacher Guidance and the Discipline of Precision

In this concluding chapter it is proposed not so much to summarize what has been said so far as to extend it and put it in the context of some of the educational thought of two men in particular: Jerome S. Bruner, and Alfred North Whitehead. Both men tend to use mathematics to illustrate their theories and for this reason many teachers in the arts might reject their philosophies of teaching as foreign to the needs of education in the arts. But both men exhibit a breadth of cultural understanding and a probingly intelligent sympathy with the problems of learning and teaching. This would indicate that they would make specific reference to theories they considered to have only limited application. Since they make no such reference to the theories which will be used here, and since the theories largely coincide with the tenor of this essay, there seems to be no good reason to believe they do not apply as well to the teaching and learning of art as to mathematics.

Fundamental to Whitehead's educational theory is a concept of cyclic process. He is doubtful of the value of "... a mythical far-off end of education." In its natural state Whitehead ob-

1Whitehead, Aims, p. 31.
serves a cycle as comprising a stage of romance, a stage of precision, and a stage of generalization. These three stages he sees as ideally encompassing "... the stage of first apprehension..." in which "The subject matter has the vividness of novelty; ..."\(^2\) Facts and relationships are perceived for the first time. Newly aroused emotion excites somewhat random, unstructured inquiry which produces more new and challenging thoughts and experiences. "It is a process of discovery, a process of becoming used to curious thoughts, of shaping questions, of seeking for answers, of devising new experiences, of noticing what happens as a result of new ventures."

To think that this activity is wholly spontaneous is to ignore the impact of the teacher and, as Whitehead says "... cursed be the dullard who destroys wonder."\(^3\) and the imaginative transformations of experience which can consume a student in those early periods of exposure. On the other hand mature guidance can begin to canalize raw response into critical, constructive and economical self-awareness. To a large extent this can be done as specific curiosity sharpens and from this point the search for more knowledge will tend to be spontaneously narrowed to satisfy a new need for precision, to achieve a mastery of techniques, and an organization of knowledge into coherent relationships. A danger in education is that the vital element of romance may be ignored com-

\(^2\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 29.\)

\(^3\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 43.\)
pletely. If romance is an imaginative transcendence over new material then it is experience-based, and work in a classroom which does not connect with experience is likely to be mystifying and tedious. If this happens the work is sure to be abandoned as soon as school and schooling is over. Alternatively, and perhaps more dangerously, it may be wholly accepted as being somehow more important than everyday life to the point of a loss of emotional contact with it.

A tendency noticeable in some contemporary education is to go to the other extreme and to encourage the stage of romance to continue genially into what should be the stage of precision. Both Whitehead and Piaget see the desire for precision to be so natural a part of normal development that not to guide and encourage it in this direction at this time might be to leave a natural resource untapped and a student with an unidentified frustration. The delicate task of a teacher is to encourage the necessary development of ability towards precision while nurturing the survival of romance. Without a continuing leavening of romance knowledge becomes secondhand information, that is, it ceases to become a part of the normal life of the student. Whitehead says of this:

First-hand knowledge is the ultimate basis of intellectual life. To a large extent book-learning

---


conveys second-hand information, and as such can never rise to the importance of immediate practice. Our goal is to see the immediate events of our lives as instances of our general ideas. What the learned world tends to offer is one second-hand scrap of information illustrating ideas derived from another second-hand scrap of information. The second-handness of the learned world is the secret of its mediocrity.6

During this stage of precision the crucial quality of self-discipline begins to become apparent to a student. "No one, no genius other than our own, can make our own life live."7 Further than this the valuable lesson is learned that precision in discovery is consequent upon dogged persistence. Bruner says: "Brute persistence seems to be one of those gifts from the gods that make people more exaggeratedly what they are."8 Put another way, a student learns how to learn.

If a teacher is to be of optimum value to a student in this precision stage of learning it seems he must serve the dual purpose of ensuring that a student is introduced to whatever knowledge is relevant to him, and guided away from what might be irrelevant and distracting. At this stage in particular Whitehead feels "A certain ruthless definiteness is essential . . ."9 for it is only through this treatment that the intuitive, purblind, or non-infer-

---

6Whitehead, Aims, p. 61.
7Ibid, p. 67.
8Bruner, Concepts in Art and Education, p. 94.
9Whitehead, Aims, p. 47.
ential condition of romance can be subjected to the scrutiny which will substantiate it or reject it. Unless he has experienced the ultimate rewards of this kind of discipline a student may well delude himself that his merest daydreams are the stuff of reality—he is inadequately prepared to handle Whitehead's third stage, the stage of generalization:

Something definite is now known; aptitudes have been acquired; the general rules and laws are clearly apprehended both in their formulation and their detailed exemplification. The pupil now wants to use his new weapons. He is an effective individual, and it is effects that he wants to produce. He relapses into the discursive adventures of the romantic stage, with the advantage that his mind is now a disciplined regiment instead of a rabble. In this sense education should begin in research and end in research.10

In this cycle a student has ideally learned first to respect his own curiosity and imaginative ability; then to respect his own capacity to subject his own imaginings to a disciplined examination in the light of knowledge relative to it; finally to bring these two different but complementary activities to a condition of mutually modified fusion. This is a version of the Hegelian thesis, antithesis and synthesis which Giovanni Gentile converted into his "... thesis of the dialectic as the transcendental principle of art, ..."11 What Whitehead sees as a three-stage process approximately covering the years eight to thirteen, fourteen to eighteen, and nineteen onwards, he also sees as applicable to each particular

11 Brown, Neo-Idealistic Aesthetics, p. 159.
Education should consist in a continual repetition of such cycles. Each lesson in its minor way should form an eddy cycle issuing its own subordinate process. Longer periods should issue in definite attainments, which then form the starting grounds for fresh cycles.\(^{12}\)

In art the romance may be germinal to content; the precision is the activity of examining and giving form to the content; the resultant synthesis is the inseparable fusion of the two as one develops and modifies the other.

Bruner also discusses the act of learning as a three-part process\(^{13}\) but his emphases are different from Whitehead's. Bruner's first stage is "...\underline{acquisition} of new information—often information that runs counter to or is replacement for what the person has previously known implicitly or explicitly."\(^{14}\) Here the chief difference from the stage of romance would seem to be the emphatic use of the word "acquisition". But this appears to raise a question of how acquisition can be shown to have occurred before Bruner's next two stages have occurred. Stage two is the manipulation of new knowledge to adapt it to other tasks. Bruner calls it "transformation", and says "Transformation comprises the ways we deal with information in order to go beyond it." This seems to be a reasonable expectation, but an attempt to adapt may also be a check, or

\(^{12}\text{Whitehead, Aims, p. 31.}\)

\(^{13}\text{Bruner, The Process of Education, p. 48.}\)

\(^{14}\text{Tbid, p. 48.}\)
evaluation—which is Bruner's third stage. Bruner believes that the three stages are the three parts of an almost simultaneous process. In that case it may be that he sees this three stage process to be a natural part of all activity which is alive to new experience, whether it occurs during romance, precision, or generalization. If this is his meaning then the stages of romance, precision and generalization can be thought of in terms of qualitative degree rather than being different in kind. But then romance and precision would be a thesis and antithesis acting together almost simultaneously to achieve a synthesis. It seems he might be hinting at the possible autonomy of this activity when he says "Often a teacher is crucial in helping with evaluation, but much of it takes place by judgements of plausibility without our actually being able to check rigorously whether we are correct in our efforts."  

Expository and Hypothetical Modes of Teaching

If Bruner is cautious about the activities which take place in learning, he is less so about teaching. In an acknowledged simplification he examines the activity that takes place in an expository teaching episode in comparison with a hypothetical mode of teaching:

---

16 Ibid, p. 49.
In the former, the decisions concerning the mode and pace and style of exposition are principally determined by the teacher as expositor; the student is the listener. If I can put the matter in terms of structural linguistics, the speaker has a quite different set of decisions to make than the listener: the former has a wide choice of alternatives for structuring, he is anticipating paragraph content while the listener is still intent on the words, he is manipulating the content of the material by various transformations, while the listener is quite unaware of these internal manipulations. In the hypothetical mode, the teacher and the student are in a more cooperative position with respect to what in linguistics would be called "speaker's decisions". The student is not a bench-bound listener, but is taking part in the formulation and at times may play the principal role in it. 17

Applying this observation to Bruner's three stages, or aspects, of learning it can be seen how easy it is in an expository teaching situation for a student to allow a teacher to do the manipulation and evaluation for him. Thus two apparently vital components of the acquisition of knowledge are virtually denied him: he is left with the piece of second-hand information Whitehead described. If a student is customarily inert it may well be that he knows that what he will be expected to regurgitate is also the inert, that is, the same material which has been fed to him. In the learning of a craft, or of a necessary fact, an expository method of teaching has the merit of economy of effort, although its pay-off might be small without ample ostensive reinforcement. Where the aim of an educational encounter is to encourage inquiry, however, it now seems that the expository mode is to be regarded as ineffective by definition.

Two crucial and inter-related aspects of an hypothetical, or discovery, mode of learning are, (1) a development of competency feelings and, (2) a resultant freedom from extrinsic control. Bruner is in agreement with the findings of Professor Robert White which are:

... that the drive-reduction model of learning runs counter to too many important phenomena of learning and development to be either regarded as general in its applicability or even correct in its general approach.18

Bruner suggests that theories of conditioning through external stimulus control mechanisms are inadequate in wholly explaining the learning experience, and finds "... that even Pavlov recognized his account as insufficient to deal with higher forms of learning."19 He is sympathetic to White's "competence" theory and quotes White as saying that competence is:

... a suitable word to describe such things as grasping and exploring, crawling and walking, attention and perception, language and thinking, manipulating and changing the surroundings, all of which promote an effective—a competent—interaction with the environment. It is true of course, that maturation plays a part in all these developments, but this part is heavily overshadowed by learning in all the more complex accomplishments like speech or skill manipulation. I shall argue that it is necessary to make competence a motivational concept; there is competence motivation as well as competence in

18Ibid, p. 96.
19Ibid, p. 97.
its more familiar sense of achieved capacity. The behavior that leads to the building up of effective grasping, handling, and letting go of objects, to take one example, is not random behavior that is produced by an overflow of energy. It is directed, selective, and persistent, and it continues not because it serves primary drives, which indeed it cannot serve until it is almost perfected, but because it satisfies an intrinsic need to deal with the environment.  

This, then, offers a development and a refinement of the theory of content as convention transgression, or self-translation, developed in chapter three. Competence in dealing with the environment is felt and shown to be total in moments of joy, but it is expressed as being near zero by grief or despair. On this analysis the content in Van Gogh's work may be the amoral animistic competence of nature and the objects he observed about him, while Goya's content in the "Horrors of War" series may be man's incompetence in handling his own passions. In contrast, Rubens and Renoir present a sublime competence in the sensuous serenity of their work. A theory of competence expression as content offers a new and fascinating speculative study in an attempt to understand motivation in the arts.

Another thrust in Bruner's argument is that with the exercise and satisfaction of the competency motive an individual will come to recognize that intrinsic satisfactions reduce the need for extrinsic rewards.  

---

20 Ibid, p. 96.
21 Ibid, p. 97.
and failure are sources of information, and not of reward or punishment. The successful completion of a form is the occasion of the satisfactorily served content, or competency motive. Bruner concludes that to the degree that intrinsic satisfaction comes to control behavior, "... to that degree the role of reinforcement or extrinsic pleasure wanes in shaping behavior." Further, in words which will sound autobiographically in the ears of many mature people in the arts and the sciences alike, struggles towards expression move:

... from a state of outer-directedness in which the fortuity of stimuli and reinforcement are crucial, to a state of inner-directedness in which the growth and maintenance of mastery become central and dominant.

The pedagogical implication is clear on the paramountcy of inner-directedness if behavior is to be more than barrenly conformist.

Allen Leepa says in regard to this:

The major characteristic of the processes involved in self-identity are choice, anxiety, responsibility, and freedom. Free choice is essential. The moment one interferes with this, authority is taken away from the individual. Self-responsibility is anxiety-ridden, because the student makes his own choices. He can no longer look to or depend on external authority. He must look to his own decisions and face their consequences. The student is asked to face himself directly, authentically.

\[22\text{Ibid, p. 98.}\]

\[23\text{Ibid, p. 99.}\]

The Educated Intuition

In what has been said of the writings of Dewey and Whitehead there has been no mention of intuition. In speaking of Croce's combination of intuition with expression Dewey says scathingly:

'It can be understood... on the basis of his philosophical background, and it affords an excellent instance of what happens when the theorist superimposes philosophic preconceptions upon an arrested esthetic experience.\(^{25}\)

In a lucid expression of his own conception of the nature of intuition Dewey says:

Intuition is that meeting of the old and new in which the readjustment involved in every form of consciousness is effected suddenly by means of a quick and unexpected harmony which in its bright abruptness is like a flash of revelation; although in fact it is prepared for by long and slow incubation. Often times the union of old and new, of foreground and background, is accomplished only by effort, prolonged perhaps to the point of pain. In any case the background of organized meanings can alone convert the new situation from the obscure into the clear and luminous. When old and new jump together, like sparks when the poles are adjusted, there is intuition. This latter is thus neither an act of pure intellect in apprehending rational truth nor a Crocean grasp by spirit of its own images and state.\(^{26}\)

At first sight Bruner appears to be more circumspect about intuition and he is at pains to point out that intuition is highly prized among scientists and teachers of science.\(^{27}\) Some physicists,

\(^{25}\)Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 294.

\(^{26}\)Ibid, p. 266.

he says, are pressing for an increase in attention to intuitive thinking by teachers as well as students, but he then adds the cautionary, pragmatic condition that intuition must be based on a solid knowledge of the subject. In this he appears to put himself close to Dewey's position. From what follows there is no reason to doubt this, and when he states his belief in "The complementary nature of intuitive and analytical thinking . . ." he is once again squarely in the company of Hegel, Whitehead, and Gentile in the dialectic of thesis and antithesis. Closer to Whitehead than he appeared earlier to be he is wary of a "formalist" devaluation of intuition and he circuitously acknowledges romance when he says "it may be of the first importance to establish an intuitive understanding of materials before we expose our students to more traditional and formal methods of deduction and proof."28

Bruner is engagingly modest about the nature of intuition. He has as little doubt about the uncanny nature of intuition as he has of the necessity of the experience and familiarity upon which intuition operates—but he sees such experience as being helpful only to some people, that is, while experience is a necessary condition for intuition it does not itself produce intuition. While Bruner supports a degree of heuristic activity he is adamant that guessing should be "educated." "The object of education is not the

28 Ibid, p. 58.
production of self-confident fools.” Nonetheless he believes self-confidence to be essential to the expression of the inner-directedness which is called "taste":

As likely as not, courageous taste rests upon confidence in one's intuitions about what is moving, what is beautiful, what is tawdry. In a culture such as ours, where there is so much pressure toward uniformity of taste in our mass media of communication, so much fear of idiosyncratic style, indeed a certain suspicion of the idea of style altogether it becomes the more important to nurture confident intuition in the realm of literature and the arts.

In the opinion of these men learning occurs best, in terms of comprehension and retention, when it is a result of discovery. But they are agreed that in heuristic methods of learning the disciplines of comparison and verification are necessary to an avoidance of foolishness, and also to an experiential modification by challenge, and as such it is close to Monod's rejection of an ontogeny-guiding teleological principle. Here once again, as was observed in chapter four, there is a rejection of the finitude of an idealized immediate knowledge, or intuition, in favor of an infinite possibility of knowledge posited in the concept of self-translation. Self-translation has been presented as an aspect of competence satisfaction and the resultant experience of quiescence may be an important element of what is called an aesthetic feeling.

---

30 Ibid., p. 65.
31 Ibid., p. 67.
Individual Expression and Individual Excellence

Contained within the concept of heuristic learning is the dilemma of individual expression. Features which do not relate to the criteria of an accepted style are screened out of the perception of a conforming individual. An object or an event which is observed is thus no more identical with what is experienced by an observer than is the experience of an observer with his expression of what he has experienced. The latter is merely an approximation limited not only by his stylistic conformity, but also by the extent of his ability to manipulate a particular medium of communication. As the distance increases from the point of origin of an activity, so the tendency increases to reduce the features of an experience to the stylistic limitations and interpretations of an individual or a similarly oriented group of individuals.

But there is also the problem of individual excellence. The paradox has already been discussed that in an egalitarian culture individual excellence tends to arouse resentment and to breed drive-reduction philosophies. But if educational practice follows hypothetical and heuristic modes, with suitable reinforcement by requirements for precision, then individual excellence through self-transcendence seems more likely to occur than if the educational mode is exposition and repetition. If this is so a liberal educator is likely to find himself at odds with political, social and industrial ideologies. It may be the profundity of this paradox which is at the bottom of much of the confusion evident in education in the
fine arts--for the paucity of pedagogical analysis and aim identification mentioned by Edward Mattil. It might account also for the questionable pride with which A. Edward Anderson is quoted by Lewis Mayhew as saying:

There are many... who still feel that instruction, to be really effective, must be individualized, a position from which professors of literature and history seem to have been gradually routed.32

Pedagogical Confusion in the Visual Arts in Higher Education

At least two factors operate against Whitehead's ideal cycle as it applies to higher education in the fine arts. According to Whitehead, by the time a student enters university he has already had the basic experience of romance and the disciplines of precision; a self-disciplined period of generalization unfettered by worldly responsibilities lies before him. In freshman classes in contemporary university studio arts, however, many students are ill-prepared, and some have come from another discipline. Perhaps in part because the studio arts are new to university life, and in part because of the ideological confusion referred to above, teachers of these classes are often poorly guided in what it is they are to teach. Little noticeable attempt is made to coordinate the work done at that time with expectations in succeeding studies--which themselves tend to be characterized by confusion of purpose. When this situation is added to the problems already described, tendencies towards delusion, disillusion, cynicism, anarchy, and amateurism are to be expected.

Where there is failure of responsible endeavor to apply to the medium of visual art the normally accepted tenets of common sense as theoretically expressed through a dialectical method, then the results must quickly become factitious. When Herbert Read, in categorizing perception said "I do not believe that a person of real sensibility ever stands before a picture and, after a long process of analysis, pronounces himself pleased. We either like at first sight or not at all." he spoke sheer nonsense. As when he praised the theory of Einfühlung, which may be explained as intuitive empathy, he made the mistake of ignoring the learning which is a necessary condition to the development and exercise of all skills and insights relating to man-made artifacts. When a person with trained sensibility confronts a picture the "long process of analysis" which is brought to bear has occurred long prior to that particular viewing.

The role of the art perceiver is learned . . . however, once the role has been learned . . . once the perceiving role-player has become adept in his performance, he tends to forget, as in all role-behavior, that he has learned it.

Read himself, with his long life of laborious inquiry, would seem to be an excellent example of a person whose disposition towards aesthetic understanding was reinforced, expanded, and deepened by consistent, if ultimately unconscious, behavioral discipline.

---

33Read, The Meaning of Art, p. 29.
34Peckham, Man's Rage for Chaos, pp. 65-66.
Resolution Through Relentless Questioning and Behavioral Discipline

Whatever is observable, including what is acquired ostensively, must be considered as dispassionately as possible in order that the wheel does not have to be completely reinvented, or rejected because of some passing fashion, by each succeeding generation of artists, educators, and students. Until fine art studies in higher education attempt a clarification of the function of art in our society—and of some coordinated methodologies to be attempted to achieve identified purposes—then confusion will continue and reproduce itself. Talk of form and content will be as esoteric and devoid of sense as the extent to which the relationship of art to the more profound human concerns is denied.

In the sciences there is no monolithic method, only an insistence upon cumulative knowledge, open inquiry, and lucid verification. Collingwood has cursed the institution of copyright laws that protect the artist against the plagiarism which the scientist regards as indispensable.

If an artist may say nothing except what he has invented by his own sole efforts, it stands to reason he will be poor in ideas. If he could take whatever he wants wherever he could find it, as Euripides and Dante and Michelangelo and Shakespeare and Bach were free, his larder would always be full, and his cookery might be worth tasting.35

It seems that the sciences have been less touched by the normalizing effects of an egalitarian democracy which is suspicious of

distinctive excellence. In the visual arts the introduction of the barely understood concept of inborn knowledge, or intuition, has resulted in a widespread abandonment of pedagogical insistence in work upon patient, rigorous application and accountability. Barzun speaks of many art students when he says of literature students he has known:

Pitted against their own capacities in school, denied the stimulus of failure by a world seemingly hungry for their crumbs of creativity, the talented young remain innocently conceited and hurtfully ignorant of both the range of common achievement and the quality of genius. All they needed was a word from me to an editor: influence must aid achievement. They also considered it unjust that it should take ten or a dozen years of not especially agreeable work to prove oneself in a profession. A nurtured subjectivism about their own creativity made the thought of unrecognized effort as revolting as the statement that their work did not as yet equal the best.36

It is hard to know where to begin because it is hard to see where the fault lies. But Edgar must be taken seriously when he said that equality must be treated as an ideal set of rights, and not as an empirical generalization about human nature. It is impossible to teach unless it has first been made clear what is to be taught, to whom, and for what purpose. Confusion brings cynicism and the abandonment of standards. A return to adult, professional health and sanity, and responsibility in the practice and teaching of the visual arts, must begin and end with questions. Amateurs and dilettantes may do as they will, but it is the responsibility of

the teacher of art to instill habits of discipline and patience in students in the purposeful attempt to achieve lucid perception.

The role of the university art department is not to encourage a heightened awareness of the marketable convention, but to develop a sense of disciplined respect in students for the exacting and demanding nature of the identification and expression of passions, beliefs, uncertainties, and concerns in the attempt to analyse them visually. The process may be termed dialogue or dialectic or research; the concept of search and research is close to Whitehead's belief in a cyclical activity which achieves increasing depths of insight. Support has been offered for the supposition that the activity between stimulus and consciousness of sensation is not only to an unknown extent spontaneous, that is, subconscious and therefore not readily accessible to awareness, but that the organism is thus sensitive to environment, education and culture. Add to this the apparently vast amount of "... past experience which is embodied in the neural apparatus that transforms stimuli to sensations." and a situation arises where claims of intuitive knowledge as well as claims of precise rational thought appear to be doubtful conceits. But, more positively, intuition and rationality were, on this theory, brought more closely together than proponents of either camp might wish to concede.

It thus appears to matter little whether we believe that knowledge exists within us ready made, or whether we believe it

37Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, p. 195.
can be achieved only through arduous self-translation; the activity of relentless, questioning search is the same. Perhaps in this way visual expression might achieve a congruity with everyday life which our earlier ancestors, as with their probings into science, touched upon but were unable to develop. We may learn from them the technical skills, the mature sensibilities, and the patient dedication which are basic to all endeavors towards further understanding.

Wherever I go I need a certain period of incubation, so that I may learn every time the essence of the plants and the trees, of all nature, in short, which never wishes to be understood or to yield herself. So it was several weeks before I was able to catch distinctly the sharp flavor of Arles and its surroundings.38

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


ARTICLES PERIODICALS AND UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL


"Transition in Art Education: Changing Conceptions of Curriculum Content and Teaching." Paper presented to the Western Arts Association Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 17, 1962.


---


---

Eisner, Elliot W. "Instructional and Expressive Educational Objectives: Their Formulation and Use in Curriculum." Stanford University, February, 1968.

---


---

Gibson, James J. "The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems." Cornell University, Undated.


