

EDUCATION

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Summary

Art might be seen as a means of educating the emotions, whereas supporters of the slogan slogan "art for art's sake" maintain that art is not only an end in itself but also an adequate justification of itself. . An extreme aesthete will put aesthetic values above all other values and will chose a morality that conforms to those aesthetic values. An extreme moralist will judge aesthetic categories only according to moral categories, and thereby stifle creativity. The Romanticists considered imagination to be the chief characteristic of any aesthetic action or experience. Imagination was to them the prerequisite of any genuine understanding of the human nature. The justification of art education in schools and colleges stems from the insight that art can be an important formative power in the development of the human being.

1. The Benefits of The Arts

The benefits of the arts may be considered as being *not inherent* if art and the appreciation of art are regarded as means to approach an acknowledged moral worth. Or else the benefits of the arts may be considered as being *inherent* if art and art

appreciation are not merely regarded as instruments to reaching other goals, but as objects unto themselves.

Theories attributing non inherent benefits to art typically point to the effect of art on the person who appreciates it. Art, in this case, might be seen as a means of educating the emotions. The question arises, however, whether art is indeed an effective means, or whether not better results could be achieved through other kinds of education. Plato even proposed in his *Republic* that education through art is not only not very effective, but that it even might have a defiling and negative effect on the education of the human being.

The most radical theory attributing inherent benefits to art is associated with Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, and the French Symbolists who condensed its essence in the slogan "art for art's sake." Followers of this theory maintain that art is not only an end in itself but also an adequate justification of itself. This theory also believes that art can only be truly understood if all other interests and goals are set aside, such that the work of art itself provides the only focus.

Apart from these two extreme theories, other theories are possible that present a compromise. One might maintain for instance that works of art should be appreciated for their own sake, yet that, in addition, one might derive other benefits as well from contemplating works of art.

2. The Concept of Taste

The word *taste* has several meanings, e. g.: a) The bitter, salty, sour, or sweet quality of a substance as perceived by the sense of taste. b) The capability of discerning flavors. c) An individual preference, fondness, or inclination. d) The ability and practice of distinguishing and enjoying excellence in the domain of aesthetic experiences and values.

In reference to art education, it is mainly d) that is of relevance.--c) is of some significance insofar, as the task of art education is exactly to develop individual preference, fondness, or inclination into the capacity of producing or discerning excellence in works of art. *Taste* then, as aesthetic concept, is the power to distinguish and to judge beauty from ugliness. Already in the 17th century, this concept was included in aesthetic discussions. In particular, three questions are of interest: 1) Is taste inherent or acquired? 2) Is taste a matter of intellect or of the senses? 3) Are judgements of taste valid only for the individual, or are they universally applicable? Answers to these questions have been manifold and still remain under debate. They lead to the broader area of aesthetic experience.

All aesthetic experience, no matter whether in regard to art or nature, appears to receive its clues from taste. Guided by our taste, we select the objects of aesthetic experience. Our selections are being judged by others; depending on what we select, our taste is considered good or bad. This involves not only choices of works of art, but also of color schemes, dresses, accessories, adornments of various kinds, manners, sense of humor, etc. The taste of an individual allows conclusions about the character of that individual

as a whole. The connection between taste and morality, however, is not necessarily a direct one. Good taste in respect to aesthetic values and good behavior in respect to moral values do not always need to go hand in hand. If there were no relation between taste and morality at all, then the tremendous measure of human energy being invested in art and art criticism might appear to lead nowhere. On the other hand, if aesthetics and morality are too closely associated then the results might become intolerably one-sided. An extreme aesthete will put aesthetic values above all other values and will chose a morality that conforms to those aesthetic values. An extreme moralist will judge aesthetic categories only according to moral categories, and thereby stifle creativity. Neither moral, nor aesthetic considerations should take priority. Rather, aesthetic categories should inform our moral faculties, and vice versa, moral categories should inform our aesthetic faculties. Neither should take precedence, neither should dictate the selection that is part of the other domain.

3. Imagination

Taste is of great importance for creating and appreciating art. Equally important is imagination. Already in the 18th-century, philosophers pondered the role of imagination in the context of art. Hume considered imagination fundamentally important for the formation of commonsense beliefs. Kant described imagination as special capacity that becomes active in the formation of scientific judgments and also during the experience of aesthetic pleasures. To Kant, imagination remains a distinct mental faculty, a distinctive mental operation that makes it possible for thought and experience to be combined. Hume, Addison, and others, consider imagination an associative process, in which experiences arouse ideas, and thus a union between experiences and ideas is achieved. For Kant--and also for Hegel--imagination is not associative but fundamental to the nature of the experience that expresses it. Both Hume and Kant had an important influence on the generations of writers and artists of the Romantic movement. The Romanticists in particular considered imagination to be the chief characteristic of any aesthetic action or experience. Imagination was to them the prerequisite of any genuine understanding of the human nature.

Kant identifies two effects of the imagination. According to him, there are two different forms in which the content of an experience is rendered: 1) Imagination is applied in any ordinary thought and perception. 2) Imagination is applied in any aesthetic experience. To illustrate 1): If I see a tree, my experience is made up of a synthesis. My experience has two constituents, namely the insight presented to my senses, and the concept *tree* presented by my understanding. These two constituents are--by the act of my imagination--synthesized and rendered as my experience of seeing a tree. Imagination, according to this concept is limited by understanding. To illustrate 2): In aesthetic experience imagination engages in a kind of free play. This free play of the imagination makes it possible for me to bring concepts to bear on an experience that is, in itself, free--or relatively free--from concepts. Kant maintains that there exists a special kind of creative imagination exercised by human beings in any aesthetic experience. It can be considered an act of creative imagination to see a tree in a painting, since we know that in reality there is no tree there. To perceive a real tree involves a different kind of imaginative act than to perceive a tree in a painting.

Neither Kant, nor later theories have answered all the questions concerning the puzzling unity between the intellectual and the sensory elements in aesthetic experience. More recent theories on aesthetics, e. g. by Sartre and Wittgenstein, have elaborated on the further study of creative imagination. They intend to show that aesthetic experience might be able to bridge the gap between the sensory and the intellectual and also try to define the relationship between aesthetic experience and the experience of everyday life. They also occupy themselves with the question whether and to what extent beauty is of moral significance. (see *Literature and the Fine Arts*)

4. The Aesthetic Experience

Being aware that aesthetics and related fields as art history, art appreciation, or artistic skills can be taught, one is nonetheless confronted with the following basic question: Is it possible to define a capacity, a disposition, a form of judgment, or a kind of experience that is primarily aesthetic?

Kant and his followers have maintained that an aesthetic attitude has to be free from practical concerns, has to distance itself from common embroilment, has to be disinterested in the sense that the aesthetic object of enjoyment is neither a means to satisfy curiosity, nor a means to an end. An aesthetic object is to be contemplated for its own sake and apart from all other interest. Arthur Schopenhauer, in his *The World as Will and Idea*, contended that regarding an object aesthetically implied independence of one's will. In other words, any usefulness an object might have has to remain completely irrelevant for an aesthetic judgement. Only if one regards an object as completely detached from its practical merits, one could come to perceive the *idea* expressed by the object. The insight gained thus leads to aesthetic appreciation. Proceeding from Kant and Schopenhauer, Friedrich von Schiller developed his theory of art as being an activity of *play*. According to him, creativity and appreciation of beauty do not fall under the domain of the will. Only in play, the human being can be free and creative; whereas in respect to goodness and perfection, the human being acts mostly under orders and restraint of a higher will. Schiller's ideal is educating the human being to become an *aesthetic human being*; that is, a human being who strives for goodness and perfection, not out of following the commands of a higher will, but instead out of playful desire.

Even though the position of aesthetics within philosophy continues to be object of fervent discussions, one might--for the purpose of this section on arts and education--condense the concerns of such discussions to the following two basic approaches:

- 1) The aesthetic object is being considered an object of sensory experience and is enjoyed as such: it is heard, seen, or felt and imagined in a sensory way.
- 2) The aesthetic object can at the same time be contemplated on: its appearance is of inherent interest and is being studied not merely as an object of sensory pleasure, but also as the object of manifold significance and value.

Both positions provide justification for including art education within school curricula, as well in the form of encouraging creativity, as also in the form of teaching how to

appreciate objects of art. The second position essentially demands the foundation of taste. It gives reason for our efforts to rationally discriminate those art objects that are worthy of reflective observation from those that are not.

Most post-Kantian aesthetic theories are based upon those two positions. The creation or appreciation of an aesthetic object is considered as fusion of sensory and intellectual aspects. Friedrich Hegel's definition of art as being "the sensuous embodiment of an idea" might serve as most prominent example. Typically, these post-Kantian theories maintain that the aesthetic experience embraces a certain synthesis of intellectual and sensory aspects, and that aesthetic characteristics and their value can only be determined by considering *all* aspects. (see *Foundations and characteristics of culture*)

5. Art Education in General

The justification of art education in schools and colleges stems from the insight that art can be an important formative power in the development of the human being. In Antiquity, such powers were primarily attributed to the art forms of poetry and music. Beginning with the Renaissance times, however, also the other arts forms were considered having a similarly crucial influence on the growth of the human being. The modern ideal would be to include all forms of art equally into art education.

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Biographical Sketch

Gerlinde Ulm Sanford received her PhD degree in Germanistics and Romanistics from the University of Vienna in Austria. After a few years as research assistant at the University of Marburg/Lahn in Germany, she went to Mississippi State University in the USA. Since 1968, she has been teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in German for the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics at Syracuse University in the USA. She has published a dictionary of Viennese professional names (*Wörterbuch alter Wiener Berufsnamen*), *Andreas Gryphius: Aemilius Paulus Papinianus* (text edition and commentary), *Konkordanz zu Schillers philosophischen und ästhetischen Schriften*, and numerous essays on modern Austrian writers, for instance Barbara Frischmuth, Michael Köhlmeier, Felix Mitterer, Robert Schindel, Werner Schwab, Peter Turrini, Josef Weinheber. Her areas of interest are linguistic studies, Goethe, and modern Austrian literature.