I would like to begin with an image of a wolf pack. In a wolf pack the younger and less threatening members are allowed to take playful nips and bites at their leaders, whereas those wolves ranked just below the top do not have this privilege. Challenge for leadership is only taken seriously by a wolf of equal status. This same game is played in academic circles. It preserves the illusion that we live in an egalitarian liberal climate—all voices are given an equal primordial howl; sometimes, if one is lucky, it even results in cosmetic change—the fur is left threadbare.

Educating Artistic Vision is an "old" book written a decade ago. As such there are many aspects in it, I'm sure, Eisner would not accept today. Therefore, the critique is made by keeping his later works, particularly The Educational Imagination (1979), in mind.

To begin, Eisner claims that there are two major justifications for the teaching of art, both of which he presents in an either/or fashion. First a contextualist justification is made by claiming that art satisfies social needs. From this perspective, the practice of art must be pragmatic: art as leisure, art as creative thinking, art as self-esteem would be manifestations of this view. Shaped by this instrumentalist viewpoint, the art teacher undertakes a "needs assessment" in order to determine what the particular function of art should be (p. 3). Eisner, quite correctly, points out that the assessment of this need ultimately rests upon a particular value base which the art educator strongly believes in. Conflicts are thus possible. However,

Somebody or some group MUST apply a set of values to those populations to determine what goals and content of the field OUGHT TO BE. (p. 5) [Capitals are my emphasis]

So, irrespective of the possible conflicts of values, realistically a program MUST be implemented.

The other position, which Eisner calls essentialist, gives art an exclusive and unique justification. Art can provide aesthetic experience—it vivifies life. Following Langer, art is a language of the affect. The artwork articulates our "most cherished values," he says (p. 11). These unique functions of art include a sense of vision, a means of activating one's own sensibility, to vivify the particular, to express the social character of society and possibly to bind people through ritual acts.
Having introduced these two positions, Eisner commits himself to an essentialist position claiming that art education should be "...for the aesthetic contemplation of visual form" (p. 9), and it should re-dress the "historical and cultural aspects of the art curriculum which have been neglected in our programs" (p. 26). To vindicate this thesis was the task of his book. It is my opinion that he fails to meet the promise of that commitment and inadvertently presents its antithesis.

Eisner attributes the low status of the arts in our schools primarily to the belief that American parents perceive the school to be an institution for social and economic mobility. Art, not being a very useful endeavor for employment, is perceived as a frill. Recently Bowles and Gintis in *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), Michael Apple in *Ideology and the Curriculum* (1976) and others like Giroux, Penna and Pinar in *Curriculum and Instruction* (1981) have argued quite a different thesis. They claim that the quality of education a child receives is dependent upon the social class to which he/she belongs. In short, students are streamed by a hidden curriculum to fill the slots that industry needs. Today's industry requires a glut of blue collar and white collar workers. Few middle and upper management positions are needed. Both our higher education and public schools ensure that the "needs" of capital are met. Extrapolating from Anyon's (1981) work, the discipline of art plays a different function in the education of each class. In working class schools, where the parental population consists of blue collar workers whose average incomes are $12,000, children are trained through a rigid, rule-governed and mechanized curriculum; the possibility for self-expression is non-existent. Via the ditto machine, art is reduced to the worst sort of pre-determined product. However, for schools which cater to a middle class, art takes on a popular role. In such schools, 'work tasks do not usually request creativity. Serious attention is rarely given in school work on how the children develop or express their own feelings and ideas, either linguistically or in graphic form' (Anyon, p. 329). The consumption of the popular and mass arts is encouraged. This form of artistic knowledge corresponds to the tastes of white collar workers, whose children are familiarized into a slightly more active consumptive role, through the purchase of popular books and the faithful indiscriminant viewing of seasonal Hollywood features. In school, art comes across as a frill, an escape and a leisure activity. In affluent professional class schools, where the parent population is composed of upper middle class jobs (i.e., cardiologists, corporate lawyers, executives in advertising or television), art is perceived as an expressive activity. Greater autonomy and freedom is a prerequisite for those whose future successes lie in the ability to handle responsibility, show creativity, understand the nature of paradox in human existence, and yet present effective choices and programs for the resolution of such conflicts. Such a character formation is necessary for middle management positions wherein a continual crisis of identity and stress prevails. The prezentment of unjust solutions to keep the system afloat (having to do the "dirty work" as the expression goes), often leads to self-doubt as to which class of people this strata wishes to identify with. Lastly, in executive elite schools, whose parents are among the top executives in major multinational corporations, the status of art is the antithesis of working class values. Art is a refinement of taste and a potential investment. Stress is placed not so much on the doing as on
acquiring reasoning and organizational skills. Such an education is well suited for tomorrow's owners of capitalist production, future directors of museum boards, members of art gallery advisory boards, or cultural offices for the government. Inadvertently and unconsciously, Eisner's book supports such a stratified society. The kind of art program he offers, I will show, maintains such inequalities. It is an ecological (biological) rather than an economical (cultural) model. It recognizes change, but not transcendence. What do I mean by this?

It is no accident that public elementary schooling was institutionalized during the mid-nineteenth century. Machines were becoming more complex and a need arose for a trained worker to handle them. Public education made this possible through the sequenced instruction of elementary school. Children of poor families were released from laboring at the age of six or seven in order to attend school. The institutionalization of public education preserved the illusion that the capitalists were indeed progressive, magnanimous and caring individuals. As capitalism changed its form from its laissez-faire beginnings to monopoly status, new skills were wanting. Again it is no accident that adolescence became a cultural phenomenon at the turn of the century (Friedenberg, 1959). Children now needed to stay longer in school because industry required more technical training. The promise of the machine age eventually generated the Bauhaus and the Vkhutemas schools along with a new crop of philanthropic robber barons. In England, Mr. Tate, a sugar magnate, immortalized his fame through the donation of the Tate Gallery, while the exploits of American culture barons such as the Rockefellers, Mellons, Guggenheims, Fords and Harrimans are well documented (Levine, 1976). Today in our own post-industrial society, we are witnessing the birth of new prolongation of childhood, that of a post-adolescence. It requires much money and many years of non-productive labor devoted to training at a technical institute or university in order to function in a bureaucratic government, cartel, or multi-national corporation.

What can be gleaned from this historical and sociological perspective is, first, that our own maturation rate is contingent upon our status in the economic production process—maturation is not a natural stage dependent on a naturally evolving organism. The amount of decision-making ability and actual effect of such decisions on lives has a tremendous bearing on our attitudes towards the constraints of our position in society. Second, our schools have always been in the service of capital despite the rhetoric of progressive, liberalist education (Feinberg, 1975). The importance of art in our school curricula is contingent upon the social stratifications of a post-industrial society. Third, along with this vertical assessment of stratification we can add a horizontal one. The relative status of art education in our schools can also be seen in the light of the needs of industry and the state. Walter Smith's mechanical drawing programs were consistent with the needs of America's industrialization, made possible by the assembly line. Gradually, the craftsman lost control over his/her artform as industry offered shop steward status to anyone who was willing to part with the secrets of his/her craft (Braverman, 1974). Likewise, the recognition of Lowenfeld's belief that art should be expressive of a child's psychological growth as the foundational
ideology for art education in the 1950's was consistent with America's Cold War policy. Eva Cockroft (1974) has admirably demonstrated how and why Abstract Expressionism became such a successful movement during the same period. Her suppositions and analysis apply equally well to Lowenfeld's ahistorical creative approach. Art was, after all, primarily expression.

A work of art is not a product of nature: it is a product of human spirit, thinking and emotions, and can only be understood when the driving force which leads to its creation is understood. The driving force represents the need to incorporate all experience deriving from expression into a single work of art to make it a symbol of expression. (Lowenfeld, p. 156)

Sound familiar? This statement could easily characterize Abstract Expressionism. The success of Abstract Expressionism, through the attendant legitimizing by Nelson Rockefeller as the dominating force behind the Museum of Modern Art during the 1940's and 1950's, ensured the promotion of an artistic style best suited for America's Cold War rhetoric and propaganda. Such a style demonstrated the virtues of "freedom of expression" in an "open and free society" (Cockroft, p. 17). It was antithetical to both Russian Social Realism and the previous W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) projects of the 1930's and 1940's, wherein form and content were integral components for social change. "Abstract Expressionism produced a separation of form and content in which form became dominant and predicated by the individual feelings of the artist without reference to any previous tradition." (Purdue, p. 220) Likewise, Lowenfeld's program supported a similar ideal, for he wrote in the introduction to *Creative and Mental Growth*:

We have clearly to differentiate between content or subject matter and mode of expression. As long as the child has the freedom to use his own mode of expression, his creativeness remains free. (p. 3)

The support of this Cold War ideology was further enhanced through the illusion that a scientific, empirical approach to art education research was neutral and value-free. "Lowenfeld was one of the first art educators to be consistently published in scientific and psychological journals." (Purdue, p. 220) The stress on creative self-expression was also consistent with a biologism that professed natural growth, unhampered by adult intervention, and Eisner's thesis is a logical extension of this development.

Eisner began his book by claiming sympathy for an essentialist position, a position which claims the justification of art on the grounds of aesthetic experience, but he brilliantly(?), or mistakenly(?), changed his mind. From Chapter 4 on, Eisner accepts a contextualist view, drawing upon the ecological biologism of Dewey, and preserving the status quo wherein education is the hand maiden for capitalist needs. After a review of the history of art education, he writes,
Although it is easy to say that, in general, the goals of art education should be based upon what it is that is unique and valuable about art, goals always function for people, and people live in contexts. Without consideration for who and where the what can only be couched in the most general and abstract terms. (p. 54)

From this remark Eisner then develops an art program squarely placed in an upper middle class view. He begins by drawing on Deweyian and Piagetian theories, both of which are a form of reduction (see Buck-Morss, 1975). Both are appealing because they support a democratic-liberalist view. So bad is Eisner's appropriation of their theory that he mixes up chronological age with mental age. For instance, he claims that

the appropriateness for emphasizing the making of useful art forms for five- or six-year-olds will be different than for twelve-year-olds. Each stage of development, so to speak, affects what we desire or aim to achieve. (p. 61)

No one has raised the critical question that possibly the hidden curriculum sequences our young to think like five-year-olds or twelve-year-olds. No one has raised the questions, To what form of knowledge is learning being sequenced? For what ends and in whose interests? In light of my remarks concerning maturity, why was there no childhood for the aristocracy? Could it be that art education curriculum unintentionally conditions the character of artistic sensibility in each grade level to meet predetermined mental ends necessary to reproduce the necessary worker spectrum?

What is most frightening about Eisner's work is the way he rationalizes how a child's social-cultural background affects his or her particular education environment. The question of gender, for instance, is not even whispered despite the growing liberalism in the late 1960's and early 1970's, particularly in California (Loeffler, 1980). Eisner presents the worst kind of determinism and predetermined slotting of classes. It is, for all intents and purposes, the twentieth century "great chain of being" of education. He claims that an art education program must accommodate (a Piagetian biological term) the "cultural baggage" a child brings with him or her to the school. This cultural overlay is to be cross-referenced with a child's maturity which is still defined in chronological terms. Consequently, a readiness profile is possible which can be mapped on his Cartesian grid, which in itself is a sixteenth century concept. This grid, which has an X-axis for maturing and a Y-axis for a continuum that runs from low socio-economic level to high socio-economic level, becomes the pigeon holes for all classes.

The six year old child living in an urban ghetto fits in the upper left hand quadrant. So goals, contents, methods are selected which match that need... a method quite
different from a child of the same age but living in a well-to-do suburb.
(p. 61)

Huxley would have been proud. We have here a nicely ordered, packaged world that places everyone in his or her place. Each strata is given a different program. The system stays the same but accommodates everybody "equally".

Eisner, drawing from both Piaget and Dewey, recognizes the "live" creature but his creature is seen in biological not human, anthropological terms. Dewey and Piaget recognize assimilation and accommodation through the concept of negentropy—the self is transformed gradually and slowly. When Eisner applies this model of human development, art activities become prepackaged consumables which bracket the student in the proper developmental niche. There is no explanation as to how students may transcend, rather than merely transform themselves, through quantum leaps rather than qualitative jumps.

This ecological view is essentially a pragmatism. It hides its real task which is how to keep the little "monsters" happy and believing that they are doing their own thing—expressing themselves. Since behavioral objectives work well for rats and most elementary children, they are still nicely accommodated in the grand scheme of things through what Eisner calls "sedate times". This is when the children learn about technique through a rigid sequence of events. However, children are not rats. There is a great deal of resistance to predetermined plans through the children's own forms of Brinkmanship. Schools are no longer providing the upward mobility once promised. The sharing in the growth of capitalist expansion has stopped. In a recession, the current crisis of capitalism requires a continued and refined ideology if the system is to maintain itself. One result has been the wedding of expressive objectives and behavioral ones.

Expressive objectives now satisfy the illusion that upper and working class children have been given laissez-faire status. They are able to "discover themselves" through art. The "New Deal" is to have the teacher still remain as the authoritarian figure, but with a difference. The authority is hidden from direct sight; the teacher is merely a "facilitator," like Adam Smith's "invisible hand." However, should any student get out of line, the "invisible hand" becomes visible, and the system is once more stabilized. A similar illusion is found in the market place, where small business capitalists are seen as the American ideal, but in actuality are unable to compete with conglomerates. There is only the illusion of free enterprise.

In Eisner's terms this practice is called "pace." It is the same process I have just described in economic terms. He wants the teacher to apply behavioral objectives, then give students some "rope", by allowing them to express themselves. The illusion that the school is an egalitarian and free place is preserved, while all along the enterprise is being properly managed.
The illusion of the "liberalism" wanes as the absurdity of the biological view is pushed to the limit, with the introduction of the notion of the connoisseur. The pretense to elitism is exposed. The upper middle class is, after all, a group of entrepreneurs wishing to mimic those in control. They want their schools to reflect this. This is yet another contradiction in what is supposed to be an egalitarian art program. At the beginning of his book he claimed that knowledge is value-based and now the startling claim is made that it is precisely expert knowledge on which we need to rely.

The connoisseur fallacy lies in Eisner's inability to distinguish aesthetics as a purely sensuous, bodily awareness and art which falls into the realm of meaning. The two do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. A florist can identify a well tended orchid through its color, size and crispness, but an orchid has no social meaning—no history. If it does, it may function only as a sign of affection but not art. To get at symbolic meaning, Eisner would have to, at the very least, couch his arguments in hermeneutics. Reference to social history rather than the application of a formalist ahistorical description would help overcome the discrepancy between symbol and sign. (see Gadamer's (1975) criticism of Kant in this regard.)

I should sum up by saying that Eisner's organicism supports the status quo. Maturation is seen organically, not economically; the cultural overlay—the baggage we bring to any situation—is perceived in passive terms. Eisner eventually adopts a Deweyian problem-solving approach. Pragmatism is vindicated, and a feedback-loop model justifies artistic knowledge as a qualitative endeavor. Such an art program justifies art as expression aimed for an upper middle class population. Such a program preserves the ideology that art of this class must emulate the elite of society through connoisseurship. It is ironic that this upper middle class should not begin to develop an art that they can at least call their own. Finally, Eisner's program says nothing to the lower classes, nor to the elites.

If one wishes to go beyond Eisner, I would claim that a more critical, emancipatory approach is needed—one which allows the student to protect himself or herself against unconscious structuring of one's own thought. To make the unconscious conscious would be a start for a change of intent.
References


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