

Arts and the School

SINCE October 1953 education has had a major share of national attention. The USSR in one bold stroke forced education to join in the "race with the Russians." Those portions of educational programs which paralleled the parts of our national life already active in the cold war competition received immediate attention—science, mathematics, foreign languages, physical fitness. Yet there was no cultural race, at least not for Americans; so the cultural scene—art, music, the dance, and the theatre arts—benefited in Congress from the wisdom of certain ultra-conservatives. On the educational front there was money from Congress, but the tune was the same—science tables, "si," tubas, "no"; tape recorders, "si," paint brushes, "no."

No one denies the importance of the emphasis. Survival is important! Yet there were many who felt that the emphasis was too one-sided. Individual and group voices were raised to defend the humanities and the arts and to urge "balance" in educational programs. To survive, for them, was not enough. Along with the question of survival was the additional question, "survival for what?"

The ASCD was one of the first groups to call for caution and to express concern over the neglect of disciplines which related to the "humanness" of humans. This issue of *Educational Leadership* is added testimony to this interest.

Why, we might ask, this concern on the part of so many persons about the neglect of the humanities in general and of the arts in particular? There are many reasons, because the arts are many things. They are expression, communication, therapy, a source for personality integration, a hobby or leisure-time activity, an approach to beauty. The arts have many interpretations and they serve in many ways. A survey of current literature, however, indicates that the reasons for interest in the arts can be grouped into one of two general classifications. The first could be termed *traditional* and under this heading grouped all the thinking which looks back at man's experience with the arts and at his attempts to understand the role they play in our individual and social lives.

Other reasons for interest in the arts get their support from recent research and investigations in psychology and other behavioral sciences. In keeping with the times, we could classify these under the heading of ideas prompted by *education's new frontier*. Let us look briefly at each.

Value of the Arts: The Tradition

Man has always made music, painted pictures, danced and had theatre. The appearance or character of each art form has not always been the same, and

different times and different peoples have used them for varying purposes and in varying ways. But the arts have always been with us; in each time and place they have contributed uniquely to the society of which they were part; they are part of our heritage and any education which neglects their study is a defective one.

Philosophers and theologians over the years have tended to view life and experience as a dualism. There is, for example, the Chinese Ying and Yang, the good versus the bad, beauty versus ugliness, etc. In our own time, we have F. S. C. Northrop's "scientific" and "aesthetic" components, Herbert Meyer's "inner" and "outer" reality, Susanne Langer's "cursive" and "nondiscursive" symbols. Other dualism views could be cited as well, and in them all we would find the arts important in the consideration of that part of man's experience which relates to the meanings he gives to life and to the values he holds as guides to his behavior. Crane Brinton points out in one of his books that every man faces the questions, "Who am I?" "What am I doing here?" and "Where am I going?" We find the arts importantly involved in the answers which people in other times and places have given to these questions. Can they not contribute as much for us today? Indeed, are they not essential?

The arts are also areas of human experience to which everyone can in some way or other respond and learn. They have been viewed in various ways relating to levels at which they can be encountered. Aaron Copland views music on three levels—the sensuous level of pure enjoyment of sound, the level of meaning, and the music level. Harold Rugg viewed the arts, particularly writing, on five levels which he referred to as a "profile." These ranged from folk

art at a sensuous level to a deep concern of the theme, "man in the universe." But whatever the particular view, there is general agreement that while the arts can be pure enjoyment and can be experiences on a surface level of meaning and value, they can also lead to a consideration of ultimates, to philosophy, and to questions of truth.

Other reasons for art interests in the "traditional" sense could also be mentioned: the arts as a historical record; the arts as a means to understanding cultures and peoples; the arts as an international language. But these reasons tend to emphasize the factual and the academic. The more forceful reasons cite the role of the arts in the lives of individual people and in their growth and development. These views tend to support an early statement of The National Art Education Association that "art is less a body of subject matter than a development activity." It is not so much factual knowledge about the arts that is of major importance, although the value of knowledge and skill is not to be denied, but what happens to people when they become sensitive to the things they see and the sounds they hear.

It is in this context also that we view the role of the arts in the discoveries coming from the exciting "new frontier" of education.

Value of the Arts: The New Frontier

Educators have always given lip service to the concept that the "proof of the pudding is in the eating." Behavior, they said, is the final test of education. But curriculums have been largely information-centered rather than behavior-centered.

Promotion has been based primarily upon tests which ask for the recall of

information rather than being based upon a pupil's understanding of concepts, his development of meanings and attitudes, or according to other behaviorally oriented criteria. Thanks to recent research in the behavioral sciences, however, we are coming closer to relating education and behavior. These are exciting times for education and the arts are playing an increasingly important role. A few examples will illustrate the point.

For years education has been intelligence- and I.Q.-oriented. The many recent studies of "giftedness" and "creativity" indicate the coming of a broader emphasis. One good example is the recent decision of the Merit Scholarship sponsors to include special awards this year to high school students who indicate exceptional creative promise or who show promise or superior attainment in one field but are not distinguished in many fields as has been the typical Merit Scholar.

In recent years, researchers have identified 50 or more dimensions of the mind, only a handful of which are included in current I.Q. tests. It is difficult for us to refer to some of the non-I.Q. dimensions in customary terms, but the problems of contemporary life make their continued investigation imperative. There is, for example, an increasing demand for creative people and for an emphasis on creativity. We are beginning to identify attributes which creative people in the arts and sciences possess, and we may soon be able to measure and test for creativity.

The arts have long been identified with creativeness, and investigations in the arts will contribute greatly to our understanding of many "non-intelligence," or "non-intelligence intellectual activities" as some of these newly dis-

covered or identified attributes of the mind are being called. No one will argue against the importance of I.Q. intelligence or of traditional academic giftedness. Yet the fact that we can identify so many dimensions of the mind relating to other types of giftedness other than the intellectual or the I.Q. variety should give cause for concern. The studies which indicate that success on the job and success in life are more related to these characteristics than to the traditionally measured intelligence give us additional reason for reexamination of the premises upon which we build our school programs. We are getting a new and more accurate picture of the individual and the various types of giftedness which exist. We are also receiving new insights into the relationship of the many dimensions of the human mind and body to the problems of living and of earning a living.

Any broadening of the concept of giftedness beyond the traditional academic variety *must* include the arts.

Closely related to the topic just discussed is the new view developing of *excellence* and *quality*. Hardly an educational conference has been held in the past few years without either the word *excellence* or the word *quality* appearing in its theme. It is unfortunate, however, that our new discoveries have not affected our general view of education to the same extent that they have altered our view of the person, even though the two should not be separated. Although there are exceptions, too many views of quality education still argue for "solid subjects," "return to the three R's," and "academic excellence." Skill in taking examinations, in repeating information gained, and in solving problems set by others is surely evidence of excellence.

There are, however, other kinds of skills. Professor D. C. McClelland of the Center for Research in Personality at Harvard mentions this in a recent article in the fall issue of *Daedalus*, which considers the theme, "Excellence and Leadership in a Democracy."¹ Professor McClelland discusses his work in understanding the human motive called the "need for achievement"—the desire to do a good job of work. People in whom such a need is strong are most often successful in business and are a valuable national resource. Yet this need for achievement may not lead them to do particularly well in school. Where, McClelland asks, do they fit in the current system for encouraging excellence? How can other qualities such as sensitivity, curiosity and imaginativeness be encouraged when the usual view of excellence does not work for these qualities?

McClelland, in his article, goes on to point out that while we have only begun to investigate this, we already know that certain schools and colleges tend to develop distinctive "personalities," distinctive and persistent climates of opinion that have marked effects on students attending them. We cannot detail the implications of these discoveries here, but certainly one thing is clear: there is no one type of excellence. There is need for many types of schools just as there is need to encourage the many types of individual giftedness.

If excellence in education is to embrace the many varieties of uniqueness and abilities, it must include in its scope excellence in the arts—not only excellence in the arts themselves but in the extent to which the arts contribute to other types of excellence and to the nature of this contribution. How, for example, do

arts experiences contribute to the development of sensitivity, imagination, and general creativeness? Or, in what way do the offerings and manner of organization of arts programs in particular colleges affect the school "personalities" which in turn affect the students? These are questions, the answers to which will help the move toward a more behavior-oriented education.

Method and Process

With the "explosion" of knowledge in recent times the problem of "what to teach" has received considerable attention. As a solution, some suggested that education acquaint students with the "methods" of the various disciplines. This view recognized various ways of working, of approaching problems, and, while it never received adequate consideration, its reappearance from time to time suggests that the view is far from dead. And in any such view the method of the artist, the composer, and the dancer is important.

The development of cybernetics as a discipline and the accompanying growth of the computer have had a natural impact on the "body-mind" problem, and this has also tended to focus interest on method and process. While the hope that we could learn much about humans from developments in computer and machine technology does not seem to hold the promise it once did, we are getting a clearer picture of each. The digital computer with its need for precise instruction has emphasized the process of formal logic and by so doing has called attention to the operation of logical systems in humans quite different from those systems now known.

Richard Bellman, of the Rand Corporation, considers this idea in an article in

¹ David C. McClelland. "Encouraging Excellence." *Daedalus*, Fall 1961; p. 711-24.

a recent issue of the *Saturday Review*. In discussing the use of the digital computer he says,

We realize then that only when we understand something of the working of the brain, of its memory or memories, of its power of perception and recognition, and above all of its power to create new ideas, will we be able to use a digital computer to something like full capacity.²

While it is true that the analogue computer presents a different picture and that it can, for example, learn from experience and be as unpredictable as a human, it is probable that we will learn more about systems other than formal logic from an increased understanding of humans than from developing machine technology. We should certainly not close the door to the latter, but by the same token we should view humans as more than a poor version of a machine.

In education we have long had the influence of formal logic and emphasis on the "scientific method." In spite of the wealth of evidence being accumulated calling attention to other ways of working and knowing, the persistence of the "formal logic" orientation should disturb us. Here again, no one denies the importance of the approach or the benefits which have accrued from its application. One would only hope for the acceptance of other ways so that the current picture of the "rational man" and of his ability "to think" might be broadened and enriched.

The method of the arts, including as it does intuition and the felt response, offers one of the best fields for exploration into method and into an understanding of logical systems other than formal. No inquiry into this portion of behavioral research would be complete without giv-

² Richard E. Bellman. "Where Is Science Taking Us?" *Saturday Review*, April 1, 1961; p. 42-43.

ing some attention to the arts and to artists, musicians and dancers and to the ways they work.

In summary, while the traditional values of arts experiences are sufficient to keep an interest in the arts in education alive, concern has been heightened by new findings in the behavioral sciences. Education is on the threshold of new and exciting discoveries which will alter much theory and transform practice. No brief statement such as this can do more than suggest some of the possibilities and hint at some of the future patterns. But it would be hard to deny an important place for the arts in any consideration of the future.

While working in the present and with an eye to the future, we should not lose sight of the past. In this regard, we might do well to remember Comenius. Three hundred years ago the "father" of teacher education suggested that all life is a school for every man, that all persons learn to read and write, that all young people of either sex should be sent to public schools and that no one should be excluded or prevented from cultivating his mind.

Like his theories, many of his suggested practices are commonplace today. Comenius insisted that art education be included in the curriculum and held that children should not attend classes for more than four hours in the morning and that the afternoons be left free for singing, drawing, and dancing. After three hundred years, this idea is still just an idea! But anyone with sensitive antenna will not argue against the suggestion that perhaps in this idea, too, Comenius was as much prophet as priest!

—RALPH G. BEELKE, *Executive Secretary, National Art Education Association, NEA, Washington, D.C.*

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