

**TRANSFORMING LIBERAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE
IMAGINATION: CRITICAL-CREATIVE THINKING IN HIGHER
EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY**

BY

KARLA ODENWALD

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Philip M. Anderson

Chair of Examining Committee

Anthony Picciano

Executive Officer

Professor Philip Anderson

Professor Nicholas Michelli

Professor Mark Zuss

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMING LIBERAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE IMAGINATION:
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PEDAGOGY

By

Karla Odenwald

Advisor: Professor Philip M. Anderson

Taking the work of Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner as a point of departure, this dissertation will argue that the general education college curriculum today needs to be seriously re-examined and re-evaluated if we are to provide students with the education they need. Students require a curriculum which gives more weight to the arts and humanities, one that will recognize, expand, and develop the cognitive, philosophical, and ethical dimensions of learning. The argument will be made for the implementation of a transformative model of education for the 21st century, one that will recognize young people as multi-dimensional human beings, who can and need to develop multi-modal sensibilities through the releasing of both their intellect and imagination as they strive towards a more fulfilling life and a more just world.

It will be argued that the general education curriculum should work to enable students to think both rationally and aesthetically, leading to a more comprehensive education. It is proposed to achieve this end through the introduction of a new, merged form of thinking, critical-creative thinking. The argument will be made that this type of thinking can be cultivated both through the inclusion of more arts and humanities courses in the curriculum as well as through the implementation of teaching methods conducive to the development of critical-creative thinking.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, my first teacher, whose love, support, and wisdom have always sustained me. I owe my insight into the human heart and mind to her careful and tireless guidance.

And to my brother, who has always believed in me, and urged me to pursue my dreams.

They both encouraged me to persevere with this project in the face of obstacles I have learned to see as inconsequential.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE IMPORTANCE OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION

Justification

A crisis exists in higher education today. The current scene is dominated by a social efficiency model that necessarily leads to a reduction of the knowledge base, and a fragmented, incomplete learning experience for college students. This situation is especially apparent in the general education requirements of the first two years of college, traditionally considered a period of intellectual exploration for young people, and normally centered on the liberal arts. But the liberal arts are losing more and more ground in the American university as colleges move towards requiring students to specialize increasingly earlier in their college careers – reputedly so as not to waste their time and money. Various private foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have promoted the reduction of time spent in school, and additional connections with the world of “work”. As Ernest Boyer (1987) has observed, general education has become the “neglected stepchild” of undergraduate education.

In “The University in Ruins,” (1997) Bill Readings paints a disheartening picture of the new “university of excellence” – a techno-bureaucratic behemoth, a corporation driven by market forces in which there is acute interest in profit, but little in thought. Indeed, the discourse of excellence, goals, accountability, and global competitiveness hails from the business world. The Spellings Commission report on education released in 2006 currently identifies higher education as an area in crisis and warns us that other countries are “catching up” to us. Echoing NCLB (2001), the report urges the US school

and political authorities to strive for excellence and world-class quality in the face of increasing economic and technological competition. “A Nation at Risk” (1983), produced by the Commission on Excellence chartered by the Reagan administration, uses the metaphor of war to underline the seriousness of our present educational “mediocrity” and voices the concerns not only of the leaders of business, but also of the military. Education in the United States, it seems, has become an issue not only of global competitiveness, but of national security, and our first line of defense is the striving for “excellence,” as we take our position in the high-stakes race in which many schools and universities have decided to participate. There is increasing concern from some quarters that American education, in fact Americans’ very ability to think and how much they know, is degenerating both in comparison to previous generations of Americans and to people from other nations. Such concerns are expressed most notoriously by Allan Bloom who writes about “education emptied of its content” in “The Closing of the American Mind” (1987), or in the writings of E.D. Hirsch (1987), with his preoccupation about Americans’ lack of cultural literacy, i.e., their eroding knowledge base.

The Global Race

“A Nation at Risk” (1983) starts out by claiming that its concern is for every last man, woman, and child in the nation regardless of class, race, or social status to have equal opportunity to develop their talents. It claims the twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling can simultaneously be met. It warns that the danger of meeting only one or the other is either a general mediocrity or an undemocratic elitism. It argues for a learning society in which people will be willing to train and retrain for the duration of

their working lives. It also emphasizes the importance of keeping one particularly American ideal alive: the belief in the American dream that superior performance leads to social mobility.

The report emphasizes the importance of the United States' winning the global race. It warns that "what was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur – others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments" (National Commission on Excellence, p.1). To this end it is imperative that the focus in schools be on math, science, and technology – the humanities are merely mentioned in passing. The most important subjects are determined to be math, English, history/U.S. government, science, economics, business, and a foreign language. Knowledge and intelligence become raw materials for international commerce. As the report states:

If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all... learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the 'information age' we are entering. (p. 2)

Interestingly, the report does state that the average person today is better educated than the average person a few decades back but that the same does not hold true for the average college graduate. The challenge then seems to be forcing old standards upon a new demographic, and the solution has, unfortunately, been found in a series of punitive measures, mainly economic, aimed at achieving the desired results, as well as in a proliferation of meaningless tests.

The Spellings Report

The Spellings Commission report, “A Test of Leadership” (2006) seems to be no less than a direct descendant of “A Nation at Risk”, “NCLB” and “Goals 2000.” Competition comes across as a primary agenda. The report claims that while not everyone needs to go to college, everyone does need some kind of postsecondary education, as a basic form of individual economic security. College, insists the report, is not the right place for students to waste taxpayer dollars, trying to master English and math skills that they should have learned in high school.

The report argues for a series of accountability mechanisms to make sure that colleges and universities do their job. The report proposes that “student achievement, which is inextricably connected to institutional success, must be measured by institutions on a ‘value-added’ basis that takes into account students’ academic baseline when assessing their results” (Spellings, p. 4). It also recognizes the “reality” of a consumer-driven environment in which all that matters is “results.” There is a call for a combination of high-quality instruction and improved efficiency through a program of cost-cutting and productivity improvements. The report criticizes American higher education from the perspective of the business world, disparaging it as a “mature enterprise,” one that is risk-averse, self-satisfied, and too expensive, one that has not taken proper stake of the new knowledge economy we find ourselves in, and has thus stagnated as the rest of the world has moved on. Without the proper measures, the Commission warns, colleges and universities will see their market share reduced and will become obsolete. The Commission criticizes institutions of higher learning as deficient

in graduation rates, learning outcomes, core literacy skills, and especially, institutional cost management.

The Spellings Report argues for improved learning, especially in STEM areas: science, technology, engineering, mathematics, as well as medicine, teaching, nursing, biomedicine and other knowledge-intensive fields critical to global competitiveness, national security, and economic prosperity. There is the glaring emphasis on world-class education, meaning the kind of education that would ensure that U.S. students remain ahead of their counterparts from other nations. The report warns that:

Today that world is becoming tougher, more competitive, less forgiving of wasted resources and squandered opportunities. In tomorrow's world a nation's wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract, and retain citizens who are able to work smarter and learn faster – making educational achievement ever more important both for individuals and for society writ large. (Spellings, p. ix)

There is a call to implement a series of performance benchmarks which can measure and improve productivity and efficiency. In the tradition of NCLB, exams such as the “Collegiate Learning Assessment” have been designed to measure value-added. This undermines the autonomy of departments and programs to set their own standards for what their graduates should know; in effect, it de-professionalizes scholars and educators, who have traditionally been the gatekeepers of their respective academic communities. If we are not disturbed enough by the situation in public primary and secondary schools, we can only imagine what college courses would be like with professors teaching to a standardized test. The problem, of course, begins in grade

school, where there is the “back to basics” move, an inevitable reduction of learning, together with the explosion in standardized testing. And now the government is proposing this same reductive model for colleges and universities.

Responses to Spellings

The Spellings Commission Report received some praise and support. Chester E. Finn Jr., speaking for the neo-conservative position readily agreed that institutions of higher education need to act more like businesses or the whole country will be adversely affected. “It won’t be a sudden collapse. It will be gradual erosion, diminution, enervation, leading slowly but inexorably to exhaustion and mediocrity for the U.S. higher education enterprise and peril for the nation itself” (National Crosstalk, 2006, p. 4A). However he also expressed some reservations about the content of the learning proposed by the Commission. In an article, “Not By Geeks Alone,” Finn and Diane Ravitch note their concern about the preponderance of STEM subjects advocated by the Spellings Commission, and the near exclusion of the liberal arts:

As with all education reforms, the STEM-winders mean well. They reason that India and China will eat America’s lunch unless we boost our young people’s prowess in the STEM fields. But these enthusiasts don’t understand that what makes Americans competitive on a shrinking, globalizing planet isn’t out gunning Asians at technical skills. Rather it’s our people’s creativity, versatility, imagination, restlessness, energy, ambition and problem-solving prowess... The liberal arts make us ‘competitive’ in the ways that matter most. (p. 1)

Finn and Ravitch also observe that a focus on STEM areas and the movement away from a liberal arts education risks widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots:

The well-to-do who understand the value of liberal learning may be the only ones able to purchase it for their children. Top private schools and a few suburban systems will stick with education broadly defined, as will elite colleges. Rich kids will study philosophy and art, music and history, while their poor peers fill in bubbles on test sheets. The lucky few will spawn the next generation of tycoons, political leaders, inventors, authors, artists and entrepreneurs. The less lucky masses will see narrower opportunities. Some will find no opportunities at all, which frustration will tempt them to prey upon the fortunate, who in turn will retreat into gated communities, exclusive clubs, and private this-and-that's, thereby widening domestic rifts and worsening our prospects for social cohesion and civility. (p. 2)

“A Test of Leadership” was met by many more objections. The MLA criticized that the Commission “makes virtually no mention of the humanities, despite their established central role in higher education” (2007, p. 1). It correctly points out that many employers today are asking for their workers to show precisely those skills the humanities foster – critical thinking, writing, and problem solving skills. Also missing, stresses the MLA, are the social and moral dimensions of what American higher education is supposed to represent. “The report ignores the humanities’ role in (helping)

citizens think more imaginatively, feel greater sympathy with others, and make sounder moral judgments” (p. 2).

The Association of American Universities is disturbed by the Commission’s pointed focus on business and the world of work. “The emphasis is almost exclusively on measurable learning outcomes that lead to demonstrable workforce skills and employment” (2006, p. 3). Missing is the mission of higher education as a humanistic undertaking. The AAU makes a call to the stakeholders of higher education to understand that “higher education is about the education of citizens as well as the training of workers” (p. 3).

Robert Atwell, former president of the American Council on Education, observes that the report does not respond to the problem of “mission creep” (National Crosstalk, 2006, p. 1A). Regional state universities want to become national research universities, and private colleges want to become research colleges. There is a relentless pursuit of elitism which leaves behind countless numbers of students. David W. Breneman, Dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, protests against higher education as a business model. He criticizes “the report’s relentless focus on higher education as a marketplace, with students as consumers, colleges and universities as producers, and the economic contribution that postsecondary education and training make to society” (National Crosstalk, 2006, p. 2A). He calls the report, “long on practicality but short on vision” (p. 2A). He observes that the report “slights the non-economic, social benefits that we used to associate with higher education, including the cultivation of ethical and aesthetic capabilities, preparation for civic society and democratic government, the development of character and understanding of other cultures” (p. 2A).

Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, says the report leaves many unanswered questions; there are too many goals without the corresponding recommendations on how to reach them. “The report did not explain what ‘world class’ means, what knowledge universities should create, how universities should contribute to economic prosperity, how they should empower citizens, or what workplace skills should be taught in higher education” (National Crosstalk, 2006, p. 4A). David Warren, president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, is concerned about the concept of measuring value-added. “We are concerned that the Commission’s rationale for outcomes information gives the impression that it is possible to compare one institution with all others. A drive for such comparisons will inevitably lead to the attempt to adopt a single test” (National Crosstalk, 2006, p. 8A). This sentiment is echoed by Ronald Crutcher, president of Wheaton College. “It would be an enormous mistake to measure each institution by the same yardstick. Research universities, community colleges, public institutions and private liberal arts colleges have different missions and serve different populations”(Issues & Trends In Higher Education, 2006, p. 3).

Social Control

Both “A Nation at Risk” and The Spellings Report are clear examples of the type of social control the government is trying to gain over students through the curriculum. Those in power seem to want a well trained workforce with a limited ability to think, which may easily be molded and manipulated - raw material as workers are sometimes called. The quest for these types of workers has led businesses to partner with the

schools, providing funds in exchange for the power to make decisions about how the schools are run, and what and how the students are taught. The goal is to turn these students into ideal future workers, the type that can be trained to perform a series of limited tasks and paid as cheap labor, allowing businesses' profits to skyrocket. Stanley Aronowitz (1980) warns us that the hidden agenda of the present higher education system is to enslave whole generations of workers. In "Politics and Higher Education in the 1980's" he paints a frightening picture of this control:

It encourages subordination of a conceptually illiterate population whose skills extend to the technical plane. They are able to follow orders under the direction of managements that are responsive to bureaucracies and capital, but unable to critically examine public and private life, to determine how and what should be produced and by whom, to make the public choices that become policy. (p. 47)

Henry Giroux (1999), in "Vocationalizing Higher Education: Schooling and the Politics of Corporate Culture," echoes the sentiment. "Curricula modeled after corporate culture have been enormously successful in preparing students for low skilled service work in a society that has little to offer in the way of meaningful employment for the vast majority of its graduates" (p. 154). People are still being taught to believe that the American Dream is available to all those who work hard. However, even getting a college degree today is no guarantee that a person will be able to move himself and his family into the middle class because there is a vast difference in what is meant by college education today. "The trend of current education policy seeks to persuade us that the basics movement can solve the economic crisis for students since it assumes that the

problem of dead-end jobs, low income, and insecurity resides with the individual” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 64).

Some students are trained for power while others are taught to submit, and our system of higher education helps to keep each in their respective places. One way of perpetuating the status quo is to expose students at different socioeconomic levels to different types of knowledge. As Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) have observed:

The right of any high school graduate to attend postsecondary schools regardless of his/her grades or test scores did not signify full democratization of higher education... It did signify, though, a sharp rise in college enrollments in vocational programs, particularly in community colleges, and the wholesale creation of an entirely new level of higher education, that is, the second-tier public liberal arts college. (p. 15)

Those who go to Ivy League schools are being prepared for positions of leadership in the society. Those who go to state schools will most probably remain in middle class jobs. Those who go to city schools, and more specifically community colleges, are being trained to take low paying service jobs, with little room for advancement, either professional or economic. This last group of “human capital” is being produced by our public schools in order to serve corporate interests, specifically by exposing these students to a limited curriculum which mainly focuses on basic skills, and makes very little use of critical thinking. This curriculum denies students the opportunity for a comprehensive education, seriously curtailing their opportunities for advancement. Thus even for those who make it through college, there is no guarantee that they will be able to escape “the poverty zone” (Anyon, 2005). Our macroeconomic policies: those

regulating the minimum wage, job availability, and affordable housing, make it nearly impossible for those at the bottom to climb out from under (Anyon, 2005). This, too, must be taken into account when thinking about an educational model which can empower young people to break out of the molds which have been set for them not only while in school, but out in the world as workers, members of their communities, and citizens of their nation.

An Incomplete Education

One of the greatest challenges facing education today is the preponderance of the social efficiency theory. Colleges and universities in the U.S. are moving further away from the ideal of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum, because it is not considered socially efficient.

Education is too often thought of as simply the delivery of neutral knowledge to students. In this discourse, the fundamental role of schooling is to fill students with the knowledge that is necessary to compete in today's rapidly changing world. To this is often added an additional caveat: do it as cost-effectively and as efficiently as possible. (Apple, 2001, pp. 5-6)

This model of education only serves to exacerbate present inequities as school serves as an engine for social reproduction. Both neo-liberals and neoconservatives, in Michael Apple's view, are to blame. "The school curriculum has become a battleground, stimulated in large part by neo-liberal complaints about 'economically useless' knowledge (and) neoconservative laments about the supposed loss of discipline and lack of 'real knowledge'" (pp. 198-199).

Today, everything is measured. Students, as well as programs, are sorted out of public institutions if they are not deemed to make economic sense. “As large amounts of corporate capital flow into universities, those areas of study that don’t translate into substantial profits get marginalized, under funded, or eliminated” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 2000, p. 1). Unfortunately, in the current educational climate, the humanities, not to mention aesthetics, are not usually deemed to make economic sense.

Many students today do not get the education they need, a comprehensive education, one which would allow them to liberate their ability to employ critical-creative thinking in their daily lives. Minority students, as well as those in the lower socio-economic classes, especially experience this sub par education.

By age 25-29, about every 34 of every 100 whites obtain bachelor’s degrees, compared to 17 of every 100 blacks and just 11 of every 100 Latinos. Just as dismaying, low-income high school graduates in the top quartile on standardized tests attend college at the same rate as high-income high school graduates in the bottom quartile on the same tests. Only 36 percent of college-qualified low-income students complete bachelor’s degrees within eight and a half years, compared with 81 percent of high-income students. (Spellings, p.8)

A mixed population of students inhabits our urban college classrooms, especially in the public colleges that more than 80% of students attend. Some are immigrant students who are applying to college for the first time, may be the first in their families to go to the university, and are facing both academic and financial challenges.

There is also the group of American born students, some racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities who may experience similar restrictions. Having been accepted into college, many are stuck in remedial reading, writing, and math classes for as long as two years. Oftentimes they use up their financial aid, taking and retaking remedial courses, causing many to never graduate. “Some 40 percent of all college students end up taking at least one remedial course” (Spellings, p.8). Many of these same students are also holding down at least a part-time job, and sometimes work fulltime to support themselves or their families. “Nearly 40 percent of today’s postsecondary students are self-supporting adults age 24 and up; almost half attend school part-time; more than one-third work fulltime; 27 percent have children themselves” (Spellings, p. 8).

For many of these students, the transition into college life is harsh and ends in failure because they do not have the support they need in order to succeed. Helping these students to develop and demonstrate the critical thinking skills as well as the content knowledge necessary to succeed in school and later on at work deserves serious attention. These young people are owed a real opportunity to develop their potential. “While educators and policymakers have commendably focused on getting more students into college, too little attention has been paid to helping them graduate. The result is that unacceptable numbers of students fail to complete their studies at all” (Spellings, p. 12).

Professors who teach remedial courses often complain about the deficiency in critical thinking skills and content knowledge shown by the students; they claim that not only do the students show a limited ability to reason, but they are also largely unaware of the world outside their own personal experience. Unfortunately, the fact that these students are placed in remedial skills courses in the first place practically guarantees that

they will not be able to develop or strengthen their critical thinking skills or content knowledge in different areas, since students will spend most of their time training to pass a series of tests, which, contrary to what they purport to do, definitely do not measure critical thinking skills.

Unfortunately the students who have the support they need to engage in a traditional type of university setting, the old ideal of four years dedicated to learning about themselves and the world around them without the pressures of work, family, and other obligations is an ever shrinking minority, so the model of this traditional student and his needs, expectations, and possibilities can hardly serve in making adequate decisions regarding the education of the vast remaining college population.

While many Americans still envision the typical undergraduate as an 18-to-22-year-old with a recently acquired high school diploma attending classes at a four-year institution, the facts are more complex. Of the nation's nearly 14 million undergraduates, more than four in ten attend two-year community colleges. Nearly one-third are older than 24 years old. Forty percent are enrolled part-time. (Spellings, p. vii)

We need to come up with viable options for today's youths - options which are not based on romantic notions of a previous time; but neither should we allow the university to be redefined as job training for this vast majority, and neglect their intellectual, social and moral development by relegating the arts and humanities to an inferior position so students can focus on more "useful" subjects.

Despite many of our politicians' slogans about justice and equal opportunity, the incisive observation which John Dewey (1916, 1933) made regarding class divisions still holds true today. He saw the division of work and play in our society as the result of unjust social conditions in the past, impoverishing the class of people whose lives revolved around labor, in order to free the higher class to pursue a life of leisure, or play - of which the arts could make up a significant part. Thus the arts become an accomplishment for the elite, and a classical education becomes a status symbol, something which enriches the lives of a select demographic of young people, by adding sophistication and cosmopolitan polish. The non-elite are thought to have no use for such accomplishments, and are supposedly better served by focusing on the basics. Thus when it comes to budget cuts in public education the arts are the first to go.

In addition, education is becoming big business. Private colleges are competing for market share, trying to attract more money and the best students. And now, to exacerbate an already unjust situation, even the public schools are chasing an elect demographic; they, too, want a piece of the luxury market. Increasingly, public colleges and universities are turning into two tier education systems. One example is CUNY, whose Master Plan 2004 – 2008 heralds its attempt to convert itself into a flagship university to attract the best and brightest, with the Honors College offering a series of perks which are not available to the rest of the student body. More and more, colleges and universities are pursuing the elite, and the non-elite are falling through the wayside.

The Proposal

Our mission in colleges and universities in the twenty-first century should be to educate a diverse, multicultural urban population – a population distinctly different from that which had access to the university one hundred years ago, an urban population which clearly has different needs and expectations. This reality brings with it both challenges and opportunities which schools need to address.

Curricular transformation of higher education aiming to enrich the cognitive, philosophical, and ethical dimensions of learning, a transformative model of education for the 21st century, must provide college students with a truly comprehensive education, a comprehensive and synthetic ability to think both rationally and aesthetically.

Colleges need to rethink the purpose of higher education today. The concept of undergraduate education demands more than the mere acquisition of “rational” learning, or worse, straightforward practical training for the purpose of gainful employment. Otherwise, why not have the students simply attend training institutes? Overemphasis on vocationalism and job training, on careerism over and above everything else, is not pedagogically sound, many times stunting growth and ignoring unrealized potential.

The first two years of college, and especially the freshman year, is the best time to educate students to the new type of learning proposed here, the merged model of critical-creative thinking, which should be especially implemented in the general education core curriculum. The best way to achieve this is by strengthening the humanities and arts component in the curriculum in order to truly offer students a liberal arts education, as opposed to having them engage in early training for a specific graduate program they plan to apply to. A set of core courses, with a strong focus on arts and humanities should

be offered to all freshmen in each particular college, instead of the popular distribution requirements which confuses students with a complicated menu of “choices” and can easily result in a haphazard general education.

Colleges and universities owe it to their students to give them a coherent, rigorous set of core requirements sufficient for becoming an educated person. It is not fair to students... to give them a Lego set of courses and leave them to construct their own contraption. (Bennet, ¶6 Foreword in Leef, 2003)

The distribution requirements approach can also result in the students not taking the requirements seriously, and merely getting them “out of the way” so they can focus on their “real” university studies in their majors. Instead, with a liberal arts and sciences core curriculum, college students will engage multiple worldviews, multiple ways of knowing, developing and strengthening different forms of literacy. They will, in effect, become educated persons. “Becoming an educated person goes beyond the acquisition of a technical skill. It requires an understanding of one’s place in the world – cultural as well as natural – in pursuit of a productive and meaningful life” (Bennet, ¶ 1 Foreword in Leef, 2003). A core curriculum can meet this need.

It becomes imperative to challenge the traditional dichotomy of mathematical thought as a subject for the active mind, and aesthetic thought as a subject for the receptive spirit, of Western logical thinking patterns as something to be valued, and aesthetic thinking patterns as merely exotic, decorative, and gratuitous. Both rational and aesthetic thinking require the student to be an active as well as a passive learner. Aesthetic thinking in itself can be divided into receptive, passive ways of knowing and

more engaged acts of making and constructing alternatives, new models and ways of resituating one's relation to a world which has heretofore only been seen as given. Similarly, if one examines the critical thinking skills of the logical-mathematical type that are taught in our schools and universities, it is also possible to differentiate between a passive and an active way of knowing. There is a distinction between identifying patterns and producing them, between classifying parts within a whole or constructing a whole from parts as an exercise posited by an instructor, and engaging in this "same" activity as an independent actor engaged in making sense of the world around him. Passive and active thinking are determined by the level of engagement and independence demonstrated by the student, and not by the type of subject that is being thought about. Certainly, asking students to use their critical thinking skills to complete cloze reading exercises and other types of worksheets is not the same as having them respond to a piece of literature.

Further, students need to be prepared for the real world and real world problems will not come neatly packaged under one form of reasoning or another, but may be viewed in multiple ways, through different ways of knowing. In the end this is the main concern, that students should be exposed to an education which will enable them to partake of different ways of knowing, strengthening their intellectual capacity, developing their moral sense, and enriching their lives. This they can achieve through a liberal arts and sciences education.

A liberal education is one which is intrinsically connected with the arts and humanities and thus transforms students' lives intellectually, psychologically, and socially so they can never quite look at the world in a commonsensical way. Students are

challenged to emerge from their protective shells, the constraints of their all too familiar contact with a narrow world consisting of self, family, friends, and material everyday culture:

Through the humanities we reflect on the fundamental question: What does it mean to be human? The humanities offer clues but never a complete answer. They reveal how people have tried to make moral, spiritual, and intellectual sense of a world in which irrationality, despair, loneliness, and death are as conspicuous as birth, friendship, hope, and reason. (Commission on the Humanities, 1980, p. 1)

In a liberal arts and sciences intellectual environment, students are challenged to push the boundaries of their experience, and cross over into the boundaries of others, as they expand their sensibilities, open themselves up to multiple perspectives, and temporarily inhabit worlds they have never before experienced. A liberal education is a broad education, an education which teaches students to savor learning for its own sake, to savor inquiry and debate as they explore possibilities and examine their beliefs within a community of their peers, on the stage of public discourse:

The humanities presume particular methods of expression and inquiry – language, dialogue, reflection, imagination, and metaphor. In the humanities the aims of these activities of mind are not geometrical proof and quantitative measure, but rather insight, perspective, critical understanding, discrimination, and creativity. (Commission on the Humanities 1980, p. 2)

A liberal education liberates, expands, and refines students' intellectual capacities. This education recognizes the importance of both rational thinking and aesthetic thinking, as students learn to expand their awareness and manipulation of different kinds of mental processes: some analytical, some based on sense impressions, intuition, or imagination. A liberal education enables students to partake of and participate within the different types of symbol systems, discursive as well as non-discursive. This education upholds "a pluralistic view of mind, recognizing many different and discrete facets of cognition, acknowledging that people have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles" (Gardner, 1993, p. 6). Mathematics and science as well as arts and music are valuable and necessary for all young people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. "Education in our time should provide the basis for enhanced understanding of our several worlds – the physical world, the biological world, the world of human beings, the world of human artifacts, and the world of the self (Gardner, 1999, p. 158). A liberal education prepares students for leadership and citizenship, for freedom and responsibility (Greene, 1995). Our students are faced with a world in which politics and the struggle among ideologies are paramount. Thus they must learn how to choose democracy through their actions and engagement with the community. A liberal education is a comprehensive education.

Methodology

Any discussion of the curriculum is rooted in a rich and varied past, so discussion of the current crisis must begin with a historical review of the place of the liberal arts in the American curriculum.

Following an historical overview, the analysis of the current curricular crisis then demands a close reading, an analysis, and synthesis of psychological, cultural, and philosophical writings of thinkers who have shown a strong interest in curricular issues, in particular the approach known as the “ways of knowing.” It is imperative to examine the tensions between those who support an “efficient” course of study by focusing on math, science, and technology in the pursuit of “excellence” and those who argue that any model which marginalizes the arts and humanities is a reductive model of education, and shortchanges students by exposing them to an incomplete education which will not serve them well when they go out into the world.

The work of educational theorists Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner, with a few alterations and additions, provides an evocative model for the directing general education policy and practice. Greene and Eisner, the first a philosopher, the second an artist, and both educators for many years, both identify aesthetics, exemplified through the arts and the humanities, as essential for enabling students to deal with an increasingly complex world. Yet they do not limit aesthetic appreciation or activity to these particular traditional domains, a telling point in itself since they provide us with an idea of the aesthetic as an inherent part of our experience of the world, and not a humble appendage (or worse - a completely superfluous one).

Following Dewey, Greene (1981, 1988, 1995, 2001), provides a strong philosophical argument for the necessity of the arts and the humanities in education by emphasizing the importance of the aesthetic for democracy. For Greene (1995) exposure and engagement with the arts is an issue of social justice; aesthetics enables one to release the imagination, allowing for alternative possibilities, and encouraging empathy with those who have been in one way or another marginalized. She criticizes our current technical-rational philosophy that makes a virtue out of economic productivity at any cost, that promotes “seeing the world small,” (1995). She emphasizes making aesthetic education accessible to all through general education, so that both the privileged and the marginalized may partake of the same kind of learning. However, it is not enough to simply expose students to survey courses in the arts and humanities, for often in these settings students are taught to be consumers, and not producers of knowledge (1981).

Eisner emphasizes the cognitive argument, rather than the philosophical. The main thrust of his criticism of education is that too often schools are overly concerned with math, science, and simple “reading” to the detriment of the arts and humanities, and have thus neglected other “ways of knowing” (1985). He claims this reduced and scientifically overloaded curriculum impoverishes students, reducing potential to experience the world. The current reductive model of education only focuses on discursive modes of thought, as if non-discursive thought were a contradiction in terms. He also expresses worry that institutions of higher education tend to look with suspicion upon courses of study in which judgments, intuition, metaphor, and other non-quantitative forms of logic might be important, thus neglecting them for the general population of students, curtailing these students’ intellectual growth (1999). He

emphatically states that aesthetic thinking is, indeed, rational activity, and he highlights the role of the senses in picking up qualitative information from the environment, which he asserts leads to concept formation. Eisner sees the refinement of the senses as a form of literacy, just as necessary to a person's development, as linguistic or mathematical literacy (2002). Eisner's views are echoed by his disciple, Tom Barone, (2000) whose scholarly research focuses on the importance of aesthetics as fundamental to the development of educational skills, and whose ethical concerns focus on "making education and schooling more life-enhancing for youngsters of all sorts and for the culture at large" (p. 4).

Following the lead of Greene and Eisner, this dissertation argues that sufficient teaching of the liberal arts must contain training in aesthetic thinking in order for students to obtain a meaningful education. But the aesthetic, by itself, will do no better job of providing students with a good education than the "rational" by itself has done so far. In fact, sole dependence on either of these models will result in a fragmented education. The liberal arts should be accessed through both rational and aesthetic forms of thinking. It is important to understand both these kinds of knowledge, rational as well as aesthetic – their nature, accomplishments, limits, and weight in the world. The proposal is for a new model of critical-creative thinking, a merging of the rational and the aesthetic based on a comprehensive view of the human mind, a mind open to multimodal sensibility.

Humanities & Science - The Liberal Arts Debate

In the 1950's C.P. Snow made a call for a comprehensive view of mind in his essay, "The Two Cultures," in which he argued that knowledge had become overly differentiated and specialized. He decried the fact that "somehow we have set ourselves the task of producing a tiny elite... educated in one academic skill" (1959, p. 19). This, in his view, could never constitute a good education. Consequently, he claimed, a wide chasm had opened between the "scientists" and the "humanists" and since that time the two groups cannot communicate with one another. Snow tells us that they are both to blame. Regarding the scientists' attitude towards the humanities he writes:

It isn't that they lack the interests. It is much more that the whole literature of the traditional culture doesn't seem to them relevant to those interests. They are, of course, dead wrong. As a result, their imaginative understanding is less than it could be. They are self-impoverished. (p. 13)

Snow argues that this lack of exposure to and understanding of the humanities has been detrimental to a richer development of the sciences. However, he also takes the humanists to task for their narrow view of culture:

But what about the other side? They are impoverished too – perhaps more seriously, because they are vainer about it. They still like to pretend that the traditional culture is the whole of "culture" as though the natural order didn't exist... as though the scientific edifice of the physical world was not, in its intellectual depth, complexity and articulation, the most beautiful and wonderful collective work of the mind of man.... It is as though, over an immense range of

intellectual experience, a whole group was tone-deaf. Except that this tone-deafness doesn't come by nature, but by training, or rather the absence of training. (1959, pp. 13 – 14)

Snow would argue that science and aesthetics are not mutually exclusive. Education should not be a matter of either/or. He would argue that the liberal arts and sciences are essential to any educational endeavor, even if ultimately each person follows his own inclinations when specializing. The neglect of a strong general education in favor of specialization leads to an impoverished education for all. There needs to be a merging of the “two cultures” if education is to make any sense. He tells us:

There seems to be no place where the cultures meet. I am not going to waste time saying that this is a pity. It is much worse than that... The clashing point of two subjects, two disciplines, two cultures – of two galaxies so far as that goes – ought to produce creative chances. The chances are there now. But they are, as it were, in a vacuum, because those in the two cultures can't talk to each other. It is bizarre how very little of 20th century science has been assimilated into 20th century art. (1959, p. 16)

This divide which Snow wrote about has a history going back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, a subject Bruce Kimball (1986) has written about in his book, “Orators and Philosophers.” In this historical account Kimball traces the debate between different conceptions of liberal education, the battle between dialectic and rhetoric, back to ancient Greece:

Plato had moved reluctantly from according scarcely any value to rhetoric in “Gorgias” toward admitting in “Phaedrus” that it might be an art worthy of study. But it still stood far below the speculative heights of dialectic in his estimation... In this fashion, rhetoric becomes an imprecise, utilitarian, and restricted adjunct to the more penetrating investigation of larger and overarching questions of principle pursued through dialectic or logic... The sophists and orators, on the other hand, reversed the relationship. They regarded rhetoric as the supreme art, the art that settles the great and important questions of deliberative and judicial assemblies and relies on logic and dialectic merely for the skeletal frame of its argument. (Kimball, p. 26).

Kimball calls the tradition of the orators the *artes liberales* ideal and the tradition of the philosophers the liberal-free ideal. In the former, the goal is to train citizens who are “thoroughly virtuous and universally competent” (p. 37) to lead society. These citizens have learned the prescribed values and standards through knowledge of a body of classical texts which transmit these values to the younger generation. In the liberal-free ideal, on the other hand, there is an emphasis on freedom from “a priori strictures and standards” (p. 119). Man’s intellect and the power of rationality rise above any tradition handed down through the generations. Skepticism becomes the new norm. Hypotheses are seen as always subject to challenge and criticism. There is a new tendency towards tolerance and egalitarianism.

Another important historical example of the debate between the philosophical and oratorical traditions of liberal education took place in the late nineteenth century between

the English thinkers, Thomas Huxley and Mathew Arnold. In “Science and Culture,” Huxley (1880), as Snow would in a later century, takes issue with the humanists’ pretension that they have a monopoly on culture:

After having learnt all that Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity have thought and said, and all that modern literatures have to tell us, it is not self-evident that we have laid a sufficiently broad and deep foundation for that criticism of life, which constitutes culture. (p. 5).

Classical education, for Huxley, is uniquely fitted to those who will devote their lives to the humanities. It is neither for scientists, nor for those involved in the “business of life” (p. 10).

Neither the discipline nor the subject-matter of classical education is of such direct value to the student of physical science as to justify the expenditure of valuable time upon either... For the purpose of attaining real culture, an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education. (p 4)

However, Huxley does not altogether reject the humanities. He accepts that a balance in education is necessary:

I am the last person to question the importance of genuine literary education, or to suppose that intellectual culture can be complete without it. An exclusively scientific training will bring about a mental twist as surely as an exclusively literary training. (p. 10)

In “Literature and Science” Arnold (1882) argues for the pre-eminent position of the humanities in liberal arts education, and makes the observation that Huxley is taking an artificially narrow view of the humanities:

What Professor Huxley says, implies just the reproach which is so often brought against the study of *belles lettres*, as they are called: that the study is an elegant one, but slight and ineffectual; a smattering of Greek and Latin and other ornamental things, of little use for any one whose object is to get at truth. (But) to know Italian *belles lettres* is not to know Italy, and to know English *belles lettres* is not to know England. Into knowing Italy and England there comes a great deal more, Galileo and Newton amongst it. The reproach of being a superficial humanism... may attach rightly enough to some other disciplines; but to the particular discipline recommended when I proposed knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world, it does not apply. In the best I certainly include what in modern times has been thought and said by the great observers and knowers of nature. (pp. 4-5)

For Arnold the humanities encompass much more than the natural sciences ever will; he calls the latter “instrument- knowledges,” the province of specialists, and admits that while they are useful, they have limited importance in the life of man. “They may be disciplines in themselves wherein it is useful to everyone to have some schooling. But it is inconceivable that the generality of men should pass all their mental life with Greek accents or with formal logic” (p. 8). The humanities, on the other hand, are intertwined

with our “sense for beauty” and “sense for conduct,” in short, with our development in the aesthetic and moral realms.

The debate continues today; many players in higher education have recently released their own visions of what a liberal arts education entails. In a 2006 article, “Liberal Arts, Deliberation, and Democracy,” Phi Beta Kappa defines the purpose of a liberal education as developing a “culture of deliberation.” This can only be achieved by moving away from “a concentration on specialized, technical knowledge, and the neglect of general and comparative skills of understanding” (p. 2). Phi Beta Kappa paints a stark picture of what failing to cultivate this culture of deliberation can lead to:

Without the skills of deliberation we will be incapable of knowing *why* we believe something. We lose our intellectual independence and become epistemological primitives who justify our beliefs by pointing to the authorities who told us so. Without deliberation, our vulnerability to manipulation is frightening. (p. 2)

The AAC&U has released a series of reports on the liberal arts, as well as a general report on the state of higher education titled, “Greater Expectations”(2002). The panel’s college of the 21st century defines liberal education as one which will “help college students become intentional learners who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lives” (p. xi). These learners should become “empowered through the mastery of intellectual and practical skills, informed by knowledge about the natural and social worlds and about forms of inquiry basic to these studies, and responsible for their personal actions and for civic values” (p. xi). There is no mention of the aesthetic component of education. The

AAC&U also enlarges the definition of liberal education to encompass a greater number of studies. It insists that professional education be approached as liberal education “because it develops just those capacities needed by every thinking adult: analytical skills, effective communication, practical intelligence, ethical judgment and social responsibility” (p. 26).

The question of what a liberal education signifies is an important one today, around which many debates are currently brewing. The content and methods of this education are being reexamined in the light of concerns about knowledge and learning, morals and society, and business and politics. But these subjects will be treated in a later section of this dissertation.

A Short History of Liberal Arts in American Universities

The Europe that so many fled from when coming to America was a highly stratified society in which social mobility was very difficult. Aristocratic families or their descendants held the reigns of political, social, and economic power. The grand universities were to a great extent places where well born sons passed a few years of their youth, while preparing for inherited positions of power and prestige. One did not go to the university to make it. Higher education was not an engine for social mobility. O. Meredith Wilson in “The Dilemmas of Humanistic Education in the United States” (1964) reminds us, “Free men were men of substance and status to whom education was not important as a means to livelihood, or as a key to office. With these endowments they were born...” (p. 102).

Those who fled this world and became Americans were, for the most part, not from the higher European social classes. These new Americans were people who wanted to make it on their own, who wanted opportunities commensurate with their native intelligence, the work they were willing to do, and the risks they were willing to take, not with privileges which had been passed down through the generations. “In a country where all men are created equal, no man is born to a station; he must win it and hold it through his natural talents. There is planted, therefore, the idea of a natural aristocracy, which Jefferson identified as an aristocracy of talents” (p. 103). This was a group with democratic tendencies, which prized freedom, equality, and opportunity for all, and which saw in education an opportunity for advancement. “Merit (ability plus hard work) was always meant to replace the inherited privilege of the Old World as the route to the top in America” (Maidment, “America, the New Class-Society,” 2007, p. 1). However, the European heritage still remained, particularly in the schools.

A vivid picture of higher education as a sort of “finishing school for gentlemen can be seen in “The Education of Henry Adams (1918/1999),” an autobiographical account of the life of this son of a diplomat and the grandson and great-grandson of two American presidents, in which he gives us a candid account of the workings of his world:

The next regular step was Harvard College. He was more than glad to go. For generation after generation, Adamses and Brookses and Boylsons and Gorhams had gone to Harvard College, and although none of them, as far as known, had ever done any good there, or thought himself the better for it, custom, social ties, convenience, and, above all, economy, kept each generation in the track. Any other education would have required a serious effort, but no one took Harvard

College seriously. All went there because their friends went there, and the college was their ideal of social self-respect. (p. 50).

And America continued looking to Europe for its culture, philosophy, and education – a liberal arts heritage that went back hundreds of years, and would not easily be discarded, even as the new settlement, and subsequent new country, struggled to carve out its own identity. The European presence in higher education carried on. In his book, “Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636” (1981), Frederick Rudolph writes:

Because they were colleges, the tools for fulfilling their purposes were the liberal arts and sciences, that whole, inherited, vital body of learning that had a life and purpose of its own. Whether they liked it or not, the colonial colleges were burdened with perpetuating “the learning and culture of Europe...” The traditional course of study had been institutionalized by the middle of the thirteenth century in a dozen or so European universities, where the liberal arts as organized and propounded in ancient Greece were regarded as the sum of all learning. (pp. 28- 29)

In medieval times, approximately between the fifth and thirteenth centuries, the seven liberal arts comprised two groups of studies. The trivium consisted of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. The quadrivium consisted of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Then from the 1300’s to the early 1600’s the liberal arts experienced another shift:

The Renaissance intruded into universities that had been narrowly religious in orientation a concern with humanistic ideals of classical scholarship. A broadened view of letters and language, knowledge appropriate to the responsible use of leisure, and an interest in Greece and the Greeks before they fell into Latin translation entered into the university course of study. What had been a curriculum for theologians now carried the burden of training a governing class of gentlemen and men of action. (Rudolph 1981, p. 30)

Then in the 1700's, with the advent of the Enlightenment, the sciences grew in importance and the definition of the liberal arts was correspondingly expanded to include these. In America the Enlightenment "prompted a suspicion of authority and tradition, as well as attacks on the gentlemanly virtues and classical education that conveyed them... Equality, liberty, learning, progress, experimentation, and science were associated in the minds of the revolutionary leaders" (Kimball, p. 141).

There was a looking back to philosophy for guidance in the educational arena. Thinkers such as Kant, Locke, Hume, and Rousseau played an important role in the development of American theories of education.

American education inherits Immanuel Kant's focus on rationality, preoccupation for morality, and great respect for learning. In his book, "On Education" (1803/1960), taken from the study notes of his student, Theodore Rink, Kant gives education a position of honor. "Man can only become man by education. He is merely what education makes of him" (p. 6). But education must proceed along certain lines in order to be effective; good methods are essential. "Man may be either broken in, trained, and mechanically

taught, or he may be really enlightened” (p. 20). He proposed that theory and practice be joined whenever possible:

The question arises whether the rules shall first be studied in abstracto, and whether they ought to be studied after they have been applied, or whether the rule and its application should be studied side by side. This last is the only advisable course; otherwise the application of the rule is very uncertain till the rule itself is learned. (Kant, p. 76)

In addition, ethics was an indispensable part of learning in Kant’s view. “Moral training must form a part of education. It is not enough that a man shall be fitted for any end, but his disposition must be so trained that he shall choose none but good ends” (p. 20).

From David Hume’s book, “An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding” (1748/1938), comes the focus on experience and the rejection of knowledge as innate and a priori:

Though our thought seems to possess ... unbounded liberty, we shall find, upon nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the sense and experience. (p. 300)

Observation and experience are recognized as the cornerstones of knowledge. Reason cannot function independent of experience. Hume’s philosophy accords new

importance to the senses as the avenues for the acquisition of knowledge. A stance of skepticism becomes the mark of a liberally educated person.

John Locke, in his work, “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding” (1690/1938), had already remarked upon the preeminence of experience and rejected the idea of a priori principles in the acquisition of knowledge:

It is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles... as it were stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first being; and brings into the world with it. It would be sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falseness of this supposition, if I should only show how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions; and may arrive at certainty, without any such original notions or principles. (p. 59)

He paints a picture of how knowledge is achieved by degrees, how we move from the particular to the general.

The senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet: and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards the mind proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language... But though the having

of general ideas, and the use of general words and reason usually grow together: yet, I see not, how this any way proves them innate. (p. 65)

Locke explains that all knowledge comes from two sources: either from experience with sensible objects, or from our attention to the internal operations of our minds. This latter activity Locke calls reflection. That is why for Locke we should learn not by unreflectively memorizing principles, but by examining the world around us and trying to “fix in our minds clear, distinct, and complete ideas, as far as they are to be had, and annex to them proper and constant names” (p 567).

In his famous work on education, “Emile” (1762/1964), Jean-Jacques Rousseau also emphasizes the senses as the gateway to knowledge:

As everything that enters the human mind comes through the senses, the first kind of reasoning in man is a kind of sensational reasoning, which serves as a basis for intellectual reason. Our first instructors in science are our feet, hands, and eyes. (p. 124).

Moreover, he took a great interest in the methods of education. Because we start with sensation, Rousseau thought it imperative to make learning active, a call which would later be taken up by Dewey. “The great art of teaching is to make your pupil enjoy his lesson: How can he enjoy it if his mind remains so passive during your recital that he need do nothing in order to understand” (p. 198).

Another important aspect of Rousseau's philosophy, and one which captured the new American imagination, was his insistence on equality between human beings, an equality which Rousseau supported through his recommendations on the content of education:

Adapt the education of man to man and not to his accidents. Do you not see that, by bringing him up to fill only one station, you unfit him for all others, and that through the caprices of fortune your pains may serve only to make him unhappy? Is there a being more ridiculous than a Lord become a beggar and retaining in his misery the prejudices of his birth? (p. 168)

Thus we can see several "old world" influences at work, both in the content and methods of American higher education, from the time of the colonial college to the present day. Harry R. Lewis's "Excellence without a Soul," (2006) and Derek Bok's "Our Underachieving Colleges," (2006) do a good job of tracing some of these developments. Rachel Donadio's article, "Revisiting the Canon Wars," (2007) sheds some light on post 1960's developments.

In Harvard in the 1700's, students learned by studying individually, by recitations, or disputations under the supervision of a tutor. "Since a tutor's job was merely to pass along what had been taught, there was no need for advanced learning and no specialization; the same tutor taught all subjects to his students" (Lewis, p. 27). Then in 1769 instruction was reorganized and from then a tutor taught the same subject to all classes, but there was still a lot of memorization, drill, and translation work involved. "The most influential defense of the prevailing model appeared in an 1828 report from

Yale College, which held that the principle aim of college instruction was not to supply all of the important information that students might some day use but to instill mental discipline..." (Bok, p. 13). A respite from the commonplace drudgery of university education was provided at the very end of students' university career:

As a culminating experience, most colleges prior to the Civil war offered a mandatory course for seniors on issues of moral philosophy, often taught by the president himself. Ranging over ethical principles, history, politics, and such issues of the day as immigration, slavery, and freedom of the press, this capstone course served multiple objectives. It set forth precepts of ethical behavior, it prepared students for civic responsibility, and it brought together knowledge from several fields of learning. For many students, it was the high point of an otherwise dull and stultifying education. (Bok, pp. 13-14)

In the late 1820's there was yet another change in the curriculum after a few young men went abroad to study in Germany and returned to teach at the college. "The nineteenth-century German universities were the best in the world, unimpeded by the rigid curriculum of required studies still in place at Harvard" (Lewis, p. 29). Students were now given the choice of studying French, Italian, German, or Spanish in place of the originally required Latin and Greek. "This marked the beginning not only of elective studies but also of introductory classes in subjects students thought useful. The fixed curriculum of wisdom received from the ancients was at an end" (Lewis p. 31). In 1869 Eliot became president of Harvard and determined to make all subjects available to all

students. “For the first time, education became consumer-oriented” (Lewis p. 40). Bok also observes that electives took over much of academic life:

By the time Eliot retired, 55 percent of Harvard students were graduating having taken virtually nothing but elementary courses. More than 70 percent did not pursue any single field of knowledge in real depth... For many undergraduate, college was not a serious intellectual experience but an excuse for making social contacts and enjoying the good life. (Bok, pp. 16-17)

In 1909 Lowell succeeded Eliot as president and implemented a curriculum which has continued as a standard in most colleges today, saying “The best type of liberal education in our complex modern world aims at producing men who know a little of everything and something well.” (quoted in Lewis, p 48). The idea of breadth and concentration became a staple in higher education. Under Lowell students were required to take courses in four broad areas: (1) language, literature, fine arts, music; (2) natural sciences; (3) history, political and social sciences; and (4) philosophy and mathematics. In 1919 Columbia University instituted its core curriculum, determining a more fixed model of what a university education should look like.

World War II and the GI bill brought further changes to the educational map. “In the aftermath of World War II, universities underwent further substantial change. Encouraged by the GI Bill and later by the demands of an increasingly sophisticated economy, larger and larger numbers of young people crowded into the colleges” (Bok, p. 18). Student bodies became more diverse. More women, blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities were choosing to pursue a college education:

As applicant pools grew larger, the best-known institutions became highly selective, teachers' colleges evolved into multi-purpose universities, and community colleges sprouted like mushrooms. Many of the new students (and their parents) were more interested in preparing for jobs than in acquiring a broad liberal arts education. (Bok, p. 19)

Then, during the 1960's, the "canon wars" were fought over the curriculum. In these "traditionalists in favor of centering the curriculum on classic works of literature faced off against multiculturalists who wanted to include more works by women and members of minorities" (Donadio, 2007, p. 1) The multiculturalists insisted that a large part of the American people were not being represented in the curriculum, their voices and worldviews belittled and marginalized. The traditionalists countered that very few high quality or significant works had been produced by women or minorities, and that including these in the Western canon would lead to an inevitable decline in the quality of education college students could hope to receive. The war between the camp of the traditionalists and the multiculturalists raged on, with the multiculturalists walking away with a victory (Donadio, 2007).

Of particular interest in the more current debate between traditionalists and multiculturalists we have writers such as Kimball, Graff, Berube, and Nussbaum, who address the political implications of what students study. In "Tenured Radicals," (1990) Roger Kimball defends Western culture against what he sees as a modern erosion of values. He writes:

It is no secret that the academic study of the humanities in this country is in a state of crisis. Proponents of deconstruction, feminist studies, and other politically motivated challenges to the traditional tenets of humanistic study have by now become the dominant voice in the humanities departments of many of our best colleges and universities... Their object is nothing less than the destruction of the values, methods, and goals of traditional humanistic study. (p. xi)

He takes issue against those he believes have let standards and values go. “The very idea that the works of Shakespeare might be indisputably greater than the collected cartoons of Bugs Bunny is often rejected as antidemocratic and an imposition on the freedom and political interests of various groups” (p. xii).

Dinesh D’Souza echoes Kimball’s view. In his book, “Illiberal Education” (1991), he stresses that instead of liberal education, today most undergraduates in American colleges are experiencing an illiberal education in which they are no longer taught to think or express their opinions, for fear that any others might take offense:

Most American students seem to display striking agreement on all the basic questions of life. Indeed, they appear to regard a true difference of opinion, based upon convictions that are firmly and intensely held, as dangerously dogmatic and an offense against the social etiquette of tolerance. (p. 231)

D’Souza also laments changes in the curriculum which he considers destructive to Western culture. “Most American universities have diluted or displaced their ‘core curriculum’ in the great works of Western civilization to make room for new course

requirements stressing non-Western cultures, Afro-American studies, and women's studies" (p. 5). Moreover, in these courses students are exposed to a great deal of proselytizing, and very little education:

By the time these students graduate, very few colleges have met their need for all-round development. Instead, by precept and example, universities have taught them that... standards and values are arbitrary, and the ideal of the educated person is largely a figment of bourgeois white male ideology, which should be cast aside... that all knowledge can be reduced to politics and should be pursued not for its own sake but for the political end of power... that double standards are acceptable as long as they are enforced to the benefit of minority victims... that the multiracial society cannot be based on fair rules that apply to every person, but must rather be constructed through a forced rationing of power among separatist racial groups. (p. 229)

In "Beyond the Culture Wars" (1992) Gerald Graff argues against the view that the new humanists have destroyed American higher education:

If we believe what we have been reading lately, American higher education is in a disastrous state. As pictured in a stream of best sellers, commission reports, polemical articles, and editorials, the academic humanities in particular look like a once-respectable old neighborhood gone bad. The stately old buildings have been defaced with spray paint, hideous accumulations of trash litter the ground, and omnipresent thought police control the turf, speaking in barbarous, unintelligible

tongues while enforcing an intolerant code of political correctness on the terrorized inhabitants. (p 3)

Graff sees this posture as absurd and nonproductive:

If the goal is constructive educational reform, then such apocalyptic posturing is a dead end. One does not have to be a tenured radical to see what has taken over the educational world today is not barbarism and unreason but, simply, conflict. The first step in dealing productively with today's conflicts is to recognize their legitimacy. (p 5)

Graff's solution is to teach the conflicts, so that students may see many sides of an issue:

Acknowledging that culture is a debate rather than a monologue does not prevent us from energetically fighting for the truth of our own convictions. On the contrary, when truth is disputed, we can seek it only by entering the debate – as Socrates knew when he taught the conflicts two millennia ago. (p.15)

Graff observes that most multiculturalists and feminists argue less against the ideal of a common culture than the assumption that this ideal is an already realized fact, “excusing us to return to business as usual after adding a few token minority texts to the syllabus” (p. 46).

In a similar democratic vein, Martha C. Nussbaum's "Cultivating Humanity" (1997) argues for a revitalized ideal of liberal education which grants the proper respect to groups which have traditionally been marginalized:

Defenders of the older idea of a gentleman's education urge that our colleges and universities focus on acculturation to what is great and fine in our own tradition, rather than on Socratic and universalistic goals. Insofar as this education reaches out to new citizens, it will do so because they agree to accept the time-honored gentlemanly standards. They should not expect that their own experiences and traditions will form part of the curriculum. They may enter the academy only in sufferance and in disguise. They may remain only so long as they do not allow their nongentlemanly voices to be heard, or inject their nontraditional experiences into the dignified business of liberal learning. (pp. 294-295)

Richard P. McKeon, in "The Liberating Arts and the Humanistic Arts in Education" (1964) also criticizes those who would impose upon our modern era an outdated ideal. "The medieval liberal arts are not adapted to the task of liberating men today... the great works of man cease to be models for contemplation and edification and become vast storehouses of clichés to be discovered and polished with philological and philotechnical pedantry" (p 172).

Michael Berube, in "What's Liberal about the Liberal Arts" (2006), joins his voice to the camp of the multiculturalists. For him, liberal education is about idealism and values, and humanists are moral idealists who still strive against an unjust social order:

What is it that we believe, we stubborn ones who continue to call ourselves liberals and progressives? First and foremost, we believe that a person's prospects and life chances should not depend on accidents of birth. We think it is a good idea to wriggle free of long-conventional beliefs about class and caste, pharaoh and slave, lord and serf, and to imagine that each of us has an equal moral claim on the rest of us. (p. 283)

Berube's ideal of a liberal arts education is one with strong moral overtones, one which teaches people "how to think deeply and reflectively about the good life, the good society, and the very idea of the good" (p. 284). He also writes about the methods for a liberal education:

The values of the liberal arts can't be transmitted simply by opening the great books and reciting key passages. Classroom discussion and debate is an indispensable part of our pedagogy, not only because it gives students a chance to try out ideas and gut reactions on each other in a relatively safe space, but also because it serves as a form of deliberation in which each of us participates according to his or her abilities and desires. (pp. 295-296)

Because of the difficulties involved in getting the camps of the traditionalists and multiculturalists to cooperate, and in an effort to reduce tensions, many colleges abandoned their core curriculums, as they had been labeled elitist and oppressive. With the passing of the core and the move to grant students more freedom over the courses they could take to fulfill their general education requirements, the liberal arts experience

became a sort of hodgepodge of unrelated courses, irrelevant to either school (the major), work (the career), or the real world, which students were anxious to get through and not waste more time on than was strictly necessary. Even today “there’s widespread concern that the humanities are losing ground – as well as intellectual cachet, students and financing – to the hard sciences on the one hand and business on the other” (Donadio, 2007, p. 1).

As the controversy around the liberal arts has shown, the school is a battleground of contending and conflicting interests, political and otherwise, (Tyack & Hansot, 1982) with constant fighting among interest groups for the power to shape the next generation of young people, and one powerful instrument of control is the curriculum. The curriculum, in American history, has been one very important area of contention in the arena of battle, an area fraught with tensions and power struggles, competing visions of the good, different class interests, and diverse cultures for many years. Education becomes such a powerful force to determine the direction of people’s lives and the direction of the society itself, curriculums are so much more than simple, straightforward courses of study; they are, in fact, the embodiment of different conceptions of the good, of what different interest groups perceive to be the overriding needs of the society and its members at a particular point in time.

In the final analysis, the curriculum is nothing less than the statement a college makes about what, out of the totality of man’s constantly growing knowledge and experience, is considered useful, appropriate, or relevant to the lives of educated men and women at a certain point of time. (Rudolph, 1981, p. ix)

CHAPTER TWO

DIFFERING VIEWS ON CURRICULUM: THE AMERICAN SCENE

The Modern Curriculum Debate

From World War II to the present day the face of American higher education has changed drastically. The entry of more and more people into institutions of higher education: universities, four year colleges, community colleges, in America, many of whom are non traditional students: veterans, mature adults, immigrants, underperforming high school graduates, etc. has led to a series of challenges and opportunities for students, professors, and the institutions themselves, as well as to questions about the role of the society at large regarding education in a democratic society. As a result there have been a series of efforts by independent thinkers, educational institutions, think tanks, and policymakers to redefine the purpose of higher education and weigh in on what the curriculum should look like.

Many have reflected and written about the higher education scene. Readings presents the problem of providing today's students with a meaningful education while living in the shadows of an older time. The Harvard of 1945 defends the ideal of providing a liberal education for all, yet proposes several tiers based on ability, talent, interest, and level of commitment. It argues for a core curriculum. The Harvard of 2007 places greater weight on inclusion; there is no more separation by tier, so the same education is made available to all. The emphasis on the core curriculum remains unchanged. Lewis proposes an evolving core, and insists that professional education needs to be included within the definition of liberal education, a claim which is shared by

Bok, who advises that the university's desire to be all things to all people is at best quixotic. Chester E. Finn and Bruno V. Manno argue for a more economical, no-frills model of higher education. Aronowitz and Giroux focus on the liberal arts as the key to resistance, an enabling of the marginalized. Boyer expresses his disappointment that general education should be pulled in so many different directions, instead of developing an identity of its own. Hirsch argues for the supremacy of content and more specifically for a body of knowledge that all Americans should share. Cheney shares this concern for cultural literacy and provides a model for a general education core curriculum. Bennet insists upon the humanities as the center of the curriculum and proposes a reading list of his own as the basis for general education.

ACTA defines a liberal art education as one which focuses on our heritage, culture, and world. The Education Trust and Common Core see the general education curriculum as an opportunity to address the social problem of inequity. Bloom's argument is for a total reorganization of the college experience. For him, education in America basically stagnated in the 1950's and since then the only thing taught is "open-mindedness." He, too, supports a core curriculum. Graff argues for a more coherent, interconnected curriculum, and for the importance of "teaching the conflicts." Bruner's focus is the spiral curriculum, and his pedagogy one which focuses more on structure than on content, more on the learning of fundamentals so that students may begin building paradigms and making them more complex as they move towards more inclusive knowledge. With Bruner we see a concern for the arts and humanities; his proposal is to build a curriculum around the issues the society considers most significant. Bruner argues for a holistic education. Phenix takes this one step further; he argues for

the unity of all knowledge, and speaks about the “realms of meaning” which make up the integral experience of human beings. Gutmann and Steiner highlight the importance of democracy as a cornerstone of the education of young people, as what may lead them to living the good life; there is a strong ethical vein running through their work. Finally, attention shifts to Greene and Eisner, and their preoccupation with the aesthetic, their reaction to and criticism of the current educational climate as one which does a disservice to a multitude of students today.

Readings: The Search for New Directions for the Post-Historical University

In his “University in Ruins,” (1996) Bill Readings urges us to resist the new dehumanizing commodification of the university, which has sadly turned what used to be considered an entity whose central mission was the education of youth into a business like any other. He urges us to resist the techno-bureaucratic striving for excellence and the ensuing social inequality, for this university of excellence is nothing more than a consumerist model, divorced from any real educational mission, driven by nothing but the ever increasing greed for profit, and the term “excellence” is empty and meaningless. On the other hand, he warns against trying to go back to a romantic Enlightenment ideal of higher education which has no place in our world today. The university of the past is dead, buried, and never to return; new times call for new methods. “It is no longer clear what the place of the university is within society nor what the exact nature of that society is, and the changing institutional form of the university is something that intellectuals cannot afford to ignore” (1996, p. 2).

His central metaphor which places us as residents of a city filled with past justifications for the university is very compelling. He maintains that we are dwelling in the ruins of the university, and cautions that we would do best to accept that once and for all. It cannot be rebuilt in the same way; the old ideals are no longer relevant. He tells us that the university has passed through a number of important stages: the university as the center of reason (Kant's vision) and the university as the center of national culture (Humboldt's vision) have been particularly significant. Both visions, according to Readings, focus on external justifications for the university, and thus cannot work in the world we inhabit today. He particularly sees a problem with the vision of the university as a center for national culture in a country such as ours. For Readings, "Americanization" implies the loss of a national culture. Just the fact that universities emphasize multiculturalism so heavily is, for Readings, a sign that there is no longer a national culture to be excluded from. For Readings we now dwell in the post-historical university, and it will not do to focus on nostalgic views of citizenship or reason as the central purpose to our institutions of higher learning. He wants, instead, a pragmatic assessment of present conditions. He notes:

Like the inhabitants of some Italian city, we can seek neither to rebuild the Renaissance city-state nor to destroy its remnants and install rationally planned tower-blocks; we can seek only to put its angularities and winding passages to new uses, learning from and enjoying the cognitive dissonances that enclosed piazzas and non-signifying campanile induce. (1996, p.129)

He would replace excellence with “thought” and teach the conflicts in a “community of dissensus” (1996, p.180) in which cognitive dissonance will be respected as a fountain of thought and the search for new meanings. But he stresses that something must be done about the sad state of the humanities in which they have become a sort of cross between customer service and “cultural manicure” (1996, p.174).

Harvard Then & Now: The Changing Face of Liberal Education

Let us take a brief step back in time and begin with Harvard, for centuries now considered a beacon of education in America. When we take a look at the report “General Education in a Free Society” (1945), we can see the emphasis on the mission to provide a liberal education not just for an elite segment of the population, but for many new students who no longer hail from the “best families.” As the report states, “Today we are concerned with a general education – a liberal education not for the relatively few, but for a multitude” (p. ix). The title of the report is particularly telling. At this time the ideal is to cultivate in young people an awareness of and appreciation for the responsibilities and benefits of being free and Americans; there is the focus on both the development of the human being as an autonomous individual and as a member of the community.

The report expresses the school’s concerns about how to continue providing a good education to its students in the face of the staggering expansion of knowledge due to ever increasing specialization, the growth of the educational system itself, which now contains many types of institutions different from the traditional college, such as the two-year college, and the complexity of society in a time in which life is constantly changing,

and young people are ever more vulnerable to the instability caused by shifting circumstances. The report promotes the goal for a system which can accommodate people with diverse abilities, talents, interests, and levels of commitment, and appreciates that the differences in student performance arising from opportunity or lack thereof are very real. However, the Harvard report is adamant in its claim that equal opportunity must not be equated with equal provisions for all. As the report states, “the best schools and most modern housing do not suddenly endow all the young people in them with high standards and good ability” (p. 82).

Despite Harvard’s stance in support of democratic principles, in 1945 the school remained somewhat of a sorting machine, though the report argues that there will be a move to try to distinguish accidental from inborn qualities since “all men are equal before God and the law... but they differ biologically, and even under the best conditions, would presumably strive for different ends” (p. 82). It remains unclear exactly how the accidental and the inborn are to be differentiated, but one of the results is the move to propose general education courses of different levels of difficulty and method, arguing that there is no reason for college to have one specific single meaning throughout the United States.

According to the Harvard 1945 report, there are several types of curriculums which are ineffective for the general education requirements. First of all, the free elective system does not work because most young people hardly have the experience and intellectual maturity to organize a curriculum which is both coherent and intellectually rigorous. If the focus is on the “Great Books,” there is the risk of ignoring contemporary contributions to American culture. If the focus is on life issues such as health, family,

and vocation, it is unclear how relevant these issues will be to students' futures. In the 1945 report there are still echoes of a nostalgic wish to preserve the old ideal of a liberal education, but with the revolutionary aim to extend it to everyone in the community. But this becomes difficult in the face of increasing specialization.

The report lists a series of desired outcomes for the students: to think effectively, communicate well, make wise judgments, and discriminate among values. It emphasizes that students should learn to think logically within different disciplines, in the arts as well as in math and science, by being able to identify and understand patterns of relationships, and by cultivating the imagination. The report further identifies three phases of effective thinking: logical, relational, and imaginative, and pairs them with the three divisions of learning: the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. The final proposal is that out of sixteen courses six should be in general education: one in the humanities (perhaps a "Great Texts of Literature" course), one in the social sciences (a course entitled "Western Thought and Institutions" is proposed) and one in the natural sciences. The remaining three courses should not be taken in the student's area of concentration.

Now in 2007 Harvard has released its latest report on the state of general education with the much humbler title, "Report of the Task Force on General Education," but with what might be considered more ambitious and inclusive aims, as well as a greater awareness of the rest of the world outside of the United States. Interestingly the document contains a few echoes of the post 60's language of existentialism: phrases such as "disorienting students," having them "question their basic assumptions," self-reflection, and exposure to "alienation." It seems that the university has made important strides in recognizing the importance of philosophical inquiry for young people's

intellectual and moral development, and that straightforward academic study is not the whole of education. It states, “A Harvard education is a liberal education – an education conducted in a spirit of free inquiry undertaken without concern for topical relevance or vocational unity” (p. 8). Harvard expresses a commitment to liberal education in the face of institutions which de-liberalize students: professional schools, employers, academic graduate programs; all of which narrow students’ worldview, in a sense asking them to buckle down and get on with more serious business. The 2007 Harvard Report understands liberal education as education in the context of the people students will become and the lives they will lead in the future, with a decided move away from vocational utility. The report claims:

General education is the place where students are brought to understand how everything that we teach in the arts and sciences relates to their lives and to the world that they will confront. General education is the public face of liberal education. (p. 11)

Today Harvard proposes as the goals of general education: preparing students for civic engagement and societal change at different levels; cultivating their understanding of diverse cultures and political, economic, and social institutions; helping them keep up with advances in science and technology; enabling them to read different types of cultural and aesthetic expressions; fostering their understanding of the ethical dimensions of their words and actions; and teaching them to reflect critically on their own beliefs and values and defend them with reasoned arguments. The purpose of this general education program is to present a wide range of material as opposed to in-depth focus on a few

topics, and teach students how to use abstract conceptual, historical, and cultural knowledge. There is, in addition, the interesting disclaimer that the proposed general education curriculum does not pretend to constitute a comprehensive guide to all an educated person should know.

Criticisms of the Harvard Curriculum

In “Excellence without a Soul” (2006), which Harry Lewis partially wrote as a response to the 2002-2005 Harvard curriculum review, he takes issue with what he considers to be recurring problems with liberal education at Harvard and other institutions which follow an outdated ideal of what students should learn. One of his principal claims is that liberal education in America seems to have forgotten those who want to be professionals; not everyone can afford to dabble in the arts and sciences for four years with no concern for what the morrow will bring.

The well-to-do may see Harvard as a shopping mall, but low-income students see it as a lifeboat, a vessel on which to escape the shortage of money that is all they and their parents have ever known. They consequently see their educational opportunities in terms of the careers they will follow and the connections they will make. (p. 152)

It is unfair, insists Lewis, to accuse students of ‘careerism’ as if it were a crime. Students know they will need jobs, so they try to figure out how to get the best job they can; it’s only natural. An education with a heavy emphasis on electives does not meet students’ needs.

Harvard's image of the liberally educated graduate mirrors the aristocratic ideal of the amateur athlete. Becoming too skilled at any one thing, so skilled that a graduate could make a living doing it, is distasteful. Students are better off being broadly educated generalists – though not much breadth can be demanded because students would resist any requirement. (p. 253)

Lewis believes it is important to move away from the model in which professors teach only what they want to teach and students learn only what they want to learn. Liberal education needs to be more than an endless array of options. In the tradition of Mathew Arnold, Lewis argues for the importance of learning the best that has been thought and said. “A good university challenges its students to ask questions that are both disturbing and deeply important” (p. 255). It is not enough for a school to “present a menu from which its multitalented, multiethnic, multicultural, multinational students can pick and choose. This cafeteria theory of education avoids the problem of valuing some things more than others” (p. 255).

His proposal for a comprehensive liberal education can be summed up as an evolving core:

I urge some great university to try this: Cloister a broadly based faculty committee to design ten general education courses, of which all students would have to take five. The courses could obey the old disciplinary divisions, but they would not have to. There would be no point in a turf battle about how many of the courses should be science courses, because if students did not want to take any science courses, they could avoid them. Allow the courses to compete for

students, but make sure they did not compete on grades or workload... Over time, curricula would shift by an evolutionary process so that the most important subjects were guaranteed always to be available to all students, taught at a level appropriate for the unspecialized undergraduate. (p. 264)

Neglecting Professional Studies

In “Our Underachieving Colleges” (2006) Derek Bok also criticizes American higher education for not meeting the needs of its students; after four years of tuition and study there is no guarantee that students will learn what they need to know:

Many seniors graduate without being able to write well enough to satisfy their employers. Many cannot reason clearly or perform competently in analyzing complex, non-technical problems... Few undergraduates receiving a degree are able to speak or read a foreign language. Most have never taken a course in quantitative reasoning or acquired the knowledge to be a reasonably informed citizen in a democracy. (p. 8)

Yet he believes that some of the new voices and initiatives for giving the liberal arts a new emphasis are out of touch. For Bok, it is a mistake to marginalize the vocational aspects of education. “Can one really blame universities for offering more vocational programs? Surely colleges have some responsibility to respond to the desires of their students?” (p. 27). He believes that what schools ought to focus on is finding a

way for vocational and liberal arts courses to reinforce each other to provide the best education for students, instead of worrying about goals that have no place in a college:

Some readers are bound to object that worthy goals have been omitted. How about nurturing powers of imagination and creativity? fostering leadership ability? developing judgment and wisdom? These are all valuable aims for any college that is able to pursue them... However, many faculties have adopted impressive goals without knowing how to achieve them. Such quixotic efforts waste students' time and often leave them disappointed and disillusioned. (p. 81)

For Bok education needs to be much more practical. He believes that a college education should basically foster the skills of communication, critical thinking, moral reasoning and political awareness. In addition students should learn to live with diversity, become well-rounded human beings, and prepare for work. "It is hard to know how any student could truly understand 'whom (he wants) to be' without thinking carefully about what career to pursue" (p. 78). Bok promotes learning communities – thematic clusters which allow a group of students to stay together and faculty from different departments to teach together, but he is not particularly concerned with developing a strong core which all students must follow:

Although almost all faculty members claim to give highest priority to helping students learn to think critically, they spend most of the time in their curricular reviews arguing over which courses to offer and which to require. Researchers, in contrast, find that the arrangement of courses per se has little effect on the development of critical thinking. What matters more is the way in which courses

are taught and the effort students and faculty devote to the educational process.
(p. 144)

A Practical Education

In the tradition of the neoconservatives, Chester E. Finn and Bruno V. Manno take the idea of a practical education one step further. In “American Higher Education: Behind the Emerald City’s Curtain” (1996), they argue for a series of cost-cutting measures which will improve higher education. They would offer students “the collegiate equivalent of a no-frills basic-transportation automobile rather than the ‘fully loaded’ model” (p. 15). One of their main criticisms of the content of college education today is that:

Much too frequently, American higher education now offers a smorgasbord of fanciful courses in a fragmented curriculum that accords as much credit for “Introduction to Tennis” and for courses in pop culture as it does for “Principles of English Composition, History, or Physics, thereby trivializing education – indeed misleading students by implying that they are receiving the education they need for life when they are not. (p. 4)

They argue for an emphasis on academic subjects, and more core subjects and requirements. Higher education, in their view, needs to become more responsive to the realities of the market; only then will it achieve excellence.

The Curriculum as Resistance

Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux bring a more radical perspective to the curriculum. In “Education Still under Siege” (1993), Aronowitz and Giroux criticize the conservative’s interpretation of “excellence,” usually a demand for more rigorous math and science instruction, coupled with cost-cutting measures, resulting in a reduction of the educational experience for students. “Their language of ‘achievement,’ ‘discipline,’ and ‘goal orientation,’ really means vocational education or, in their more traditional mode, a return to the authoritarian classroom armed with the three R’s curriculum” (p. 14). In their view the mission of higher education is much more inclusive.

The curriculum should not be solely about academics; it should serve as a form of resistance. “The job is to help students see ideology as lived experience, in literature, music, painting, and social interaction without regard to distinctions between great canonical literature and the art of contemporary popular forms” (pp. 48-49). In “The Corporate University and the Politics of Education” (2000), Aronowitz and Giroux express their support for a high quality core curriculum to be made available to students at all kinds of colleges. The core should not limit itself to the knowledge and traditions of those in power, but should be all-inclusive; it is especially important to give a voice to those who have traditionally been marginalized. Their proposal is for “a rigorous and coherent core curriculum in which the history and diversity of Western and Eastern knowledge are critically examined” (p. 5). They propose that “all students, especially in their first two years, study science, literature, and philosophy in global historical contexts regardless of their institution’s position in the hierarchy” (p. 5).

Boyer: Recovering Liberal Education

In “College: the Undergraduate Experience in America” (1987) Ernest Boyer emphasizes that the tradition of college in the United States, an otherwise highly pragmatic society, is that it views its undergraduate education mission as a transformative one, one which will lead students to become more complex and complete human beings; otherwise universities would simply be job training institutes. But this, unfortunately, has changed drastically. Boyer declares that we are facing a crisis. Because schools are constantly competing for students, this is turning the academy into a primarily economic entity. He claims that, “scrambling for students and driven by marketplace demands, many undergraduate colleges have lost their sense of mission” (1987, p. 3).

This, for Boyer, has led to an increasing conflict between careerism and the liberal arts, a conflict which the liberal arts have lost. Students are constantly worried about getting jobs, preferably well-paying ones, and this threatens to turn the mission of the university into one of narrow vocationalism and job skills training. Boyer argues that this leads to the erosion of the undergraduate experience as a transformative one, though he still harbors the illusion that “it is not too much to hope that the college, as a vital community of learning, can be a model for society at large – a society where private and public purposes also must be joined” (1987, p. 8)

He is further concerned that the current distribution requirements model, which is popular in so many schools, provides for a supermarket type experience in which students pick and choose courses according to whim, and graduate without any kind of unifying, meaningful college experience. In “The New Agenda for the Nation’s Schools” (1988), he takes issue with what students learn today. “‘English’ can mean anything from

Shakespeare to oral reading. Tomorrow's curriculum surely must be something more than the minimalist fragmentation of information and the disconnected courses that exist today" (p. 312).

He argues for interdisciplinary study and adopting an integrated core of which the arts should be an essential part. As he emphasizes, "bridges between disciplines must be built, and the core program must be seen ultimately as relating the curriculum consequentially to life" (1987, p.91). He underlines the importance of studying symbol systems, how these were relevant to our development in the past, and the different ways in which they are relevant today. In "A Call for a Core Curriculum," (1994) an article co-written with Martin Kaplan, he insists that our very social survival as a nation depends on the rediscovery of a shared heritage. Boyer has deep concerns about the pull towards individualism that he notices in modern day society:

Diversity's undertow has pulled us far from shore. Democracy requires a tension between self and society, and yet today, the broadening social vision seems in full retreat. The human agenda that we all confront is global; the issues are transcendent. Yet social structures are beginning to break apart, and humans tend increasingly to isolate themselves. Self, privatism, "your own thing" are the new ruling tides. (p. 2)

Additionally, he makes the interesting note that though most educators support the importance of general education, very few seem disposed to come out and pinpoint the specific type of knowledge that this general education should entail. He deplores the fact that "educators seem more confident of the idea of general education than of the

knowledge it should contain” (1987, p. 257). This brings us to Boyer’s general education as a “spare room” syndrome (1981), in which the university, in an effort to please everyone, tries to make general education carry out too many tasks, and thus undermines what should be a meaningful, transformative experience for undergraduates.

The debates about the purpose of general education seem to wage on endlessly. He intones, “The underlying concern (of general education) has remained remarkably constant. It reflects the never ending tension between the individual and the group, between freedom and control, between independence and interdependence” (1987, p. 18). Some concerns identified by Boyer are: to make the “me” generation more concerned with others; to deal with the perceived decline in academic performance; to combat vocationalism; and as a remedy for overspecialization. Boyer especially argues for general education as a way to help students understand that they are not only autonomous individuals but part of a larger community to whom they are accountable.

General education, for Boyer, is society’s way of trying to attain a cultural ideal through the embodiment of the information, attitudes, and values it thinks significant in its youth. But it is, according to him, presently a disaster area. He posits his own outcomes: to help young people understand that they share the use of symbols, membership in groups, activities of production and consumption, a relationship with nature, a sense of time, and commonly held values and beliefs. Boyer would advocate for the model of the college as a community of learning, as a model for the larger society, a society in which there is a merging of both private and public purposes. As an overarching aim he stipulates, “We believe the mission of general education is to help

students understand that they are not only autonomous individuals, but also members of a human community to which they are accountable” (p. 22).

Hirsch: Cultural Literacy & Nationalism

On the side of tradition there is the voice of E. D. Hirsch with his “Cultural Literacy” (1987). He argues that the progressive education movement in America, with its emphasis on self-expression and critical thinking skills, with its romantic anti-knowledge theories of education, has left most people without a grasp of basic knowledge. He believes that “to be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world” (p. xiii). He stresses the supremacy of content, mostly that of the traditional Western canon, with some concessions to women and minority thinkers - a distinct body of knowledge and texts he believes American students should know, as opposed to the argument which instead places far greater importance on modes of inquiry and interpretation. Hirsch (2002) argues that “one important cause of the decline (of literacy) has been the use of ‘skills-oriented’ ‘relevant’ materials in elementary and secondary grades” (p. xv).

Hirsch makes the argument that people are bound together by shared values, allusions, and language because these are the foundation of public discourse, information that is taken for granted – what an educated person should know. Hirsch (2002) stresses that “cultural literacy, unlike expert knowledge, is meant to be shared by everyone. It is that shifting body of information that our culture has found useful, and therefore worth preserving” (p. x). He claims that the easiest way to learn something new is to associate it with something known. Thus, people who already know a lot, tend to learn things

faster and more easily than people who do not have much background knowledge, since the former are already somewhat comfortable with key elements in the new concepts. He tells us, “literacy is far more than a skill... and it requires large amounts of specific information” (1987, p. 2). He is aware that some of his ideas come across as distasteful to people who are committed to democratic values and inclusion and so posits the paradox that the social goals of liberalism require a conservative educational philosophy. He insists, “We only make social and economic progress by teaching everyone to read and communicate, which means teaching myths and facts that are predominantly traditional” (p. xvi).

Other Supporters of Cultural Literacy

In a National Endowment for the Humanities publication, “50 Hours. A Core Curriculum for College Students” (1989), Lynne V. Cheney also weighs in on the debate of content vs. skills, and concedes the greater importance to content, stressing that the learning of facts does not necessarily result in the reduction of the educational experience.

Education aims at more than acquaintance with dates and places, names and titles.... When education is rightly conceived, events and ideas become... ‘invitations to look, to listen and to reflect.’ But students who approach the end of their college years without knowing basic landmarks of history and thought are unlikely to have reflected on their meaning. (p. 11)

In an NASSP bulletin, “The Humanities in the School Curriculum - Source of Enrichment and Wisdom,” (1989) Cheney stresses that it is important for each school to revisit its mission, and for the faculty to try to come to a consensus about the core. She observes that in a diverse society it is difficult to agree on what students should know:

That doesn’t mean, however, that we shouldn’t wrestle with the question and answer it at least for today, and then for tomorrow, and then for next year. We sometimes avoid answering it by focusing on the process of learning, rather than its content. We say that we’ll teach students “how to think.” I’m not really sure that you really can do that effectively without specifying important material for them to think about. (pp. 53-54)

In “50 Hours,” she offers a model of what the undergraduate core curriculum might look like. She proposes 18 hours devoted to cultures and civilization with the following breakdown in courses: (1) the origins of civilization (2) Western Civilization I (3) Western Civilization II (4) American Civilization (5) Other Civilizations. She proposes 12 hours in foreign language, 6 hours in concepts of mathematics, 8 hours in the foundations of the natural sciences and 6 hours in the social sciences and the modern world. (Core, 1989)

William Bennet, In “To Reclaim a Legacy” (1986), also argues for the importance of cultural literacy, and in the tradition of Eliot’s five foot shelf, offers a reading list of his own, all original texts, upon which to base a core curriculum:

The works and authors I have in mind include, but are not limited to, the following: from classical antiquity – Homer, Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato,

Aristotle, and Virgil; from medieval, Renaissance, and 17th-century Europe – Dante, Chaucer, Machiavelli, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Hobbes, Milton, and Locke; from 18th-through 20th –century Europe – Swift, Rousseau, Austin, Wordsworth, Tocqueville, Dickens, Marx, George Eliot, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Mann, T.S. Eliot; from American literature and historical documents – the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, the Constitution, the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address, Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and “I have a dream...” speech, and such authors as Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and Faulkner. Finally, I must mention the Bible, which is the basis for so much subsequent history, literature, and philosophy. (p. 7)

Bennet’s position is that the core curriculum should have the humanities at the center:

Merely being exposed to a variety of subjects and points of view is not enough. Learning to think critically and skeptically is not enough. Being well-rounded is not enough if, after all the sharp edges have been filed down, discernment is blunted and the graduate is left to believe without judgment, to decide without wisdom, or to act without standards. (p. 5)

He also points out that education cannot be merely limited to the written word. “Great souls do not express themselves by the written word only; they also paint, sculpt, build, and compose” (p. 7).

Bennet provides the core curriculum at Brooklyn College as a good example of a liberal arts education: (1) The Classical Origins of Western Culture (2) Introduction to Art; Introduction to Music (3) People, Power, and Politics (4) The Shaping of the Modern World (5) Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning and Computer Science (6) Landmarks of Literature (7) Science in Modern Life I (Chemistry/Physics) (8) Science in Modern Life II (Biology/Geology) (9) Comparative Studies in African, Asian, Latin American, and Pacific Cultures (10) Knowledge, Existence, and Values (11) One course in foreign language at Level 3 (college level) or demonstrate an equivalent proficiency. (Brooklyn College Handbook)

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), founded by Lynne Cheney and former Colorado Governor Lamm in 1995, and the Institute for Effective Governance, a membership and service organization for college and university trustees, released a report written by George C. Leef, “Becoming an Educated Person” (2003), in which the institute expresses support for Cheney’s 50 hour curriculum.

The report states that college students should derive the following from their college experience: (1) crucial habits of mind such as inquiry, logical thinking, and critical analysis (2) literacy – proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking (3) quantitative reasoning (4) a historical perspective of Western civilization, world history, and American history (5) an understanding of cultures very different from our own (6) an understanding of the natural world (7) an understanding of citizenship – American political systems and principles (8) an understanding of economics and basic principles (9) an acquaintance with art, music, and aesthetics (10) learning a foreign language (pp. 9 – 10).

In short, “the college curriculum is the design for what an educated person should know. It should, to the greatest extent possible, ensure that students finely hone their basic skills and learn about the most important aspects of our heritage, our culture, and our world” (p. 4).

In 2003 The Education Trust released a report, “Thinking K-16: A New Core Curriculum for All” which insists that a common core is necessary because it is the only way to address the problem of inequity among young people in our nation. “We must prepare all young people for success because it is the right thing to do,” the report observes. Success is measured not only as economic success but as the ability “to make decisions that increasingly demand high levels of understanding and judgment” (p. 3).

Common Core, among whose founding members is Diane Ravitch, released a 2008 report written by Frederick M. Hess, “Still at Risk: What Students Don’t Know, Even Now” The report echoes the Education Trust’s preoccupation with less privileged youngsters falling academically behind their more fortunate peers:

Students born into educated or affluent homes where books and cultural experiences abound may have the opportunity to become culturally literate regardless of what happens in their K-12 schooling. But for those without advantages at home, school offers their only chance of acquiring this necessary knowledge. (Hess, p. 13)

Though there is support for a core curriculum from some quarters, the idea of a core for all undergraduates in one same institution worries those who fear their interests may not be adequately represented. The 1980 Humanities Commission Report, “The

Humanities in American Life” answers some of their objections to a core curriculum. Some groups worry that the curriculum will reflect a white male perspective. “Efforts to define America’s common culture have stirred fears among minorities that their contributions to cultural life are to be thrown back into the melting pot” (p. 5). But the Commission underlines its commitment to the preservation of America’s “diverse heritage” (p. 6). Others are concerned that only “high culture” will be considered worthy of study, but the Commission insists there is no such simple divide. “The cultural debate allegedly between ‘elitists’ and ‘populists’ oversimplifies issues and weakens everyone’s will to preserve our diverse heritage and find common values” (p. 6).

Still others are concerned that either humanistic or scientific study will be emphasized to the detriment of the other. But the Commission points out that the scientific and humanistic are two sides of one same coin – learning about our world. “Their interconnections have been obscured by an oversimplified thesis of conflict between the humanistic and the scientific, a misperception that diminishes both” (p. 13). Today both humanists and scientists need to work together to face the complex issues that are part of our world. Finally, the Commission addresses the debate of content vs. skills, and concludes that there must be a balance between the two. “Education in the humanities requires factual knowledge of ideas, values, and tastes... without it attempts at critical discussion become pointless... Effective instruction in the humanities encourages a creative interplay of fact and imagination” (p. 29).

Bloom: Education Emptied of its Content

Allan Bloom's "Closing of the American Mind" (1987), which makes some very strong contentions, is another important text in the history of the debate about the content of the undergraduate curriculum. Bloom argues that moving away from the Western canon has dumbed down the universities' curriculum; thus American intellectual life has basically stagnated since the 1950's. He claims that "without the great revelations, epics and philosophies as part of our natural vision, there is nothing to see out there, and eventually little left inside" (p. 60). Today, for Bloom, there is very little content to American education. Relativism runs rampant; young people are taught to be open-minded, and are not taught much else. Lack of open-mindedness (being open to absolutely anything and everything) is considered at best, ignorant, and at worst, evil. There is no longer the search for truth, for the good life. Americans no longer have a shared vision, and Bloom questions whether under these conditions the social contract is still possible. He complains that "practically all that young Americans have today is an insubstantial awareness that there are many cultures, accompanied by a saccharine moral drawn from that awareness: We should all get along. Why fight?" (p. 35).

According to Bloom, the only mission the university has today is the witch hunt to stamp out a series of "perceived" crimes against democracy – racism, sexism, elitism. For Bloom, the role of the great avenger or equalizer does not suit the university at all, and so it is suffering a serious decline. Bloom believes that education should be a transformative experience for all students, making them more aware of the world around them, but this will hardly happen, intones Bloom, if our humanities departments become a series of minority studies program, with each minority group intent on studying itself.

Another one of Bloom's concerns is the university's increasing focus on the practical: straightforward career training at the expense of a liberal arts education. Competence and success, preferably in financial terms, are all that seem to matter in the modern world. For Bloom the four years of the undergraduate experience should be a time of intellectual freedom between the "wasteland" of their younger years and the years ahead when they will be little more than working drones. But today the university is turning away from the undergraduate experience as a time of freedom to the undergraduate experience as a time of credentialing. He insists that:

There is no vision, nor is there a set of competing visions of what an educated human being is. The question has disappeared, for to pose it would be a threat to the peace... better to give up on general education and get on with a specialty in which there is at least a prescribed curriculum and a prospective career. (1987, p. 337)

It must be pointed out that Bloom's sample is hardly a democratic one. In his book he states that, right or wrong, he is focusing on the type of students who are most likely to take advantage of a liberal education (read wealthy) and have the greatest moral and intellectual effect on the nation (read powerful). He further goes on to criticize what he considers the misguided reduction of the ideal of equality to an artificially generated equal opportunity for people of unequal ability to get ahead.

Bloom dislikes distribution requirements for he believes these give people a superficial smattering of knowledge. He finds composite courses slightly preferable, since in interdisciplinary studies professors from different areas work together, but he is

afraid that sometimes the courses may not be rigorous enough since many professors do not like or are not prepared to work outside their narrow areas of specialization. He strongly prefers the Great Books curriculum, not as literature but as an example of “the greatest minds debating at the highest levels,” (1987, p. 346) but knows that this type of curriculum inevitably invites criticism from different quarters.

Democratic Silence

Gerald Graff, in “Clueless in Academe” (2003) also takes issue with the disorder he sees in the curriculum, due, in part, to the university’s desire to keep the peace between different interest groups:

Campus culture is governed by a tacit code of democratic silence, whereby we all agree to muzzle ourselves so that no individual or group gets their way... This mutual nonaggression treaty preserves short term peace, but in doing so it shuts down intellectual community or pushes it to the margins. (pp. 76-77)

This model of education leaves many students lost, without an understanding of the connectedness of all knowledge.

The curriculum represents not a coherent intellectual world with conventions and practices anyone can internalize and apply to the specific challenges of each discipline, but an endless series of instructors’ preferences that you psych out, if you can, and then conform to, virtually starting over from scratch in each new course. (p. 67)

Graff criticizes what he terms the “volleyball effect” (p. 74), in which new courses and subjects are assimilated by simply being added to the existing ones, without rethinking the curriculum as a whole. “Since the new interdisciplinary units are simply added to the existing disciplines, they tend to remain disconnected from each other as well as from the disciplines themselves” (p. 70). He believes it is imperative to provide students with a more connected view of their academic experience, as well as help them relate this experience to the wider world. He proposes Writing Across the Curriculum programs, teacher swapping, learning communities, and lecture series as models of education which may help students integrate knowledge from different courses and apply what they learn to the real world

Bruner: The Spiral Curriculum

With “The Process of Education” (1969), Jerome Bruner also enters the debate of form versus content. In his view the teaching and learning of structure is as or more important than the simple mastery of facts, of a body of knowledge – even one as well regarded by some as the traditional Western canon. He argues that the understanding of fundamentals not only helps to build more complex knowledge, but aids memory. He explains that “if earlier learning is to render later learning easier, it must do so by providing a general picture in terms of which the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible” (1969, p. 12). The foundations are particularly important, and may lead to the transfer of training, and improved educational performance. Students need to be given the fundamental principles of a discipline, with

the details placed within a structured pattern in order to conserve the unity of the subject, or these details will appear random to the students, and will thus be easily forgotten.

Bruner is also a strong proponent of the importance of the arts and humanities and sees the neglect of these in favor of “real” knowledge as unfortunate. He reminds us that the divide between the sciences and the humanities is not a new one, but one that goes back hundreds of years. Today there is little or no training, Bruner says regretfully, in intuition - the ability to perceive a problem in its totality at once, but everything must proceed step by step, in analytical fashion. He insists that:

Intuitive thinking, the training of hunches, is a much neglected and essential feature of productive thinking not only in formal academic disciplines but also in everyday life. The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion – these are the most valuable coin of the thinker at work, whatever his line of work. (1969, pp. 13-14)

Still, it is important to note that for Bruner, intuition rests upon a solid grasp of a subject. He reminds us that “the good intuiter may have been born with something special, but his effectiveness rests upon a solid knowledge of the subject, a familiarity that gives intuition something to work with” (1969, pp. 56-57). There is decidedly a love of order at work in Bruner’s educational philosophy. We can clearly see that even though Bruner is attempting to be innovative, he retains the idea of the analytic as somewhat more real than the aesthetic. We can see that even though he allows for the importance of a creative intuition, he would still insist that once the groundwork is set, the analytic methods should step in to tidy up after the artist.

For Bruner a curriculum should be built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society cherishes. He favors a holistic education which he only sees as possible through the spiral curriculum, a curriculum “which turns back on itself at higher levels” (1969, p.13), recycling what has been learned, and reaching greater levels of complexity as the students become able to benefit from it.

Phenix: The Unity of Knowledge

The idea of holistic education is also a very important one in the writings of Philip Phenix, but instead of focusing on disciplines as others have done before him, he centers on what he terms, “realms of meaning,” also the title of one of his important works on curriculum theory. In this work, “Realms of Meaning” (1964), Phenix argues that knowledge is not the province of specialists; instead, he believes that through higher education, higher order thinking and understanding can be attained by everyone. He defines human existence as a “pattern of meanings.” He focuses on the idea of centering education around a series of different realms of meaning, with their corresponding types of rationality, which he considers absolutely necessary to the full development of human beings, as opposed to the type of education which focuses on just one type of rationality. Phenix points out that acquiring a comprehensive view is no simple task. “It is not easy to sustain a sense of the whole. Many a person pursues his own limited calling with scarcely a thought for his place in the total drama of civilized endeavor” (1964, p. 3). He sees the mission of education as that of broadening students’ view of life, deepening their insight into different kinds of relationships, and enabling them to go beyond daily customary existence. He expresses that:

There is a great need for the best insights of civilization to be made available to people generally and for its humane significance to be made clear. “Popular culture” need not be mediocre and trivial. Meaning is lost both when knowledge is abstruse and inaccessible and when it is commonplace and trivial. (1964, p. 14)

Phenix’s goal is an integrated outlook – a holistic model. He advocates for a unitary philosophy of the curriculum leading to a comprehensive outlook of the world. He argues for the inclusion of the following realms in the curriculum: symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics (relational insight), ethics, synoptics (history, religion, and philosophy). He emphasizes that human beings may both discover and create meaning. His general education ideal is that a person be good at speaking, understanding and using symbols, be well-informed, aesthetically aware, and self-aware; that he possess inter-subjective understanding; and be capable of making wise judgments in day to day life. He considers the good life to be the realization of meaning in all realms, and the mission of a liberal arts education to be to help students start making strides towards the good life.

Gutmann: Democracy & the Obligation of Ruling Well

The good life has been considered a worthy aim of higher education by many thinkers who have written on the issue of the curriculum. In “Democratic Education” (1987), Amy Gutmann makes the important claim that being a citizen in a democracy necessarily means ruling, which makes it necessary for all to be capable of doing so through participation in the different affairs of the society. Thus the university has a very important mission to fulfill: it has the ethical obligation to provide students with an

adequate education which will enable them to understand and evaluate competing conceptions of the good life.

Gutmann's concern is that the curriculum should not focus solely on filling in the gaps students have from their primary and secondary schooling (reinforcing the basics). She assures that "higher education cannot succeed unless lower education does. If high schools are not educating most students up to the democratic threshold, then many colleges and universities will continue the primary education of their students" (1987, p. 172). Nor does she believe the curriculum should become an amorphous creature which may be conveniently molded into anything that sells at a particular point in time. Gutmann stresses that the focus of the curriculum should be critical thinking and thinking about political problems, articulating one's views and debating with those one disagrees with; this becomes a type of moral education which all who would be capable of ruling themselves and others must possess. Her proposal is that "even if some universities conceived of themselves solely as 'knowledge factories,' aiming only to maximize their 'intellectual product,' they would consider in addition to test scores and grades: evidence of creativity, perseverance, emotional maturity, aesthetic sensibility, and motivation to learn" (1987, pp. 198-199).

Steiner: Democracy & Public Discourse

David Steiner's "Rethinking Democratic Education" (1994) also focuses on the importance of democracy as a central part of the curriculum; but he insists that democracy is not to be confused with a mere populist approach, thus the high premium

on a good college education centered around communication, for this communication is at the base of our society.

For Steiner public discourse needs to be at the core of education. It is within our public discourse, within the free exchange of different viewpoints and ideas, that we negotiate the political and the ethical, stake our claims to our freedoms and responsibilities, and define who we are. It is the responsibility of the society, claims Steiner, to make men, “the measure of all things.” He proposes that:

A democratic sensibility will hold fluid and in question the relationship between the finite spaces of political interaction and the potentially infinite arena of the private imagination. It will be prepared to undertake a lifelong negotiation between the temporarily immediate and the claims of the domestic, the political, and the ethical, which may intersect with, or put in question, the demands of the moment. (1994, p. vi)

Steiner would focus his curriculum on historical and current events and how these have shaped our identity. He would, in addition, put a high premium on communication: the spoken and written word, as well as media images and computer languages. He strongly believes in the importance of understanding different forms of rhetoric, and he finds literacy in political economy to be particularly important in order to develop in citizens a full capacity to judge public policy, to protect themselves against the dangers of oppressive ideologies. He proposes the pedagogy proceed in the following manner:

Students would focus on a number of case studies in which they would examine the relationship between issues, audiences, and media in speech, advertising,

song, literature, documentary, demonstration, video, and film... Students will concentrate on dissecting the dynamic relationship between differing forms of rhetoric, the political impact they do or do not create or embody, and the ethical claims that are reformed in the process. (1994, p. 201)

Greene & Eisner: An Aesthetically Significant Curriculum

Countless thinkers have debated liberal education and the importance of humanities in liberal education; but there is little mention of arts – of the aesthetic component of education, which will be an integral part of this dissertation. That is why the work of Greene and Eisner is imperative in rethinking a new undergraduate general education curriculum for the 21st century.

Against the new technical-rational view of human beings, schools and society, against rampant testing and standardization, against back to basics movements and accountability measures, we have the voices of Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner, who call for a complete reevaluation of education today. Greene and Eisner insist that incomparable harm has been done to students' development and well-being through the neglect of aesthetics in the curriculum. This neglect has led to a highly impoverished model of education which makes of students one-dimensional creatures, capable of acting only within a limited sphere of experience. Today, with the increasing move towards specialization, the highest knowledge has become the partial knowledge. Philosophical reflection, moral development, and aesthetic appreciation have been neglected because they are not considered qualities which will help students get ahead. They are not considered tangible skills; it cannot be proved that these lead to better jobs, more money,

and a corresponding higher social status. The mania for measuring material results has taken its toll on everyone.

The results of this fragmentation of the human mind and spirit in today's world are legion, as Greene and Eisner have expressed through compelling arguments, which will be examined in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. We will take a look at their two very different but complementary views of the aesthetic in education. We will look at how the aesthetic, and particularly literature, informs Greene's moral philosophy of freedom and responsibility. We will also analyze the role of the aesthetic, and particularly the visual arts, at the basis of Eisner's psychological research on cognitive development, on his theory of "ways of knowing."

But first we will turn to one more figure in the history of American education which deserves special attention for the priceless legacy he has left to those who have already or have yet to embark upon philosophical, psychological, or cultural reflections on the nature of curriculum and education after him – John Dewey.

CHAPTER THREE

DEWEY

John Dewey (1859-1952) is a figure that deserves distinct attention as an embodiment of a particularly American philosophy, pragmatism, as well as an important thinker in the history of progressive education. He brought to the table a sound sense of democracy and a commitment to education. He was worried by what he saw as a two tier system designed to separate students into distinct groups according to their parents' wealth: one receiving an elite education and the other, a trade education. He was adamant that all should receive an equal education, a good education, and he promulgated a healthy respect for all kinds of skills and knowledge. Dewey also brought a practical twist to thinking. He insisted that learning should be an active process, an exchange between subject and object, between the knower and the world of experience, as opposed to the rote memorization which was the norm in the schools at that time. In his later years he also tackled the subject of the aesthetic and gave it the status of intelligent activity, arguing that the aesthetic was not the exclusive province of the arts, but instead present in everyday life. Dewey stressed the importance of valuing all aspects of human experience. His work was a foundation for the work of many later thinkers, among them Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner.

In this section we begin with Dewey's reflections on the historical relationship between education and the social order, his concern with democracy and social justice, and his definition of what a good education, a comprehensive education, entails. Then we move on to Dewey's analysis of thinking in which he discusses the order of thought,

the nature of experience, and the role of the senses. From there we advance to Dewey's examination of the aesthetic, its importance in daily life, and the particular importance of arts education; here we see Dewey's insistence on aesthetic thinking as real thinking. Finally we arrive at Dewey's analysis of the conditions necessary for good thinking, the "habits of mind" he advocates for, and his discussion of how the aesthetic element ties in with these.

Education & the Social Order

Dewey's commitment to democracy in education was an integral part of his social philosophy; his idealism, sense of justice, and insistence on equality are powerful. He was a strong critic of education as a way to divide and separate, to keep individuals in their respective class positions, to reproduce unjust existing class structures in the society.

For Dewey all types of knowledge and skills hold equal value; some are not inherently better than others, though they may be perceived as unequal in the society due to unjust historical social conditions, going back as far as the Ancient Greeks, which divided men into masters and slaves. Dewey reminds us that:

There exists an educational tradition which opposes science to literature and history in the curriculum... the notion that 'applied' knowledge is somehow less worthy than 'pure' knowledge, was natural to a society in which all useful work was performed by slaves and serfs. (1916, pp. 228-229)

It is the unjust social philosophy of an era now past which still insists upon marking the distinction between the academic and the vocational in the schools, and attaching honor to the first, and a stigma to the latter (1916).

According to Dewey there is a great misconception at the heart of this divide; the term, “vocational education” is misunderstood by many. He warns that “there is a danger that vocational education will be interpreted in theory and practice as trade education: as a means of securing technical efficiency in specialized future pursuits” (1916, p. 316). Vocational education does not mean “practical” education. In fact, all education, claims Dewey, is vocational education, regardless of how theoretical or practical. With considerable wit, Dewey points out that “to a considerable extent, the education of the dominant classes was essentially vocational – it only happened that their pursuits of ruling and enjoying were not called professions” (1916, p. 312). Even the liberal arts may be considered a kind of practical specialized training (1916). The liberal arts, the humanities, or even the arts, for Dewey, do not confer an automatic monopoly on culture (1916).

Dewey makes the interesting observation that if we were a society strictly divided into classes we would only need to pay attention to the members of the upper classes. We could therefore, without too many qualms, allow them to have the run of the schools. These upper classes would, of course, choose for their own children a curriculum emphasizing a broad education, a curriculum centered on the liberal arts, one which would train their children to be future leaders. The children of the poor, on the other hand, would be exposed to a different curriculum altogether, one befitting their station in life. They would primarily be trained to serve the needs and interests of the elite through

trade education. But this, insists Dewey, is an unjust situation for “a society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability” (1916, p. 316). The trade worker, having been trained for very specific tasks which can at any moment become obsolete, is rendered almost wholly dependent on his employer, and can thus be easily controlled. He would be hard pressed to harbor ambitions beyond his station. Given the social order, how realistic could these ambitions possibly be? (1916)

Sadly, the description above is not a hypothetical one, but one which we see taking place in our society each and every day. In fact, those who have superior economic resources and wield power and who may best invest in their offspring, acquire for them a liberal education. The rest, the masses, consisting of the poor and a good part of the middle class, are the ones who provide the raw material and cheap labor for the enterprises of the few.

This state of affairs, Dewey argues, is absolutely unacceptable in our country. The U.S. is supposed to be a democratic society, one in which all people are considered equal, one in which upward mobility is a real possibility, not simply something read about by children in social studies textbooks. And the principles of democracy, states Dewey, are violated when society infringes upon the freedom of its members, attempting to use education as a tool to fit individuals in advance for specific vocational pursuits, not on the basis of the students’ capacities or interests, but on the wealth and social status of the parents. This is a flagrant abuse of education, making of school an agency for the transfer of an outdated division of leisure and labor. The separation of the classical and

the vocational in fact undermines the principle of equality, making our society but nominally democratic (1916). As Dewey argues:

Any scheme for vocational education which takes its point of departure from the industrial regime that now exists, is likely to assume and to perpetuate its divisions and weaknesses, and thus to become an instrument of accomplishing the feudal dogma of predestination. (1916, pp. 318-319)

Some might argue that job training is precisely what most of the population needs: specific skills in a specific area will lead to a specific, tangible job with which a person will be able to support himself. But, Dewey reminds us, the narrow focus on this sort of training is, in fact, counterproductive. With the fast pace of the world today and the constant changes brought about by technology, workers are quickly made redundant. And not everyone is able to readjust – go back to school, get another set of skills that may qualify him for a job for a few years and then once again become redundant and begin the process all over again. This is an exercise in absurdity, and it leads to wasted talent, and lives of constant desperation (1916).

A Good Education

Dewey underlines the exigencies which democracy places on our system of education: A democracy must foster unity and good feeling among fellow citizens, and so must strive for equality among them in all things. It must, therefore, demand respect for all types of occupations; it cannot discriminate between greater and lesser areas of

knowledge or greater and lesser skills, but recognize the full intellectual and social possibilities of all vocations (1916). It must also demand equal treatment for all its citizens; it cannot favor those with greater assets and a higher social status, and allow them to set themselves apart from their less wealthy and influential fellow citizens through either a brazenly or a subtly engineered and manipulated system of education which sorts its youth into their “proper” social strata. He writes:

To split the system, and to give to others, less fortunately situated, an education conceived mainly as specific trade preparation, is to treat the schools as an agency for transferring the older division of labor and leisure, culture and service, mind and body, directed and directive class. (1916, pp. 318-319)

In short, a democracy demands a good education for everyone. And what does this good education consist of for Dewey? A good education is one that fosters thinking for its own sake, one which teaches that the value of wisdom and the search for the good life are far superior to the simple gathering and storing up of information (1933). He writes:

Of course, education is not exhausted in its intellectual aspect. There are practical attitudes of efficiency to be formed, moral dispositions to be strengthened and developed, esthetic appreciation to be cultivated. But in all these things there is at least an element of conscious meaning and hence of thought. Otherwise, practical activity is mechanical and routine, morals are blind and arbitrary, and esthetic appreciation is sentimental gush. (1933, p. 78)

A good education is one that teaches equality, that no one group has the right to reserve for itself the lion's share of the goods and benefits in the society; it teaches young people to be vigilant lest others try to use them and curtail their dignity and freedom. A good education teaches its citizens to be independent and proactive, to take initiatives, and to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. This is not just an ideal; it is a practical matter – a matter of survival for the vast majority (1916).

Dewey's argument is for a comprehensive education for everyone, regardless of social status or future occupation. He would make sure that the education our current students and future workers receive is one that benefits them directly, as opposed to their employers. Thus these young people would first of all be trained for re-adaptation in changing conditions so that "future workers would not become blindly subject to a fate imposed upon them" (1916, p. 319). To this end, it is necessary to instill feelings of pride and self-worth in all workers, regardless of their occupation. This would in a sense mean freeing them of the oppressive conditions, rampant in our industrialized society, which objectify them, forcing them into the performance of repetitive tasks that are devoid of personal interest and afford no satisfaction in personal accomplishment. But Dewey is clear that:

There is nothing in the nature of machine production per se that is an insuperable obstacle in the way of workers' consciousness of the meaning of what they do and enjoyment of the satisfactions of companionship and of useful work well done. The psychological conditions resulting from private control of the labor of other men for the sake of private gain, rather than any fixed psychological or economic

law, are the forces that suppress and limit esthetic quality in the experience that accompanies processes of production. (2005, pp. 343-344)

For Dewey the kind of education which would counteract that type of alienation would be one which includes instruction in the historical background of present conditions as well as the study of economics, civics, and politics, in order to make workers aware of current problems and challenges, and empower them to become engaged, to partake of the social life of the community and the nation. This is the kind of participation democracy demands, one that engenders the achievement of socially defined ends for the benefit and satisfaction of the members of the society (1916).

Dewey believes that the renewal of the social life takes place through education, an education which is primarily conveyed through communication. For Dewey, communication, which was meant to be the great transmitter of education from one generation to the next, has been misused, leading to a great deal of waste and lost educational opportunities. A great mistake has been made in the education of youth, says Dewey. He insists that it is wrong for a society to simply attempt to convey to its young people the beliefs, emotions, and knowledge it wishes them to have (1916). He complains that “in schools, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as theoretical spectators, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect” (1916, p. 140).

Young people are not empty vessels waiting to be filled up with knowledge, yet this is what an education based on the memorization of lessons assumes, that young minds will be effectively and efficiently molded by their instructors’ pouring facts into

them. For Dewey, this type of routine can only lead to the arrest of growth, invention, or initiative of any kind because students cannot conceive of this kind of educational experience as meaningful, as relevant to their lives, hopes, and dreams. As Dewey reminds us, “general appeals (to a person) to think, irrespective of the existence in his own experience of some difficulty that troubles him and disturbs his equilibrium, are as futile as advice to lift himself by his boot-straps” (1933, p. 15). The skills and knowledge which students learn need to be directly integrated into their lives as individuals and as part of the community. Aims imposed from the outside, claims Dewey, yield few positive results. The transmission of knowledge as a preparation for some far off future merely leads to making the work of teachers and students mechanical, meaningless, and empty (1916). But on the other hand, Dewey reminds us that it is also a mistake to assume that any kind of spontaneous activity, without the proper direction from the instructor, will necessarily lead to the training of mental power (1933). This was part of Dewey’s quarrel with the direction some progressive educators took, misinterpreting his educational philosophy and using teaching methods that were less than ideal from Dewey’s point of view. He criticizes the view that:

The more unfitted the physical object for its imagined purpose, such as a cube for a boat, the greater is the supposed appeal to the imagination... (But) the healthy imagination deals not with the unreal, but with the mental realization of what is suggested. Its exercise is not a flight into the purely fanciful and ideal, but a method of expanding and filling in what is real. (1933, p. 214)

For Dewey, improving education means broadening the intellect by developing problem solving and critical thinking skills in students; it means focusing on conditions which will develop and make demands upon thinking, since only through fruitful thinking can human beings be led to intelligent learning (1916). But this thinking consists of both rational and aesthetic activity. Neglecting imaginative vision, whether within or outside of the arts, leads to the fruitless amassing of loads of information and specialized skills, and so education becomes barren (2005). Without imagination, mental growth stagnates, leading to the stagnation of the society as well, as “the imagination is the medium of appreciation in every field” (1916, p. 236).

In short, Dewey sees education as the heart of social life, and decries the fact that for so many years its fields of possibility have lain fallow as the society has wrongly focused on education as the straightforward, unimaginative transmission of knowledge, customs, and beliefs, what has often been described as culture, from one generation to the next. Dewey has a very different definition of culture. For him, culture does not consist of a distinct body of knowledge and traditions, but instead, of the ability to constantly broaden one’s ability to perceive meaning (1916). He also reminds us that the arts and the sciences are both part of the culture, and so we need to develop ease and familiarity in navigating different waters without losing our way. He writes:

A person who has at command both types of thinking is of a higher order than he who possesses only one. Methods that, in developing abstract intellectual abilities, weaken habits of practical and concrete thinking fall as much short of the educational ideal as do methods that, in cultivating ability to plan, to invent, to

arrange, to forecast, fail to secure some delight in thinking, irrespective of practical consequences. (1933, p. 228)

Dewey maintains that if it is true that there are still some educators who do not truly understand how art can contribute to education, this is due to the aridity of an education which excludes the imagination and does not take into account the desires and emotions of human beings, an education in which enough attention is not paid to the aesthetic. He claims that:

The hostility to association of fine art with normal processes of living is a pathetic, even a tragic, commentary on life as it is ordinarily lived. Only because that life is usually so stunted, aborted, slack, or heavy laden, is the idea entertained that there is some inherent antagonism between the process of normal living and creation and enjoyment of esthetic works. (1933, p. 27)

Thinking: How it Proceeds

The Order of Thought

There is in Western culture a mania for separation, incision, and categorization, a mania which, for Dewey, leads to misconceptions about mind. He tells us that:

The separation of 'mind' from direct occupation with things throws emphasis on things at the expense of relations or connections. It is altogether too common to

separate perceptions and even ideas from judgments. The latter are thought to come after the former in order to compare them. (1916, p. 142)

This leads to the creation of an assembly line of sorts within the human mind in which each of the aforementioned powers carries out a singular set of actions in a distinctly prescribed manner without infringing upon the task, or specialty, of the next one in line. The end result, the tangible good thus obtained, is said to be productive thought (1916). In effect the thinking man in this model proceeds in the following manner: He first perceives things apart from any relations they may have, he then proceeds to analyze each particular part by enumerating and examining all its qualities, and finally he calls upon his powers of judgment to combine the previously separated elements so as to discover the causal connections that may exist among them. This, for Dewey, is absurd. In fact we may perceive and judge, judge and perceive all at once, our powers of analysis and synthesis pervading the whole process from beginning to end, as long as our perceiving is not a mere response to stimulus, a mere sensory excitation, or perhaps the simple recognition of something we are familiar with from a previous judgment (1916).

Dewey posits a different theory of how a learner acquires knowledge. He breaks up the process into three main stages. He calls the first stage “the power to do” (1916, p.184); this is the knowledge of simple familiarity, a knowledge with little depth or sophistication; it is our point of departure. Then in the second stage we may be exposed to new information or a new experience; knowledge is thus deepened through this communication, this contact with something outside of what is already familiar. Finally,

we come to the third stage, the most challenging one, for it entails our own efforts to enlarge this knowledge, making it into rationally or logically organized material; this is the knowledge of the person who is considered an expert in a subject. But Dewey still claims that “a conscious setting forth of the method logically adapted for reaching an end is possible only after the result has first been reached by unconscious and tentative methods” (1933, p. 257). Of special significance in Dewey’s stages is his insistence on the active nature of knowing, on the hard work this knowing demands of the knower, for it is through our tireless relentless perceiving, pondering, judging, and looking for connections that we come into our own repertoire of the world, a world which is made broader and deeper primarily through our own efforts and experience (1916).

The Nature of Experience

For Dewey experience is neither solely physical nor solely mental, but an interface between the two. It is “the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication” (2005, p. 22). The experiences originating in the world: things and events, whether they are physical or social, are transformed when met with the perceiving human being and act upon the person, effecting a second transformation: the transformation of the human being, who undergoes change and development as a result of this communion with the world around him (1916).

Experience is not primarily cognitive. Dewey argues that the mind does not perceive things apart from relations. How can these relationships be appreciated without

experience? There is no disembodied mind or spirit which is equipped to grasp them. For this reason, Dewey reminds us, “An ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory” (1916, p.144). That is why experience is such a valuable asset, and why it is an integral part of a good education. That is also why “the fundamental fallacy in methods of instruction lies in supposing that experience on the part of pupils may be assumed” (1916, p.153).

The Role of the Senses

In a philosophy in which experience is paramount, the senses carry a great deal of weight; they are man’s first avenue to experience. For Dewey, being fully awakened to the senses and what these can perceive and experience is crucial. There is no greater way to acquire knowledge; the idea of a “pure” mind directly engaged in the contemplation of abstract knowledge is nothing but a myth; it is a mistake of education to separate mind from direct contact with things as if the former could be tainted by such lowly company. He reminds us that:

Nothing enters experience bald and unaccompanied, whether it be a seemingly formless happening, a theme intellectually systematized, or an object elaborated with every loving care of united thought and emotion. Its very entrance is the beginning of a complex interaction; upon the nature of this interaction depends the character of the thing as finally experienced. (2005, p. 162)

Nor is it the case that the senses cannot achieve much on their own without the intervention of the external higher powers of analysis and judgment. The senses pick up

sensuous material from the environment and can directly engage in its contemplation: perceiving, analyzing, and judging all at once. The senses open us up not only to sensuous material itself, but engender the perception of relationships, something which is impossible outside of experience. For Dewey, while the whole process of communion with the world contains a strong emotional element, the perception of things and the discernment of their relationships is still primarily an intellectual matter; it is still good thinking. So, “the common assumption that, unless the pupil from the outset consciously recognizes and explicitly states the method logically implied in the result he is to reach, he will have no method and his mind will work confusedly or anarchically is fallacious” (1933, p. 128).

The Importance of the Aesthetic

Dewey exalts the aesthetic as the manifestation and celebration of the life of a society, promoting its growth and development. For Dewey esthetic experience is “the ultimate judgment upon the quality of a civilization. For while it is produced and is enjoyed by individuals, those individuals are what they are in the context of their experience because of the cultures in which they participate” (2005, p. 326). Thus there is an inextricable connection between men and the culture that produces them. Each may enlarge or constrict the other.

Dewey sees art as the bridge between not only man and nature but between man and other men; art is what renders human beings aware of the deep connections we all share, and our ensuing responsibility to one another. Without the aesthetic, Dewey

intones, we are missing the completeness of experience, the unity of the world, and the awareness of ourselves as a necessary part of this unity. “Art breaks through barriers that divide human beings, which are impermeable in ordinary association” (2005, p. 244). It’s the aesthetic element which gives human beings a feeling of aliveness, which gives birth to appreciation and enjoyment of the world, which gives experience its emotional quality. Without the aesthetic element there can never be a complete living of life; men are, in effect silenced, so neglecting the aesthetic can only lead to an incomplete education (2005).

The Aesthetic & Arts Education

Education does not become aesthetic solely through the introduction of an aesthetic subject, such as the fine arts. Indeed, arts education can be just as dry and empty as any other kind of learning if the same dry and empty methods of rote memorization are employed, if students perceive the educational process as mechanical and meaningless. At the same time, any subject, even those which are not considered aesthetic, such as math and science, can be given aesthetic treatment through imaginative vision. It all depends on the methods employed. Dewey decries the fact that:

Unfortunately, it is too customary to identify the imaginative with the imaginary, rather than with a warm and intimate taking in of the full scope of a situation... This leads to an exaggerated estimate of fairy tales, myths, fanciful symbols, verse, and something labeled ‘fine art’ as agencies for developing imagination and appreciation; and, by neglecting imaginative vision in other matters, leads to

methods which reduce much instruction to the unimaginative acquiring of specialized skill and amassing of a load of information.... (1916, p. 236)

Dewey speaks out against what so often passes for aesthetic or arts education in the schools. He speaks out against the method of instruction which consists of a simple, unimaginative transmission of facts from teacher to student, or from textbook to student, facts which must be memorized, internalized, and then spewed back in the same unadulterated form upon examination. This method makes of teaching a technical occupation and not an art. This method of instruction, Dewey argues, works directly against what education should be (1916). Instead, he counters, “the sole direct path to enduring improvement in the methods of instruction and learning consists in centering upon the conditions which exact, promote, and test thinking” (1916, p. 153).

Dewey repudiates a curriculum within which subjects, whether from the arts or sciences, are taught with literal methods, with what he terms the “anatomical” or “morphological” method (1933, p.127). He complains that:

Even when it is definitely stated that intellectual and physical analyses are different sorts of operations, intellectual analysis is often treated after the analogy of the physical, as if it were the breaking up of a whole into all its constituent parts in the mind instead of in space. (1933, p. 127)

Logical analysis, Dewey claims, is much more than a mere enumeration of all possible qualities and relations. Understanding of a subject does not consist in multiplying distinctions ad absurdum and finding a name for each such distinction.

Dewey worries about the excessive instructional dependence on method. Dewey sees this method as excluding the imaginative, leaving the emotions untouched, and not responding to the students' needs and desires. This kind of instruction, the insistence on impressing knowledge and information upon young people's minds, of making them passive absorbers of "truth," is for Dewey a perversion of communication. It is but an arid exercise in the collection and transmission of meaningless artifacts which are to be stored in the students' memory bank without affecting or changing anything in their world, and it does not lead to the better living of life (1916).

Aesthetic Thinking is Real Thinking

Thinking in and through the arts is not just a passive affair; it is not a simple receptivity to feelings and sensations which may overwhelm from without, but instead an active experience; one which necessitates hard work on the part of the thinker. Aesthetic experience does not mean a sole emphasis on undergoing, but is instead accompanied by doing - its necessary complement. Dewey insists that:

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. (2005, p. 54)

Dewey considers thinking effectively in terms of relations and qualities as challenging as or even more challenging than thinking through verbal and mathematical

symbols, since words and numbers have the advantage of lending themselves to mechanical manipulation, whereas each art has a unique symbol system which it does not share with others. “Each art speaks an idiom that conveys what cannot be said in another language and yet remains the same” (2005, p. 106). One cannot be directly translated into another. A minor scale is not synonymous with a palette of blues and grays, though it may suggest these colors to a listener.

All this, Dewey claims, should further elucidate for us the demands upon someone engaged in the production of a work of art. When the rules have already been made by others, as is the case of straightforward verbal and mathematical manipulation, it does not take too much imagination to communicate meaning. The arts, on the other hand, are filled with uncharted terrain in which the artist must struggle alone with his vision, trying to bring it to fruition. Searching after that “rightness of fit,” a term which Dewey borrowed from Goodman, may seem simple and effortless to an outsider viewing the finished product, but, in fact, taxes all of the artist’s powers of qualitative intelligence, of relational thinking. This improvisational ability, which is really only the province of those who are truly familiar with their subject, Dewey considers an integral part of intelligence as employed in the arts. Engagement with the arts then becomes not the province of divine inspiration, but intelligent activity (2005).

The Conditions for Fruitful Thinking: Habits of Mind

All of the potential for intelligent activity inherent in human beings will merely remain in the realm of the possible, if a series of conditions do not come together in the education of young people. In order for human beings to reach their greatest potential, wings must be given to the powers of curiosity, imagination, play and freedom. These are to become, in a word, “habits of mind.”

Curiosity

Curiosity, for Dewey, is “the basic factor in the enlargement of experience and therefore a prime ingredient in the germs that are to be developed into reflective thinking” (1933, p. 37). Without curiosity there is no reflective thinking, since there is nothing to reflect on if students have encountered nothing that arouses their interest, nothing they can care about. Dewey reminds us that:

The mind is not a piece of blotting paper that absorbs and retains automatically. It is rather a living organism that has to search for its food, that selects and rejects according to its present conditions and needs, and that retains only what it digests and transmutes into part of the energy of its own being” (1933, pp. 261-262).

So for Dewey it is very important that instructors stimulate curiosity in their students by encouraging them to wonder, to take intellectual risks, mental leaps, instead of always following the tried and true methods of analytic reasoning. But Dewey warns us that curiosity alone, though essential, achieves nothing. It needs to be elevated to the

intellectual plane and fully explored, otherwise it just fades away. The mind must be stretched to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel, whether literally or metaphorically, and from these experiences, to draw its own conclusions (1933).

Imagination

Imagination, for Dewey, is paramount. It is what brings life to the intellect, what makes any human activity more than merely mechanical, what enriches thought and renders it significant, by stamping it with the personal response of the one who imagines.

For Dewey:

Power in action requires largeness of vision, which can be had only through the use of imagination. Men must at least have enough interest in thinking for the sake of thinking to escape the limitations of routine and custom. Interest in knowledge for the sake of knowledge, in thinking for the sake of free play of thought, is necessary to the emancipation of practical life – to making it rich and progressive. (1933, p. 224)

The imagination is not to be confused, Dewey insists, with the imaginary, with simple flights of fancy. The imagination has the special quality of allowing us an expansive view, an initial glimpse of the seemingly unconnected parts, qualities, and relations of a thing, a simultaneous taking in of an initially undifferentiated whole, together with its various relations. For Dewey imagination would ideally be part and parcel of all sorts of educational encounters, both in the arts and in the sciences.

Play

The playful attitude is one of freedom, one in which a person is not bound by the limits which traditionally adhere to things: by the uses they have heretofore been put to or the meanings they have held for others. Play entails the absence of dogmatism of any sort; it is instead, marked by openness and flexibility. Play expands the mind's cognitive capacities as things develop the ability to stand for other things, as they become signs that the student can imbue with his own meanings and manipulate in novel and interesting ways. Dewey shows great faith in the fruits of the marriage of playfulness and seriousness, the union of unchained spontaneity and grounding intellectual labor. For Dewey, "to be playful and serious at the same time is possible, and it defines the ideal mental condition" (1933, p. 286). In an educational setting play allows students' minds an escape from the stifling prison of ready made answers, allows them to explore new ideas and notions which may not have been considered before. This is in fact how many new inventions come into being, from ideas which once seemed far fetched and did not fit the mold (1933).

As can be seen, for Dewey, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, and reflectiveness are the cornerstone for real thinking and real learning to take place, though these must be merged with self-discipline because learning is serious work. Well-developed habits of mind will enhance people's creativity and their problem-solving abilities in the face of the different situations they will encounter throughout their lives. A habit, for Dewey, is much more than repetition. "The essence of habit is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response... Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than

bare recurrence of specific acts. It means will” (1921, p. 10). A well formed habit may pervade a person so deeply as to become second nature. This is reminiscent of Sartre’s claim that we choose ourselves through our actions, so that these, in a way, change us and cause us to become whom we wish to be. In so far as a student participates in curiosity, imagination, and play, he is altered *as a person* through the new horizons he is exposed to. Dewey stresses the primacy of habits in our consciousness and our actions; these become an integral part of us, not subordinate instruments. “We may think of habits as means, waiting, like tools in a box, to be used by conscious resolve. But they are something more than that. They are active means, means that project themselves, energetic and dominating ways of acting” (1921, p. 2).

In schools, particularly, it is the task of the pedagogue to inculcate good habits of mind in his pupils, or else he cannot expect them to learn. It is not enough to tell students what they ought to do. Dewey remarks upon a certain “superstition” of society. “They suppose that if one is told what to do, if the right end is pointed out to them, all that is required in order to bring about the right act is will or wish on the part of the one who is to act” (1921, p. 3). It is not enough for students to want to learn or for teachers to exhort them to do so. The right habits of mind must first be inculcated, and this takes a certain amount of discipline and experience. As Dewey tells us:

Ideas, thoughts of ends, are not spontaneously generated. There is no immaculate conception of meanings or purposes. Reason pure of all influence from prior habit is a fiction. But pure sensations out of which ideas can be framed apart from habit are equally fictitious... Distinct and independent sensory qualities, far from being original elements, are the products of a highly skilled analysis which

disposes of immense technical scientific resources. To be able to single out a definitive sensory element in any field is evidence of previous training, that is of well- formed habits. (1921, pp. 4-5)

Well-formed habits of mind are essential to a good education, an education which speaks both to the student's intellect and to his moral sense. This is the kind of education which can serve to protect society against "advances" divorced from ethical concerns, or a preoccupation for the ethical, unaccompanied by concrete actions. The first leads to our present technocratic society, the second to an assemblage of dreamers, incapable of acting upon their world. Dewey's thought developed through the lens of Greene's ethical concerns becomes habits of mind in the service of philosophy, the moral imperative to reach for justice and inclusion. Dewey's thought developed through the lens of Eisner's preoccupation with the psychological laws of learning, becomes habits of mind in the service of understanding, the ability to see, engage with, and interpret the multitudinous symbols of the world.

Further Words on the Aesthetic

Dewey, as we have seen, is an invaluable source for all those who are interested in pedagogy. He has left us many important insights into education and its methods; particularly important was his campaign to free students from oppressive methods of instruction which he believed led to a reduction of knowledge. He has also left us the reflections pertaining to his initial forays into aesthetic education, a journey of

exploration, which though incomplete, yet holds valuable seeds for all those who come after. In our continuing progression towards the aesthetic in this dissertation we will now turn to two thinkers who were champions of the arts, proponents of the diffusion of the aesthetic, and upholders of a more comprehensive view of thinking and education: Greene and Eisner.

We see Dewey's influence in Greene's work particularly in her preoccupation for democracy and social justice, and her desire to counteract the alienation felt by a large segment of the society which has been silenced and marginalized by those in power. Greene also draws on Dewey's legacy in her emphasis on inter-subjectivity: on the cognitive front, the inter-subjectivity between the perceiver and the work of art and on the social front, the inter-subjectivity among human beings. Greene's "releasing the imagination" also bears some comparison to Dewey's conditions for fruitful thinking, and the necessary role of the aesthetic in this exercise.

We see Dewey's influence in Eisner's work particularly in his analysis of cognitive activity and how the "rational" and the aesthetic must come together to form a well-rounded person. We hear echoes of Dewey's writings in Eisner's criticism of the reduction of thinking to a series of steps which have been artificially delineated, as well as his insistence on the importance of the senses for thought. Like Dewey, Eisner underlines the rigor of qualitative thinking. Finally, by calling for student parity in cognitive development, Eisner, like Greene, comes back to Dewey's preoccupation for democracy and social justice.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAXINE GREENE

Maxine Greene is the great American defender of everything aesthetic: art, music, literature, dance, as well as a great lover and upholder of democracy. Throughout her long career in education she has been constantly engaged in the project to bring the arts to young people in the public schools through such work as her involvement with the Lincoln Center Institute. She harbors the vision of a more just society through “releasing the imagination” in young people, and stimulating in them a love of knowledge. She is a champion of the imagination, stressing its inseparability from both the cognitive and the ethical. She is also a strong proponent of diversity, multiculturalism, and empowering the voices of those who have been marginalized. Though she has been called an elitist by some for her emphasis on certain types of texts such as classical music and literature, her elitism can be considered a kind of democratic elitism, for she would open up the whole world of aesthetic experience to all youths.

Greene is a lover of the humanities and of philosophy. Her ethical argument for aesthetic learning owes a great deal to existential philosophy, especially that of Sartre; we can see her treatment of many of the issues which existentialist thinkers were preoccupied by. Greene designates her own philosophical orientation as “existential-phenomenological” (1978), a stance in which there is a focus on the engaged observer and his subjectivity as well as on the subjectivities of the people he is interacting with and the inter-subjective reality which is created through these interactions.

In this section we begin with Greene's thoughts on the purpose of education, through which we are immediately introduced to her passion for democracy and social justice. Then we come to Greene's worry over a world in crisis and take a look at those evils which she describes in her work: alienation, meaninglessness, despair, dehumanization, indifference, and the erosion of democracy, and we follow Greene through her examination and rejection of a few traditional solutions which cannot work in today's world. We then go through Greene's arguments for arts education. This is followed by an examination of the nature of the aesthetic and how aesthetic experience reveals the world; here we are able to see Greene's proposals for counteracting each one of the ills she has previously mentioned. We continue with Greene's discussion of the importance of making art accessible to all students and her analysis of what makes a good teacher. After this there is a brief recounting of Greene's debt to Rosenblatt, especially as pertains to the relationship between the reader and the text. Finally, Greene's dialectic of freedom is revisited, showing how possibility and necessity are eternal players in the drama of human life.

The Purpose of Education

According to Maxine Greene, the purpose of education cannot be to ensure that our students are first in the world of math, science, and technology. There is infinitely more to learning than what can be measured with standards, criteria, or Goals 2000. Students are being taught to revere an anonymous, authoritarian scientific reason. "When it comes to schools, the dominant voices are still those of the officials who assume the

objective worth of certain kinds of knowledge, who take for granted that the schools' main mission is to meet national economic and technical needs" (1995b, p. 9). Students are being shut off from the narratives of their lived experience, from what makes them individual and unique. Math and science have become the embodiment of knowledge, while the arts and humanities are seen as merely decorative, unnecessary, and gratuitous (1995b).

Greene rails against our technicized, consumerist mentality which has led to the inevitable reduction of human life in every possible aspect: moral, psychological, intellectual, and cultural. The new buzzwords in education are words like effectiveness, proficiency, and efficiency. The new goal is an empty, ill-defined "excellence" whose relentless pursuit by schools, instructors, and even the students themselves leads to a one-dimensional educational experience. Today young people are not being educated to develop into human beings capable of leading happy, moral lives in which they accept responsibility and show concern for their world and for their fellow human beings; they are instead being strictly molded to enhance the economic competitiveness of their nation. According to Greene, teachers "are expected to process the young (seen as human resources) to perform acceptably on some level of an increasingly systematized world" (1988, p. 12).

Education, for Greene, has a plurality of missions. It must first of all enable young people to perceive and to reflect upon their perceptions. The awakening and refining of their senses will move them to see, hear, and feel in new, unexpected ways as they become able to look upon the familiar with new eyes. Reflection will allow them to consider, analyze, and evaluate their perceptions, to look critically at their world, posing

questions, finding connections, and creating new meanings. Perception and reflection lead to learning, and it is important that this learning be a process of both discovery and creation in a world filled with ambiguity in which each individual becomes the artist whose brushstrokes bring life to his experience. The one who reflects must be conscious, wide-awake, as he engages in the search for answers to meaningful questions which arise out of concrete situations. Greene writes:

It is through and by means of education... that individuals can be provoked to reach beyond themselves in their inter-subjective space... that they may become empowered to think about what they are doing, to become mindful, to share meanings, to conceptualize, to make varied sense of their lived worlds... It is through education that preferences may be released, languages learned, intelligences developed, perspectives opened, possibilities disclosed. (1988, p. 12)

Young people must learn multiple languages, develop multiple intelligences, and learn to conceptualize in many ways (1988). They must develop different kinds of literacy, a comfort and ease with various types of texts; they must learn to both read and express themselves through the languages of music, dance, the arts, and literature, for these are languages that matter (1995b).

This learning must be emancipatory. Students must be led to understand human interests and how these complement, clash, and intersect in the world of ideas and action, ideologies and politics. They must be made aware of the history of knowledge structures, the paradigms of science; anything that can throw light upon the world as it, for it is thus that they can learn to understand power: what it is, how it is used, and how it is abused.

Young people must be made critical and aware so that they may replace passivity with engagement, and can protect and defend themselves and others. As Greene notes, we live in a world where “no one takes responsibility; yet individuals feel that their rights and liberties are being eroded by people more adept, efficient, and powerful than they can ever be” (1978, p. 10).

Encounters with others move young people outside of their own experience, pressing them to reach beyond themselves out to these others and meet them in inter-subjective space where they may share and create meanings together as part of a community. These others are a central part of the ethical mission of education, for it is through the awareness and understanding of the inherent dignity and worth of others, that young people will learn responsibility for the world and for their fellow human beings, a responsibility which is the very essence of freedom. Greene insists that:

An important dimension of all education must be the intellectual bringing into being of norm-governed situations, situations in which students discover what it is to experience a sense of obligation and responsibility, whether they derive that sense from their own experiences of caring and being cared for or from their intuitions and conceptions of justice and equity. (1995b, p. 66)

This freedom is what moves us towards democracy: towards a healthy society, a society which is just and compassionate, which does not discard members it considers useless, ugly or broken, which does not measure people according to their material possessions or worldly influence, a society which will strive against injustice and right wrongs where it may find them. Greene reminds us that:

We need but recall the long years in which people took it for granted that failure was the fault of the individual pupil, or that certain minority groups were content with their lot. We need but recall the ‘invisibility’ imposed upon poor persons, members of various ethnic communities, even upon what we know as the ‘third world. (2001a, p. 18)

Perhaps the ultimate purpose of education, for Greene, is to enable young people to create meaning in their lives, to name their world and take responsibility for it through the choices they make every day. To this end Greene urges us to pursue a pedagogy of liberation, of inclusion, of critical consciousness and wide awakesness through which young people may be made more aware of their individual world and the multiple worlds of others. We owe it to our students to teach them lessons in school to prepare them for the trials and tribulations they will encounter as they come face to face with the world that has so far been given them, a world in crisis. Greene’s hope is that they emerge from the struggle ethical, committed human beings. As Greene emphasizes:

Ethical action takes place when spaces are opened for concrete choices made by situated human beings. Enmeshed in relationships and projects, such human beings must attend to the impinging social and political contexts and attempts to overcome the carelessness, systematization, and neglect that stand in the way of morality. (1990, p. 67)

The Crisis of Modern Man & Society

Today, Greene insists, we are living in an increasingly unjust world, a world in which there is rampant dehumanization, in which technical rationality has taken over, in which human beings are only worth as much as their bank accounts or social connections. Greene points out that feelings of desperation, hopelessness, and meaninglessness are more widespread than ever, and even as suffering and pain increase, more and more people become passive, withdrawing into the protective shell of unconcern. She is concerned that “there is a general withdrawal from what ought to be public concerns... there is... a widespread speechlessness, a silence where there might be, where there ought to be – an impassioned and significant dialogue” (1988, p. 2). She speaks of lives submerged in the everyday, of people going about their tasks purposely unaware, surrounded by “white noise,” too afraid to glance up and take a look around them (1995b).

Greene takes a strong stand against our pragmatic American conscience, combating it with an existentialist interpretation of the world which calls into question much that has been taken for granted about man and his surroundings. Greene’s existentialist stance uncovers a view of the world which had been silenced, not fully recognized as real. Words such as alienation, despair, freedom, and responsibility take on a new and significant meaning within the existentialist context which privileges the whole man. Existentialism will not render cult to a disembodied reason, untainted by the flesh.

Alienation

Greene decries the fact that today we live as though our lives were something in which we were but nominally involved. The positivists are dominant; the cult of efficiency has been allowed to rule. The government in post industrial America has decided that it is in its best interest to produce little more than a series of malleable, easily manipulated youths to serve the needs of business, technology and national security. Too many students are given training instead of an education; too many adults are concerned only with career tracks, status, and wealth. Hardly a thought is given to equality and justice for all. People are disengaged and uncommitted. We become other: invisible, unimportant, incapable of feeling or making ourselves felt. We are alienated. “We are other to those we meet and to ourselves at once. Correct and controlled, we seldom – as living persons – meet each other’s eyes” (1969, p. 439). And people, notes Greene “are likely to attribute what weighs down and limits them to the ‘nature of things.’ They overlook the fact that domination in the intellectual and social realm, unlike mortality, is alterable” (1978, pp. 24-25).

Meaninglessness

People have become passive and disengaged; undergoing life instead of living it; not posing questions about whom they are and their place in the world, but accommodating themselves to an objective version of reality which has been given them. They live a life in which there is no conscious choosing, in which everything is automatic, routine. Many are drawn to escape, losing themselves in narcissistic

enjoyments, in what gives immediate, unreflective gratification: drugs, erotica, violence, sensationalistic experiences which can trigger feeling. Greene is concerned that:

Many people are deliberately choosing against the rational way. They prefer the way of mysticism or sensuality. They prefer magic, ancient myths, orphic wisdom, or astrology. It is not that these modes of thinking and being provide answers to nagging questions, but rather because they make discursive thinking seem unnecessary; they make the questions recede... People move in limbo, in an ongoing present. Do they despair? Are they free? They smile. (1978, pp. 7-8)

They are lacking passion and without passion there can be no real engagement, and thus no meaning (1978).

Despair

Greene sees the human condition as experiencing some desolate days; the world is experienced as a theater of the absurd, which leads to despair. Yet all this is a despair of our own making, for it is human beings who have chosen to live a life of unconsciousness, “that sad opaqueness of a private life centered about nothing but itself” (1995b, p. 2). And it is human beings who have created an unjust world. Greene reminds us that people lose their freedom when they are not capable of creating the world for themselves with others, naming alternatives, imagining a better state of things, engaging with others in projects of change, and so they despair. She highlights that:

We cannot simply fantasize the disappearance of joblessness, homelessness, fatherlessness, disease. It may be, however, that a general inability to conceive a

better order of things can give rise to a resignation that paralyzes and prevents people from acting to bring about change. (1995b, pp. 18-19)

Dehumanization

Greene asks us to take a long hard look at the world that surrounds us. In these times, she tells us, there are so many harsh, dehumanizing realities that people are living with on a daily basis: hunger, disease, poverty, neglect, yet we seem primarily concerned with world-class achievement and winning the global race. We live in a world in which so little is done to reduce suffering, in light of which our goals become something of a mockery, a farce. What is to be done with all those who will never meet world-class standards? Greene censures the view that:

Unlike the well-adjusted and the 'normal,' the unsuccessful are unable to memorize, draw inferences, do what more fortunate children do 'naturally.' They are, it is suggested, free to make a proper effort, free to refuse; like it or not, failing youngsters have only themselves to blame. (2000a, p. 9)

And if those who fail are held solely responsible for their failure, then those who are successful can very easily wash their hands of any responsibility.

Indifference

This is a time, says Greene, in which self-interest reigns supreme, in which most Americans are concerned with only their own individual projects, their own getting ahead. Modern man, for Greene, is locked into a never ending race against his neighbor:

the better house, the bigger car, and so on; and he includes his children in this race as well: the better test scores, the better schools, the more prestigious degree leading to the better paying job, and thus the cycle continues. It seems to Greene that this selfishness, this lack of awareness of a world lived in common with others has led to the decline of social consciousness, and behavior which is non-moral, “meaning the kind of behavior that demands no conscious choosing, that is wholly automatic, determined, coerced, or routine” (1973, p. 214). Family, community, nation, and world all pale in comparison to the private interests of the individual, who shows an indifferent face to what does not directly touch him. The indifferent citizen, Greene would say, is an irresponsible citizen. She reminds us that:

There still exists the indifference to human suffering that makes holocausts and torture chambers possible. There are, increasingly, systems judged by the efficacy of their controls and the promise of their markets. Feelings of powerlessness, desperation, and anomie are probably more widespread than they were a decade ago. Somehow or other, the ‘plague’ has to be confronted once again, and whatever the ‘plague’ now signifies. (1981b, p. 288)

The Move away from Democracy

All of the ills described above, Greene would argue, keep man from realizing his full potential as an ethical human being in the world; they keep him from partaking of a true democracy, a society where the principles of equality and justice reign supreme, and where men choose not only their own good, but the good of others each and every day. But Greene reminds us that this is not just an ill of our modern times, for as a nation,

even as we have always glorified the ideals of democracy, our actions have not exactly kept pace with our words. Even as idealists like Horace Mann were calling for equality and universal education there existed child labor among the poor and the exclusion of ethnic minorities from the common school (1997). Yet these new schools, to hear the speakers' enthusiasm, were to usher in an era of true democracy: they were to train the young for the responsibility of freedom, ensure universal equality and guarantee a future of prosperity to each and every member of the new nation. The American Dream would be accessible to all (1965).

In Search of a Solution

Why Not Focus on Knowledge?

Greene would point out that too many times knowledge has been sought after as a life raft, a false hope that the world can be completely and forever explained. Other times it has been sought after as an instrument of exclusion, a way of setting oneself and one's own apart. The idea of true and objective knowledge as the pinnacle of human accomplishment can be traced back to the philosophy of Plato and his separation of the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds, or truth versus appearance, the mind versus the senses. As Greene reminds us:

Philosophers were thought to possess a privileged awareness of truth and goodness, of what the human being ought to do and be. Moreover, they were thought capable of constructing great systems of thought, inclusive world pictures

that transcended individual perceptions and personal responses to being alive.
(1973, p. 20)

And this is at the base of much of our positivistic culture, our technical-rational tendencies. But Greene reminds us that there is no such thing as truth out there in some objective universe. Greene rejects the claim of Enlightenment philosophy in which man believed that there was only one right answer for each and every question.

Exclusion is one unfortunate legacy of that far-off gilded age of knowledge. Greene reminds us that “the so-called liberal arts, with their emphasis on languages, literatures, and logic, were intended to liberate a talented few to know the True and the Good and the Beautiful through the exercise of reason” (1981b, p. 290). They were taught to crack the codes that lead to power (1981b). Today standards, under the banner of narrow, specific knowledge, continue the mission of exclusion, sorting young people into the different strata of society. The emphasis on objective knowledge and becoming part of an elite who are, through a meritocratic society, made privy to this knowledge, results in the desire for those in power to “see the world small”, to exclude and objectify others who are seen as means and not ends in themselves. People outside of the power structure are seen as “human capital”, as “raw material” to be exploited for the benefit of the few. Thus the underprivileged and excluded feel alienated, resentful of those in power, in despair at their inability to get ahead in a world where the cards have been stacked against them (1995b). Greene highlights the injustice that:

It is evident enough that people are born into a culturally defined literacy, which some acquire in the course of growing up and which some never fully grasp.

They may not grasp it because their families are poor, remote from institutional efforts to socialize people into productive participation in society. They may not grasp it because they are out of the mainstream for any number of reasons, including immigrant or minority status. Many of the alienated or marginalized are made to feel distrustful of their own voices, their own ways of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories or shape their narratives or ground new learning in what they already know. The favored ones, in contrast, seldom question the language of dominance or efficiency or efficacy in which they were reared.... (1995b, pp. 110-111)

All knowledge, says Greene, is perspectival, limited, incomplete. Knowledge is inextricable from the human condition, from the world that surrounds us in a particular place at a particular moment in time as well as from how the world is experienced from the different standpoints of the human beings experiencing it. There is no discipline in the world, scientific or otherwise, which can be considered a mirror of nature (1988). We cannot impose a hierarchical, objective stamp upon reality. Gone are the times when:

Liberal education and the traditional disciplines seemed to offer the exemplary counterbalance to local knowledge, purely factual information, casual observations, particularistic views. They were doorways through which selected members of the privileged class could enter the culture's conversations and keep alive what was authoritatively taken to be the heritage. (1997, pp. 1-2)

For too long knowledge has been considered purely theoretical when, in fact, Greene reminds us, it also carries a heavy dose of practicality. This is a highly complex world, and young people need to be taught how to navigate it, how to cope with different institutions: schools, hospitals, welfare offices, prisons, the streets. These are also part and parcel of the reality for some, and need to be taken into account as valuable spaces for the discovery and creation of meaning. How then can some still insist upon a monological literacy? (2000a)

Finally and most importantly, a knowledge which is not infused throughout with the aesthetic will be an impoverished knowledge. Imagination, metaphor, and encounters with art are priceless. They help us break with the natural attitude, with everyday, unconscious seeing, hearing and knowing. They combat life's anesthetics, as we are moved to perceive the world in new and deeper ways. They humanize us as we become more conscious of the dignity and worth of others and move towards the creation of a more just, inclusive world. As Greene writes, "Encounters with the arts and activities in the domains of art can nurture the growth of persons who will reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to be more ardently in the world" (1995b, p. 132).

Why Not Focus on the Rational?

Greene is not devaluing the importance of logical thinking. She is not advocating that one go to the other extreme, throwing over logic and analytical thinking in favor of the aesthetic and of sensibility. This kind of one-dimensionality would hamper human being's development just as seriously as the one-dimensional focus on rational thought

which runs rampant in American culture today. She recognizes that “a complex society requires echelons of people with problem-solving abilities, technical knowledge, and administrative skill” (2001a, p.17). Training rational thought will remain an important part of education but it is not its only goal. The purpose of cognitive development cannot be solely to gain an increasingly complete grasp of abstract principles. It is instead, Greene would offer, to engage in true hermeneutic interpretation, to learn to see, understand, and experience from as many perspectives as possible.

The Importance of Educating in the Arts

Greene’s first concern is the ethical, the pursuit of the good life for the individual as well as for the society. Greene would tell us that we have the moral responsibility to strive for a better world: to counteract alienation with engagement, meaninglessness with meaning, to free those who feel powerless in their despair, humanize those who suffer from dehumanization, and teach responsibility to the indifferent. In effect, to strengthen what is at present a fragile democracy, a democracy in constant danger of erosion if we are not ever conscious, vigilant, and engaged.

We can do all this through the creation of meaning within a world which is given to us as absurd, containing no values outside the ones we may imbue it with. The arts and humanities, for Greene, can serve as a catalyst to face the inevitable struggle of a life filled with endless choices in a world for which we are responsible. Aesthetic experience, for Greene, touches our bodies, our minds, and our very souls. Greene shares with us what art means to her:

I am not talking of the arts as motivation, nor am I justifying experiences with the arts as means to the end of learning to read or to do math or to grasp the renderings of history. They may on occasion work that way, but my concern is with the way in which informed encounters with art forms – preferably by means of initiation into the language of each form – affect our being in the world... Each engagement, each moment of attending, each moment of careful noticing opens new perspectives for me, reveals new possibilities for living and being. (2001b, p. 151)

The Nature of the Aesthetic

Misconceptions about the arts in general and aesthetic thinking can be found not only in the general population, but even among educators, Greene tells us to her dismay. They cannot see the abilities related with aesthetic thinking as basic and necessary to all human beings, nor can they comprehend what it is that aesthetic thinking consists of, and how the arts are involved in this exercise. Some see the arts as negative, as a simple waste of time and resources in education. Others see the arts as positive, but still misinterpret their nature and their mission. Both camps misunderstand the arts in fundamental ways. “Few teachers even consider the possibility that the capacities needed for grasping and enjoying works of art may be as basic as those required for verbal and numerical literacy” (1981a, p. 116).

For Greene the arts are neither frivolous nor decorative; they do not stand purely on their ability to amuse or to distract, to achieve beauty, elegance or harmony. The arts

are not easy, or random; they are not haphazard, unreflective arrangement, or mere accident. The arts are not the simple product of the affect or the imagination; they are not magical, purely inspirational, beyond understanding and communication. The arts are not empty or meaningless, or open to any meaning whatsoever; they are instead rich, significant, and deep. The arts are the result of hard work, of intelligent engagement, the shaping and molding of a vision, the rendering of a piece of the world (2001b).

How Aesthetic Experience Gives Us the World

The Aesthetic Helps Develop Human Intelligences

Some place artificial limits on what is considered intelligent activity. They are prone to stop at verbal and numerical literacy as the only literacies proper to the development of mind and education. As Greene explains:

The arts in education ordinarily summon up certain creative and expressive activities fostered in art rooms and music rooms and dance studios. Too frequently, these are described as component parts of an ‘affective’ realm, considered an antithesis to the ‘cognitive,’ the really serious concern of the schools. (1984, p. 127)

Why, then, try to teach it in schools when there are more pressing issues at stake? The reason, argues Greene, is that cognition and sensibility are inseparable. “Cognitive learning is depersonalized and technicized in the absence of aesthetic concerns” (1981a, p. 118). Greene insists on the importance of developing the whole range of human

intelligences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and interpersonal, among others. She insists on the need for developing understanding in the multiple languages and symbol systems that exist today, on training in multiple literacies. Aesthetic literacy is an intellectual power, part and parcel of reason, and no less crucial or challenging than literacies which depend on discursive forms, and enlarging students' symbolic repertoire for thinking and expressing themselves falls within the domain of education. She writes:

No form of literacy, of course, is taught for its own sake. Like verbal and numerical literacy, aesthetic literacy provides acquaintance with specifiable languages, as it does with particular ways of perceiving and imagining. Not only may this lead to heightened awareness of actual works; it may bring about an enriched acquaintance with the appearances of things... even as it enlarges the symbolic repertoires needed for thinking about the world and expressing what is taught. (1981a, p. 120)

Youths must be taught to perceive, critique, and then act upon the meanings they have discovered for themselves and with others. This is achieved through reflection, through the use of an intellect which has been sensitized to construe meaning from what the senses experience, and there is no better sensitizer than art. Aesthetic education helps the young stop looking at the world through the tunnel vision of their particular experience, and reach outwards. It “enlarges the spaces – the perceptual, imaginative, and conceptual spaces – in which the young come in touch with and try to interpret their worlds” (2001b, p. 139).

Art Releases the Imagination

Greene is concerned that we just let life happen to us instead of immersing ourselves in its richness, that too many of us live in “everydayness,” in the taken for granted, that we take the world as a given, together with all its injustices. We are resistant to developing a critical consciousness. Perhaps some of us are too comfortable in our habits, our routines, entrenched in our particular ways of seeing the world, surrounded by “white noise,” any distraction that helps us forget ourselves and others (1995b).

Greene struggles against this unconsciousness and indifference. She advocates a total engagement with the world, the courage to look upon its wounded visage and do something to repair it. Greene believes that the desire for reparation can be awakened through encounters with art. Art is what combats what Greene has called the “shadow side in American culture – an uncaring, separatist aspect too many associate with freedom” (1995b, p. 67). Art has the ability to “release the imagination,” and imagination is what makes empathy possible. “Of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities” (1995b, p. 3). If we are able to imagine things other than as they are, to decide that certain aspects of the human condition are unacceptable, we can make changes leading to democracy and freedom. As Greene explains, “we acknowledge the harshness of situations only when we have in mind another state of affairs in which things would be better” (1995b, p. 5).

It is social imagination which will help us empathize with others, throw our lots in with them, and become actively engaged in creating a just world for all. Social imagination, for Greene, is capable of transcending injustice, indifference, and suffering.

It is “the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools” (1995b, p. 5). If we can release our imagination through empathy with others, with the downtrodden and the disenfranchised, we can summon into existence a more just world. Greene insists that:

We cannot ignore or set aside the inequities, the indecencies, and the pressures of ideology. Nor can we ignore the unequal transmitting of knowledge, the tracking of children, the demeaning of poor and immigrant people’s experience, the proposing of one-dimensional reforms, all of which are functions of existing social structures and tendencies. (1995b, pp. 50-51)

Mirroring Jean-Paul Sartre, Greene claims that the confrontation of young people with a world full of deficiencies and injustices cannot but arouse indignation and a desire to make reparations. It is the dissonance between what is and what ought to be that can move us to act, and it is art which so vividly discloses these dissonances that force us to take notice and take action (1995b).

So Greene advocates for a new pedagogy in which the arts will play a central role, a pedagogy of hope through which youths learn responsibility for others and their world, enmeshed in relationships and projects, in the shared creation of values springing from the fertile ground of aware, passionate and committed inter-subjective experience (1995b). Art, Greene will argue, is the ultimate tool to combat the great ills of society that have traditionally been pointed out and illustrated by existentialism; art is the answer to the crisis of modern man and society in multiple ways:

Engagement Counteracts Alienation

Greene constantly reminds us that art is profoundly important, that it truly matters. “The learning provoked by what we call aesthetic education is paradigmatic for... learning stimulated by the desire to explore, to find out, to go in search” (2001b, pp. 46-47). Art forces a reaction from us, a waking from sleep and passivity. Engaging with art is “refusing the anaesthetic in our experience” (2001b, p. 148). Art fosters passion; it moves us to become engaged. Aesthetic education for Greene is “an effort to move individuals to seek a grounding for themselves, so that they may break through the ‘cotton wool’ of dailyness and passivity and boredom and come awake to the colored, sounding, problematic world” (2001b, p. 7). Thus silence can be replaced with dialogue and passivity with action.

Meaning Counteracts Meaninglessness

Greene asserts that art can bring meaning to peoples’ lives. In an absurd world, a world without meaning, we have no choice but to make our own, if we will not instead choose despair. There are no made and ready rules to follow. “There is no hidden self or divine spirit within us that ‘knows’ the good and the right; nor is it an act of reason, liberated from human connection and community, that permits us to grasp what is just” (1990, p. 73). Art steps in, presenting us with aesthetic encounters, situated encounters in which we are led to see that our background, our individual story matters. Greene stresses “the importance of encouraging encounters with subject matter that involves a sense of agency, of achieving dimensions of that subject matter as meaningful, not

uncovering some hidden meaning others have predefined” (2001b, p. 193). For Greene, we find our meaning in freedom.

Freedom Counteracts Despair

Freedom, for Greene, is the moral imperative to take ethical action in the world. In the sartrean tradition she defines it as freedom for, a positive freedom, as opposed to freedom from, a negative freedom. Freedom is active, not passive. It does not allow us to escape, but thrusts us before our responsibility to create the world and our own story. Art gives us the gift of possibility. Greene tells us, “Without the presence of the arts, I cannot conceive of open spaces or the life of the imagination that may make the actualization called freedom possible” (2000a, p. 13). It makes us conscious that we have the freedom to reach beyond ourselves and our everyday personal concerns, and enter inter-subjective spaces within which we may struggle for a more just world. Greene reminds us that “all this demands the activity of what we are calling a social imagination – a capacity to envisage a transcending of the violence, the unfairness, the carelessness we see and feel around us” (2000a, p. 13). If we can recognize and accept this freedom, we have no need to despair.

Inter-subjectivity Counteracts Dehumanization

Greene advocates a world in which human beings confront one another without masks, and this can only be achieved through inter-subjectivity, “familiar contact with everybody and anything” (1995b, p. 63). Practicing inter-subjectivity means no longer seeing others as invisible, strange, or undeserving. It means giving them a voice and

respecting and valuing what they have to say. Art will make these others visible, transforming them into concrete human beings. Greene tells us that “imagination may be a new way of decentering ourselves, of breaking out of the confinements of privatism and self-regard into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, ‘Here we are’” (1995b, p. 31). Art then reveals them as somewhat different yet essentially the same by allowing us, through metaphor, to try on their thoughts and feelings. This allows us to empathize with them. After this we can never again reduce them to mere objects; art promotes awareness of a world lived in common with others.

Responsibility Counteracts Indifference

For Greene moral education should culminate in each individual’s assuming responsibility for the state of the world. Social consciousness, for Greene, is key. She tells us, “I am preoccupied... with... ‘the plague’ – that terrible distancing and indifference, so at odds with commitment and communion and love... I want to stress the connection between wide-awakeness, cognitive clarity, and existential concern” (1978, p. 48). Art combats the plague, the pervading carelessness and indifference which gnaw at the roots of our basic humanity. Art allows us to acquire a conscience which can look beyond itself to empathize with others.

Choosing Democracy Counteracts its Erosion

Democracy, for Greene, is the noblest of goals, but achieving democracy is a challenge. It is a struggle that we must engage in at every moment through the choices we make for ourselves and for others. As she reminds us, “democracy is forever

incomplete; it is founded in possibility” (1993, p. 218). Thus the existentialist focus Greene places on wide-awakeness, on vigilance and care, lest we should slip into more comfortable, unreflective habits. Democracy demands a great deal. The values of pluralism and cohesiveness are central; so too are equality, justice, and freedom. Yet all these demand creative tension and strife, for there is never a final consensus; there will always be multiple perspectives, multiple voices clamoring to be heard, encompassing dissonance. Greene reminds us:

There cannot be a single standard of humanness or attainment or propriety when it comes to taking a perspective on the world. There can only be an ongoing, collaborative decoding of many texts. There can only be a conversation drawing in voices kept inaudible over the generations, a dialogue involving more and more living persons. There can only be – there ought to be – a wider and deeper sharing of beliefs, an enhanced capacity to articulate them, to justify them, to persuade others as the heteroglossic conversation moves on, never reaching a final conclusion, always incomplete, but richer and more densely woven, even as it moves through time. (1993, pp. 212-213)

Making Art Accessible

For Greene, a first step in enabling the good society we yearn for lies in making the aesthetic accessible to all through education (1978). All young people need to become literate in the different symbol systems that can be found in the world, to enlarge their symbolic repertoire. Without this they will be at a disadvantage. As Greene points

out, “There is little question that, in spite of efforts to democratize the arts by making them increasingly accessible to all children, the offspring of the rich are taught early to ‘crack the codes’ that obscure the arts for so many” (1994, p. 392). But for students to truly benefit from exposure to art it cannot be as passive observers. They must be taught to actively engage with works of art. Greene tells us:

I want to see people resonate to the kind of knowing that plunges deeply to central ideas and complex understanding; I want them to feel connections between what they are coming to know and the contexts of their lives or their lived worlds. I want to provoke dialogue and eager transactions in the classroom, whether they have to do with works of art or with art-making and perceiving.... (1994, p. 398)

But developing the aesthetic imagination also comes with dangers and temptations which can move us away from the critical consciousness that Greene considers essential. Students can fall into a reverie of aesthetic experience as pure pleasure, an overwhelming of the senses which may make them resist intellectual, moral, social, or political analysis. It may also happen that students believe that because their voices are, by definition, valid, any opinion or idea that is expressed carries the same weight. To this end Greene insists that “there should be choosing and participation and experience and the search for order in all the arts” (1978, p. 209). Greene would not countenance an engagement with the aesthetic which did not signify effort (1995a). She believes that aesthetic engagements should not “separate or alienate learners so fully from the tasks of the world that they become incapacitated for belonging or for membership or

for work itself” (1988, p. 133). This reduction of aesthetic experience is just as noxious, in her view, as the intellectualizing, objectifying, and standardizing of the world.

The Pedagogue as Essential to the Arts Curriculum

Teachers are crucial in helping their students traverse the realm of the aesthetic and explore its infinite dimensions. The good pedagogue, for Greene, is one who both appreciates the aesthetic, and knows how to reveal it to young people. Greene says there is a need for “teachers who provoke students to pose their own questions, to teach themselves, to go at their own pace, to name their worlds” (1995b, p. 11). He exposes his students to the many languages of the aesthetic, helping them refine their senses, and bringing them to impassioned engagement with the work. As Greene tells us, “for teachers, the obligation is to teach persons how to notice what there is to be noticed without imposing alien readings or interpretations” (1984, p. 133). He makes his students aware that there are multiple literacies, diverse modes of understanding, and different vantage points, and that all these may contain valid messages that deserve to be heard.

Teachers, Greene believes, should educate not by providing information, but by stimulating a love of knowledge. They need to send the message that engagement with the aesthetic is serious work. They have the responsibility to break through any resistance to intellectual engagement with the arts they may notice in their students by practicing engagement themselves, by bringing their personal stories to the classroom, sharing with students to encourage them to do the same in turn. Greene believes that “the classroom situation most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is the

one in which teachers and learners find themselves conducting a kind of collaborative search, each from her or his lived situation” (1995b, p. 23).

For Greene the good educator is very much in tune with what is going on around him. He is sensitive to the existential climate of the times, and to the needs of young people. Greene reminds us that “it takes imagination to break with ordinary classifications and come in touch with actual young people in their variously lived situations” (1995b, p. 14). This can only be achieved if the pedagogue is passionate and committed.

Practical Applications for Greene’s Philosophy

Debt to Louise Rosenblatt

Louise Rosenblatt (1904 - 2005), like Greene after her, argues for the supremacy of literature as an important source of insight because she believes that “prolonged contact with literature may result in increased social sensitivity” (1938, p. 184). This is the case because “the text embodies verbal stimuli toward a special kind of intense and ordered experience – sensuous, intellectual, emotional – out of which social insights may arise” (1938, p. 31). In this way literature becomes a way for students to expand their understanding of others. She points out that “books are a means of getting outside the limited cultural group into which the individual is born” (1938, p.192). She asserts that “literature permits something resembling ‘ideal experimentation’ because it offers such a wide range of vicarious experiences” (1938, p. 199). Imagination is thus awakened in

students, the imagination that Greene will later refer to in her call to “release the imagination.” Rosenblatt tells us that “literature fosters the kind of imagination needed in a democracy” (1938, p. 222), the kind of imagination necessary to create a more just world.

Rosenblatt takes issue with the dryness of an educational method which focuses on the objective transferring of knowledge from one generation to the next. “The assumption of a mask of unemotional objectivity or impartial omniscience is one reason why teachers and college professors sometimes seem not quite human to their students” (1938, p. 130). Rosenblatt, like Greene, wants to liberate students from a noxious passivity which enslaves them to outdated, rigid conceptions of the world. “The more unthinkingly and mechanically the human being follows the patterns set for him by his environment, the nearer he approaches the state of the automaton” (1938, p. 156). It is necessary to emotionalize thought in order for real and fruitful thinking to take place. “An emphasis on emotional development should parallel the current emphasis on the intellectual” (1938, pp. 173-174).

Rosenblatt distinguishes two different modes of reading, the efferent mode, and the aesthetic mode. During any reading experience, claims Rosenblatt, it is common to shift back and forth from one mode to the other. The efferent mode is the one which has traditionally been emphasized in education. In the efferent mode the reader focuses primarily on the information contained in the text; very little interpretation takes place. The focus is on the collection and classification of data. Meaning is determined; there is one correct answer to each question. Teachers may check for comprehension through a series of worksheets and textbook type questions to make sure the student has

“understood” the text. In the aesthetic mode, on the other hand, the one favored by Rosenblatt, the authority is shifted away from the text and placed instead on the reader’s relationship with the text based on his own experience and interpretation:

The special meaning, and more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the particular contribution of the text. (1938, pp. 30-31)

In the aesthetic mode the reader experiences a personal relationship to the text. The focus is on the different layers which may be accessed through attention to emotional subtleties, or rhetorical techniques; in fact it is a qualitative response to a text. There are no correct answers, just different interpretations

From Rosenblatt’s preoccupation with the aesthetic mode comes her theory of transactional reading. Rosenblatt “underlines the essential importance of both elements, reader and text, in any reading event” (1978, p. 18). She asserts that “fundamentally, the process of understanding a work implies a re-creation of it” (1938, p. 113). Under this paradigm reading is an active, rather than a passive event, and the text is no authority within which it is merely possible to discover objective “right” answers. As Rosenblatt reminds us, “the transactional view accepts into the aesthetic realm all readings in which the reader attends to the lived-through experience engendered by the text (1978, p. 155).

Rosenblatt's theory is especially important as it sensitizes us to the fact that "there is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are in reality only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works" (1938, p. 32). Thus the pedagogue who would emphasize real learning will place his interest and concern on the individual student, and the student's particular response to the text. Rosenblatt insists that "youth needs to be given the opportunity and the courage to approach literature personally" (1938, p. 66). Young people need to be able to carry out their own exploration. The pedagogue's job is to make sure there is a certain depth to this exploration.

Thus Rosenblatt lays out an important approach to learning, and a specific concern with and orientation towards the aesthetic which sees an echo in the work of Maxine Greene, especially as she presents her own vision of what education for future generations of students ought to entail.

In Greene's words, "To project a vision of what public education in the US might become in the 21st century is to move back and forth between the predictable and the possible" (2000b, p. 267). Greene means that we need to take stock of a rapidly changing world and deal with the challenges it presents to us, even while not allowing some of the negative changes to become a new "reality" which we convince ourselves cannot be overcome. We cannot, Greene insists, accept inequality of any kind, whether it be through the comfortable ignoring of the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, of ethnic and racial prejudices, or of the silencing of the voices of the oppressed. This inequality can certainly be confronted in the classroom.

Greene favors literature for what she considers its moral possibilities. She sees the text as first of all, an encounter with others. Books allow us entry into a world of heroes and heroines, anti-heroes of different sorts, and ordinary people, whose worlds may be radically different from our own. Having young people engage with literature is vastly superior to having them do worksheets with cloze exercises in which comprehension is measured by having students answer fill in the blanks or multiple choice questions which ask about the main idea, purpose, author's tone, and the "logical" connection between different sentences, making reading into an arid, meaningless task.

Engaging with literature exposes students to experience inter-subjective space because no young person approaches a text as an undifferentiated bundle of reading-comprehension possibility, but the young person brings his own world of experience to bear upon the text, posing questions, offering criticisms, interpreting the life of others from his own vantage point, and interpreting his own life from the vantage point of others. These interactions of reader and text are sure to spark a more comprehensive view of the world. Greene supports the use of literature, as well as of the other arts, in schools as a method of combating "the plague" by making young people more aware of suffering and injustice, and committed to doing something about it. Greene's message to us is that we can no longer afford to live in a world for which no one takes responsibility, for then we will lose our freedom.

In Pursuit of Freedom

In her "Dialectic of Freedom," (1988) Greene tells us, "My focal interest is in human freedom, in the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be

otherwise” (p. 3). Greene’s dialectic of freedom is the cornerstone of her moral philosophy. If you are free to imagine the “what if,” free to imagine better possibilities, an alternative to the present injustice and oppression, then there is hope for a better tomorrow, and there is a real possibility for tolerance and progress. The alternative is a series of dangers: becoming subject to demagoguery, or to manipulation by the media and the consumer society. The dialectic of freedom is intimately connected with possibility and imagination, as well as with the many inevitable struggles that are characteristic of each person’s quest for freedom.

For Greene there is a dialectical relation, and an ensuing tension, marking every situation. There is the relation between subject and object, between self and other, between present conditions and future expectations. The tensions arising from these may be fruitful and lead to creative re-imaginings and re-workings of things as they are, but the tensions, as such, will never completely disappear, will never be completely and forever resolved, for they are tensions which can, at best, push up against the borders of specific situations. Greene reminds us that each person’s life is subject to a series of limitations. Human beings are born into a particular race, social class, and economic status – in short a particular environment against which everyone is free to become by using their very circumstances as the stuff out of which freedom may arise in the partial overcoming of adverse conditions. Greene will stress that one is always in a situation, free to choose among multiple possibilities, but from a background of necessity. For Greene, the essence of the human being is an authentic existence understood as freedom to forever become, continual transcendence in each person’s project of being.

CHAPTER FIVE

ELLIOT EISNER

Elliot Eisner has done extensive research in three main areas: arts education, curriculum studies, and educational evaluation. He is a strong proponent of reform in the schools and criticizes the fact that these offer a narrow and unbalanced approach to education by neglecting the arts in the curriculum. The schools, Eisner insists, do not appreciate the importance of the aesthetic; they do not recognize it as a mode of thinking.

Eisner's argument for the arts is primarily a cognitive one. He focuses on the examination of mind and representation, and the role that the senses play in constructing knowledge. He claims that our ability to know is based on our ability to construct meaning from experience. The arts, he says, expand awareness and advance understanding. They are cognitive, not merely emotional.

Eisner insists on schools and the curriculum as the proper spaces for the pursuit of social goals, such as equity; thus his emphasis on improving education. He believes that people need access to the experience of different forms of representation, different symbol systems in order to be better able to "read" the world, to conceptualize; this is how they learn to survive and take advantage of opportunities. For Eisner, this kind of education is best achieved through art. School, he believes, is the best place to learn how to read the different sorts of texts available. He would extend this kind of education to all young people, especially those who have been marginalized.

In this section we begin with Eisner's reflections on the purpose of education, and his criticism of the technical-rational climate which is currently pervading schools and

education in general. Then we look at what Eisner has singled out as common misconceptions about knowledge and mind. From here, we move on to Eisner's analysis of how human beings think and how young people can be motivated to expand their cognitive ability. Next come Eisner's criticisms of some common misconceptions about the curriculum and about the aesthetic, together with his discussion of aesthetic modes of knowing. From here we move to Eisner's criticism of misconceptions about art education, together with his own views about the purpose of art education. We then look at Eisner's reflections on communicating through the aesthetic and his discussion of how aesthetic intelligence is developed. After this we come to Eisner's requirements for a good teacher and a discussion of connoisseurship and criticism. Then we examine Eisner's arguments for arts based research. As an extension of Eisner, we then look at highlights from the educational philosophy of Thomas Barone, one of Eisner's important disciples. Finally, we travel back in history and examine how the old dichotomy between orators and philosophers may be overcome in the present day.

The Purpose of Education

Eisner calls for serious educational reform. He has a great deal of criticism for what is happening in schools today. In his view, the orientation to the technical is making schools into factories, where young people are processed as quickly, efficiently, and cheaply as possible, and little learning takes place. The current climate of instrumentalism with its constant preoccupation for outcomes and objectives, has forced education to follow a business model, leading to a formulaic approach to education which

is clearly not working. In Eisner's view, both the content and methods of education are sadly lacking in effectiveness or significance. He calls for "a vision of the possibilities of education other than those that seem intractably premised upon a business-oriented competitive view of schooling and an intellectually narrow conception of mind" (1994, p. xi).

Eisner decries the dominant approach to the curriculum with its insistence on standardization and the proliferation of objectives. He writes, "I want to argue ... that educational objectives clearly and specifically stated can hamper as well as help the ends of instruction" (1985b, p. 29). He decries the focus on testing and ranking, which impoverishes the educational climate by focusing on increasingly narrow aspects of education, forcing teachers to scramble to prepare students for state and national exams. He decries the dominant approach to teaching with its theories borrowed from behaviorist psychology in which students are reduced to little more than animals who can, with the right stimulus, be taught to perform tricks. Students are not seen as autonomous human beings with varied interests and talents who are capable of constructing their own meanings. All this, Eisner believes, leads to an absurd situation in which "the current emphasis on the production of measurable competencies in the three R's is creating an unbalanced curriculum that will, in the long run, weaken rather than strengthen the quality of ... education (1978a, p. 615).

Eisner protests that there has been a serious neglect of the aesthetic in education. An educational environment where everything is controlled, where the outcomes have already been set in stone, cannot produce fruitful results. An environment in which students have no more to do but jump through the hoops that have been predetermined by

the curriculum maker and the teacher, is not one where learning can take place. Where there is no longer the element of surprise and discovery, where the creative and imaginative side of education has been discarded, there can be no true pedagogy. Art, in Eisner's view, needs to be central in the curriculum, central to the mission of schools. The arts, for Eisner, "represent a form of thinking and a way of knowing. Their presence in our schools is as basic as anything could be" (1988, p. 8). The purposes of education are many, and for Eisner, the arts can play a great role in bringing them to fruition.

One very important purpose of education, for Eisner, is enabling students to develop their full cognitive potential. To this end it is necessary to move beyond the idea of perception as merely instrumental. For Eisner, "perceptivity – the ability to see what others do not – provides the building blocks for our imaginative life" (1988, p. 4). It is not enough for students to look merely to recognize and label, but to explore visually and construct meaning from what they find, to function, in effect, as critics. The same holds true for the qualities we experience through any of our senses. Constructing meaning is hard work, requiring focus, attention to qualities, and intelligence. As Eisner reminds us, "it is through qualitative inquiry, the intelligent apprehension of the qualitative world, that we make sense" (1998a p. 21).

Cognitive potential which has been well developed leads to the acquisition of insight and understanding, but for this to take place there must be an emotionalizing of the cognitive, allowing for the refinement of its many features. For Eisner, "all thinking, especially all productive thinking, is infused with feeling... Affect is part and parcel of mind" (1998b, p. 8). This takes account of the fact that human beings possess more than brains, they possess minds. "People acquire minds during the course of their lifetimes...

Brains are biological. Minds are cultural” (1991b, p. 11). And for Eisner, one of the main purposes of education is the transformation of brains into minds as we nurture young people’s imaginations, and make them ever more aware of the different texts which may be experienced in the world.

In order to foster this kind of awareness in students, it is necessary to help them develop multiple forms of literacy. In the real world, Eisner reminds us, young people will find themselves in complex situations. “The problems they encounter are those that almost always require synthetic abilities and multiple perspectives” (1991a, p. 79). Having the capacity to read and interpret different symbols or forms will give them access to the major sources of the culture. They will not be outsiders, illiterate, easily manipulated by others. Instead they will be able to participate fully in the life of the community, the nation, and the world.

For Eisner, the curriculum is a defining part of students’ educational experience. A broad curriculum will expand students’ possibilities; a narrow one will contract them. If students are not taught to think in the different modes possible, they will become unable to do so, not through lack of inherent intelligence or talent, but simply because they have not been given the opportunity. Eisner notes:

If it is true... that children who are given an opportunity to learn x are more likely to learn it than children who are not, then clearly we should be as interested in what we are not giving children an opportunity to learn as we seem to be in what we do provide. (1982, p. 11)

It is also true that a curriculum which does not recognize or value any mode of knowing outside of the discursive, that does not value nonverbal modes of learning and expression, will serve to exclude some students whose talents lie elsewhere. This, says Eisner, is a type of discrimination. He reminds us that “educational equity is an empty ideal when a substantial portion of our children are excluded from the very areas in which their talents reside” (1988, p. 36)

In short the vision of education which Eisner holds contains many ideals:

We would like our children to be well-informed – that is, to understand ideas that are important, useful, beautiful and powerful. And we also want them to have the appetite and ability to think analytically and critically, to be able to speculate and imagine, to see connections among ideas, and to be able to use what they know to enhance their own lives and to contribute to their own culture. (1997, p. 349)

Eisner’s ideal education is one in which young people are not afraid to explore new ideas or imagine new possibilities. It is an education in which qualities are important, and relationships are paramount, as students become ever more aware of the inter-connectedness of things. All this, Eisner assures us, is healthy and good not just for the individual, but also for the culture at large. Eisner supports:

A culture of schooling in which more importance is placed on exploration than on discovery, more value is assigned to surprise than to control, more attention is devoted to what is distinctive than to what is standard, more interest is related to what is metaphorical than to what is literal. It is an educational culture that has a greater focus on becoming than on being, places more value on the imaginative

than on the factual, assigns greater priority to valuing than to measuring, and regards the quality of the journey as more educationally significant than the speed at which the destination is reached. (2002b, p. 16)

The Current Climate in Schools

The Quantitative versus the Qualitative

Eisner understands why quantification is so attractive; it is because it gives people a false sense of security. He notes:

We find it seductively reassuring to know the rules. They comfort the novice, add legitimacy to the work of the experienced scholar, give everyone the sense that things are known and in order. After all, rules embody standards and standards define the criteria for both consensus and quality. (1990, p. 365)

It is thought that numbers are absolute, that they provide a window into objective reality. With numbers, so it is thought, we may effectively explain the past, assess the present, and predict the future. Number is the tool of rationality par excellence. But Eisner reminds us that there are definite limits to the power of number. Flux, change, ambiguity, all this stuff that real life is made out of cannot be counted up, added, or subtracted; it cannot be defined, labeled and categorized. Dilemmas and paradoxes are the essence of the human condition.

Another of the seductions of quantification, in Eisner's view, has to do with our competitive nature. We are altogether too concerned with seeing how we measure up against our peers. "We Americans are very much interested in our position in a distribution. Doing well means, in practical terms, doing better than one's neighbors" (2005, p. 14). Eisner says that as long as we're all engaged in one big race it will be very hard to sell the idea of a holistic education to overeager and overambitious parents, or even to the students themselves. Eisner insists that it is necessary to have a curriculum that aims at developing multiple forms of literacy, and that exposes students to discursive and non-discursive modes of thought, even if there are no standardized tests that must be taken in the latter. Our curriculum, Eisner insists, cannot be simply about naming, categorizing, and moving from point A to B and up to Z as quickly and efficiently as possible (1988).

The final and perhaps most harmful seduction of quantification has to do with simple economics and greed. Simple solutions are cheaper than complicated ones (1994). The goal becomes to create a scientifically managed educational practice with little room for the human element. Eisner observes that "as a 'can do' society we very much would like to maximize our efficiency and what better way than to create a technology that was capable of doing this" (1985b, p. 2). Standardization and efficiency theory are embraced by the system today because they are seen as objective and more economically viable. These make sure that resources are not wasted on the less talented or deserving. Eisner is appalled at the great callousness and indifference of human beings who can apply mathematical formulas to real live human beings, especially the young.

The fixation on the quantitative goes hand in hand in some quarters with a disdain for the qualitative. As Eisner explains:

The psychometric model long dominated educational research, as it has generally dominated the social and behavioral sciences... to conduct experiments and surveys was to be scientific; to do otherwise – and otherwise covered considerable territory – was to be soft, wrong, or muddle-headed. (1990, p. 1)

This lack of respect can also be attributed to the fact that the qualitative has traditionally been the province of the arts and humanities, and these are not exact sciences; they cannot be tested for validity and reliability (1999a). But now, Eisner tells us, an interface is beginning to open up and there is more communication and cooperation between quantitative and qualitative researchers, which is as it should be. Eisner's ideal is for researchers to be bi-methodological. Openness to ambiguity, Eisner insists, is key. As he tells us, "We who work in and study education are engaged in a field that has no 'nature'... There are an infinite number of ways to teach, to learn, and to evaluate" (1985b, p. 2). Qualitative inquiry, for Eisner consists in:

That form of inquiry that seeks the creation of qualities that are expressively patterned, that seeks the explication of wholes as a primary aim, that emphasizes the study of configurations rather than isolated entities, that regards expressive narratives and visuals as appropriate vehicles for communication. Qualitative methods tend to emphasize the importance of context in understanding, they tend to place great emphasis on the historical conditions within which events and situations occur.... (1985b, p. 136)

Qualitative inquiry is open to many different disciplines: the arts and humanities, the social sciences, education. Additionally, it calls for sophistication in the reading and interpretation of symbolic forms, which is no simple feat (1988). In short, the qualitative approach is a rich and multi-dimensional way of organizing experience.

Misconceptions about Knowledge

Eisner points out that the Enlightenment produced a host of beliefs about the world which we can still find influencing our vision today: that nature is orderly and its patterns may be perceived and identified if only we know how to look; that it is possible to develop theories about patterns in nature and prove these theories; that mathematics can ensure objectivity. So quantification becomes supreme, and what begins with measurement and theoretical explanation grows into a desire for prediction and control. Positivists want a world in which it is possible to reach a detached, objective description of this world as it is in itself, independent of our perceptions (1998b).

However Eisner does not “restrict rationality to discursively mediated thought or limit it to the application of logic” (1998a, p. 51). Rationality is in full play whenever relationships among parts or elements are well grasped or arranged. Rationality may be displayed in many different subjects, including the arts, and the development of this rationality ought to be one of the most important aims of education. This can lead students to build knowledge, to become both connoisseurs and critics in different areas. Eisner explains, “If connoisseurship can be regarded as the art of appreciation, criticism can be thought of as the art of disclosure” (1998a, p. 86). There can be no

connoisseurship for Eisner, without high levels of qualitative intelligence in the particular domain in which the person is considered a connoisseur. Neither can the art of criticism, of disclosure, be practiced without a good grasp of the qualitative.

For Eisner knowledge is made, not simply discovered. It is a reflection of both the knowing subject and the world it encounters. He reminds us that “since what we know about the world is a product of the transaction of our subjective life and a postulated objective world, these worlds cannot be separated” (1998a, p. 52). There is thus, no justification for an educational world centered about quantification.

Misconceptions about Mind

Eisner identifies a series of flawed beliefs that we have about mind today: that human conceptual thinking requires the use of language, that sensory experience is low on the hierarchy of intellectual functioning, that intelligence requires the use of logic, that detachment and distance are necessary for true understanding, that scientific method is the only legitimate way to generalize about the world. In short, the human mind has been infinitely reduced under this vision of the mind as merely biological (1992).

But Eisner reminds us that minds are cultural, that people think in many different ways: some through language, others through images, while others may experience feelings or sensations. And one way of thinking or experiencing the world is not better or more intellectual than another. As Eisner states, “The existence of differing forms of representation in culture testifies to their distinctive utility for enabling humans to conceptualize and convey to others the kinds of meanings they wish to express” (1981, p.

468). Human beings display different kinds of intelligences, each with its own logic. What is experienced in one modality is not necessarily transferable to another.

How We Think

Eisner does not for one moment say that scientific inquiry is not useful. Science is a great tool created by human beings to help us make sense of the world, but it is not the only tool we have available. Science is something we can use if we choose, not something which is over and above human beings; it is not something that must be adhered to if we are to consider ourselves rational. Scientific inquiry provides us with schematics that may make interpretation and judgment more acute (1983). But there are other schematics available to human beings.

For Eisner the scientist is not more valuable than the artist; both have important things to say about the world. “Both artist and scientist create forms through which the world is viewed” (1985a, p. 26). Different persons use different forms of representation according to their particular tastes or talents and all these different modes of communication require the use of intelligence. Exposure to the different forms, by influencing our experience, broadens the possibilities of inquiry and makes it more complete. Eisner reminds us that “our internal life is shaped by the forms we are able to experience” (1985a, p. 25). In fact, Eisner claims, science can also be experienced aesthetically; aesthetic experience is not limited to the arts.

Eisner explains that human beings are equipped with mediating apparatus, a sensory system through which we can experience various aspects of a multidimensional

reality (1978a). No amount of objective knowledge would even be imaginable if we did not possess this sensory system, for without our senses we would be unaware of the different qualities in the environment we now perceive. Our environment is a qualitative one, made up of sights, sounds, smells – all that may be experienced by a sentient human being, but only through the adequate development and refinement of perception; mere exposure to the world will not suffice. Eisner points out that “the educational development of the sensibilities is not an automatic consequence of maturation” (1981, p. 466).

Eisner makes an important distinction between seeing and looking. We may look, according to Eisner, merely to label, to attach some name to an object or categorize it according to previous experience. But Eisner makes the claim that real seeing requires an “enlightened eye” (1998a). The senses require refinement; they require the development of intelligence in the different modes of perception, and the most excellent avenue to the cultivation and expansion of the senses is through the arts. The arts refine the senses; they make us able to perceive more subtle qualities which may at first instance not be visible, and our ability to experience the world becomes more complex. Eisner affirms that perception does not just receive impressions, but participates in the process of constructing meaning. He writes that, “there is a transactional or reciprocal relationship between the qualities of the environment and the cognitive structures or anticipatory schemata an organism possesses, but also that perception itself is constructive” (1982, p. 33). This is where concepts originate, and so we come to the importance of the imagination, creativity, and play.

Through the refinement of the senses we enlarge our imaginative capacities so that we can envision what we may not physically see, hear, touch, etc. For Eisner concepts are “imaginative distillations of the essential features of the experienced world” (1998b, p.120). These can be manipulated and modified, and can be used to generate possibilities that are new, an invaluable tool in a world in which we do not deal with givens and absolutes.

Play is a freeing of the imaginative capacities; it leads to exploratory activity and to analogical cognitive processes as we learn to look upon the world with new eyes, combining ideas that are usually considered to be unrelated in interesting and novel ways. In play we can devise our own rules; we are not boxed in by the rules and limitations of an objective world. For Eisner, “intellectual activity at its highest level is often associated with play” (1991b, p. 14).

Eisner celebrates creativity not as the gift of a chosen few, but as a capacity that all people can develop, a capacity that should be explicitly cultivated in the process of education, and not only in the arts, but across a wide spectrum of subjects. He writes:

Once considered an elusive, almost mystical gift belonging to a special few, creativity is now being seen as a capacity common to all men, one that should be effectively developed by the school. Once considered a rare type of behavior limited to the arts, creativity is now viewed as a mode of activity that penetrates, in some degree, almost all human action. (1966, p. 323)

We become creative as we learn to explore ambiguity, to break free of the constraints imposed by the vision of a world where everything has already been decided by others.

Teaching Youths to Think

Eisner points out that most of us are only partially literate. Most of us will not fully experience everything that we might if our senses were well developed through a good education. Young people need to be taught how to think and communicate within the different forms of representation, or they will be at a disadvantage throughout their lives. Eisner insists that “balance in the curriculum is not simply a plea for the equal representation of cultural artifacts, but rather an imperative for helping students learn how to expand their modes of consciousness” (1978a, p. 620). Students need to both encode and decode the different forms of representation, the symbol systems that surround them. They need training to perceive the subtle qualities in things, and to understand the syntax of these different forms. They need help in both conceptualizing and expression, in taking a private perception and making it public. They need to develop tolerance for ambiguity; they need to learn to imagine and play with their imaginings, releasing their creativity as they are exposed to and interact with forms of representation which are not rule-governed, which are not the traditional discursive forms of thought or communication. A good curriculum based on multiple literacies is essential.

Misconceptions about the Curriculum

Elliot Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance (1974) bring our attention to a series of fallacies regarding the curriculum which are recurrent in educational philosophy. The first is the fallacy of formalism. In essence this fallacy states that what is important is helping young people learn how to learn, not what they learn. Eisner and Vallance point out that the content of the curriculum can be either significant or trifling, and this decidedly makes a difference in the quality of education students receive. The next fallacy is basically the opposite - the fallacy of content. This fallacy focuses on what students learn, not how they do so. There is an emphasis here on a “rigorous” course of study in which students need to memorize a lot of facts. The problem is that this sort of education leaves us with consumers, not producers of knowledge; once again this takes away from the quality of education. Finally we come to the fallacy of universalism which states that some subjects are universally important to all students, independent of their particular characteristics or inclinations, a position which clearly does not respect students’ individual capabilities, talents, or interests (1974).

Eisner reminds us that curriculum reform has been a constant for a long time now. “‘New curricula’ has been one of the hallmarks of educational change since 1955” (1971, p. 1). Of all reforms, he especially criticizes the whole “back to basics” movement. All this provides is a bare bones curriculum that guarantees that students will not profit from their education, since they will be exposed to nothing, and learn nothing (1998b). Eisner posits a different type of curriculum. His model would place the arts at the center. The arts allow for a meaningful educational experience. They provide countless opportunities for thinking and learning because in aesthetic experience the mind and the senses are not

artificially separated (1982). The arts expand consciousness. They encourage analogical processes, the playful treatment of ideas, and the use of judgment (1980). They encourage students to use the figurative, to symbolize their experience, to be open to multiple forms of representation, multiple literacies, and to understand and work with their syntax (1994). In the arts, uniqueness and originality are virtues. There is a move away from the focus on rule governed activity. Students can engage in tasks they care about rather than having them imposed on by others; they can define their own questions. For Eisner, “a prime goal of curriculum reform must be to recapture meaning in education” (1980, p. 453).

Eisner also proposes a curriculum which gives ample opportunity for interdisciplinary study. There should be attention to the relationships among different fields and the important issues and concerns of the time. The curriculum should expose students to a wide array of subjects, but also allow them to pursue their own interests. He writes:

Balance in the curriculum has been and is an idealized criterion for deciding upon curriculum content... How does one ensure the cultivation of idiosyncrasy while, at the same time, requiring students to study the wide range of subject matters that make for educationally balanced men? By the cultivation of idiosyncrasy, I mean providing students with the opportunity to attend deeply and extensively to the pursuit of their own aesthetic and intellectual interests. (1971, p. 167)

Finally, the curriculum should treat learning as a journey and not a competition. There should be attention to the learning process itself and not just test scores and standards.

Misconceptions about the Aesthetic

For years, Eisner notes, there have been several misconceptions in the educational arena as well as in the larger society, which have undermined the importance of aesthetics. It has been thought, Eisner expounds, that science is cognitive, whereas the arts are emotional, that science may be taught, whereas art is merely a matter of talent, and thus un-teachable, that science is testable, that whether something is good science or not can be determined, whereas the arts are but a matter of preference (2002c).

Yet, Eisner counters, there exists a very interesting paradox. For all the bad press the arts suffer, there is no higher accolade that can be given to anyone, not only in the aesthetic realm but also the scientific or technical, than to call him an artist (2002c). Why is that? It is because art in fact is highly valued in every human endeavor, yet at the same time it is misunderstood. “The fine arts have no monopoly on the artistic,” (2002c, p. 8) Eisner claims. And it is the artistic that Eisner is most concerned with.

Aesthetic Modes of Knowing

Eisner decries the fact that “the phrase, ‘aesthetic modes of knowing,’ presents something of a contradiction in our culture” (1985a, p. 23). He decries the fact that the aesthetic should be set aside in conversations about knowing, when, in fact, it is the aesthetic which provides the most excellent avenue to knowledge. It is art, Eisner claims, that first provides the conditions for awakening to the world (2002a). Art shows us that any kind of experience is mediated experience, a product of both the features of the world and our own personal stories (1985a). The aesthetic side of life is no mere luxury, and

Eisner considers it a grave mistake that it is the first thing to go in schools when resources are limited.

Eisner counters the most popular misconceptions about the arts: The arts are not merely emotional, but part of cognition; cognition, for Eisner, needs to be emotionalized in order to enrich thinking. The arts can, in fact, be taught. The arts are not simply a matter of talent, though some young people may be predisposed towards the arts. But the same holds true for science, math, or technology. Regardless of particular talent, all young people can learn in any one of these fields. It is not necessary to produce geniuses, merely multi-dimensional human beings. Aesthetic reading, appreciation, and communication can be learned if a good, well thought out curriculum is in place, and if the teaching is carried out by pedagogues who are connoisseurs and critics, who are well versed in the multiple manifestations of the aesthetic. The arts are not simply a matter of preference, but require meaningful perception, analysis, and judgment. They are intelligent activity, a mode of knowing, of engaging with the world. Human beings, insists Eisner, need stimulation; they need to put their sensory systems to use, develop different capacities, experience new things, and develop potential and talents which may at present lie fallow through disuse. Such are some of the outcomes of engagement with the aesthetic (2002b). Aesthetic knowing occurs through many avenues. “Art provides the conditions for awakening to the world around us” (2002b, p. 10).

Aesthetic knowing occurs through creativity. Creativity is born of the marriage of experience or skill with imagination and a propensity for play. Creativity thrives within an environment of freedom and tolerance for ambiguity, an environment where students feel safe, where they can feel that they are not being judged as right or wrong. Eisner

identifies a few different types of creativity: boundary pushing, the ability to put objects to new and unusual uses; inventing: taking existing material to create a new object; boundary breaking: seeing the limits in existing theories and searching for new ones; aesthetic organizing: the ability to arrange objects or ideas in aesthetically pleasing ways (1966). Different people possess different kinds of creativity; the important thing is to open up the possibilities for our students to learn to know through their creative potential.

Aesthetic knowing occurs through imagination. Eisner notes that:

Many of the most productive modes of thought are nonverbal and illogical. These modes operate in visual, auditory, metaphoric, synesthetic ways and utilize forms of conception and expression that far exceed the limits of logically prescribed criteria or discursive or mathematical forms of thinking. (1985c, pp. 98-99)

Imagination allows us intercourse with these modes of thought. The work of art awakens our senses and thus releases our imaginative capacities as we engage with it in multiple ways, each way bringing forth new meanings. Aesthetic images are an excellent study in wholes and parts, in relationships; as Nelson Goodman coined it, in “rightness of fit.” “The arts liberate us from the literal,” (2002b, p. 10) Eisner claims.

Aesthetic knowing occurs through play. Eisner writes:

The arts provide a kind of permission to pursue qualitative experience in a particularly focused way and to engage in the constructive exploration of what the imaginative process may engender. In this sense, the arts, in all their manifestations, are close in attitude to play. (2002b, p. 4)

For Eisner, the arts are close to play precisely because they encourage people to use their imagination, to explore territories where others may not have ventured before, or at least not quite in the same way. Play allows students, through their imagination, to move away from rule-governed activity, and thus releases their ability to experience, create, and discover the world for themselves (2002b). Play affords limitless possibilities for growth.

Aesthetic knowing occurs through judgment. Judging allows young people to experience meaning making in freedom, since we cannot make of judgment a rule, a formula, or an algorithm. Judgment, for Eisner, depends on feel, and feel, depends on a kind of somatic knowledge (2002b). There are no set formulas which may aid someone in making judgments about how qualities are to be organized, or when a work of art is completed, or whether it is well crafted. The arts awaken students to this freedom and teach them to rely, instead, on feel and nuance, on subtlety and undertone. Eisner reminds us that “the arts represent one of the ways through which humans construct and convey meaning and... the creation of art forms requires the use of judgment, perceptivity, ingenuity, and purpose – in a word, intelligence” (1982, p. 74). What else can this be considered but knowing?

Misconceptions about Art Education

There are several misconceptions about art education which preoccupy Eisner, but one in particular stands out: the justification for teaching art based on the instrumental value of art; that is, how art education may serve ends outside itself, by raising math and

reading test scores, for instance. Eisner is worried by “the image of arts educators who know what the arts have to offer trying to give the customers what they want, whether or not there is evidence to support it” (1999b, p. 143). The arts and the development of aesthetic intelligence do not have the purpose, Eisner intones, of acting as support to more serious subjects such as math or science. The purpose of studying music cannot be to ensure that children will more quickly and efficiently learn their multiplication tables. The idea that transfer of learning occurs between subjects is, according to Eisner, unsupported by research (1999b). While it is the case that studying music can somewhat raise a child’s math scores, it is equally true that studying more math will also raise a child’s math scores – and by many more points than listening to a violin sonata. Focusing on the instrumental value of the arts marginalizes and reduces them.

The Purpose of Art Education

For Eisner art education is a crucial aspect of developing aesthetic intelligence. The arts expand awareness of aesthetic qualities in both art and the surrounding world; through the sensitizing and heightening of our perception, everyday objects become imbued with aesthetic possibilities. Art education allows young people to conceptualize and express themselves through different symbol systems, to develop multiple literacies. Eisner tells us that:

There is much evidence to suggest that most of us are only partially literate, that we do not know how to experience much of what either nature or culture makes possible. Part of the task of education – and I would suggest one of its most

important tasks – is to foster such literacy. Without it life is only partially lived, then in one sense, we are only partially alive. (1981, pp. 466 – 467)

Art education sharpens judgment, as students are forced to take in wholes, parts, and relationships all at once and make sense of them. Art education illustrates the inextricability of form and content; that the medium is part of the message. It allows young people to explore ambiguity, imagine possibilities, and embrace multiple perspectives, to experience various aspects of a multidimensional reality (1999b).

Eisner insists that art education should not focus on outcomes outside of itself. It should not foster the growth of academic skills, but of artistic intelligence and sensibility. Aesthetic images: perceiving, experiencing, understanding, and creating them should be the focus, not only because they are powerful and significant, but because of the role they play as part of the culture and society in which they are embodied (2002b).

Communicating through the Aesthetic

Eisner reminds us that people are social beings. “Humans have a basic need to externalize the internal, to communicate, to share their experience with others” (1998a, p. 235). Knowledge and experience alone, in a vacuum, are meaningless unless shared with others, thus the great importance many thinkers, Eisner included, place upon communication, upon taking a private vision, experience, or understanding, and making it public, bringing it to existence before others.

Eisner argues the following: There are multiple ways in which the world can be known, multiple forms through which meaning can be communicated. Human beings' ability to experience these different forms of representation both decide the variety and depth of their experiences as well as what and how well they are able to communicate with others. Valid forms of representation are not limited to words and numbers; many, in fact, are nonverbal and illogical - though not irrational. Learning to communicate well through different forms of representation requires intelligence, and it is a skill that can and ought to be learned (1998a).

Eisner argues the importance of enabling young people, through education, to participate in their culture fully. Through the development of multiple forms of literacy they may both read and communicate the many things there are to perceive and share. Acquiring these frames of reference is a way of becoming socialized within a culture, of being able to participate within a discourse community. Eisner reminds us that "we can make the private public by sharing it with others" (2002b, p. 3). The more frames of reference they can navigate, the more concepts that will be accessible to them, opening the door to more opportunities.

Developing Aesthetic Intelligence

Literacy, and more specifically multiple literacy, is the central mission of aesthetic education for Eisner. He tells us:

Man has used his intelligence to create expressive forms in each of the systems and modalities that he has been able to use. Meaning is constructed by forming

patterns that eventually become codes which carry meaning within them. Creating meaning requires the ability to use the coding system in a way that will disclose what it is the expressive form contains or implies. Our knowledge of these patterns or codes creates a type of regularity that makes predictability possible, and predictability is a source of security in a world which we must negotiate. (1978b, p. 15)

The process of decoding these forms allows students to read the environment at large, and the ability to encode allows them to communicate and express themselves within the different discourse communities in the culture. This is how we negotiate meaning. Eisner notes that “reading” is a term we may correctly use not just for discourse, but also for other forms, particularly art forms. He insists that our minds construe meaning not just from words and numbers, but from any kind of pattern, and each pattern has access to a grammar even if such may not be directly translated into language. The arts, Eisner states, carry within them a qualitative syntax, or arrangement of symbols, each with its own logic and order (1978b).

Eisner makes an important distinction between two types of symbols: representational and artistic. Representational symbols such as words or numbers he calls transparent because it is relatively easy to move from them to their referents. But artistic symbols are opaque; they do not take us directly to their referents, but we grasp meaning from them directly. So the reading and manipulation of artistic symbols require more intelligence than that which is needed to understand and communicate through representational symbols. Eisner also notes that syntax refers not only to discourse but

also to the arrangement of parts within a whole. The virtue of rule-governed syntax, such as in the case of language or mathematics is that it is easier to reach consensus about an issue. The virtue of syntax that is not rule-governed, such as in the arts, is precisely the opposite. The latter forms require that judgment come into play, engaging a person's higher mental processes (1998a).

As our experience of the world grows we develop repertoires, but these repertoires are not enough, warns Eisner. That is where imagination comes into play. Imagination allows us to read between the lines, to form wholes from seemingly unrelated parts. Eisner argues that "the expansion of our expressive repertoire, when complemented by refined sensibilities, is an achievement of signal importance in our efforts to improve education" (1985b, p. 10). This is a skill that must be expressly cultivated to bring our literacy to the fullest potential possible. From experience with the qualitative, with the subtle, with reading between the lines, we expand our abilities to read the environment.

Eisner's goal is for students to become artists working in science, art, or humanities, by no means a simple feat since it is something which requires a superior level of understanding and engagement with the subject. In effect it requires students to become both connoisseurs and critics, to perceive, analyze, and judge in a manner that few people today can boast (1998a). In art, learning occurs through what Eisner labels the productive, the critical, and the cultural. The first is the ability to create art forms, the second deals with the development of aesthetic perception, and the third deals with the understanding of the relationship between art and culture (1972).

A great deal of Eisner's work focuses on visual forms. He explicates the different frames of reference which may be used to sensitize students and open them up to the aesthetic possibilities of a work of art. First, attention must be given to the experiential, to how the work makes the viewer feel. Though engagement with art, for Eisner, is intellectual labor, the cognitive does not go far without the emotional element to complete it. Students need to apprehend an artwork and react to it emotionally first, allowing the work to communicate feelings. It is important to remember that in engaging with the aesthetic we first take in the whole, without leaping into classification, analysis and explication which would reduce the initial experience. Next, attention must be paid to the formal, the relationships that exist among the different forms making up a work, the presence of harmony or tensions. Then comes the symbolic, what the work or certain aspects of the work stand for, which opens up the student to a deeper understanding of the different ways in which experience may be symbolized in the multiple languages of art. After this comes engagement with the thematic, the underlying general meaning of the work, which has to do with the construction of a narrative, the telling of a story. Finally Eisner brings us to the contextual, within which students examine how the social, political and cultural may intertwine with the work of art. Going through these different frames of reference will certainly serve to expand students' awareness, analysis, and understanding (1972). Order and process are important to Eisner. He tells us:

I hope it is clear from what I have just described that the curriculum that is provided to students or developed by them in art should not be a random array of novel explorations that simply lead to superficial dilettantism. Artistic learning is

complex. It is not likely to develop a program saturated with fragmented excursions into novel material. (1972, p. 161)

If we wish to lead students further and deeper into engagement with the aesthetic, they can be taught how to read a work of art on different levels, a complex and exacting task. Eisner identifies and describes three modes in which forms of representation can be treated: the mimetic mode focuses on imitation, such as in the hieroglyphics of the cavemen. The expressive mode refers to the deep structure of a form as when minor chords are used to conjure up a gloomy atmosphere. The conventional mode is what most people understand a symbol to mean such as a green light for go and a red light for stop (1982). For Eisner understanding these different modes is very important to reach full aesthetic appreciation, but it requires nothing less than a solid repertoire of literacies, an understanding of the culture, a certain level of connoisseurship of the aesthetic, and the ability to judge and to employ criticism. This is no less than an impressive display of intelligence (2002a).

The Art of Teaching

Eisner insists that the best curriculum in the world will come to nothing without a good teacher, a teacher who is an artist in pedagogy (1971). He tells us “If one thing has been learned during the past fifteen years, it is that the so-called ideal of the ‘teacher-proof’ curriculum is a mirage subscribed to by those who have little contact with the subtleties of the classroom” (1971, p. 7). In proud defiance of the current age of science

and technology Eisner still defends teaching as an art. Education, says Eisner, is not about controlled experiments and isolating variables within a hermetic environment, but dealing with real live, largely unpredictable human beings who do not respond to stimulus upon demand. Under these conditions, the scientific management of education cannot work. Eisner tells us, “In the human condition I opt for interpretation, schematics, and heuristics, rather than prescriptions, rules, and algorithms” (1983, p. 9). It is absurd to believe, says Eisner, that teaching can be reduced to simply learning a series of steps; that teaching skills should be considered miniscule, discrete elements which, once learned individually, can be aggregated to form a whole: good teaching. For Eisner, teaching is about drawing upon the educational imagination in order to open up the world to students. Effective teachers need to be both connoisseurs and critics of their subject matter, or they will not be able to guide their students well.

Eisner defines educational connoisseurship as the ability to make fine-grained distinctions among complex qualities. A connoisseur needs the ability to look at the big picture and understand the different dimensions of a situation. “Seeing, rather than mere looking, requires an enlightened eye” (1998a, p. 1). As connoisseurs, teachers must be able to appreciate both what is salient and what is subtle, what is simple and what is complex in their subject, and bring this knowledge and understanding to bear in their exchange with their students. For Eisner, connoisseurship is synonymous with mastery of a subject. “Connoisseurship depends upon high levels of qualitative intelligence in the domain in which it operates” (1998a, p. 64). Connoisseurship is a reachable goal in fields which are very different, but which share a sense of freedom and flexibility at their core. “Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation. It can be displayed in any realm in which the

character, import, or value of objects, situations, and performances is distributed and variable, including educational practice” (1998a, p. 67).

Eisner defines criticism as the art of disclosure (1998a). It is the ability to help others see the qualities of something, as well as the relationships between parts. “Criticism is an art of saying useful things about complex and subtle objects and events so that others less sophisticated, or sophisticated in different ways, can see and understand what they did not see and understand before” (1998a, p. 3). Criticism allows perception to flourish and then refines it to make it more acute. As critics, teachers can disclose the richness and depth of their insights to their students, they can interpret the perplexing, unwrap the hidden, and explicate the mysterious in aesthetic experience, and step by step bring young people to strike out on their own and accomplish the same (1983). Because criticism is a difficult process Eisner recommends some aids to interpretation. “Structural corroboration, like the process of triangulation, is a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs” (1998a, p. 110).

Eisner’s view of the teacher as a connoisseur and a critic is a far cry from the wind-up teacher who, with the proliferation of standards, accountability, and the teacher-proof curriculum is supposed to replace the true pedagogue. He asks us:

Does the unabashedly romantic image of teaching I have portrayed have any implications for what we ought to be doing in the schools or is it simply an unrealistic conception of what it means to teach? A conception that will be amply corrected by a Betty Crocker view of teaching or by a teacher-proof curriculum? (1983, p. 12)

Practical Applications for Eisner's Philosophy

Eisner is particularly concerned by the present emphasis on a curriculum that is dry and meaningless, that is overly controlled and constricted, providing for an arid educational experience. This is especially the case as, increasingly, American education has been reduced to the scramble for parents to get their kids into the “best” schools and colleges, and test preparation has taken over education. Thus the emphasis is on memorizing strategies to answer multiple choice questions, and memorization of meaningless facts.

For Eisner the key to unlocking creativity and imagination in students is through the visual arts. Eisner proposes a joining of perception, analysis, and judgment by interacting with a work of art on different levels, and the unleashing of qualitative experience through different kinds of exercises expressly for this end. Eisner would propose exercises in which upon initial exposure to a work of art, students are first asked to respond to it emotionally, to think about how it makes them feel. Then the students would be asked to uncover the relationships existing among the different forms that constitute a work. After this would come an analysis of the symbols employed in a work; what do they stand for? Next there would be questions about the theme or themes embodied in the work. Is the artist's purpose social criticism of some sort? Students would then be asked to look at the materials employed in the work and decipher how these contribute to the artist's message. Finally, students would be led to analyze the contextual element of the work: its relationship to other works, tradition, and history. At all times the teacher would refrain from informing students of the “right” answer or imposing his own interpretation of the work of art, thus allowing students ample

opportunity to explore and understand the different symbol systems they need to become familiar with. (Eisner, 1972)

It is not surprising, then, that Eisner promotes the arts not only in the education of students, but also in the education of their teachers, especially those who are interested in learning about learning and about teaching. He tells us, “In another life I was a painter so it is not surprising that I was interested in the ways in which the arts generate awareness – wide-awakeness as Maxine Greene might say” (2005b, p. 3). For the purpose of studying this wide-awakeness and how it might best germinate in students, Eisner promotes arts based research. He reminisces, “In many ways, this ambition of mine, to develop an approach to the conduct of educational research that was rooted in the arts and that used art forms to reveal the features that mattered educationally, was a central ambition” (2005b, p. 4). But it was an ambition which would be met with antagonism by those who wanted more practical ways to measure results in the schools. Eisner attributes this to certain misconceptions. One misconception regards the limitations of how “real” is defined. Eisner offers the theory that “perhaps the problem or tension that we experience between the aesthetic and the world it portrays is our belief, often unexpressed, that a correspondence theory of truth is the model that should guide our work” (2005b, pp. 11-12). Another misconception relates to the nature of arts based research itself. Eisner clarifies that “arts based research is not simply the application of a variety of loose methods; it is the result of artistically crafting the description of the situation so that it can be seen from another angle” (2005b, p. 12). Eisner insists upon the importance of multiple perspectives, of having available different lens through which to gaze upon and

interpret the world. “I believe there are many roads to multiple Romes” (2005b, p. 13), he tells us.

And then there are the tensions inherent to an arts based research which would offer educational illuminations, which would attempt to shed light upon and improve the learning process for the great numbers of diverse young people in our schools today:

These five tensions... penetrate our work – first the tension between using open forms that yield diverse interpretations and forms that yield common understandings is one such tension. A second is the tension between the particular and the general. We want our single case research to extend beyond the single subject studied. A third tension is between the desire to aesthetically craft form and the desire to tell it like it is; aesthetic considerations can trump epistemological ones. A fourth tension is between the desire to pursue new questions and puzzlements and the need in the practical world for answers. Finally, there is the tension for arts based research to seek what is novel or creative and the need to create work that has verisimilitude to the furniture of the world. (2005b, p. 19)

But this is an experiment which Eisner strongly believes is worth pursuing in order to provide young people with a good, comprehensive, twenty-first century education which can serve them as students, workers, inhabitants of their communities, and citizens of their nation and of the world. With optimism, he tells us that:

Finally, the tensions and procedures that I identify I believe can provide a general model that, if used in our classrooms, could reshape and advance the practice of

education and reform our conception of its proper aims. Regarding mind as a cultural achievement, knowing as a process that yields tentative resolutions, objectivity as an aspiration rather than a realization, the impact of forms of representation beyond the literal use of text, recognizing the power of form to inform, yet realizing that every form of representation both reveals and conceals, such ideas might broaden our perspective regarding what is worth teaching and learning and through a broadened perspective change the scope of the curriculum and enrich the practices that teachers employ to promote student growth. (2005b, p. 21)

Eisner's Legacy: The Work of Thomas Barone

Thomas Barone takes Eisner's ideal of the teacher as connoisseur and critic and gives it a highly personal touch through his ethnography of an art teacher, Forrester, in a high school in Appalachia, the subject of his book "Touching Eternity." Throughout the book Barone focuses on the educational experiences of students with the art process itself, their environment, and especially, their teacher.

Barone's writing echoes Eisner's concerns. It is obvious at first glance that Barone sees education as an ethical mission. As he says, "Among the things I care about is educational virtue – making education and schooling more life-enhancing for youngsters of all sorts and for the culture at large" (2000, p. 4). Barone wants education to benefit the student as an individual, and, in turn, asks the individual student to become a committed participant in the world. From this commitment flows the ideal of education

as intricately interwoven with social justice. Barone asks his readers, “How can one instill in students a critical disposition that... enables them to perceive imbalances in the culture and... engages them in redressing those imbalances?” (2001, p. 145) We can clearly see that Barone, like Eisner, does not consider education a purely intellectual endeavor, but argues for the emphasis on the development of the moral life of students.

Another concern that Barone shares with his professor and mentor, Eisner, regards the increasing importance of the positivists in shaping current educational practice. Barone rebels against our current technical-rational society and the ravages it has left in its wake. The metaphor of the school as a factory is particularly repugnant to him, especially since it is becoming an increasingly accepted one. “It is hardly news to note that the American school is patterned after the industrial workplace. The literature detailing the analogies between various organizational features of school and factory is abundant, comprehensive, and sophisticated” (2000, p. 120). The school as a factory leads to a standardized product which is not something, in Barone’s view, to be valued. The factory model, in Barone’s view, does not produce moral human beings, or particularly intelligent ones. In fact, it does little to benefit students, and much to benefit business:

Because the Bush administration was destined to leave us with few substantial accomplishments in the field of education, educational historians and theorists are reduced to studying its rhetoric. “Breaking the mold” was one of the catch phrases its members fondled repeatedly as they promoted the reformation of schools without additional funding. (2000, p. 119)

Barone offers us an alternate picture of what the school ought to be, a picture reminiscent of Eisner's own education philosophy:

New American schools that truly broke the mold would proffer no such standardized vision of success. Instead, they would offer students and teachers the autonomy of the artist who works toward an end that is emergent, and not yet in view. They would be concerned less with molding students in accordance with "national consensus standards" than with providing the growth of unique, powerful, integrated identities. (2000, p. 121)

However, this vision of the school goes hand in hand with good teachers who can effectively engage in the challenging task of helping to mold young human beings. This process demands both the knowledge and skill of the artist, a teacher who is both a connoisseur and a critic, as well as the freedom that artistry entails. There can be no set path if real learning is to take place:

The artist travels with aspirations in hand but sans detailed blueprints. Along the way, the artist welcomes chance intrusion, entering into negotiations with emergent qualities of experience, incorporating them into the construction of an ultimate vision. So does the good teacher. So does the active student. (2000, p. 10)

For Barone, like Eisner, the good teacher may best reach his students through engagement with the aesthetic, for the aesthetic carries tremendous weight. Experience

with the aesthetic leads to the development and refinement of perception and understanding:

Aesthetic experiences possess a vitality that distinguishes them from ordinary life. In aesthetic experiences a person feels a unified structure in that flow, progressing in an organized fashion from the initial acceptance of a challenge to a fulfilling denouement. New perceptions arise as a person experiences his environment aesthetically, perceptions of relationships between familiar phenomena and new ones seeking a place. (2001, p. 139)

The aesthetic leads to the development of critical thinking:

One can observe in this process a dialogue between the student and the materials being shaped, a qualitative problem-solving process in which the student-worker-artist struggles with possibilities, tentatively moves on the material, encounters resistance, and manipulates the component parts. (2001, p. 25)

Barone, mirroring Eisner, reminds us that the aesthetic is not limited to artistic subjects. Throughout history, Barone intones, the aesthetic has been misunderstood:

The possibility of discovering aesthetic qualities within a commonplace activity such as education would have once seemed absurd. Until fairly recently art was equated by the prevalent formalist critics with “high arts,” a process wherein an elite corps of aesthetes created beautiful, self-contained objects to be admired from a distance. (2000, p. 121)

In fact, Barone claims, the aesthetic is a pervasive part of our world, and can be appreciated in all aspects of our experience; this is something which educators can take advantage of in their classes, particularly because the aesthetic appeals to students' emotional lives. "Aesthetic projects can be fashioned almost everywhere: in the science corner, in the library, in the nearby community, in the studio... they all share the common shape of an unfolding story" (2000, p. 128)

However, Barone warns, while the aesthetic may be enjoyable and the arts are a particularly satisfying endeavor, they are not easy. Here we see not only echoes of Eisner but of Dewey as well:

Several students described the process of self-expression as "fulfilling" and "enjoyable," but also insisted that it was "hard work..." Some admitted to electing art with hopes of coasting through with minimal effort. They apparently harbored a notion quite common in our society, the one that associates crafts like basket weaving with extremely low rates of mental taxation. (2001, pp. 23 -24)

Throughout his writings, Barone speaks primarily to teachers who are true pedagogues, good teachers whom he considers quite capable of both the theoretical and practical aspects of education, of developing their own curriculum and implementing it in the classroom. He writes, "The kind of theory envisioned here is for thoughtful practitioners. It will hopefully aid in improving the design, selection, and implementation of programs and materials, and ultimately in providing more profound and liberating educational experiences for students" (2000, pp. 58-59).

Through both the curriculum and his teaching a good teacher must expose his students to multiple viewpoints, multiple stories:

Good stories can pose a threat to our equilibrium in their capacity gently to persuade us of the wisdom of choosing a life course dramatically different from the one down which we have been traveling... They can promote greater degrees of integrity and coherence in a student's autobiography. They can promote the creation of more integrated and responsible selves. (2000, p. 129)

A good teacher must be tuned in to students. "The educator comes to understand emphatically the lives of her students in order to arrange the environment intelligently toward the promotion of aesthetic experiences" (2000, p. 131). But Barone insists that though an understanding of students is crucial, an understanding of subject matter is at least as important; the intellectual dimension is still significant. "Empathy alone is not enough. It is merely a necessary condition for... the development of educational activities that can broaden students' "horizons" (2000, p. 188). Finally, Barone believes that a good teacher must be aware of and concerned about social issues in the community and the larger world and transmit this concern to his students. Barone's educator should be passionate and engaged. "The kind of honesty that might result from a gaze that is intensely empirical but politically disinterested is insufficient. The responsible story... must be...critical, insofar as it adopts an openly political stance" (2000, p. 192). Like Eisner before him, Barone does not believe that the political can be divorced from education if education is to be recognized as a truly important endeavor in the world, and

if educators are not to be dismissed as people, lacking in intelligence and independent thought, that will simply follow curriculum guidelines and do as they are told.

Orators & Philosophers Revisited

Throughout their professional lives Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner have advocated for a revolution in education, one that will finally provide the comprehensive education necessary for students in the twenty-first century. Both thinkers know this task is no simple feat, for the history of Western culture is one of polarization and false dichotomies: mind vs. body, us vs. them, the rational vs. the aesthetic. Dialogue and thought suffer as a result. Western culture has become a culture of winners and losers, a culture in which opposing armies clash with the passion of fanatics bent on spreading their ideology at all costs, with little thought for the casualties they leave behind: the young, the poor, the voiceless. And education is no exception. But for thinkers such as Greene and Eisner it is the ideal arena for new beginnings. Echoing Greene's "what if" it is still possible to imagine a new vision of education.

We can imagine an education which does not concentrate on specialized, technical knowledge but which, instead, speaks to the whole person and opens him up to the immense wealth of possible learning. We can imagine an education in which the rational and the aesthetic are merged together, and yet remain in constant dialogue with each other, allowing students to explore their different potentialities. We can imagine an education which has a place for tradition, (millenniums of thought cannot merely be discounted) but also for skepticism, tolerance, and egalitarianism. In this education

classical texts will be valued alongside what is new and different, in a dynamic, renewable core which evolves with the times to give students what they need. In this education both the orators and the philosophers can sit at the same table and engage in dialogue, with less sparring and more communication, for both will have understood that the humanities do not have a monopoly on culture, but neither are science and math all of knowledge. Metaphor and facts will hold equal value so that finally the two cultures can meet.

CHAPTER SIX

CRITICAL-CREATIVE THINKING: A MERGING OF THE RATIONAL & AESTHETIC

What Counts as Knowledge?

As has been shown throughout this dissertation, “knowledge” and “thinking” are loaded terms; they mean different things to different people, and they are often defined by those in power. Today, the definitions of the positivists usually hold the most sway in the academy, and in the larger society. Consequently, the dominant definitions of knowledge or critical thinking skills have to do mainly with a technical-rational logic which serves the interests of big business and the state, while the aesthetic has been marginalized, put aside as not useful to the agenda of the nation.

Today critical thinking is a common term in education, but critical thinking as it is currently understood is a one dimensional construct which leaves students with a lopsided education. Thus a new construct is needed. This new construct, which will heretofore be referred to as critical-creative thinking, is a merging of the rational and the aesthetic. This is a new model of thinking, based on the educational philosophy of Greene and Eisner, which is propitious for the general education college curriculum today in order to meet the needs of our students in the twenty-first century.

Critical Thinking

Most educators claim that an important part of their job is teaching young people critical thinking skills, but if we ask, “What are critical thinking skills?” a lot of the responses will be limited to statements containing words such as “logic,” “reason,” and “rational.” But what ever happened to the role of aesthetics within the definition of critical thinking skills? If we are to take the overly simplified division of left brain and right brain as representing logical thought versus artistic thought, we can ask ourselves, what ever happened to the right brain activity of human beings? How can we just value one half of what goes on in the human mind? Is it the case that thinking independently of logic is not true thinking – at least not critical thinking, no more than ornamental thinking, only to be embarked upon when the serious aspects of life have all been dealt with? Unfortunately, creative thinking has been negatively stereotyped, and is thus not held in particularly high esteem within the academy (Greene, 2001).

Critical Thinking in the Classroom

A number of college professors are concerned about the lack of critical thinking skills they notice in their students. The students may not be performing well; they may be disengaged during classroom discussions, or their comments may not be on point. Their papers may not show a basic understanding of the readings they have been assigned, or their exams may be unsatisfactory. They may show difficulty in drawing inferences, or in applying what they have learned in one situation to another. These professors are assuming that their students are coming to them with a set of skills and a

determinate cultural capital which will enable them to perform well in college. These college professors have certain expectations of their students:

These students are to be critical thinkers, comfortable with analyzing and synthesizing information, and then smoothly applying it to a series of contexts. They are to be adept at absorbing content, possessing a great deal of the cultural capital equally accessible to all young people who live in the United States. In short, public college students ought to be as comfortable with content as they are with form, and the form which they master is none other than post-Cartesian rationality, whether the student is from China, Turkey, or a New York City ghetto.

Critical Thinking at Work

At the same time employers complain about the quality of their employees. They say that many recent graduates don't know how to work without excessive direction, take initiatives, or come up with creative solutions to problems. They complain that employees don't show strong critical thinking skills, and that this is because schools are not doing a good job of educating youth. Young people are told that they will need these critical thinking skills to do well in college, to advance in their careers, and in general, to succeed in life.

The Aesthetic & Critical Thinking

Unfortunately, for some the arts - the original domain of the aesthetic, are seen as frivolous and not necessary to serious academic pursuits. In education we are familiar with the "rational" logical-deductive procedure borrowed from Rene Descartes of

dividing a problem into as many parts as needed to arrive at a solution, and beginning with the known and simple and moving gradually to the unknown and complex. There are a couple of problems to consider with these recommendations, though. First of all, problems which have to do with human beings and their lived experience are not so easily divisible into adequate smaller parts, nor is it possible to always begin with the known and simple and move gradually to the unknown and the complex, because people are complex beings, not easily defined or compartmentalized. Their problems cannot be solved in the same manner as mathematical proofs, nor is their behavior quantifiably predictable (Bruner, 1986).

As has been shown in this dissertation, in opposition to the dominant educational philosophy, some thinkers have been staunch supporters of aesthetic thinking. Dewey (2005), for instance, clearly speaks up to defend the role of intelligence in both the production and the appreciation of works of art. He defends the rigor of thinking in terms of relations and qualities, and states that laziness on the part of one who engages with a work of art will lead to nothing but incomplete ideas. Eisner (2002) also speaks of aesthetic thinking as intelligent activity; he emphasizes the role of the senses in picking up qualitative information from the environment which leads to concept formation; he sees the refinement of the senses as necessary to developing multiple literacies. Greene (1995) speaks of aesthetic thinking as releasing the imagination, a crucial step in the building of a more just society based on democratic values. This is not to say that logical-deductive knowledge should be neglected, but it is important to watch out for the combination of an over-developed intellect and an under-developed moral sense. A

technical-rational morality which makes a virtue out of economic productivity at any cost leads to what Greene (1995) has called, “seeing the world small.”

Critical Thinking in the Curriculum

If we look at the manner in which critical thinking is taught in schools and universities in the United States today, we would see little evidence of students learning anything more complex than to solve puzzle-like exercises lacking in rigor, like fill in the blanks, or multiple choice questions. Through these standardized tests students can be easily tracked and put into their “proper” place in the world, where they won’t take up more economic resources than strictly necessary. And later on when these students grow up, businesses obtain a considerably large population of workers who may be easily managed - ideal raw material. How exactly are multiple choice questions supposed to teach young people to think? Where are the processes of analysis and synthesis – not to mention more holistic thinking in general?

Students are trained in puzzle-solving accomplishments, but not in creativity. The latter is a pastime for those who will probably not get very far. And while it is true that the ability to solve puzzles is to be preferred to the inability to solve them, there exists the danger that an inordinate amount of emphasis on a certain type of intellectual focus may result in a truncated moral sense. From a heavy penchant for cold hard logic as the appropriate guide in the realm of abstract knowledge there is little distance to this same logic as a proper representation of the laws of abstract human life. Statements such as “All people tend to maximize profit,” can seem appropriate to the mind that has been trained in logic to the exclusion of feeling – of a moral sense. Justice and injustice appear

to be matters of pure economics – the law of supply and demand an effective way to determine who is indispensable and who is not.

In schools students do not study aesthetics, the language of aesthetics, or much less, aesthetic thinking. In art or music appreciation classes, they barely learn more than a few historical facts, and the aesthetic judgments of “experts.” It is a sad commentary on American culture that adults can take art classes which promise to teach the learner the critical vocabulary to ensure that they may engage in intelligent sounding conversations about art in galleries. “Never be at a loss for words again,” the brochures promise. Never mind that this vocabulary, learned in this manner, is but an empty form.

Critical Thinking, Mind, & Meaning

If a student’s aesthetic imagination is not given a voice, it diminishes both the student’s possibility of a deeper intellectual enrichment and the possibility of his sharing and creating meaning within the community of the classroom. What is worse, when a society sends the message to its people that aesthetic thought is unimportant, little by little it is set aside as students learn to focus on important things – like making money. If a student is not taught to decipher systems of symbols, different modes of representation, soon he will be unable to decipher any but the most obvious messages. Appreciating works of art requires perception, intuition, imagination, a feeling for metaphor and other forms of representation, value-inquiry, tolerance for ambiguity, play and engagement with the unconscious – hardly a simple feat. And this takes time, patience, and hard work; it is an important way of knowing.

Human beings carry around an internal world, even as they participate in an external reality. This internal world is privy to thoughts, feelings, and language which may not be immediately apparent in the external world, and this internal world must be given a voice. Human beings negotiate the world on different planes, and logical deductive rationality is one of them, not the only one, and not necessarily the best. But since it is favored as the critical thinking of the academy, those who are less comfortable with it tend to shut down, to disengage in traditional learning environments. This is not an acceptable state of affairs. It does our students a disservice that they should feel alienated from intellectual exercises which should be accessible to all alike, even if each person ultimately develops knowledge in his or her own unique way.

In Search of Critical-Creative Experience

Knowledge is not the special province of experts; it can and should be made accessible to all through general education. Knowledge is not the special province of the logical or the aesthetic, but requires a merging of the two in order to render our representations of the world more complete. It is interesting to note that for Dewey, Greene, and Eisner the aesthetic is not merely restricted to art, but mathematics and science may be appreciated from an aesthetic point of view; neither is logic restricted to mathematics and science, but art may also be subject to the lens of logical inquiry: to analyses of content and form, parts and whole, and relationships. This move to aestheticize the rational and analyze the aesthetic can be seen as a precursor to the proposal contained in this dissertation for a new merged form of thinking.

Rationality has at its base centuries of an elaborately developed logic capable of seeing an argument through from premise to conclusion. Aesthetics, on the other hand, is an as of yet largely neglected arena rich with systems of symbols which many have not learned to interpret. These two are complementary parts of the comprehensive view of mind which we are in such dire need of in the twenty-first century. If our goal is for students to exhibit higher order thinking, this will not be achieved by sole emphasis on either logical-deductive or aesthetic thinking. The point is to move towards a critical-creative thinking which will allow students to make well thought out judgments in various realms through exposure to different systems of symbols, different forms of literacy. Practice in identifying patterns in different contexts will lead to a more profound understanding by enabling students to navigate multiple worlds and make an increasing number of connections.

This is a project which can be begun by taking the work of Greene and Eisner as a point of departure, a model to build upon, as we explore the nature of this thinking, its possibilities, its challenges, and how it may become central to the general education college curriculum, especially through placing a greater focus on the arts and humanities.

An Educational Philosophy of the Aesthetic

As has been shown, both Greene and Eisner share a passion for the aesthetic as an integral part of experience and an essential component of education, an education which should focus on the development of the whole person, not just the intellectual powers. Greene and Eisner both affirm that human beings live through their minds, bodies, emotions, passions, and spirit. Neglecting everything else in order to give primacy to the

mind, and then, to a very limited definition of “mind” as that through which the traditional “rational” human being may develop his or her intellect, leads to an impoverishment of the very same human being by denying him or her access to other essential dimensions of necessary experience.

Aesthetics is a liberating force, and the study of aesthetics, both for itself, and as a method for other learning is an excellent way of empowering students to inhabit multiple realms of experience and become critical thinkers on many different planes. Students can be taught very effectively through literature, art, music, film, and other expressions of the aesthetic. This exposure opens them up to a critical awareness of their own lives and experiences, and those of others; it develops empathy and understanding, and has the potential to make young people into more moral human beings.

For both Greene and Eisner, the aesthetic sense is the necessary half that is missing in order to enable people to possess a more comprehensive mind, and aspire to a more complete and moral knowledge of themselves, of others, and of the world around them. Through the development of aesthetic sensibility ordinary human beings will broaden their perception, insight, intuition, and judgment. They will have smoother access to impressions from their unconscious, which carries powerful messages that need to be decoded. The ambitions of the aesthetic go far beyond knowledge to the achievement of wisdom, that which will lead human beings towards living a better life.

Aesthetics in the Curriculum: Eisner's & Greene's Visions

Eisner and Greene share the same confidence in interdisciplinary study but focus more on the importance of the arts and humanities as facilitators for deeper learning. Eisner expresses his worry that institutions of higher education tend to look with suspicion upon courses of study in which judgments, intuition, metaphor, and other non-quantitative forms of logic might be important. Greene worries that even when students do take courses in the arts and humanities, they are taught to be consumers and not producers of knowledge.

Both Greene and Eisner see the curriculum as fertile ground for the liberation of human potentiality through aesthetic study, but they have slightly different focuses. Eisner's first love is art. He emphasizes the importance of making art a central part of the curriculum. He would favor a course of study in which students learn how to produce, analyze, and critique visual works of art. He presents quite a sophisticated methodology which explains the different ways in which art can be engaged with, and how symbols may be interpreted, in order to produce a rich educational experience for students. Eisner's focus is primarily on the releasing of students' cognitive potential, but Eisner's idea of the cognitive is radically different from the disembodied intellect which is still looked up to as an ideal in some quarters. Eisner's cognition is an emotionalized cognition, a cognition which is infused throughout with feeling, with the search for beauty, harmony, and significance within the multiple forms of representation, thus his insistence on aesthetic thinking as a legitimate part of rational thinking, and on engagement with the arts as intelligent activity.

Eisner's argument is that multiple literacy should be the first aim of education because human beings are either "liberated or constrained by the types of forms they are able to experience." Eisner wants students to be able to participate in the world fully, navigating its many symbol system, able to both read the many messages embedded in experience and communicate through different forms of representation. This expansion of the cognitive, in Eisner's view, will help achieve equity, as, with the proper education, there will no longer be any group of people who can be silenced or marginalized.

Greene, on the other hand, has a special feeling for literature from among the many different arts, though she also appreciates and writes about the contributions of multiple forms of expression. Literature, for Greene, is a particularly effective tool for releasing the imagination and having students reflect within the realm of the ethical in the pursuit of social justice. Through her numerous writings, Greene repeats her moral message time and time again: Students should be taught to imagine a world unlike the one that is, a world in which wrongs may be righted, suffering might be eased, and injustice would be swiftly dealt with. When students are able to place the world as it is side by side with the world as it could be, they will be able to decide that certain aspects of the human condition are unacceptable, and will be willing to engage in changes leading to democracy and freedom. Themes such as famine, disease, torture, war, discrimination, the abuses of business and government are all fertile subject matter for the philosophical reflection of young minds. Youths should be exposed to portraits of despair, of alienation. Anger can be a powerful tool for change, and the idealism of youth can accomplish incredible things. They can begin to practice engagement with their communities and the world around them, understanding that social injustice can

only be combated through the active participation of those who are determined not to tolerate it.

In Greene's philosophy there is a greater emphasis on the engagement with other people in addition to the initial engagement with the work of art experienced. To that end she underlines the fact that critical thinking mandates not being afraid of conflict, not being afraid of raising discussions that may lead to arguments and looking at issues that will make some people uncomfortable or angry, because conflict is a great opportunity for learning to take place. Human beings are different from one another. We all have our own set of lived experiences, values, and assumptions, and we are bound to disagree with others on many points. But while conflict creates the opportunity for growth, it can also be a destructive force if allowed to spiral out of control. The lessons of respect for different values and tolerance for other viewpoints need to be constantly emphasized if we want to build bridges towards understanding, which may lead towards a transformation of society.

Aesthetics & the Pedagogue: Eisner's & Greene's Visions

Greene and Eisner also have great expectations for the role of the teacher in the successful implementation of a good curriculum, as no amount of theory in the world, no matter how coherent, transparent, or significant, can substitute for the human element which can only be provided by a good teacher.

First and foremost a teacher should be an "expert" in whatever subject he is teaching, and must have the skills to both transmit knowledge and develop critical thinking skills effectively in students for that particular field, in Eisner's words, both a

connoisseur and a critic. Even when a lesson is well prepared, in order for truly effective learning to take place, a teacher must be able to deal with all sorts of unexpected twists. Content knowledge in itself is not meaningful unless it allows for flexibility of method and experimentation. He must be able to anticipate what topics are bound to cause students difficulty, be able to explain a problem in different ways, come up with improvised examples and make both planned and on the spot connections with other content students may be more familiar and comfortable with. If a teacher cannot employ critical thinking skills in a given subject, how can students be expected to develop them? In effect, a teacher must be a master of his craft, and this is no simple feat.

Teachers need to understand that learning is multi-dimensional, that people possess different kinds of intelligences, that different learners have different strengths, and thus need to be taught in different ways. The different symbol systems and forms of representation can only be accessed by students if they are exposed to multiple literacies, if they are taught to perceive, analyze, synthesize, and communicate in multiple ways. Teachers need to understand that though all students may not excel in the areas of math, science, or technology, they have other abilities and talents which teachers can help to identify and encourage them to develop, leading students to have more productive and happier lives. They need to believe that all students can learn, in one way or another, that human potential is unlimited.

But all this cannot come about if the teacher is not sensitive to aesthetic experience in the first place, if he is not capable of insights into the meaning of the brusque stroke of a brush, an arpeggio in a minor key, or chiaroscuro lighting in a film. There is also a need for teachers who are capable of imagining, who cherish the ideal of

social justice and who do not believe that protesting against the world as it is, is fighting a losing battle. Teachers should pursue a pedagogy of liberation, of inclusion, of bringing out the potential in each and every student, bringing him or her to a critical consciousness of his or her world and the multiple worlds of others.

Some Reservations

The educational philosophies of both Greene and Eisner are excellent models for a re-imagining of the general education curriculum today. Eisner's focus on the cognitive possibilities of the aesthetic and Greene's focus on the moral possibilities of the aesthetic are rich and significant, worthy of being seriously investigated and pursued.

It is possible, though, to point out a few reservations which may be harbored about some parts of their philosophies as applied to the curriculum. Eisner, for instance, speaks a great deal about his concern that students be exposed to as many types of symbol systems as possible, that they learn to read and communicate within them. Yet at the same time he rejects the idea of a core curriculum; his argument is that having a core marginalizes subjects which are not part of the core. However, there is no better way to ensure that students develop and exercise their different potentialities than by engaging with different types of subjects, whether they feel an affinity for them or not. And having a core curriculum which all students must follow is an excellent way of providing the same educational opportunities to all. If they are to survive in this world, they need to engage with mathematics, science, and technology. At the same time, as Eisner has claimed, they also need to engage with art, music, and literature. Eisner's sympathies are very clear; they are with the arts, and more specifically, the visual arts. And perhaps

because the arts have been marginalized for such a long time, he tends to overcompensate by suggesting that all students should be exposed to art, but not necessarily to algebra or chemistry.

There is certainly room for disagreement with this position. It is surely true that the arts and humanities need to be given much more importance in the general education curriculum, but the idea of a liberal arts education is, as much as possible, to expose students to the world, and math, science, and technology, for better or worse, are part of this world. Naturally, this core curriculum would need to be reviewed from time to time to make sure that it is in keeping with changes in our world: advances in math, science and technology, new social and ethical perspectives opened up by a more inclusive and diverse world, exciting research in the humanities, innovative art forms, etc. A renewable core curriculum, constructed by each college with the input of professors from different areas of expertise, would provide the opportunity for dissenting voices to call into question what is being taught at any point in time while providing students with an up-to-date, comprehensive education which would offer rich, significant, and varied content knowledge, as well as access to multiple ways of knowing, inculcating in students the habits of mind necessary to become lifelong learners.

In the case of Greene, it is certainly true that her passionate dedication to social justice is laudable, a worthy and noble goal. Indeed, young people need to be sensitized to the world around them. Too often they are unaware of any reality but the one that touches them most directly, their own lives, preoccupations, and the limited range of their knowledge and experience. Greene's focus on the importance of opening young people up to multiple perspectives and narratives is quite valuable, and can be the start of some

very important and hard conversations which need to be had, as we all try to move towards a more just world.

But it is a matter of concern that Greene should insist that though all voices should be heard, precedence should be given to those leading to democracy and freedom. It seems that this could create the danger that some voices will not be heard at all. Greene's stance on this point is a matter of particular concern because since "democracy" and "freedom" have been designated as the ultimate good, anything which does not immediately seem to come under this category can be seen as evil, and harmful ideological battles can ensue. Greene's criteria, because it is not particularly well defined but open to interpretation, makes it too easy to silence any voice which may air an unpopular viewpoint by pointing an accusing finger at the one who is not committed to democracy and freedom. Inquiry and philosophical reflection ought not to have a predetermined end result. If the university is, in fact, to be a place which encourages thought and communication, all should be allowed to voice their views. It is unjust to silence some and allow others to speak. Students should be allowed to deviate from "the party line" without the risk of being ostracized.

Finally, for all the efforts of philosophers and pedagogues to transform the world through education, still, when young people leave the walls of the academy and step into the outside world, a great number of the lessons learned recede into the background as life becomes a quest for survival. One can, of course, hope that from time to time these lessons will resurface and the adult who faces the world today will remember some of the promises he made to himself and to his fellow human beings when he was a youth. Though to a great extent school should be a safe place where students can learn to know

themselves and develop their different talents, yet it is important that at the same time the school should not give these young people a false sense of security or they will pay a very high price for it in adulthood. Young people deserve to know the prospects available to those who pursue different courses of study, even as they learn that every job and career choice is valuable and worthy of respect. They should also know and understand that some excel more than others, and this too is natural. True equality will never be achieved; it is naïve to believe that everyone could conceivably start at the same place, even just after graduation.

Nevertheless, education should serve to produce better prepared and more enlightened citizens with a commitment to democracy and social justice. Therefore, those who love logic should be exposed to art, and the artists should learn to deal with numbers. With time both the mathematician and the artist will be able to pursue their own paths, but they will be richer for their expanded capabilities. Thus, we arrive at the proposal set forth in this dissertation. In order to provide students with the most opportunities for learning, meaning, and personal enrichment, the aim should be to cultivate critical-creative thinking in all.

Critical-Creative Thinking

A Case of Two Programs

Taking aesthetics seriously transforms education, as can be seen in the case of two significant programs: *Project Zero* and *Lincoln Center Institute*, which owe a great debt

to “champions of the aesthetic” like Dewey, Greene, and Eisner, and bear the mark of their philosophies in more ways than one. Here, art is an end in itself as well as an avenue of exploration, an opening to the world. In the deweyan tradition, productive engagement with the aesthetic is clearly seen as a manifestation of a fertile intelligence capable of rigor and concentration. So too are Eisner’s methods for approaching art given a central role: the encounter with art should be thorough and meticulous; the work must be engaged with on different levels, each of which will open up new lines of communication between object and viewer, as well as amongst the community of viewers. In this manner meaning is encountered, created, and shared; symbolic languages are discovered; and private perceptions made public. Within this process both connoisseurship and criticism may be achieved. And then, as we move from the cognitive to the moral, Greene’s ethical imagination is unleashed as we come face to face with the affective realm through recognizing the presence of the “other” and being socialized into a more inclusive world. Throughout all these moments judgment matures, and we may become better and wiser human beings.

These programs are special because they have been cultivated with pride and passion by thinkers who transgress the old conventions, who will not constrain themselves within the artificial limits of our current technocratic worldview, having embraced a more holistic epistemology. But the programs in themselves cannot stand in as curriculum; in fact, they mainly serve as support for curricula already in place. However, they can give us some important insight into both what can be known and ways of knowing. We can teach perception, intuition, and imagination to take their subject matter where they may find it and use it as a launching pad for creativity. We can learn

from our initial confrontation with the unknown and seemingly insurmountable, which may challenge us to simultaneously wrest meaning from it, or confer meaning upon it. We can enter upon multiple and many-sided dialogues, finding our way through a more polyphonous world as we move towards democracy. This is the new humanism.

Project Zero

Project Zero was founded at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1967 by the philosopher, Nelson Goodman, who, like Dewey, believed that engaging with the arts was serious cognitive activity. “Zero” was chosen as the name of the program to underline that “nothing” certain had yet been established about arts learning. Initially centering on the arts, Project Zero now focuses on exploring human cognitive development and the process of learning across all disciplines. It emphasizes learner centered education, and first proposed ideas now widely accepted in education such as the theories of different learning styles and multiple intelligences. Project Zero has benefited from the work of eminent thinkers such as Howard Gardner, (multiple intelligences) David Perkins (human potential) and Ernest Boyer (humanism), each of whom has put his special stamp on the program. Throughout the years, the program has engaged in various research studies and spearheaded multiple initiatives that involve collaboration between schools, universities, museums and other cultural institutions. Presently a lot of its work takes place in American public schools that serve disadvantaged students.

According to its website, Project Zero’s mission today is:

To help create communities of reflective, independent learners; to enhance deep understanding within and across disciplines; and to promote critical and creative thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines, at the individual and institutional levels. (p. 1)

Lincoln Center Institute

As stated on its website, Lincoln Center Institute prides itself on fostering imaginative thinking across the curriculum. Its workshops focus on the examination of one particular work of art from a number of perspectives, through a process of “inquiry-based study” (p. 1) which highlights questioning and reflection. Students are also involved in the art-making process. The point of these exercises is for students to examine the connections between “the story that the artwork tells” (p. 1) and their own lives. Thus, art is transformed from an “abstraction” into something tangible and meaningful. “The process is both artistically and academically rich for the students, and fosters imaginative thinking as a habit of mind” (p. 1). It is hoped this habit of mind then transfers over into the manner students approach their other subjects, such as language arts, math, science, or social studies.

Lincoln Center Institute was founded in 1975 as a branch of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. It grew out of a one-year study commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation, and undertaken by Mark Schubart. The purpose of the study was to conduct a survey of programs at cultural institutions. The study determined that these institutions, by following traditional arts appreciation models, were only serving a very small percentage of the student population. Grounding itself on the philosophical vision of

educators such as Dewey and Greene, the institute proposed making students active participants of their experience with the arts. (History of Lincoln Center Institute)

Today Lincoln Center Institute brings art from diverse cultures (dance, film, theater, music, etc) into classrooms in New York, nationally, and internationally. The purpose is for both students and teachers to learn about and through the arts in order to develop critical and creative thinking. The curricula are developed through collaboration between professional artists, teaching artists and classroom teachers.

Both Project Zero and Lincoln Center Institute provide ample opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development workshops and activities. These institutions support a rich tradition of research, dialogue, innovation and imagination. This same philosophy of critical reflection and collaboration is becoming popular in Teaching and Learning Centers which are opening up in colleges and universities around the United States. These provide workshops, seminars, individual consultations and the opportunity for dialogue in formal and informal sessions. One example of the latter is CUNY's noted "Brown Bag Series": informal lunch time gatherings in which professors can exchange ideas and speak about current concerns regarding curriculum and pedagogy. Unfortunately, though, some schools tend to treat these centers as resources geared specifically towards graduate students who are just starting to teach. I believe this is a misguided step, since educators at all stages in their careers can benefit from the opportunity to examine and reflect upon their teaching practices as well as keep up with innovations and research in pedagogy.

A Case of Two Schools: The Content of the Core Curriculum

Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, a four-year public college, and Columbia University, an Ivy League school, have an interesting point in common. Both have been praised for their core curriculum. “The New York Sun,” a now defunct daily, recently ran articles about the different schools and their interpretations of and conflicts surrounding the core. It is interesting to see how these two institutions compare, how they are viewed by faculty, students, administrators, and the public, and to get a glimpse into some of the issues surrounding the core that have presented themselves.

Brooklyn College

“Brooklyn’s Core” (April 3, 2003), an editorial, speaks about Brooklyn College’s Core Curriculum, introduced in 1981, as a bright spot in the educational landscape, but expresses concerns about certain changes that are starting to appear on the horizon. The article opens, “When the politically correct crowd last tried to dumb down Brooklyn College’s core curriculum back in 1987, they met with memorable resistance” Apparently the paper believes that the danger of “dumbing down” has returned and goes on to report on the results of a recent survey carried out by the college in which professors were asked what the goals of general education ought to be. “The New York Sun” comments:

The survey struck us as slanted. Of 43 possible goals, none mentioned Aristotle, Shakespeare, economics, freedom, or capitalism. Three mentioned diversity... Another possible general education goal that won significant support from the

faculty was “understanding and affirmation of one’s own identity.” Another was “interpersonal and social skills.” (p.1)

The question raised by the paper is whether, given the current climate, the new core curriculum will be appropriately content-rich and rigorous or whether education will deteriorate into ideological brainwashing. This critique refers not only to what is taught in the core, but extends to the pedagogical methods employed in some classes. One particular complaint concerns Ms. Roberta Mathews, then provost of the college, and her passing out of a series of “ground rules” for classrooms:

One such rule, originally documented by Lynne Weber Cannon, would ask students to acknowledge that “One mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and the like is that we are all systematically misinformed about our own group and about members of other groups.” (p. 2)

The New York Sun’s position is that these ground rules will interfere with the culture of free speech and debate, in effect, serving to silence students with conservative views. The paper further questions the political agendas of those who will have a say in the changes to the curriculum. This particular critique extends to sociology professor, Timothy Shortell, chairman of the Faculty Council’s Core Curriculum Committee. The “New York Sun” alleges that Professor Shortell has called religious people “moral retards” and quotes him as saying, “It is not enough to be irreligious. We must use our critique to expose religion for what it is: sanctimonious nonsense” (p. 1).

Again, the concern is that professors should attempt to instruct students as to what they ought or ought not to believe, intruding into students' personal space. The overarching view the paper is espousing is that Brooklyn College is in danger of veering from its excellent reputation as a school which provides a comprehensive education to its students, and that care should be taken not to tamper with a curriculum that has been recognized as excellent at the national level. The article, indirectly, also makes it evident that everyone at the college is not convinced that the curriculum is the best it could be, and that is why conflicts have arisen, conflicts which will lead to the curriculum evolving, though not everyone will be happy with the changes that take place. Going back a few years we can find a 1990 "New York Times" article, *Brooklyn College Examines its Core* which claims:

Brooklyn's stability stands in contrast to the intellectual ferment at many other institutions, where the core curriculum has become a battleground between traditionalists and those who demand increased cultural diversity... For the last 10 years Brooklyn's core curriculum has included both contemporary and traditional studies to a degree that may be unique in this country. Still, the college believes in tinkering with success. (Depalma, p. 1)

Yet, for all the talk about evolution and change the same article states, "Guardians of academic tradition need not fear for Brooklyn's future; no one is advocating courses on "MTV Culture" or "The Media and the Mind." Rather, what is sought now is more accessibility, the 1990's version of relevance" (p.1). These are courses which might have been considered outlandish back then, but which may become more relevant as the

culture transforms and reinvents itself, and this is why a culture of debate is essential to the university, so that proponents of change should feel that they are able to speak up when it appears that the core curriculum has become irrelevant and stale. This is why the idea of an evolving core should be integral to any curriculum.

The Brooklyn College Core

In 2009 the core course requirements are as follows: Students must take a total of 11 core courses. These are divided into lower tier courses, of which the students will take nine, and two additional upper tier courses. The lower tier courses are more foundational while the upper tier courses are more specialized. The lower tier courses are divided into three main areas. The first is “Arts and Literatures” and includes the courses, *Classical Cultures*, *Introduction to Art*, and *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*. The second is “Philosophical and Social Inquiry” and includes the courses *Knowledge, Reality, and Values*, *Shaping of the Modern World*, and *People, Power, and Politics*. The last area is “Scientific Inquiry” and here students have some choice regarding their curriculum. They can take *Thinking Mathematically* or *Computing: Nature, Power, and Limits*; *Biology for Today’s World* or *Science in Modern Life – Chemistry*, and *Physics – The Simple Laws that Govern the Universe* or *Geology: The Science of Our World*. For the upper tier courses students choose one, more specialized, course from each of the three initial main areas. There are currently 27 courses among which they can choose. Finally, students must take *English Composition* 1 and 2, reach level 3 or higher in a foreign language, and go through a screening by the Speech Communication Arts and Sciences Department before they can receive their diploma.

Common Goals of the Core Curriculum

Brooklyn College's website states that the common goals of the Core Curriculum "reflect the knowledge, understanding, judgment, and skills that a person needs who will be in a position to make major contributions to society, to assume tasks of leadership, and to continue a life of learning and reflection." It lists these goals as the following:

1. Be able to think critically and creatively, to reason logically, to reason quantitatively, and to express their thoughts orally and in writing with clarity and precision.
2. Be able to make sound moral and ethical judgments
3. Understand the arts, histories and cultures of the past as a foundation for those of the present
4. Understand the development and workings of modern societies in an interdependent world
5. Acquire the tools that are required to understand and respect the natural universe
6. Understand what knowledge is and how it is acquired by the use of differing methods in different disciplines
7. Be able to integrate knowledge from diverse sources
8. Understand the necessity for tolerance and appreciate individual and social diversity
9. Be informed and responsible citizens of the world
10. Establish a foundation for life-long learning and the potential for leadership.

Justification for the Core Curriculum

Brooklyn College proclaims its support for the core, calling general education, “the hallmark of a true liberal arts education.” And it stresses its commitment to providing all students with a broad background in the liberal arts and science. The college website states:

In a national environment where students are urged, earlier and earlier, to choose an area of specialization, the Core Curriculum ensures that as students are preparing for careers and specialized research, they are also being exposed to areas of lasting interest and to their interrelatedness: history and political systems; artistic movements in literature, visual arts, drama, and music; schools of philosophy; and developments in mathematics, the physical sciences, and computer science.

An Evaluation

This is a sound model of education, but has a few weaknesses. The lower tier courses do seem comprehensive and cover a broad base, but some of the upper tier courses seem unnecessarily specialized. Classes such as “The Development of the Silk Road” or “Studies in Forensic Science,” though interesting, seem more proper to a specialized rather than a general education. Specialized courses can be taken in a student’s major, minor, or as part of his elective quota; there is no need to include specialization within the general part of the curriculum.

In addition, there is not much information on the pedagogical methods employed in these courses, so we do not know whether special methods are being employed to

make students active participants in the learning process, or to help them expand their ways of knowing. Brooklyn College does have a resource for pedagogical reflection and development, the “Roberta S. Matthews Center for Teaching.” It offers orientation to teaching for new faculty and adjunct faculty, brown bag discussion series – informal gatherings where professors can share ideas about teaching and learning, workshops and seminars, mentoring, and consulting, but there is no indication that the center is intimately connected with the Core program. It appears to be a supplementary resource – not a central part of education at Brooklyn College.

Also, it seems that core courses at Brooklyn are too large for the seminar model. With so many students in a class it is difficult to practice the type of dialogue that is essential to a liberal education; some students will inevitably be lost in the crowd. The opening lines of a 1990 *N.Y. Times* article, “Brooklyn College Examines its Core,” highlight this point:

On a gloomy Thursday morning near the end of the semester, Chi Shing Chao and 35 other Brooklyn College students squeezed into an undersized classroom for Prof. Hardy Hanson’s survey class, “The Classical Origins of Western Civilization. About half the students jostled and parried with Professor Hanson over Plato’s “Republic” and Thrasymachus’s definition of justice. The other half, including Mr. Chi, a computer science major who sat in the last row, spent the hour in silence. (Depalma, p. 1)

Brooklyn College’s Core Curriculum program is laudable for its attempt to provide a comprehensive education to the great body of diverse students that make up the

college. Here one can make out traces of Dewey's emphasis on democracy, his desire to equalize education for all. These students, for the most part, do not come from an elite background, yet the school maintains its efforts to ensure that they are not relegated to a straightforward vocational program of study, but instead have access to "the best that has been thought and said" throughout the ages. Certain changes do need to be made, but often these are changes that take money, and the City University's funding will not compare to that of an ivy league school like Columbia, whose Core will be subsequently examined.

Some examples of positive changes would be implementing seminar style classes with fewer students and two professors to each of these courses. That would make it easier to engage all students in the process of critical-creative thinking. There should also be professional development opportunities specifically designed for professors of the core in order for them to expand both their understanding of the subject and of special pedagogical methods which can improve education for their students. Eisner would say they need to be made into connoisseurs and critics of their subject as well as of different ways of knowing, a task which necessitates adequate support on the part of the institution. Finally, there should be subsidies in order for students to take advantage of the great cultural resources available in a city like New York; Greene would certainly insist that all the students be exposed to art, music, theater - the overall culture that surrounds them, else how will they be enabled to release their imagination, to escape the aridity of a life not fully aware of the aesthetic? At present the only CUNY students who enjoy these advantages are those in the Honors College, a fact that all three thinkers would surely protest. I believe Brooklyn's Core needs to be strengthened through more

analysis of the content and methods employed in courses, more initiatives for faculty development, and more economic resources in order to help the program fit the mold of a liberal arts education.

Columbia University

In making the comparison between Brooklyn College and Columbia University, we cannot lose sight of the fact that Columbia counts with resources such as endowments from wealthy donors and the ability to charge its students high tuitions. “The New York Sun” article, *Columbia Professor Takes on Overhaul of Curriculum* (April 14, 2008) gives us an example of the wealth at the school’s disposal:

The university announced it would spend \$50 million on a project to enhance the core curriculum’s multicultural offerings last fall, shortly after students conducted a week-long hunger strike to protest the weakness of the classes. Now Columbia is assigning a young professor of Western Civilization, Roosevelt Montas, 34, to direct the effort. (Garland, p. 1)

The article also gives us the opportunity once again to see the conflict surrounding the core curriculum, conflict which the administration has tried to contain by choosing someone with very specific characteristics to head the new initiative. Montas is an attractive candidate on many fronts. His class, ethnicity, youth, immigrant status and his struggle to master English are all signs that he does not belong to “the establishment.” He was born in a rural village in the Dominican Republic and came to the U.S. as a teenager; he graduated from John Bowne high school with “a minimal command of

English.” Of course this, in itself, is no guarantee that students at Columbia will now receive a better education since there is nothing inherently superior about being non-white, non-native, non upper-middle class, and young, so some may see Montas’ appointment as a shrewd political move. It is no coincidence that Montas, a Columbia graduate, has a great deal of respect for Columbia’s core, attributing to it his own success in navigating the new society he found himself in. He reminisces:

I doubt there are very many people who enter college in the same state of bewilderment and ignorance that I did... The core curriculum worked very well for me because I was trying to make sense of the world into which I was thrust.
(p. 2)

Montas calls the core “a systematic and rigorous approach to some of the fundamental questions about what it means to be human, questions that every human being must ask his or herself” (p. 2). The college’s website gives us a few examples of these questions: “What does it mean to be an individual? How does one live with the certainty of death? What kind of life is most worth living? What responsibilities does membership in a community entail?”

Montas also addresses the concerns of supporters of multiculturalism by assuring them that the ultimate goal is not equal representation, but representation of the “most important ideas” that have come out of our culture. In this, he is espousing the ideal of liberal education put forth by Matthew Arnold. Montas notes:

The idea that a core curriculum ought to be representative based on the way that, say, Congress is representative, that it should be demographically representative,

that's just apples and oranges... The core curriculum represents and embodies the most important ideas that have shaped the institutions and values of our culture. And it ought to represent those ideas. (p. 1)

The article points out that this view is precisely the one the administration wants to push. It quotes Richard Brake, director of university stewardship at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute as saying, "We wouldn't want any effort to water down, or succumb to political pressure... We don't want some kind of very rigid multicultural perspective" (p.2). He is also quoted as saying that the institute has no complaints with strengthening supplementary multicultural offerings.

The problem with "supplementary" is that obviously what is supplemental is not central to the core. Montas has said that the structure of the core curriculum will not change; what will change is the offerings of the list of major culture classes that can count for core credit. He emphasizes that he will work with administrators to make sure that these new courses follow the rigorous, seminar-style model of other core courses. This careful attention to pedagogical methods is a positive move. Also positive is the emphasis on change, the possibility for the core to evolve. And Montas seems committed to the idea of change. He notes, "The core curriculum is always evolving and it has to evolve... Perhaps a better way of putting it is that the core curriculum is not a tradition of thought but a tradition of debate" (p. 2), words reminiscent of Graff's proposal to teach the conflicts.

Columbia University's Core

In 2009 the core course requirements are as follows. Students take a total of 10 courses plus four semesters of a foreign language, and two semesters of physical education. In their first year all students take two semesters of *Literature Humanities*, a seminar surveying the great works of Western literature. They also take two one-semester courses in alternate semesters: *Frontiers of Science*, a lecture and seminar course which aims to instill “scientific habits of mind” and *University Writing*, a seminar intended to develop college level writing skills across different disciplines. In their sophomore year students take two semesters of *Contemporary Civilization*, a seminar surveying the great works of Western philosophy and political thought. Before their junior year students need to complete two one-semester courses: *Art Humanities*, a seminar surveying the great works of Western art and *Music Humanities*, a seminar surveying the great works of Western music. Students also pick two courses in Non-Western civilizations from among a distribution to satisfy the Global Core requirement. Two additional science courses, four terms of foreign language and two semesters of physical education complete the core.

Goals of the Core Curriculum

Columbia University's website states that the goals of the Core Curriculum are to provide students with the “critical tools of observation, evaluation, and judgment that translate into all spheres of life,” membership in an intellectual community including Columbia graduates in “different places, different careers, and different generations,” and

the development of enduring habits of mind which will help students experience their lives “in a richer and more meaningful way.”

Justification for the Core Curriculum

Columbia University’s college website promises that the core experience will be “academically formative and personally transformative.” It promises that, through the critical examination of important ideas and issues, students will gain insight into themselves and understanding about society that will change their perspective on life. The university hails its core as “the essence of the liberal arts tradition” and offers students “an oasis of order” that will help them make sense of their lives and of the world around them. Columbia’s program has traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on Western culture, but is now working on incorporating a more global perspective into the course of study. The College Bulletin asserts:

No part of the Core Curriculum assumes that boundaries between “West” and non-West” have ever been clear, impermeable, or unchanging; or even that a distinction so rough and so simple is particularly useful for understanding the world. Nor does the Core assume that one civilization is ours’ and the rest are others’.

In this manner Columbia continues to make strides in the effort to make students’ education ever more comprehensive and complete.

An Evaluation

Columbia's core curriculum has many good points in its favor. The courses are designed to be rigorous and challenging; the sheer amount and depth of the material covered and the extent of the connections among disciplines encountered within one class demand serious intellectual effort on the part of both students and professors, especially with small seminar classes (22 students per course) in which student participation is a given. Columbia's bulletin points to its courses as "broadly introductory, interdisciplinary, and temporally or spatially expansive." To this end, the program relies upon a variety of materials to give students a more complete picture of the subject being studied. One example is the global courses which are "organized around a set of primary texts or artifacts, which may range from texts of literate traditions to media, ritual performances or oral sources, produced in the regions of the world in question."

Professors also use multimedia and other advances in order to enrich students' experience in the classroom. For example, In Art Humanities professors may use QuickTime virtual reality photography and video to expose students to architectural monuments. Another important element of the core is the relaxing of boundaries between the university and the outside world. In Music Humanities, for instance, students are exposed to live music performances both at the school and at different venues in New York City. In addition, the school maintains a quartet in residence, the Daedalus quartet. The quartet gives presentations in classes followed by question and answer sessions. There are also jazz ensembles and other groups of students who present in classes. This is the kind of rich educational experience that Greene would clearly favor, one in which students have the opportunity to engage all their senses through exposure to different

kinds of texts, and different expressions of the aesthetic; words are supremely important to Greene, but they are not all of education. Of course, these programs take money; the opportunity to experience all this culture carries a considerable price tag. Another advantage of the curriculum is the evidence that the core has evolved throughout the years, though in a culture of dissonance, there will always be moves to block certain changes, and those which do result may not be satisfactory to all groups. Columbia's alumni publication, "Columbia College Today", recently ran a cover story, *True to the Core*, (September/October 2008) which included a section on curricular changes throughout the years; it provides a few examples of general changes:

The core curriculum always has been somewhat fluid, both in the required courses and in their content. The major changes of the past decade include a revamped composition course, University Writing, which in 2003 replaced Logic & Rhetoric, a part of the core since 1986; a semester-long science course, Frontiers of Science, required for all first-years; and an evolving Major Cultures requirement. (Boss-Bicak, p. 6)

The article also notes that the contents of particular classes have gone through major changes, and that the input of faculty across the board is actively sought out.

The Literature Humanities syllabus is reviewed every two years, and more than 120 works have gone on and off the reading list over time. "It's a lively and ongoing project, figuring out what's going to be on the syllabus," Popkin (Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities) says. "It's the best-attended staff meeting of all time. Everyone is invested and committed. (p. 7)

One particularly important change was adding a seminar-style science requirement to what had before 2003 been for the most part a humanities core, a positive move since scientific literacy is integral to a comprehensive education. Hefland, the founder of *Frontiers of Science*, says he undertook this task because he wanted students to understand that science is not simply a series of facts but “a dynamic, intellectual activity that’s very, very different from other ways of looking at the world, and has tremendous power in the world today” (p. 9). Hefland’s vision to make science a part of the core dates back to 25 years ago, when he chaired a committee on science in a liberal arts curriculum. He recalls, “It troubled me that our Core Curriculum consisted of seven humanities courses and no science courses... That was not adequate preparation to be an intelligent citizen of the 21st century” (p 9).

Finally, the Core Curriculum program provides excellent professional development opportunities for its pedagogues, the opportunity for them to become, in Eisner’s words, connoisseurs and critics of their subject. There are weekly lunch gatherings for faculty of Contemporary Civilization, Literature Humanities, and Frontiers of Science. These luncheons feature guest speakers who often are experts on the author or work being taught that week. In addition, pedagogic seminars are held each week for graduate student preceptors teaching the courses for the first time, and are also open to faculty new to the core. This attention to both content and methods is integral to providing students with a complete education.

Even though Columbia has thought out its Core program very carefully and has devoted many resources to its development and implementation, there are still a couple of weak points that need to be overcome. Once again I have a preference for some of the

foundation courses such as *Contemporary Civilization* and *Literature Humanities* not only because of the broad coverage given, but because I believe that the opportunity for students to take part in a cohort is priceless; this model allows for dialogue outside the classroom, and so the issues discussed become more real and significant. I believe the same sort of model ought to be followed for the Global Core. At the moment it seems that this requirement is being met through the traditional distribution system. *The New York Sun* gives us some examples of the current course offerings which may satisfy the requirement: *Introduction to Japanese painting*, *The Mongols in History*, *Buddhist Ethics*, *Arabia Imagined*, and *Salsa, Soc, and Reggae: Popular Musics of the Caribbean*. (Garland) This calls to mind Boyer's criticism of the cafeteria approach to general education.

Another point that is worrying is that even though the core is evolving, it seems that there is a strong move to block multiculturalism by relegating it to supplementary courses in the Global Core, where students can pick and choose what appeals to them without the guarantee that these courses will provide the rigor, depth, and structure of those courses emphasizing Western civilization, or that they will count with comparable resources. A more democratic model would ensure that the Global Core is given all the support it needs so that it is not seen as a less important component of the curriculum. The core needs to evolve with the evolving population of students. With the passing of time, some excellent works of the past will need to be replaced with equally excellent and perhaps more significant works of the present if Columbia is to have an evolving core in anything else but name.

Two More Schools: Changes in Curriculum

Brown University

“Inside Higher Ed” recently published an article on Brown’s undergraduate program, *Reforming the Requirement-Free Curriculum* (September 15, 2008). Brown University is in a category all its own. Traditionally, it is a school with no core and no requirements to speak of. “Students must demonstrate writing competence, finish a major, complete four years’ worth of courses, and pay their bills” (p. 1), we are told. But now it seems the school has been rethinking the way it approaches education in response to some criticism: “students have even publicly been demanding more guidance from their professors” (p. 1). A task force consisting of 4 students, 7 senior faculty members, and three deans, led by Katherine Bergeron, dean of the college, undertook the project to provide students with a more unified vision of their education at the school and have produced a report, “The Curriculum at Forty: A Plan for Strengthening the College Experience at Brown” (September 2008) summarizing their findings and outlining their recommendations.

The university’s position, Bergeron says, is to challenge the “false dichotomy” “the alleged split between giving students freedom and articulating an educational vision” (p. 2). Instead the task force proposes clarifying the goals and mission of higher education across all departments. “When individual instructors and departments are explicit about their learning goals, their standards of achievement, and their methods for assessing student learning, students are in a much better position to engage in meaningful

reflection about their own learning,” (p. 3) the plan concludes. And so liberal education is achieved; apparently all that was lacking was a few definitions.

The “Core”

Brown’s website states that students must meet the following requirements to graduate: First, they must demonstrate competence in writing. This is done in the following manner: Along with a student’s grades an instructor may submit a “writing not satisfactory” check. If a student accumulates two or more of these checks, he will be contacted by the Dean’s office and obligated to fulfill the requirement possibly by taking a writing course, or doing work at the writing center. Second, the student must achieve a passing grade in a total of thirty courses. Third, he must complete a major. And finally, he must be enrolled and pay for eight semesters even if he completes his coursework in less time. There is, of course, no pedagogical justification for this last requirement. Students may opt for letter grades or satisfactory/ no credit marks. The reasoning behind this is that students will take the risk to explore areas they are not familiar with if they don’t need to worry about their GPA.

Goals

A new statement on liberal education sent out to all students (The Curriculum at Forty, pp. 39-41) outlines a series of recommendations to help students achieve a liberal education. They are:

1. Work on your speaking and writing
2. Understand differences among cultures

3. Evaluate human behavior
4. Learn what it means to study the past
5. Experience scientific inquiry
6. Develop a facility with symbolic languages
7. Expand your reading skills
8. Enhance your aesthetic sensibility
9. Embrace diversity
10. Collaborate fully
11. Apply what you have learned

Following these guidelines, students are expected to “design meaningful and integrated courses of study that make a positive difference not only for themselves but for the world they live in” (p. 2).

Justification

The university tells its students, “At Brown... we challenge you to develop your own core” (p. 39), promising that the open curriculum will lead them on a broad intellectual journey in which they will be able to “navigate multiple points of view” (p. 2). The school prides itself on adopting an “inclusive” concept of education:

One so inclusive that conventional distinctions between general education and the concentrations, between the curricular and the extracurricular, even between classroom and community, need to be rethought... The sheer proliferation of student-run activities on campus ranging from journalism to discussion groups to

conferences: all these reflect what we might call the “fuller life” of the classroom (p. 8).

An Evaluation

Brown’s proposal rests on a series of dangerous assumptions. We are to assume, first of all, that due to the rich environment at Brown, anything a student experiences whether in a class, a garden, or a cafeteria counts as part of his liberal education curriculum. Where is the structure, the careful choosing of significant content for students to reflect on, the well chosen methods to sharpen and deepen their perceptions? Dewey might ask, where is the evidence of rigor in this education? Where is the evidence that we are not simply rewarding class? We are also to assume that Brown students are much more sophisticated than their peers at other colleges, and more sophisticated than their professors. American education has a long tradition of grappling with the general education curriculum; there are faculty who have spent years reflecting on and analyzing the curriculum: studying its historical development, reflecting on its multiple purposes, weighing the significance of different content and ways of knowing, and proposing methods of successful pedagogy. But Brown students between the ages of 18-22 will simply hit upon the ideal education with just a roadmap of “recommendations” from the liberal education statement and a list of “objectives” published by the different departments.

Some may argue that these students are bright, that they have high SAT’s and GPA’s, but does this automatically confer upon them the wisdom to construct a meaningful education? I think very few would seriously argue this point. It seems to me

that Brown is taking an elitist stand in claiming that its students, by virtue of who they are, can accomplish all this. If so, why would they need a university education in the first place? It would seem that they are all too ready to launch themselves into the world. Perhaps the school wants to take credit for re-thinking its curriculum simply by re-naming or re-listing objectives instead of working on some deeper changes. Perhaps the school has not thought about what students lose from not having a set of courses that provide a unified experience, common courses where they will be exposed to the same questions and ways of knowing. That is an invaluable experience and should be an integral part of the undergraduate experience. As it stands, one can hardly call Brown's model an undergraduate curriculum.

On the other hand, Brown does advance some ideas that ought to be taken seriously. The university recommends making the curriculum more explicit. It is asking departments to engage in a self-project study and match their course offerings to a list of specific objectives. "The report would explain how the program's required courses fulfill the expectations of a given discipline, as well as how they serve to fulfill the broader learning goals of a liberal education" (p. 9). Questions answered might be what kind of critical thinking is employed in a course, how a course improves quantitative reasoning, moral reasoning, etc. According to Brown, "by stating such learning goals, departments would not only help students make better choices; they would also help students keep the full curriculum in view as they set out on their chosen path." (p. 10). The move for programs to define their mission can be the beginning of some fruitful conversations which need to take place, but there may be the danger of an insistence on over-

explication which can result in imprisoning thought within artificial constraints, or in the deterioration of philosophical reflection into language games.

In addition, I commend Brown for its rejection of the CLEP or any other kind of standardized assessment tool which only serves to infantilize students and higher education. Instead, the school proposes the idea of e-portfolios as a more complete way to assess student progress. The e-portfolio would include documents such as student papers, declaration of major forms, creative projects, a capstone proposal and a concluding statement in which students reflect on their educational journey.

Moving on to pedagogy, we can see that professors do not enjoy a “unified” experience at the college any more than their students do; teaching is certainly not getting the attention it deserves. There does not seem to be any particular professional development program in place, but some loose recommendations that professors attend workshops on teaching at the “Sheridan Center” (the center for teaching and learning) and consider visiting one another’s classes. A more structured proposal needs to be worked out, even though Brown does make some good recommendations for pedagogical practice. The report notes:

We think departments and programs should be expected to create, each year, a regular roster of courses that introduce the ideas and discourses of their fields. Such courses would be designed to capture the spirit of a discipline: its assumptions, its methodologies, its ways of thinking.... (p. 9)

This sounds like a good plan, but where is the support for the professors who would be expected to create and teach these courses? The university also proposes

interdisciplinary courses team taught by faculty in different fields to develop “a student’s awareness of the pluralism and even dissonance of knowledge production” (p. 26). This move also requires enrichment experiences for the faculty. What Brown cannot continue to do is to assume, for the most part, that things will just take care of themselves.

Harvard

Stanley Katz, author of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* article, “Liberal Education on the Ropes” (April 1, 2005) criticizes undergraduate education in the research university as a “project in ruins” (p. 1). Part of the problem, proposes Katz, is that the ideal of liberal education arose in the elite institutions of a previous time, and so does not easily lend itself to our modern moves to democratize it. “Pluralism requires something less morally prescriptive, less tailored, more diverse, and more practical than the elite higher education of the early 20th century,” (p. 6) he notes.

Katz calls our attention to all the unanswered questions which plague colleges today: Should the focus be on content or ways of knowing? Should there be a strict core or distribution requirements? Should students study “the great questions” or delve more deeply within specific fields? These, for Katz, are a symptom of how deep the conflicts run between factions. Different groups vie for their particular vision of “liberal education,” leading Katz to refer to the term as “the most used and abused phrase in the rhetoric of higher education” (p. 1). He concludes that “liberal education is being asked to carry more freight than it did a century ago, and it is not clear that it can succeed” (p. 2). Katz gives us two reasons for this. First, there is the problem of the vast expansion of knowledge in the last two centuries: math and science, the humanities and the social

sciences have advanced so much in this time that there is simply too much to know. There can never again be another Aristotle, said to have been conversant with the whole of culture during his time. Then there is the issue of the social, political, and economic environment higher education must navigate which has led to recent internal restructurings within the university in which the liberal arts have lost out. Katz explains:

Another problem, though one hard to document and discuss, is the difficulty of financing the humanities and soft social sciences, the fields in which so many undergraduates find their most important liberal-education experiences. We all know that faculty members in those fields teach more, get paid less, and have fewer resources for research than their colleagues in the natural sciences and hard social sciences. They have less leverage in the institution to get what they want, from secretarial services and office space to computers. They are also, on balance, the faculty members most likely to be concerned with undergraduate education, but they are in a weak position to influence decisions within their universities. (p. 7)

Katz's response to Harvard's new core is less than enthusiastic. He sees little of interest in the addition of the international studies and scientific literacy course requirements, or in the move to add freshman seminars and support undergraduate research. "Not one of these seems like either a new or a very exciting idea," (p. 4) he tells us. He calls the proposal a "modest, reformist document" (p. 4) and declares: "for those of us at other institutions who are long-term observers of liberal education, there does not seem to be a lot to learn from Harvard" (p. 4).

Finally Katz warns that the current climate is producing nothing but reforms begetting reforms, begetting reforms, and emphasizes that we need to be clearer about the purpose of general education. He writes:

If we believe that values do have a role in education, then the challenge may be to rehistoricize and rehumanize the underclass curriculum. That does not mean going back to Contemporary Civilization courses or the *Red Book*. It does mean rethinking the content of knowledge appropriate for our contemporary society, and summoning the intellectual courage to embolden students to make qualitative judgments about the materials they are required to engage with in their underclass years. (p. 8)

This is nothing less than an epistemological and moral revolution.

The General Education Curriculum

The general education requirements at Harvard may be met by taking courses in the following categories:

1. Aesthetic and interpretive understanding
2. Culture and belief
3. Empirical reasoning
4. Ethical reasoning
5. Science of living systems
6. Science of the physical universe
7. Societies of the world

8. The United States in the world

Justification

Harvard has decided to change the *Core Curriculum* to the *General Education Program* in an effort to move away from the focus on different “ways of knowing.”

Instead:

The new Program seeks explicitly to “connect a student’s liberal education – that is, an education conducted in a spirit of free inquiry, rewarding in its own right – to life beyond college.” In addition, the new Program in General Education seeks to provide new opportunities for students to learn- and faculty to teach – in ways that cut across traditional departmental and intra-university lines. (Harvard website, FAQ, p. 2)

Though I believe it unfortunate that Harvard is downplaying the importance of “ways of knowing,” an essential ingredient of a liberal education, it would be remiss to fail to mention one particular new initiative which holds a lot of promise and which is precisely an embodiment of a “different way of knowing.” The “Report of the Task Force on the Arts” (December 2008) recommends that the arts play an integral part in the general education curriculum and in the life of the university. The justification for this initiative is presented directly on the cover page of the report:

To allow innovation and imagination to thrive on our campus, to educate and empower creative minds across all disciplines. To help shape the twenty-first century, Harvard must make the arts an integral part of the cognitive life of the

university: for along with the sciences and the humanities, the arts – as they are both experienced and practiced – are irreplaceable instruments of knowledge. (p. 1)

The proposal moves away from the traditional emphasis on the study of art and art theory, focusing on art-making, which Harvard defines as performance, and the “fashioning of material and textual objects” (p. 1). The report emphasizes the strong relationship between art and intellect:

The culture of modernity depends upon the collaboration of the art of “making” and the art of “thinking” and is intolerant of any arbitrary and exclusionary division between them... The relationship of cognition and creativity is not simply complementary; art-making and scholarship must be placed in an active relation to each other because the contrast as well as the collaboration between them extends the horizons of both. (p. 7)

In this manner Harvard makes the production of art an essential piece in the life of a liberally educated person, a bold and democratic move to value manual work - “labor” as mental work, work requiring intelligence; Dewey would approve. This new and more holistic intelligence, Harvard believes, will serve its students well:

On graduation, they will be entering a new and rapidly changing economy, one in which fertile imagination, inventiveness, the control of recalcitrant materials, improvisational cunning, empathy, the ability to once master and to violate

conventions will be at least as important as the bodies of knowledge they will acquire in their classes. (p. 5)

All this, Harvard believes, they may achieve through active and passionate engagement with the aesthetic. But first it is necessary to learn to view the arts in a new light.

Harvard sums up its traditional relationship with the arts as “the result of long-term student interests conjoined with a blend of institutional benign neglect and uneven, occasionally serendipitous, often idiosyncratic bursts of institutional support and energy” (p. 3). Even though the arts are all around at Harvard, because they are not central, they are seen as “a thing entirely bound up with pleasure” (p. 3). In effect, they are marginalized. Harvard wants to emphasize that the arts matter, that they are serious work. The report notes:

Because the arts are deemed at Harvard to be extracurricular, many students remain oblivious to the hard work – the careful training, perception, and intelligence – that the arts require. They know that writing essays is a skilled and time-consuming labor. They recognize that problem sets in math and science are meant to be difficult. But ask them to photograph a landscape, compose a short story, or direct a scene rather than write an analytical essay and they will almost universally assume that the exercise will be quickly and easily dispatched. The problem is not that they believe art-making is trivial but rather that they believe that talent alone, and not thought or diligence, will determine the outcome. (p. 4)

And this misconception needs to be overcome if we are to move past the limitations that young people impose on themselves and others because we have not taught them that there is an alternative.

An Evaluation

Harvard's latest move has been to shift from the Core Curriculum to the General Education Program. The school claims that it has decided to move away from "ways of knowing," having students understand and employ conceptual, historical, and cultural knowledge as a tool. Instead, the new emphasis is on "connecting a student's liberal education to life beyond the college" (Harvard website, FAQ p. 2). I do not see why both of these goals cannot be simultaneously met. When we learn how specialists think, we are learning the internal structure and logic of a discipline, which can serve to clarify a multitude of worldviews we will come across outside the gates of the university; knowledge of these structures is not imposition of the same; rather this acquaintance is another tool to navigate the world. I am also disappointed that Harvard has decided to keep what, in effect, amounts to a distribution model for the undergraduate curriculum. The general areas of knowledge are well thought out, but in choosing specific courses students may very well end up with a haphazard education.

That being said, I think the new art-making initiative is a valuable addition to Harvard's educational model; one that Eisner would certainly appreciate given his insistence on engagement with art as a propitious entryway into different ways of knowing. Eisner has written extensively about ideal encounters with a finished work of art. He emphasizes the possibilities of a thorough engagement with a piece – how we

may enter a work through the exploration of the experiential, formal, symbolic, thematic, and contextual meanings contained within. (1972) How much more can be experienced, then, through the creation of these same meanings as students join mind and body in bringing a finished work to life. If the senses can be stirred through the exercise of perception, how much more so through that of design. Harvard has done well in finally including the arts within the “cognitive part” of the university, in reconciling “making” and “thought.” And it has also done well in recognizing imagination and creativity as integral parts of a good education, a comprehensive education. Finally, the decision to recognize the making of art as depending on diligence and hard work, as opposed to mere talent, gives it the status of a serious endeavor. No longer can art be viewed as a simple pastime, merely one of life’s pleasures, but as a form of communication - of engaging with the world.

CUNY Reflects

In his foreword to the book, *Reclaiming the Public University: Conversations on General & Liberal Education* (2007), Chancellor Matthew Goldstein declares, “I am grateful to have received a strong grounding in math and science, as well as an equally rigorous liberal education, one that emphasized the creative, progressive, and relational nature of learning” (p. xi). Goldstein values the Arnoldian ideal of liberal education, saying that “a thoughtful general education curriculum acquaints us with diverse thinkers, those who have created some of the most challenging and imaginative ideas throughout time” (p. xii), telling us that to read these thinkers is “to read the world” (p. xii).

Goldstein maintains that there need be no contrast between the primary goal of most CUNY students (getting a good job) and a liberal education, for “the skills they need to succeed in their professional lives, the ability to analyze, inquire, create, and communicate, are those a liberal education provides (p. xii).

In her prefatory note Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost, Selma Botman tells us that a liberal education is one that: “encourages students to think, read, write, and talk about issues that may be entirely alien to them... to extend their intellectual reach and examine (even re-examine) their own beliefs, attitudes, and opinions – to study, reflect, and change (p. xiv). And she believes that college is the best place for this. As she reminds us, “For many students, the undergraduate general education curriculum is the only opportunity they will have to study the diversity and richness of the liberal arts and sciences” (p. xiv), so we owe students the most fruitful experience possible, to enable their intellectual and moral growth.

This is precisely the mission that gave birth to “Public Conversations,” edited by Judith Summerfield and Crystal Benedicks. The book tells the story of a project of institutional self-reflection from the different standpoints of those engaged in it. In her chapter, *The Project: Common/Uncommon Ground*, Summerfield tells us that the purpose of the project was to rethink and reevaluate the general education curriculum at CUNY for the present generation of students. Self-reflection is important, Summerfield stresses, because we must admit to errors in order to allow growth to occur; this openness to change counteracts the crystallization of ideas that may no longer be relevant. Summerfield acknowledges that there is much work to be done:

What we had to admit was the profound disconnect between the lofty ideals of the goals of a liberal education and the disorganization of the actual practices of “curriculum,” what students were required to do to get a degree. The disorganization pervades the system: on the ground, students take one course after another, often not knowing why or how to connect the dots. The CUNY Gen Ed Project calls for each college to organize those practices so that they make sense to students and to faculty. (pp. 18 – 19)

The reorganization called for is both a matter of ethics and pedagogy. First of all, students enroll in college expecting a good education and we have a moral responsibility to provide that. Second, a well organized and thought out general education curriculum is good pedagogical practice. General education is particularly important because, as Summerfield points out, it is “the largest major,” and as such deserves our attention. But unfortunately, it “slips between the cracks of both the administrative and the academic realm: ‘It’ remains elusive as a project, is characteristically overseen by no one, and exists nowhere” (p. 19). Like Boyer’s “spare room” it is at once everything and nothing.

Summerfield reminds us that CUNY is an experiment in democracy and as such it must succeed, it cannot fail its students. “CUNY is the largest urban, public, commuter University in the country, with seventeen undergraduate colleges spread throughout the five boroughs of New York City” (p. 7). This means access for countless students who would otherwise not have the opportunity for higher education. She quotes Marlene Gottlieb, professor of Spanish, who expresses a concern shared by many:

How to facilitate a liberal education – a liberating education - for CUNY’s quarter of a million students, who commute, work, live transnationally, go back and forth between nations, cultures, and languages, who struggle to make a living, raise families, and complete a degree, who do not have the foggiest notion of what we mean by a liberal education, that... is – the challenge. (p. 6)

So, argues Summerfield, we need to build bridges of understanding between the institution and its students. We need to clarify what we mean by liberal education, to communicate CUNY’s mission to students, else how are they to become invested in their own learning, architects of their own education project? So far this task has not been carried out successfully, a fact Summerfield illustrates with the example of the son of a friend, Michael, now a firefighter, who dropped out of college years ago because he did not perceive the education as meaningful. She shares his words with us:

I think one of the problems for me was that I didn’t understand what I was doing, and I got stuck in all those required courses at the beginning – that’s what you mean by liberal education, don’t you? – They’re kind of like rites of passage that you’ve got to get through before you get to what you really want to do. But they don’t add up. It didn’t make sense to me, why we had to take those courses. And the teachers didn’t seem to know, either. (p. 4)

Summerfield’s account effortlessly draws the reader in so that she seems to ask the “questions” for many of us who are humanists and have fond memories of our own liberal education. How can students not “get” and value liberal education? How can they

not share our worldview? We reflect upon this as she invites us into conversations with her fellow researchers and uncovers experiences which may resemble our own:

The stories we told were, of course, journeys. Unsurprisingly, they were cast as metaphors of movement, exploration, discovery, and falling in love. They told of moving from one space in time to another, reversals, transformations, starting out in one place and ending up in another, growing up, entering new worlds, assuming new identities, of coming to know and be known by others, of being recognized and believed in. (p. 4)

She further shares with us one particular experience with a history professor, Colodny, who changed her way of thinking forever:

Colodny taught me what schooling might be for – and how I could bridge the two worlds of home and the academy. The call for a historical imagination brought with it, as well, a moral imagination, and my early love of fiction was being called now to think about history in new ways. It was not as I had thought in high school: facts, facts, facts. I was finding ways to understand my father's stories, that I had grown up on. If all was related, then, I could connect the private and the public, the personal and the political. Fact and fiction, story and history. I could bring a number of worlds together. This was a license I had not expected in college. (p. 26)

This is the experience we owe our students, but it must be an experience that is worthwhile and meaningful to students today, and it can only be made so through clear,

illuminating communication with them. We can assume nothing about our students; background, social class, psychological inclinations, all make a difference in what is perceived as worthwhile and significant. The question then is, “how to make that part of an undergraduate education ‘real,’ to make it visible and daily, knowable and meaningful” (p. 6).

Summerfield recognizes that this is a challenge, a complex issue that is not easily resolved, for the curriculum itself is but the tip of an iceberg; what lies beneath is much more complicated. Summerfield explains:

At least three categories of assumptions – what we expect from our students – are obvious: the moral, epistemological, and vocational. Taken together, as they typically are in the colleges’ mission statements, they represent the tensions within the institution that leave faculty stalemated, unable to change, because the curriculum, itself, rests on nothing less than history, politics, ideology, and on how we envision students. (p. 17)

The university’s inability to change, to evolve with the times has led to a crisis in liberal education which the neoconservatives have taken advantage of, coming in with Occam’s razor to cut everything they deem nonessential, since we have not been able to take a stand on what is essential. “More and more, the epistemological – a focus on knowledge or ‘content’ – is being eclipsed by the pragmatic, the practical, and by a growing list of ‘competencies’ or ‘proficiencies’ or ‘skills,’ particularly at the community college” (p. 18). As can be seen, this crisis is very real, and it is one that disproportionately affects those students at the bottom.

One way these students are affected is through the “hidden curriculum” Summerfield has uncovered, a veritable obstacle course for students who already have more than enough challenges to deal with. She identifies a series of “service” courses which fall under three main categories. First, under Degree Requirements, students typically take courses such as freshman composition, mathematics, a foreign language, physical education, and oral communication. Then, under Proficiencies, Summerfield discovers the “horizontal curriculum.” Some of the competencies included are writing, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and oral communication; these are currently being set up as “across the curriculum” programs. Summerfield notes:

If these requirements are not embedded into already existing requirements, either within general Education or the major, they become additional obligations, added on to already swollen menus, with students scrambling to add/fit “W” course into their schedules at the end of their college careers. (p. 21)

Finally, Summerfield tells us, 85% of CUNY students at the Community Colleges are faced with developmental education, taking classes in the “basic skills” of reading, writing, and mathematics. Until these courses are completed, they will not be allowed to enter the “regular” curriculum. This situation has dire results, Summerfield explains. “For many students, these hidden costs of a college degree, in money and time, and incomprehensibility, often result in students’ leaving college” (p. 21).

Might there not be a better way to serve these disenfranchised students, Summerfield asks us. A re-imagining of the curriculum is desperately needed, and the ethical imperative is absolute:

Our Project at this most public of universities, calls for us to interrogate those entrenched ideals and practices, unsettling the certainties, the status quo, as well as the bastions of power, as we consider how to do the job of educating our students. (p. 27)

This goal is especially significant as we attempt to take a stand against the encroaching ideals of the present technocratic society with its mania for measurement.

The conflation of the moral, epistemological, ontological, and vocational results in a confused set of values and practices, and immeasurable goals, which are more and more called upon to be measured. The Collegiate Learning Assessment Test (CLA) is the first in what will certainly be a series of tests to ‘measure’ the value of a general education. (p. 18)

So, maintains Summerfield, there can be no more confusion, no more murkiness in the undergraduate curriculum; we cannot afford it. We must either define ourselves or be defined by others. Liberal education needs to become a clear, transparent undertaking which will provide students with the intellectual, social, and moral development they need and deserve.

Philip M. Anderson, professor at Queens College and the Graduate Center, takes up and expands upon Summerfield’s idea of transparency and clarity in his article, *Curriculum Mapping: Climbing out of the Briar Patch*. He argues that we must begin by taking a long hard look at what is happening in our society today, and move away from arguments focusing on a golden past that never was. He inquires,

Is it easier to idealize some remote past than to deal with the actual and direct influences on our current situation?... Why, in these complex and transformative times, would we wish to pursue an essentialist goal in any educational argument? (p. 57)

The error, declares Anderson, is to focus on a monolithic, unchanging ideal of a good education, instead of recognizing that the “good” is socially and historically constructed. We cannot assume that certain traditional concepts, ideals, and skills will be relevant to students for all time. An essentialist philosophy of education could not possibly work in any but the most primitive and stagnant of societies.

Unfortunately, Anderson might say, it seems that stagnation and primitiveness is precisely what our technocrats are striving for today. He paints a striking picture of “the scientific management monster” (p. 61), a creature intent on paralyzing all real thought and creativity if for no other reason but that this can best bring about generations of low maintenance workers which may be easily controlled. Anderson warns that if those of us who truly have students’ best interests at heart cannot make some clear and important decisions about what education is significant today, others, less altruistically inclined, will make them for us. The present administration, Anderson reminds us, has not responded well to the current confusion in higher education. “The response, throughout the neo-conservative counter revolution, has been to reduce chaos by limiting the purpose and functions of education” (p. 63). He is especially concerned with the consequences of Margaret Spellings’ report. He provides us with the following analysis:

The commission clearly reasserts the social efficiency model for higher education. The advantage of the social efficiency model for politicians is that it takes the curriculum out of the hands of the teacher and puts it in the hands of the policy maker. Standardized testing, as a control mechanism, makes it possible for policy makers to exert even more influence on the curriculum, especially as the curriculum is manifested in the teacher. (p. 63)

What results from this move is a military style of education: drills, worksheets, and tests; teachers who teach without the inconvenience of having to think and students who obey.

So, Anderson asks, in the current climate is it even possible to speak of humanism? Social efficiency, he tells us, with its emphasis on the information processing model of human thinking, has trumped the humanistic arguments. And then there are those, such as Hirsch, whose support of humanism does education more harm than good. “Humanism has become knowledge of certain “facts,” a storehouse of “cultural literacy” that can be measured by “objective” testing” (p. 64)

While still retaining elements of idealism, Anderson’s philosophy is a pragmatic one. Like Readings, Katz, and others, he argues the importance of dealing with the here and now. He reminds us that “colleges have always had to respond to outside influences despite rumors of a golden age of faculty governance that met some ideal of Plato’s academy” (p. 64).

So, to return to Anderson’s question, how can we redefine humanism for our times? How can we capture the essence of a living organism that is constantly changing,

while curbing our inclination to mummify any one particular ideal? A first step, for Anderson, would be to recognize that “there is more than one “culture” at play in any school curriculum, beyond the tendency to think in terms of an Arnoldian ‘high’ culture versus ‘pop’ culture” (p. 65)

Integral to Anderson’s argument is his adoption of Raymond William’s definition of culture. William’s theory is that at any one time there is not just one culture but three: the dominant culture, the residual culture, and the emergent culture. Anderson uses as examples liberal arts and sciences for the dominant culture, classics and religious studies for the residual culture, and global studies and media studies for the emerging culture. That is why any move to crystallize culture is bound to fail. Not only is the task impossible, but it is also bound to leave a bitter taste in the mouths of those who feel themselves excluded, marginalized from the dominant culture. Thus any attempt for a core in a democratic society must have at its center the idea of renewal; in effect the only possibility is an evolving core. Anderson writes that:

This evolutionary model is attractive because it allows for a vision of organic growth within a university tied to a model of evolutionary growth in society. William’s educational theories are connected with his vision of expanding growth of educational opportunities promoting democracy. (p. 65)

Anderson’s argument is an optimistic one. “I want to believe that curriculum is more organic and integrated into society than simply a reactionary response to social and political mores,” he tells us. Education should not be the site of power games in which students will be the primary casualties. Instead we should focus all our energies on a

serious evaluation of what the curriculum needs to be, and not accept simplistic solutions, such as what is commonly understood by interdisciplinary study:

Interdisciplinary curriculum, a favorite topic these days, cannot be accomplished by simply bringing together two or more disciplines. In many cases, what is lauded as interdisciplinary curriculum is merely cross-disciplinary study, in which the worldview of one discipline is forced unto another discipline's worldview. (p. 67).

Contrary to what the neoconservatives would have us believe, pronounces Anderson, simple solutions will not work, and it is absurd that these should even be considered by professional academics. He notes:

As serious scholars, we would never begin a study in our disciplinary field by not sorting through our prior knowledge and the knowledge base in the subject. Nevertheless, we talk about the complexities of the college curriculum as if Occam's razor is all we need to cut through the briar patch. (p. 70)

One simple solution which Anderson strongly criticizes is what he refers to as "the transformation of academic skills into an extra-curricular activity" (p. 68). He's referring to the proliferation of basic skills departments, including ESL, reading, writing, math, and study skills. The problem is that:

The inhabitants of those academic skills courses are poor or disenfranchised students who must not only pay for those classes, but put in the time necessary to

complete 120 credits after they escape the basic skills “curriculum” to which they have been assigned. (p. 69)

This is a classic case of exclusion, Anderson would argue. “These students are held outside the community until they “prove” themselves and are also asked to make greater sacrifices of time (more important than money in most cases) to complete their degrees and receive their “credential” (p. 69). How, then, are we serving their needs? What can we do to provide them with a more meaningful educational experience?

Anderson argues that we need to begin with a serious endeavor to examine what we are as institutions of higher education, and what we want to be. He highlights the need for curriculum mapping as an integral part of this project of self-reflection. He explains that:

Curriculum mapping is not about developing an essentialist program of study, a new definition of a limited and standardized curriculum. What curriculum mapping unfolds are the structures of curriculum, attempting to discover the rationale(s), the assumptions, and curriculum-in-action within existing structures. (p. 70)

Curriculum mapping provides us with the opportunity to explore beneath the tip of the iceberg, to examine what is hidden from plain sight. It compels us to face our assumptions, motivations and ideals. It sheds light on how our systems of beliefs are manifest in the stances we adopt and the projects we undertake. The insights we achieve through curriculum mapping can allow us to take on a more active role in the educational

arena. It can enable us to be proactive instead of merely reactive, to take pride in questioning and challenging the power structures instead of merely playing at running circles around “the system,” without understanding that the power games we engage in with the administration ultimately only harm students. Anderson exhorts us:

It is time to stop thinking of the faculty as Brer Rabbit, out-smarting the latest traps set by college administrators or politicians playing Brer Fox. We’ll show them: Every time “they” throw a new requirement at us, we will just add it on as an extra-curricular expectation and punish the students. In that scenario, we are not outsmarting the “Man’ but only confusing, and maybe cheating, our students. (p. 70)

If we are not to get caught up in this immoral game, stresses Anderson, the first thing we need to do is clearly define our curriculum in terms of objectives that students can understand and relate to so that we may build an educational partnership with our students. Anderson asserts:

At the least, every faculty member in the department ought to be able to explain the logic of the major and the general education requirements to the students (we know how many cannot). At the most, we ought to figure out what we are doing that connects with the rest of the college, and with the students’ lives now and in their credentialed futures. Otherwise, we are just hiding in the briar patch. (p. 70)

As can be seen, CUNY has embarked upon a very important project of renewal. The first step, critical self-reflection, has allowed the institution to carefully examine its

weaknesses and strengths, to scrutinize the curriculums in place, and to think about what needs to be changed. The goal is for a new CUNY to surface, a school which provides a clear and transparent education mission which can be clearly communicated to students so that all, administration, faculty and students may be engaged in the project of constructing a liberal education proper to the present day. Dewey, Greene, and Eisner would recognize this move as essential to providing a strong democratic base. The particulars of each curriculum are a matter for a later project.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEVELOPING A RENEWABLE CORE

Philosophical Justification

The revamping of general education is a serious project which must be undertaken for reasons that are material as well as moral. In order for the project to be successful its supporters must show an understanding of current social, political, and economic conditions, as well as a commitment to ethics, and insight into the nature of learning. It is necessary to take a long hard look at the university in order to begin the important process of transformation. Changes in curriculum and pedagogy are essential if we wish to rebuild the university, transforming it into a viable institution for our twenty-first century needs.

We can recall Readings' (1996) pronouncement that, as it stands, the university is in ruins. It is thus essential for us to move forward and resist idealizing the past, for in our misplaced loyalty to the old we may yield to the narrow-minded impulse to overlook what is new, culture as it emerges before our very eyes. As Readings reminds us, "the grand narrative of the university, centered on the production of a liberal, reasoning subject, is no longer readily available to us" (p. 9). Anderson (2007) makes a similar point. He prods us to ask ourselves, "What does a good education mean today?" He argues that if the good is socially and historically constructed, then we cannot assume that those "concepts, ideals, and skills" which worked for students in the past will do so in the present. We must, as Readings tells us, learn from the cognitive dissonances we face today (1996).

The challenge to define a good education is particularly acute because the social efficiency model currently in place is shortchanging our students. This is what the new techno-bureaucratic world offers us: excellence, precision, and progress – without disorderly interference from the feelings and desires of real, live human beings. We are suffering from what Barone (2000) has termed “a compulsion for prototypes, for having students converge toward predetermined, standardized end results” (p. 131). Scientific management, says Anderson, has postulated itself as a viable alternative to humanism, and that is a situation which humanists should not accept. He reminds us of the challenges we face: How do we reshape modernist thinking in an era dominated by science and technology? How do we bring back humanism to the center of education? And how do we redefine humanism for our time? These are all especially important issues to those of us who can testify to the richness and depth of the arts and humanities.

There are, of course, competing conceptions of what humanism is. A case in point is Hirsch’s focus on cultural literacy which seems at times to be little more than a storehouse of facts to be memorized, independent of any meaning or relevance they might have to students. Boyer (1988), for instance, suggests that we “identify a core of common knowledge that recalls the past, anticipates the future, and helps students apply what they have learned to the realities of life” (p. 318). And Bruner (1969) advocates for a curriculum that is “built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members” (p. 52).

Anderson’s position is a little different. In his view, renewal must be at the center of humanism. Like Williams (1976), he believes that culture is always in flux, that there are at any one time different co-existing cultures: dominant culture, residual culture, and

emergent culture. This model of culture celebrates change, having renewal at its center. It provides for an evolutionary model leading to organic growth within a university, which responds to evolutionary growth in the society. This view is reminiscent of Dewey's insight that culture is not a frozen entity, not a distinct body of knowledge and traditions. Instead he defines it as "the ability to constantly broaden one's ability to perceive meaning" (1916).

In his 1958 essay, "Culture is Ordinary," Raymond Williams wants to do away with the idea of culture as something inaccessible to the masses. He rejects the notion of culture as an exclusive possession of the elite, instead making the definition of culture much more inclusive and democratic. He writes, "Culture is ordinary... Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning" (p. 1). In William's democratic society culture is defined by ordinary people in their day to day lives. It is what the people choose as meaningful that defines what culture is. As he writes, "the making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land" (p. 1). This is a more modern view of cultural literacy, one which is vibrant and shifting, which renews itself as the culture which feeds it evolves.

Learning should focus on an evolving, multidimensional cultural literacy, which provides both equity and high-quality schooling to the diverse, multicultural urban population in our classrooms today. In Barone's (2000) words, the focus should be on "educational virtue"- "making education and schooling more life-enhancing for youngsters of all sorts and for the culture at large" (p. 4).

The challenge is for faculty to generate renewable course offerings while maintaining authentic structure and comprehensive learning, to reconcile the apparent dichotomy between structure and freedom. I support a system which provides students with an opportunity for true intellectual exploration as well as social and political awareness and cognitive and moral development. We need a curriculum that can accomplish all this. We can recall Boyer's (1987) words on the purpose of undergraduate education:

The undergraduate college in America, with its long and venerable tradition, has a unique mission to fulfill, one that will enrich and, at its best, transform. Why else provide college for those who could otherwise be trained on the job or in a corporate classroom? It can only be because of the conviction that something in the undergraduate experience will lead to a more competent, more concerned, more complete human being. (p. 1)

Adult Education & the Renewable Core

It is important to stress that college education is education for adults – particularly today when the traditional 18-22 demographic makes up a small percentage of the students enrolled in higher education. In Malcolm Knowles' classic textbook on adult education, "The Adult Learner" (2005), he makes the argument that teaching adults requires a completely different orientation from that traditionally used for children. When speaking of adult education he refers to an old term seldom used, "andragogy," first introduced in the U.S. in 1967 by Dusan Savicevic, a Yugoslavian adult educator.

Knowles sets up pedagogy and andragogy in opposition to each other, outlining the main differences between the two:

In the pedagogical model the teacher determines what the learner should know. The learner is a dependent person whose experience is worth very little in the classroom. All knowledge is held by the teacher and the curriculum maker. Learners are ready to learn at the prompting of the teacher, and view learning as the straightforward acquisition of content. They are pushed to learn by external motivators such as grades. (2005) He writes:

In traditional education the teacher decides in advance what knowledge or skill needs to be transmitted, arranges this body of content into logical units, selects the most efficient means for transmitting this content and then develops a plan for presenting these content units in some sort of sequence. This is a *content* model. (p. 115)

In the andragogical model adults need to determine for what purpose they are learning something and need to make a conscious choice to do so. They bring their own experience into the educational encounter. They are motivated by the concrete - they want to be able to apply their learning to their real life. Adults are also less interested in content knowledge and more in problem-solving. And though adults are certainly motivated by external rewards such as promotions and wages, they also operate from internal motivators such as self-esteem. (2005) Knowles breaks down the process for us:

The andragogical teacher prepares in advance a set of procedures for involving the learners in a process involving these elements: (1) preparing the learner; (2)

establishing a climate conducive to learning; (3) creating a mechanism for mutual planning; (4) diagnosing the needs for learning; (5) formulating program objectives that will satisfy these needs; (6) designing a pattern of learning experiences; (7) conducting these learning experiences with suitable techniques and materials; and (8) evaluating the learning outcomes and rediagnosing learning needs. This is a *process* model. (p. 115)

Knowles calls our attention to the fact that all the famous teachers of antiquity: Confucius, Lao Tse, Jesus, Socrates, and others, were teachers of adults – not children. Therefore, he claims, we have but to look to the pedagogical methods they employed in order to make learning much more relevant for adults in our schools today. Knowles tells us,

These notable teachers perceived learning to be a process of mental inquiry, not passive reception of transmitted content... The ancient Chinese and Hebrews invented what we now call the *case method*... The Greeks invented what we now call the *Socratic dialogue*... The Romans were more confrontational: they used challenges that forced group members to state positions and then defend them. (p. 35 – 36)

All of these models show an inherent respect for the intellectual independence of the student, for his ability to puzzle out a situation, to grapple with questions on his own, under the guidance of the teacher whose job it is to stimulate and challenge his students, not to merely transmit information to them. If, as Dewey (1916) tells us, the

straightforward transmission of content is detrimental to children's education and renders it meaningless, this is so much more the case with adults, who step into a classroom with a wealth of past experiences as well as pretty well elaborated world views. This is why it is especially important for colleges to embrace a philosophical orientation towards adult education, as opposed to developmental education. This orientation is what Knowles refers to as "andragogy," and what I refer to as pedagogy for the 21st century.

Curricular & Pedagogical Principles

Curriculum

We must first of all democratize education, doing away with the multi-tier university system in which the upper classes receive the lion's share of the cultural capital. We can do this by implementing a solid general education core curriculum with a strong dose of liberal arts and sciences during the first two years of college. I propose a curriculum which is broad, interdisciplinary, and theme-based, one whose methodology is guided by inquiry, problem solving, and the use of multiple intelligences.

A broad curriculum is one which counters specialization, vocationalism and careerism. Like C.P. Snow (1959), I see little educational value in "producing a tiny elite... educated in one academic skill" (p. 19). Today it is imperative to make students broad thinkers, capable of navigating multiple fields. That is why interdisciplinary studies are becoming increasingly popular. In these courses students have the opportunity to examine the relationships and cross-influences between one discipline and

another, as well as apply the methodologies and languages of the different disciplines involved to look at the central themes examined in the course. This is different from courses in which one discipline is clearly subordinate to another. For example, currently writing departments offer courses organized around professors' particular interests. The purpose of these courses is not for students to learn the content of the course, but rather to improve their writing skills. While these courses are sometimes called "theme-based," my definition of a theme based course is quite different. In theme-based learning a central concept, problem, or issue is rigorously examined and provides a focus and a framework for both the choice of texts and the activities carried out in the classroom.

I particularly favor courses with a holistic flavor to them. One type of course, which has recently been criticized, but which I think may be salvaged if it is carefully rethought, is any of a series of variations on the theme of "Western Culture" or "The Western Tradition." The advantage of such course is that the subject matter can be approached from several different angles. From an arts and humanities lens, we can examine the ideals, values, and aesthetic sensibilities of an era. The social sciences lens allows us an understanding of historical, social, political, and economic influences. Looking at the natural sciences can give us insight into the developments that were taking place and how these, in turn, shaped the culture. The integration of these different disciplines allows us to paint a much more vivid picture of a time period than we could if the focus were on any one of the disciplines in isolation.

The idea is to allow students to navigate subject matter from different organizing frameworks in order to improve understanding. A course of this type does not simply need to be a survey, lecture course. It can include a myriad of activities designed to make

students active participants in the learning process. The same can be said for courses which are primarily focused on art, literature, or even mathematics. Students should be engaged not simply in learning about art, but in producing it as well. Literature courses need less focus on reading and analyzing texts, and more focus on creative writing. And applied mathematics courses allow students to engage with numbers in the real world, giving them a sense of accomplishment and ownership which most will not encounter with “pure” mathematics.

Pedagogy

Education should be a combination of both theory and practice; neither the model of knowledge as the straightforward transmission of facts or that of learning as the spontaneous activity of young people exploring their interests will work effectively (Dewey, 1916). Students need an educational experience focused on discovery. They need the opportunity to explore ambiguity, imagine possibilities, and experience a multidimensional reality. To facilitate this it is imperative that the pedagogue know how to draw upon the educational imagination (Eisner, 1985). The ideal pedagogue is responsible for cultivating a series of habits of mind in his students. He needs to awaken curiosity, encourage imagination, and provide opportunities for play. He needs to make his charges critical thinkers, independent problem solvers, and most of all, flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances (Dewey, 1921). The pedagogue should appreciate the aesthetic and know how to reveal it to young people. He should expose students to the different languages of the aesthetic and provoke students to pose their own questions

and refine their senses. The pedagogue needs to make a moral commitment to his students, his community, and his profession (Greene, 1995).

A methodology focused on inquiry, problem-solving, and one that makes explicit use of multiple intelligences is ideal for our purposes. A focus on inquiry allows students' curiosity to be aroused, as they pose questions that they are interested in, and explore different avenues in an attempt to make sense of the subject matter they are confronted with. A focus on problem-solving allows students to uncover the multiple layers and dimensions of a given task or situation, pushing them to stretch their capabilities as they grapple with the complex and/or unfamiliar, using their mental, physical and social tool kits to propose imaginative solutions to the challenges posed. Problem-solving activities are particularly enriching when carried out through group work. The explicit use of multiple intelligences in the classroom allows for students to become literate across a wide array of systems of representation (Eisner, 1997).

For example, verbal intelligence can be stimulated by engaging students in debates. Logical/mathematical intelligence can be accessed through brainteasers. Bodily kinesthetic intelligence can be developed by having students create their own props for a lesson. Visual/spatial intelligence can be strengthened by using graphs, charts, and other visuals in the classroom. Musical intelligence can be activated by using rhythm and melody to help students express their ideas. Interpersonal intelligence may be released by encouraging collaboration among students and opening up group discussions. Intrapersonal intelligence can be accessed by having students keep journals, and through the use of e-portfolios (Gardner, 1983). Not all students will excel at all types of

activities, but exposure to these different ways of knowing is a first step in providing a richer educational experience.

Finally, it is important to remember that if our goal is to provide students with a holistic, comprehensive education we need to get away from the traditional mix of textbook reading and lectures as our main pedagogical tools. In this scenario students are primarily passive, and the material for the most part is accessed through verbal/linguistic intelligence. We need to provide students with different types of texts, for instance different types of media and artwork, authentic materials and artifacts. We also need to actively engage them in the learning process through discussions, debates, projects, group presentations, etc. In effect students need to be actively involved in their learning in order to experience it as significant.

In order to go more in-depth into the curricular and pedagogical principles outlined above, it is important to explain how these may be guided by the implementation of critical-creative thinking in all aspects of the life of the university. The importance of the imagination for both the curriculum and pedagogy will thus be examined.

Imagination in the Curriculum & Pedagogy

Critical-Creative Thinking

The Purpose of Critical-Creative Thinking

The curriculum and pedagogy are inseparable elements of a good education. Both the content that is learned, and how it is taught are infinitely important parts of the

educational experience. Thus for critical-creative thinking to take a strong hold upon the educational scene it is necessary to make alterations both in the current general education curriculum as well as in the teaching methods that are employed in universities. Changes in one of the two, without the other, will not produce the desired results. The purposes of implementing critical-creative thinking in the college curriculum are multiple. The overarching goals are to invigorate students' intellectual capacities, cultivate their sense of moral responsibility, and enrich their lives.

From the intellectual perspective the focus on critical-creative thinking will enable education to focus on multiple worldviews, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple literacies, by going far beyond what can usually be taught or experienced within discursive methods. Students will become familiar with a wide range of symbol systems, and will be able to move among them with ease. This will not only allow for a more comprehensive reading of the environment, but will also expand students' abilities for communication.

From the ethical perspective there are several purposes. One is to free students from the bonds of dehumanizing technical-rational reason, to allow them to see how they are victims of social control, and thus encourage them to assert their freedom. Another is to counter the effects of super-specialization in which most people just have access to miniscule pieces of knowledge and are thus easily replaceable in the workplace; this is especially important in the case of those who do not fit the elite mold. These young people need a more comprehensive education so that as adults they do not end up working at dead-end jobs for low wages. Students need to obtain much more than the 3 r's plus one specific marketable skill from their education. We cannot forget that life,

liberty, and the pursuit of happiness should be a real possibility for all, not just the elite. Finally, the focus on critical-creative thinking will make young people aware of the multiple connections and ensuing responsibility human beings have to one another.

From the perspective of enrichment, being creative makes young people happier and empowers them to explore their talents and capabilities. Wonderful things such as new inventions, works of music, art, literature and philosophy come out of the ideas people had in their youth. Creativity is beneficial not just for the individual but for society as a whole.

Thinking in the University

That being said, the purpose of this dissertation is not to altogether reject the value of all parts of our current system of education. It is good to train students' minds to absorb and produce forms of the dominant Western knowing. Students benefit from logical-deductive critical thinking skills. They benefit from engaging in deductive and inductive reasoning, from learning to break up wholes into their constituent parts for the purpose of analysis, by subscribing to the idea of causality; in short, by partaking of our dominant worldview of knowledge not as an absolute way of knowing, but as one more dimension they can inhabit. Students can become stronger if they don't feel lost within the system they are navigating. But this is hardly enough to produce a rich educational experience. There is a strong need to integrate more ways of knowing into the curriculum in order to open it up to a diverse population.

Critical-creative thinking cannot be developed through a single course, even one in philosophy, but it must be a project which encompasses the students' entire

educational experience, especially within the general education curriculum. Students need to develop higher order thinking. They need to enjoy the manifold delights of culture and civilization. From adolescence, in the process of awakening as individuals, human beings tend towards freedom, towards the pursuit of happiness and self-actualization. The point of a curriculum based on the model of critical-creative thinking is to engage the whole person: mind, body, and spirit in liberatory pedagogical processes that give importance to his voice.

Traditionally, logical thinking is applied to most subjects in the university, certainly to mathematics and the sciences, and often to the arts and humanities as well since many times these are taught as survey courses in which the students deal mainly with facts: names of movements, salient characteristics, dates, important actors, etc. Occasionally there might be an assignment in an art or literature class which asks students to analyze a piece of work, but these analyses, too, proceed along lines already drawn by others. The categories according to which an object may be analyzed have been predetermined. There is little sense of freedom or imagination in these exercises; it seems that everything has got to proceed just so in the academy if a student's work is to be valued.

But what if the university could be invested with the idea of the possibility of play and imagination to free students' minds? What if the university could be invested with the idea that the world has no underlying method, truth, or order, besides that which we can give to it? Then young people would not have to be presented with a world that already is, but with one that could come to be. This would free students to speculate, to imagine, to remember that the world is not a jigsaw puzzle which has already been put

together and then taken apart for the students' benefit. Meaning could thus be given to the whole person and not just his intellect within the academy. Each generation of students could invest the world with a newfound significance because it is a world that has come about through their choosing.

Only through engagement can we counter alienation. Human beings' hunger for the infinite and eternal cannot be sated through logic; there is a longing for wider horizons of thought and more profound levels of experience. These can be achieved through the aesthetic. Young people should be encouraged to search for wisdom, not merely knowledge, for knowledge gives only a partial view of the world.

The Liberal Arts & Critical-Creative Thinking

The liberal arts should be accessed through both rational and aesthetic forms of thinking. Critical-creative thinking is a merging of these two types of thought, allowing students to develop multimodal sensibility. A good way to achieve this type of thinking is by strengthening the humanities and arts components in the curriculum; students need more of these courses, regardless of their major. There are some learning experiences which are only possible through the affective legacy of our culture, most vividly contained within subjects such as art, music, and literature, even while we grant engagement with these fields the status of intelligent activity.

In introducing the students to the liberal arts, the teaching component also merits a long, hard look. It would be ideal to introduce aesthetic teaching methods into courses outside of aesthetics, such as science, and merge these methods with the "rational" methods already in place. In addition it would be a good idea to introduce these same

aesthetics methods into courses focusing on aesthetics and merge these methods with the “rational” methods already in place. A valid complaint which can be made is that in the academy there has traditionally been the tendency to treat even aesthetic subjects non-aesthetically.

The Nature of Critical-Creative Thinking

Critical-creative thinking works best through interdisciplinary study, which thrives in a liberal arts environment. The virtue of interdisciplinary study is that it calls attention to the inter-connectedness of the different aspects of our world. This allows for experimentation as different worldviews, schemas, and methods come into contact and allow for more insights into different dimensions of experience. In an interdisciplinary course, students will not be limited to any one major architectonic plan, but will instead work with combinations of worldviews as they examine issues from multiple perspectives, providing for a fruitful educational experience. Interdisciplinary study allows for combinations of courses which may be closely related or very different and not usually taught together; either of the two cases can provide interesting educational opportunities. It is ideal that these courses be taught by a team of two professors who know their field very well and are not afraid to venture into unknown territory. The seminar method would be the most fruitful, with the students taking an active part in the experience through dialogue, student projects or any other exercise intended to give students a strong participatory role in the encounter.

A defining characteristic of critical-creative thinking and of a grounded liberal arts education is the disappearance of the borders between the university and the real

world. There would be a constant examination of real situations outside of the academy: social, political, and economic, and an emotionalizing of these investigations by seeking out encounters with people along the whole spectrum of the society, not just those in power, nor those who are disadvantaged. It is important to see how theories and the human element can fit together, how theories can apply to the real world and real world problems. Critical reflections on the ethical implications of the material being examined or developed would be key, even in mathematics, science, and technology. For example, upon examining a particular policy in a class the following questions could be raised: Who does this policy affect? What is the purpose of the policy? What are the intended outcomes of the policy? What are the real outcomes of the policy? How are the outcomes measured: both quantitatively and qualitatively? What are the “politics at work,” the interests and driving forces behind these policies? What criticisms have been leveled against these policies? What are the driving forces behind these criticisms – the competing narratives? These kinds of questions serve to ground an inquiry and move it from the abstract to the real.

Imaginative Models for Critical-Creative Thinking

There are a few metaphors which may be presented to try to render a clear vision of what critical-creative thinking could be. The first image we can focus on is that of Descartes sitting alone in his study, deciding to uncouple himself from the entire history of philosophy before embarking upon his meditations “On the Method.” Descartes’ decision to reject the philosophy which had come before him can be interpreted not as a devaluing of the wisdom of the ages, but as a move to un-clutter his mind from a world

filled with objects which had already been defined by others, and which could, thus, limit the freedom of his thoughts by constraining the possible paths his mind might take.

Descartes wished to free his mind, to give himself a clean slate, and see in what direction and how far his own thoughts could take him. In the same way it would be wise to make a shift away from what can be seen as an exaggerated focus on research in college classes. The point is not, again, to devalue the excellent work that has been done by others, the collected knowledge which is essential to progress. But for students to become critical-creative thinkers they should have a good amount of exposure to grappling with the thinking process on their own, and finding their own way in the dark.

Another metaphor which could work is a term borrowed from Anton Ehrenzweig (1973) the “seemingly empty daydream like stare.” This can be interpreted as the attitude of openness and flexibility necessary in the initial encounter with something new and unknown which a person desires to understand, the stance he should take in his initial perceiving, before he allows his conscious mind to interfere.

The unconscious mind is rich with possibilities. Our conscious mind reminds us of our limitations; it tells us that there are correct procedures and rules to follow in every case; it tells us that we must plod along, through trial and error, systematically trying out possibilities one at a time. It does not allow us to consort with the illogical. Our conscious mind is often the architect of the mental impasse; perhaps we are thinking too hard about one specific thing; perhaps we are bent on going about things in the right way, the logical way. The unconscious mind does not impose such limitations. It allows us to relax and let our thoughts wander. It frees us to perceive, imagine and put things together in innovative ways. It allows for brainstorming, free association, engagement with the

figurative. It allows us to leap from one form of representation to another without worrying about the rules of grammar or syntax. It allows us to play with ideas, thoughts, and perceptions without worrying about what does and what does not make sense. The unconscious mind needs to be given free reign in our initial encounter, in the first grasping of a problem, in the intuitive phase. This would be an invaluable lesson for students.

The third metaphor is the metaphor of the mind as chaos. It appears on a first plane that the mind experiences an almost constant state of chaos, as it is bombarded with sense data of all kinds: sights, sounds, smells, etc. This provides for rich and varied opportunities of meaning making if we know to play with our ideas first, allowing our minds to wander and imagine before we attempt to bring order to this chaos. It is important to note that if we engage in analysis too soon, before we have allowed ourselves to imagine, we will truncate our possibilities for understanding. Too much order can be counterproductive; there is such a thing as over-analysis which can actually serve to limit thought.

We need to give free flight to students' minds. They may apprehend the whole at first and then direct their attention to the parts, or they may decide to focus on one part at first or several, or they may focus their minds on relationships. The important thing is to not force any particular order or method on the paths the mind wishes to take, but to keep the journey open-ended. The virtue of this method is the virtue of the bricolage, the putting together of bits and pieces of perceptions and experiences in interesting new ways which can reveal different perspectives and meanings. Bricolage is an exercise in freedom; it frees students to be architects of their own learning.

Finally, we can use the metaphor of the chameleon to look at critical-creative thinking. It would proceed in different ways, follow different patterns, or none whatsoever, according to the task at hand, the context within which it is being employed, and the particular persons who are employing it. Like a chameleon, critical-creative thinking would constantly shift its shape and form, re-inventing itself in whatever way necessary. Its inception would be sparked by curiosity and interest, its growth by insight and intuition, and its expressive possibilities brought to fruition through imagination. Developing critical-creative thinking would make it possible for young people to apprehend and create within all realms. The possibilities are endless: mathematical and scientific models, philosophical reflections, innovative art, and more.

The Challenges of Critical-Creative Thinking

It is, indeed, a challenge, to construct an education based on critical-creative thinking, an education that would have at its center Dewey's respect for the rigor of "thinking in terms of relations and qualities," that would integrate Eisner's focus on associative thinking and his insistence on developing a range of symbolic repertoires, and that would heed Greene's summons to "release the imagination" in all students. Habit, incomplete knowledge about learning, and a lack of pedagogical imagination, all conspire to frustrate the efforts of those who would implement new, more enlightened paradigms in education.

Critical-creative thinking does not fit the mold of past educational practice; it goes counter to centuries of ingrained habit. Thus qualitative thinking will be seen as suspect in an environment in which we have been conditioned from our earliest years to respect

quantification and measurement. Consequently there is the danger that new methods will be distorted to fit the old ways of thinking; for example, Eisner's focus on developing symbolic repertoires can be warped into the creation of a taxonomy of the aesthetic, which students would subsequently be forced to memorize, leading to a reduction of aesthetic experience. Critical-creative thinking is not developed by listing the objectives which "comprise" critical-creative thinking and having students read and commit these to memory so they may name and categorize every step of any particular mental process they engage in, because this takes us back to a rigid linear thinking. It is unfortunate that some good faith efforts to improve education have centered on listing and multiplying objectives ad absurdum.

Finally, Greene's insistence on bringing students' lived experience into a class can present a problem for an instructor who does not have a solid understanding of the learning process and a good dose of pedagogical imagination. Knowing how to weave students' narratives into a lesson is an art which takes a combination of intuition and experience in order for real learning to take place. It is important to ensure that "learning" does not deteriorate into everyone's presenting their own personal opinion or narrative in an uncritical way; the goal of constructing knowledge must always be kept in sight.

Critical-Creative Thinking in Action

Special methods come into play in order to implement the model for critical-creative thinking. First of all, it is imperative to make a deliberate move away from any kind of learning that does not actively engage students, that allows them to be passive and unresponsive, or that expects them to respond within strictly limited guidelines.

Worksheet type exercises and exams with multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true or false or matching questions will not work in this environment. Students need to reflect upon, question, and critique the content they are being presented with, or they will not understand it. Neither is it useful to present students with traditional lecture courses where they can sit quietly and take notes, for often these courses ask nothing more of students but that they temporarily store and recall material for examinations. Students need to know from the start that the course is a collaborative project in which both instructor and students are, at different levels, on a journey to become connoisseurs and critics of the subject through in-depth, rigorous treatment of the material, and the forging of connections to previous knowledge as well as other disciplines as they intersect with what is being studied.

The class in which critical-creative thinking is central would have several characteristics. First of all it would be a student centered course in which the professor's role would be basically to act as a facilitator, guiding the students without imposing his vision or ideas; thus the responsibility for learning would be shared. It follows that the class would be active. There should be ample opportunity for reflection, dialogue, and critique. This comes about if there is a culture of debate in which students feel free to question and challenge the instructor and each other, to present alternatives, and to approach an issue from their own life perspective; a vital part of the educational experience is the constant search for dissonance in order to create more dialogue. For this kind of learning the ideal model is the seminar, with small classes which allow for student-led discussions and constant engagement of all participants.

The class should also be flexible, with the professor having a general idea of the direction the course will be taking, but able to shift gears at a moment's notice if more interesting possibilities arise during the course of a lesson or even the semester itself. Knowledge which is in the process of being constructed cannot be constrained within predetermined limits. Flexibility refers not only to content but also to methods. Thus the pedagogue needs a level of familiarity with his subject that allows him to play with it, to be able to present it in different ways, and nothing less than mastery is required for this. Also, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the class, the teacher must be somewhat of a generalist, comfortable with several subjects outside his area of expertise, and he must have a passion for novelty and exploration that will lead him to constantly work to expand his own education.

In addition he should be familiar with the critical-creative thinking process and deliberately work to help his students expand their own critical-creative thinking abilities through different types of activities engineered to get students thinking in innovative ways. For this to be possible the teacher needs to understand different ways of knowing, and these must be explicitly incorporated into the methodology of the class. He needs to be conscious of his students' different learning styles and be comfortable working through multiple intelligences in order to help students expand their own symbolic repertoire and become independent learners. But first he needs to be comfortable modeling thinking in front of his students. This emphasis on knowledge as a creative process will enrich the learning experience for everyone. The goal is to give free reign to inventiveness and encourage students to take leaps in thinking even if initially they cannot map out their mental journey.

Mixed media is very useful to achieve this goal. It is important to move beyond the reliance on traditional written texts and expose students to a world in which art, film, and music can also play an important role in their education; this will encourage the members of the learning community to understand and communicate through different forms of representation, including those they may not have had much experience with in the past. In interacting with an image, for example a photograph or a painting, students can be asked questions such as: What feelings does it evoke? What words can you use to describe it? What story does it tell? Does it contain any significant symbols? How might it be viewed from a different perspective? The goal is to help students develop and hone their perception and intuition, their ability to analyze and synthesize, and their ability to look at the world from different points of view in order to strengthen their abilities to make sound judgments. Lessons can be created around any number of aesthetic tools in order to achieve critical-creative thinking as long as the pedagogue creating these lessons is a true master of his craft.

Critical-Creative Thinking in the General Education Curriculum: The Renewable Core

Though these types of mental exercises can be put into practice in any subject whatsoever, the arts and humanities are particularly conducive to critical-creative thinking because of their open-endedness, their possibilities for revealing multiple perspectives and thus enabling multiple interpretations. To that end it is essential that college students' general education requirements contain a strong dose of these types of courses. They are the most conducive to developing the habits of mind we want to inculcate in students.

In addition, in order to foster unity in learning, it is imperative for different colleges to design their own core curriculum - a renewable core: a series of classes that all students would have to take at the beginning of their program, in their freshman and sophomore years, subject to periodic review. This core curriculum should be interdisciplinary in nature, with classes taught by two professors, specialists in their field.

The core curriculum would be arrived at through reflection and dialogue among representatives from the different programs and departments in the college, and the goal would be to strive in so far as possible for representation from different groups. For example, if an American literature class were implemented there should be the presence of texts written by Americans from different ethnicities and backgrounds in order to give students a more complete picture of our society. In the case of a history course, it would be interesting to include texts representing one same event from different perspectives. The goal is to open up students' minds, to make them citizens of the world, not just of the tiny piece of experience they inhabit. However, it is imperative that the desire to give everyone a voice does not lead us into the trap of multiplying the offerings of courses that count toward the core requirement at absurdum and allowing professors to teach courses that are too specific and based on their particular research interests, else we will find our way back to the old distribution requirements model in which students "pick and choose their way to graduation," (Boyer) with very little clue of how to construct a meaningful education for themselves.

There should also be a service component to the core curriculum. Young people need more awareness of and engagement with their communities; they need to know about the day to day issues that touch real live human beings, not an abstract mankind.

They need to engage in meaningful experiences that transcend the walls of the university. We are in dire need of a core curriculum which emphasizes the arts and humanities. This curriculum should focus on critical-creative teaching methods, which all professors will be trained in, so that students are no longer locked into unimaginative educational experiences in which all they have to do is memorize what others have thought before them, so they no longer experience a college education which does not touch their lives. Only by making some serious changes will we be able to offer college students a true liberal arts education, the sort of education proper to free men and women today.

Imagination and Staff Development

Faculty Governance

Education needs to be in the hands of professional educators. Consequently we begin with the premise that faculty decision-making is key and ought to be at the center of the curriculum. We must be optimistic that faculty members from different disciplines can work together, putting their particular interests aside, in order to focus on what is good for their students.

A good analogy for this model of cooperation is John Rawl's famous thought experiment from "A Theory of Justice" (1971), his idea that it is possible for rational human beings to work together toward just arrangements. Rawls expresses confidence that "among individuals with disparate aims and purposes a shared conception of justice establishes the bonds of civic friendship; the general desire for justice limits the pursuit of

other ends” (p. 608). A descendant of the social contract theories of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, Rawls’ positive, idealistic philosophy offers hope for the possibility of mutual respect and cooperation between human beings “as moral persons, as creatures having a conception of their good and capable of a sense of justice” (p. 611).

Applying Rawl’s ideas to the academic community might serve to reduce the scourge of politics and power games if faculty could be encouraged to embrace a sort of “original position” as they think about the curriculum, if they could be convinced to act behind Rawl’s “veil of ignorance,” a hypothetical situation in which “no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like” (p. 609). This approach treats all members of a group as equals, ensuring that no one person or party has an unfair advantage. Indeed, under this model each faculty member engaged in curriculum reform would not know whether he is an orator or a philosopher, a scientist or a humanist, a liberal or a conservative. These differences would not matter as, through a moral imperative, all are equally invested in the task of providing their students with the best education possible.

Rawls is not naïve and neither are we; he recognizes that:

No society can, of course, be a scheme of cooperation which men enter voluntarily in a literal sense; each person finds himself placed at birth in some particular position in some particular society, and the nature of this position materially affects his life prospects. (p. 609)

And this includes the society of academics at a particular institution. However, Rawls is confident that the ideal of freedom in a democracy is strong enough that it will compel self-reflecting members to act ethically and justly. In Rawl's democracy "members are autonomous and the obligations they recognize self-imposed" (p. 610).

Faculty Commitment

Students need to understand the purpose of their education and how the content and methods prescribed contribute to it. Part of the responsibility of faculty is to engage in the habit of self-reflection both at the personal and the institutional levels through the analysis of curriculum and pedagogical methods, keeping in mind the ideals of democracy and the mission to provide students with a good, solid, meaningful education for our time.

At the institutional level there needs to be support both for the renewable core and for keeping pedagogy fresh and relevant. This could be achieved through the funding of research positions, designating a group of scholars dedicated to gathering new knowledge in both established and emerging fields. These researchers would be responsible for keeping up with the latest publications, and from these they would glean, analyze, and synthesize the essential knowledge for students according to the particular mission of the school.

In order to provide for a culture of dissonance there ought to be the opportunity for different groups to have an input into what and how students learn. Thus the work of these researchers could be shared with the rest of the college during faculty meetings, at which time professors would voice their own recommendations. Also, in order to add the

input of students there could be an analysis of capstone projects, in which students have meditated upon and evaluated their educational experience. This can give us a window into their interests and concerns.

The idea is to create a core structure that is continually updated to meet contemporary needs. Texts of different times and from different viewpoints will be included. The humanities alongside math, science, and technology will be studied, all through critical-creative thinking methods which will lead students on the path to becoming critics and connoisseurs of their world – modern day Renaissance men and women who can look around them and read and interpret their world even as they add to the script which is every second being written.

Let us temporarily step away from America to look at a large-scale experiment in democratizing higher education – the Open University. This U.K. initiative can be seen as a kind of precursor to our recent interest in community colleges in the United States, as we start to realize the importance of their role in the higher education arena. Community colleges are currently attracting a great deal of attention. Community college education presents us with a series of challenges and opportunities which will be examined in the next and final chapter of this dissertation.

The Open University – An Experiment in Adult Education

The Open University, or the OU as it is commonly called, began in the UK in the 1960's as an experiment to democratize higher education by expanding access through the use of modern communications technology. The idea for a “wireless university,”

though, was first pitched by educator and historian, J.C. Stobart. Years later, Raymond Williams (1921-1988) argued for a “teleuniversity” which would use a mix of correspondence texts and broadcast lectures. Williams, a cultural historian and political theorist born in Wales to a working class family with left-leaning political views, believed in informal education and public pedagogy and was a proponent of lifelong learning in the service of community and democracy. He supported new media like broadcasting and television for the expansion of educational opportunities for the masses. In 1963, Lord Taylor led a labour party study on the exclusion of disadvantaged groups from higher education. The group proposed a mixed radio/tv package, a “university of the air” for adults. In 1964 Jennie Lee was appointed Minister for the Arts and asked to oversee the University of the Air Project. The first student applications arrived in 1970 and in January 1971 the first students were enrolled. By 1980 the university had 70,000 enrollees and about 6,000 people were graduated each year. In 1983 the OU business school opened; it is currently the largest business school in Europe. In effect, “The Open University was the first institution to break the insidious link between exclusivity and excellence” (p. 7). Their mission statement reflects their philosophy of democracy and inclusion. It reads:

The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas. It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnership it seeks to be a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open and distance learning. (Open University Website)

Their requirements to enter the university are minimal:

- With most courses there are no previous qualifications required to study, you have to be aged 16 or over when your course starts but there is no upper age limit.
- We have around 150,000 undergraduate and more than 30,000 postgraduate students. 10,000 of our students have disabilities.
- The Open University's style of teaching is called supported open learning.
- Nearly all students are studying part-time. About 70% of undergraduate students are in full-time employment.
- A third of our UK undergraduate students have entry qualifications lower than those normally demanded by other UK universities. (Open University Website)

An Evaluation

The philosophy behind providing the opportunity for higher education to great numbers of people is a laudable one, but I am concerned about some of the “solutions” provided by the Open University. The classes are essentially long distance, self-study courses, with support provided from time to time by a part-time tutor who gives feedback on assignments and can answer questions via e-mail or phone. Many tutors are former OU graduates, and start off with very low salaries – as little as \$200 per month per course. (Open University Website) Professors are completely dispensed with – obviously a cost-cutting measure. The curriculum for each course is standardized, as are exams, which are taken at regional exam centers.

This is an example of social efficiency at its finest. Costs are cut by doing away with instruction in favor of tutoring, and by standardizing the curriculum, which makes it very simple to hire practically anyone to deliver pre-determined content to prepare students for the exams. This is not good pedagogy and it is certainly not providing the students with a liberal education. Quantity of graduates is not a mark of success if not accompanied by quality of education. I can only express my concern that this same system is not ultimately embraced by U.S. education with Obama's plan to designate \$500 million dollars to online education for community college students. Self-service education is not a viable option, as I shall discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEW VISIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The Community College – An Increasingly Important Player

The complexity of life in America in the 21st century has made it clear that young people need to engage in post secondary studies; a college education, once considered a luxury, is today vital for a good part of the population. Recently attention is being focused on community colleges, which had for many years been treated as the “stepsiblings” of the traditional four year college. These two-year institutions are now looked upon as a door to opportunity for many people to improve their economic outlook. In some cases the Associate’s degree is a stepping stone to a future Baccalaureate at a four year school, or the Associate’s can stand by itself, allowing the graduate to move into certain trades, or students can enroll in short term certificate programs which may lead to employment.

However, there are definite disadvantages to this type of education - practical and philosophical. From a pragmatic standpoint, while it is true that enrolling in one of these programs may improve a young person’s economic possibilities in the short run, trades can easily become obsolete, and then people will find themselves caught in a cycle of lifelong retraining for whatever occupations happen to be hiring at a particular moment in time. From a philosophical standpoint, a purely vocational emphasis does not provide students with a liberalizing education. Because community colleges are now educating a greater part of the population, they have a special responsibility to ensure that students are exposed to a solid liberal arts and sciences education curriculum.

The Struggle for Equality

In recent years enrollments at community colleges have been increasing faster than enrollments at four year colleges. David Brooks, New York Times Op-Ed columnist, gives us some statistics in his article, “*No Size Fits All*” (July 17, 2009). In the past year many community colleges have seen increases of 10 to 15 percent in their enrollments. And students who graduate with a certificate or an Associate’s typically experience a 10 to 15 percent increase in earnings. Yet community colleges are not well funded. “Four year colleges receive three times as much federal money per student as community colleges” (p. 1). As Brooks observes, “Most people in government, think tanks and the news media didn’t go to community college, and they don’t send their children to them. It’s a blind spot in their consciousness” (p. 1).

Obama’s administration has responded to this by approving twelve billion dollars in funds to support community colleges across the nation. Among the provisions of the new plan are remedial education, outcome tracking, online education, and partnering with private industry. The Wall Street Journal article, “*Obama Plans Community-College Initiative*” (July 14, 2009), reports that “Mr. Obama has called education key to the nation working its way out of the recession and competing more effectively internationally (Kellog & Tomsho, p.1). Community colleges will receive money through an “access and completion” fund, and special note will be taken of the graduation rate of each school. Washington Post Article, “*Obama Announces Community College Plan*” (July 15, 2009), notes that the funds would increase community college graduations by 40 to 50 percent (Shear & de Vise).

But there are some who criticize the president's move as an unnecessary expenditure of funds. For instance, McCluskey, education scholar at the Cato Institute, considers community college training to be "a costly and ineffective proxy for on-the-job training, which is what many high-growth careers require" (Shear & de Vise, p. 3).

There has been a great deal of interest in Obama's community college project. In "The Page" "*Fact Sheet on Obama's Community College Initiative*," (July 19, 2009), Mark Halperin analyzes Obama's goal: that by 2020 America might once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. To this effect Obama has asked every American to commit to at least one year of higher education or career training. The national concern is that "in an increasingly competitive world economy, America's economic strength depends upon the education and skills of its workers" (p. 2). The language employed here is disturbingly similar to that of *A Nation of Risk*.

Obama's plan focuses on the traditional strengths of community colleges such as affordable tuition, open admissions policies, and flexible schedules. In fact, Bunker Hill Community College in Boston is currently offering courses from 11:45 PM to 2:30 AM to accommodate students who cannot take courses during the day. Community colleges cater to older students, those working and with families, and those who need remedial education. They are touted by some as a practical alternative which can provide real economic opportunities for students. They often work with businesses or government "to create tailored training programs to meet economic needs such as nursing, health information technology, advanced manufacturing, and green jobs, and of providing customized training at the worksite" (Halperin, p. 2).

In addition community colleges pride themselves on their use of cost-cutting methods to educate students more “efficiently” and “effectively”. One example of recent trends is the proliferation of online courses. Part of Obama’s plan is that:

New open online courses will create new routes for students to gain knowledge, skills and credentials. They will be developed by teams of experts in content knowledge, pedagogy, and technology and made available for modification, adaptation and sharing. The Departments of Defense, Education, and Labor will work together to make the courses freely available through one or more community colleges and the Defense Department’s distribute learning network, explore ways to award academic credit based upon achievement rather than class hours, and rigorously evaluate the results. (Halperin, p. 4)

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently delivered a speech entitled *Moving College into the 21st Century*, (October 2009) in which he speaks about turning points in the history of education: Lincoln’s signing of the Morrill Act, which led to the creation of land-grant colleges; Roosevelt’s signing of the GI Bill, which provided veterans with access to a college education; and Truman’s support of the expansion of community colleges. Duncan tells us that “because of the combined foresight of these presidents, the United States has the most diverse and the best system of higher education in the world” (p. 1). Duncan draws a parallel between these events and Obama’s current challenge to “fix” higher education. He writes, “Today, we’ve reached another turning point. The global economy is changing, and the United States needs to educate its way to a better economy for the 21st century” (p. 1). He reminds us that Obama’s goal is that by 2020

the United States will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world, and that in order to reach that goal it is necessary right now to open up higher education opportunities to at least 5 million more Americans. He informs us that Obama's American Graduation Initiative will provide \$12 billion over the next ten years to improve community colleges.

Duncan is particularly impressed by the \$500 million which are to be invested in the creation of "world-class online college and high school courses that will be available to all 24/7/365" (p. 1). The courses will combine "high-quality subject matter expertise with the latest advances in cognitive and computer sciences" (p. 2). As a result students will be able to move through these courses at their own pace. For Duncan, this is a thorough democratizing of educational opportunity. He calls Obama's initiative "the most profound equalization of access to cutting-edge knowledge and information since the creation of the public library" (p. 2).

It is not yet clear, though, how these courses will be counted towards a degree. Duncan says that at the moment colleges and universities will decide for themselves whether to grant credit for these courses; some may opt to offer credit through proctored exams, "as a way to accelerate student learning and accommodate more students" (p. 2). Duncan optimistically tells us, "By opening up the digital doorway to the best online higher education and high school courses available, we will provide millions of Americans with the knowledge and skills they need to advance their education and succeed in our global society" (p. 2).

It seems, though, that the end result of such plan will be students moving through higher education at a dizzying pace, without having been exposed to a comprehensive

education. Once again a “forward-looking” proposal is made in which pedagogy is to be sacrificed to the bottom line. Class hours are to be cut in order to save money on instructors’ salaries under the guise of embracing new technologies. Further, the idea that credit is to be awarded based on achievement is a murky one at best.

Other Community College Initiatives

In recent years, with the entry of more and more students into the nation’s community colleges, together with the high dropout rate and the disappointing rates of graduation, there have been a few initiatives focused on improving community college education. Two well known national initiatives are “Achieving the Dream” and “Bridges to Opportunity.” In addition, there is the recent move to internationalize the curriculum, and the move to implement three-year bachelor’s degrees. Though this last proposal does not at first glance affect community colleges, it does result in serious implications for students which will be discussed later on.

“Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count”

Launched in 2003 by the Lumina Foundation for Education, “Achieving the Dream” is a multiyear national initiative, which focuses on enabling the success of community college students, especially those who have historically been underserved. The program is currently operating in sixteen states. Its basic goals are for students to: “successfully complete the courses they take; advance from remedial to credit-bearing

courses; enroll in and successfully complete gatekeeper courses; enroll from one semester to the next; and earn degrees and/or certificates” (Achieving the Dream Website).

The initiative recognizes that there is a pressing need for a program that focuses on the part of the population which does not fit the definition of the “traditional” college student, and is struggling due to a series of factors. “A large proportion of first-time community college students enter schools each year in need of developmental education, but few succeed in making it through these programs to college-level courses, let alone earning a certificate or a degree” (Zachry & Schneider, 2008, ES-1).

The federal government is currently working with participating states in order to raise the issue of student success in community colleges higher on public policy agendas. Among the desired outcomes for state policy are: making success of under-prepared community college students an explicit public policy goal; routinely monitoring student outcomes to make decisions about resources, rules, and accountability; and identifying and implementing specific policy changes that will benefit students. Among the issues addressed are data and accountability systems, public financing, and alignment of community college and other education systems’ standards. (Jobs for the Future, December 2005). In order to improve services to academically under-prepared students in developmental courses there is a focus on curriculum, technology, linkage to credit programs, teacher quality, and placement policies. Student advising and counseling are also being looked at, and there is a move to strengthen the first year experience.

Colleges participating in “Achieving the Dream” receive \$450,000 in grants over the course of five years. In return they must commit to collecting and analyzing data to improve student outcomes. “Achieving the Dream” stresses the importance of “building

a culture of evidence.” This process consists of looking at student transcripts and other information in order to determine student progress. “Achieving the Dream” is a data-driven initiative. “Colleges are expected to evaluate their strategies, expand effective ones, and use data to guide budgeting and other institutional decisions” (Zachry & Schneider, p. iii). “Achieving the Dream” recommends a five step process for colleges to implement the principles of institutional improvement: “1. commit to improving student outcomes. 2. identify and prioritize problems. 3. engage stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems. 4. implement, evaluate, and improve strategies. 5. institutionalize effective policies and practices.” (Zachry & Schneider, p. 6)

Schools recently interviewed about their participation in this initiative gave positive feedback regarding their experience. Through the analysis of this feedback “Achieving the Dream” highlights the following successes: by subscribing to “the culture of evidence” schools have become more comfortable analyzing student outcomes data and using this analysis as a basis for further reform; there has been a move to accelerate students’ progression through developmental education, and to increase student engagement; courses of different length and intensity have been developed to meet the needs of lower and higher skilled developmental education students; faculty leadership has been key in developing and implementing instructional reform; and colleges feel that they now have a more structured framework for dealing with their challenges.

“Achieving the Dream” initially started out small – only covering five states. It now operates in 16 and has plans to eventually expand to the fifty states.

“Bridges to Opportunity”

Established by the Ford Foundation in 2003, “Bridges to Opportunity” is a multi-year program also focused on traditionally under-represented groups. The philosophy behind the initiative is that community colleges should serve as “bridges to opportunity” for students who are not sufficiently prepared for college-level work so that they may undergo remediation and progress to college-level programs that lead to “career-path employment” or to a baccalaureate education.

The initiative takes stock of the problematic situation for a good part of U.S. adult students today. First of all, many academic programs still cater to the “traditional” college student, which is fast becoming a minority and being replaced by another demographic, “older students, many of whom are poor and most of whom may need special academic support to succeed in college-level work” (Community College Central Website). In addition, workforce programs are not well integrated into the college model. “In too many institutions, college academic/transfer and workforce/career programs operate under separate divisions that ignore the fact that most community college students are seeking both to advance in their careers and to earn a college degree” (Community College Central Website). Education, according to the view of the Bridges’ initiative, should focus neither exclusively on academics nor on job training. “Focusing education solely on the immediate requirements of employment, limits students’ long-term prospects for career advancement” (Community College Central Website).

“Bridges to Opportunity” identifies a series of challenges which create barriers to success: “poor alignment between adult basic skills programs and college-level programs; occupational programs and academic offerings operate in isolated ‘silos’; limited

counseling and other needed supports; difficulty securing sufficient financial aid; difficulty transferring community college occupational program credits to baccalaureate programs; poor coordination with outside workforce and human services agencies; lack of sufficient resources to serve underprepared students effectively; and lack of students' political clout" (Jenkins, 2008, pp. 9-12).

The initiative recommends specific roles for state policy in tackling these issues. First of all, states need to make the advancement of underprepared adults a strategic priority. Second, they must promote the alignment of programs and services. Next, they need to collect data and conduct research in order to inform policy and practice. Moreover, they need to offer financial aid to non-traditional students. Finally, it is crucial to engage stakeholders in the initiative. (Jenkins, pp. 13-14.)

"Bridges to Opportunity" is confident that by implementing these policies, giant strides will be made in the democratization and equalization of educational opportunity for all.

International Reform & the Need to Compete Globally

In a world that is increasingly flat it is no longer enough for community college graduates to focus their attention on local or even national concerns. In fact, it is becoming more and more necessary for U.S. students to compete not only with other nationals, but with an increasing number of foreigners and immigrants who are interested in the same jobs, and who may have more experience and feel more comfortable within the global arena. A recent book, "International Reform Efforts and Challenges in Community Colleges" (2007) recognizes the need for internationalization of U.S.

community colleges and makes suggestions regarding how schools may best reach this goal.

In the article, *Community College International Education: Looking Back to Forecast the Future*, Rosalind Latiner- Raby and Edward J. Valeau caution that “to prepare for this changing world, community colleges must produce internationally literate graduates who can effectively navigate the complexities of the modern world” (p. 5). It is necessary for students today to understand a variety of perspectives: ethnic, cultural, and gender. Latiner- Raby and Valeau highlight a series of rationales for the internationalization movement. The political rationale conceives of international education as a tool for national security, and to ensure that the U.S. continues to be a world leader. It also sees international literacy as a tool that allows students to actively participate as citizens in a diverse, democratic society. The economic rationale looks at international education as a tool to enhance international trade and commerce, and to ensure a competitive edge in the world economy. The humanist rationale highlights the need to foster understanding, tolerance, and peace among people in a multicultural society. The academic integrity rationale argues that college programs without a reference to international issues are incomplete.

In *Transcendence and Globalization: Our Education and Workforce Development Challenge*, Mark David Milliron argues for a transformation of our educational institutions and the embracing of internationalization because it is what students need. He argues that the most important skills for students today are critical thinking, creativity, and courage. He defines critical thinking skills as “the ability to take information, assess its sources, synthesize it, and analyze it... the ability to learn how to learn” (p. 34).

Moreover, he argues that creativity is key in education. “All science and no art is dangerous,” (p. 35) he claims, and expresses concern that “many educators care more about rules and regulations than insights and innovations” (p. 35). But the most crucial skill in Milliron’s view is courage. He writes, “Courage is necessary to champion new and novel solutions, to build a reasoned center of thoughtful critics and careful advocates to take up the banner of transformation” (p. 36). As it is, argues Milliron, “we are still facing tomorrow’s world with yesterday’s schools and colleges” (p. 36). Because the world is becoming increasingly flat, community colleges need to internationalize their curriculum if their students are to have a real chance to survive and thrive in the twenty-first century.

In *Expanding the Vision of International Education: Collaboration, Assessment, and Intercultural Development*, Holly A. Emert and Diane L. Pearson make an excellent point about internationalization. They argue that today internationalization is not simply about looking outside of the United States but within it due to the large numbers of cultures that make up our nation. Consequently, intercultural competence is a key skill which students must master. Emert and Pearson define intercultural competence as a skill which “indicates awareness and understanding of culturally diverse others and situations, as well as the presence of behaviors that promote productive and effective communication among and across cultures” (p. 68). They further argue that “there is a heightened need for community colleges to foster opportunities to students that promote intercultural competence, irrespective of whether these students travel outside their home city, region, or country” (p. 68). In the 21st century Americans will need to use their intercultural skills on a daily basis in their classes, in their neighborhoods, and at the

workplace as our demographics shift to make us a more diverse nation with each passing year.

Island Roots, Global reach: A Case Study in Internationalizing Kapi'olani Community College, written by Leon Richards and Robert W. Franco, focuses on the internationalization experience at one particular school. Kapi'olani Community College is the largest two-year college in the ten campus University of Hawaii system.

The college's shared vision of internationalization challenges the institution to support the languages, cultures, and histories of Hawaii's people; strengthen students' capacity to understand and respect diverse cultures; develop strong educational and economic partnerships in Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas; and increase access to and success in its academic programs. (p. 91)

The methodology that the college has followed is to take advantage of the resources already within the school. Kapi'olani's philosophy is that "the classroom, campus, and community offer a spectrum of indigenous, intercultural, and international experiences that enhance student learning and faculty development" (p. 91). The curriculum also supports the school's mission through a set of courses that meet the University of Hawaii's Manoa (UHM) Global and Multicultural Foundations general education requirement. Students must take two courses that present interdisciplinary perspectives on world history and geography, as well as religious, artistic, and cultural developments. In addition all students must complete a one-year second language requirement. Finally the college has a special Understanding Self and Community general education standard with learning outcomes emphasizing cultural and linguistic

diversity, ethics, and civic responsibility. Richards and Franco note that “each semester, forty courses connect 250 students to intercultural and intergenerational service-learning opportunities in Honolulu’s diverse ethnic communities” (p. 94). On a more negative note, there seems to be an increase in monitoring of professors. “Faculty are being encouraged to focus on ‘assignment alignment’ so that their course assignments more explicitly direct students to produce evidence of expected learning outcomes” (p. 95).

Efforts to internationalize community colleges will surely continue as more schools realize that unless they see themselves as part of a much broader group – higher education institutions worldwide – they will not be able to effectively meet their students’ needs.

Compressing College Education

In October 2009 Newsweek published a theme issue focusing on higher education, and specifically on the merits and dangers of a three-year bachelor’s degree. In recent years a few colleges have been offering students who are worried about saving time and money the opportunity to complete their bachelor’s in three years. In the article, *The Three-Year Solution*, former secretary of education under George H. W. Bush, Lamar Alexander compares the university to the auto industry. “The three-year degree could become the higher-education equivalent of the fuel-efficient car. And that is both an opportunity and a warning for the best higher-education system in the world,” (p. 26) he tells us.

He points out that “The Big Three”- Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors, though hugely successful in the 1960’s ultimately paid the price for not moving forward with the

times. They were “increasingly locked into practices that their best people knew were destructive but unable to break out of so profitable a syndrome” (p. 26). Of course, this story has a tragic end. “Today, American taxpayers are bailing out GM and Chrysler, foreign competitors make most of the world’s best cars, and the Big Three account for less than half the cars sold in the United States” (p. 26). Similarly, claims Alexander, today the United States may have almost all of the world’s best universities, but that can soon change unless a transformation takes place in higher education. One of his main complaints is the fall to spring academic year. Alexander points out that we are no longer a nation of farmers and thus do not need summers off to work the land. Another issue is tenure and age-discrimination laws which make faculty turnover difficult. Yet another problem is that students are spending too long on their bachelor’s: the average amount of time has extended to six years and seven months.

Some schools consider that a good place to begin the transformation of the university would be to offer three-year degrees, which would save students time and money. But there are drawbacks to this plan as well, and a major concern is that students will rush through their education and thus miss out on important experiences. Spending just three years in college “deprives students of the luxury to roam intellectually. Compressing everything into three years also leaves less time for growing up, engaging in extracurricular activities, and studying abroad...” (p. 29). Alexander also points out that faculty members, particularly, “will be wary of any change that threatens the core curriculum in the name of moving students into the workforce” (p. 29). While oftentimes government officials regard education as a way to ensure economic competitiveness, there are still some who believe in the liberalizing mission of higher education, and this

group is not satisfied that the three-year option will be good for students. However, modern pressures may override these concerns. Alexander concludes that:

Whether they experiment with three-year degrees, offer year-round classes, challenge the hidebound tenure system – or all of the above – universities are, like the automakers, slowly realizing that to stay competitive and relevant they must adapt to a rapidly changing world. (p. 29)

In a second Newsweek article, *What's College for Anyway?* Deputy Editor Debra Rosenberg interviews five thinkers in the higher education arena to get their take on the three-year degree, and on how American undergraduate education can cope with threats such as rising costs, unprepared students, and other issues. The interviewees were: Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia University; Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University; Elaine Tuttle Hansen, president of Bates College; Robert Zemsky, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and author of a new book on education reform; and Diane Ravitch, professor of education at New York University and former assistant secretary of education under Lamar Alexander.

Bollinger expresses his disapproval of the three-year degree. He believes that there is a base of knowledge that an educated person should be expected to have and that today it has expanded, so in fact students may need more, not less time in college in order to be adequately prepared. He gives an example, “It’s no longer just of interest to find out about China. It’s now imperative that a young person graduate with a knowledge of China and India” (p. 30).

Zemsky, on the other hand, is much more optimistic about the possibilities for the three year degree. His point is that today we cannot limit ourselves to a three or four year period of “learning” while at the university; instead we need to understand that because we no longer recognize a fixed knowledge base, in order to remain relevant we will need to continue learning throughout our lives. And that skill, learning how to learn, does not require four years in college. He tells us, “My guess is that we can teach that in three years to well-prepared students, and what we have to do with un-well-prepared students is get them prepared before we start them down that journey” (p. 31).

Hansen disagrees. His main complaint is that “too much in our culture is about doing things faster and simpler and easier. And what we can’t let go of in higher education is that slower is actually better when it comes to learning” (p. 31). In other words, a student’s life is not particularly improved by allowing him to join the workforce one year earlier, but it is impoverished by having him rush through his education.

Crow proposes that the three-year degree could work if more college-level courses can be offered to high-school students. This would allow college students to move through the general education requirements more quickly so they could focus on their major, or as he puts it, “allowing more time for other things” (p. 31).

Ravitch is appalled by the three-year proposal. She says it will not work for the greater part of the college population, many of whom require remediation of basic skills.

She notes:

They’re very poorly prepared in mathematics. They know little of history or literature or science or the arts or geography. They probably have not studied a

foreign language and to reduce their higher education from four years to three years means they'll have 25 percent less education. (p. 32)

In fact, Ravitch believes that the “explosion of knowledge” means that today students need more education, not less. She comments, “I’m having trouble understanding the logic that says we have more to learn and therefore we need less time in which to learn it” (p. 33).

Government officials may see the three-year degree as a cost-effective solution for students and colleges because they are setting their sights on the endpoint – the degree, the credential. On the other hand, among educators, the three-year degree has more detractors than proponents because teachers understand that education is a journey which must be properly savored, absorbed, and pondered upon if it is to have any real significance.

Changes at CUNY

At the City University of New York steps are also being taken to overhaul education for community college students. A recent press release “CUNY Newswire” reports that The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed to more than \$1.3 million in aid to New York City and Washington State. The foundation has already provided support for innovative postsecondary programs which include “compressed classroom time; reduced complexity of registration, course selection and class scheduling; support services integrated with program structure; and “soft skills”

development, labor market knowledge and job placement assistance” (2009, May 20, p. 2)

In a recent speech, Hilary Pennington, Director of Special Initiatives for the United States Program at the Gates Foundation, explains the utilitarian bent of the project. Regarding students’ interests she remarks,

Before they (college students) sacrifice their time and money, they should be able to find out whether or not they are buying an education that is worth something. Which programs lead to the greatest opportunities? Which institutions have the best track record for getting their students through school and into careers? (Forum on Education, 2008, November 11, p. 2)

She also emphasizes the importance of keeping employers’ needs in the forefront, saying, “We need to build models of college that work for people that work and that add value for employers as well” (p. 3). She cites the ArcelorMittal’s Steel Worker for the Future Initiative as an example of a success story. In this program:

Students start off with several months of classes in a specifically designed two-year program, then alternate between paid on the job training and their community college courses. After three years, graduates earn an associate degree and the possibility of a full-time, well-paying steelworker’s job. (p. 3)

But if we are simply preparing students for factory jobs then why not just go back to the old apprenticeship model? Why have students step into a university? How many upper class individuals would like their own children to be exposed to a steelworker’s

limited curriculum, a curriculum with no art, literature or philosophy, a curriculum whose only purpose is to produce a well trained laborer? Without the proper emphasis on liberal arts we are on our way to becoming merely a society of technicians, led by a very small group of liberally educated “superiors” who will have little trouble managing the vast majority of the population – an ideal situation from a social control perspective

Notwithstanding my rejection of the increasing careerism and vocational direction of the efforts made by the Gates Foundation, I do support their attempts to deal with the current problem of remedial education. As Pennington observes:

Imagine arriving at college thinking you’re prepared and being mentally and financially ready for two to three years of long hours, hard work, and constant penny-pinching. Then you take a placement test, and learn that it will take twice as long. That’s not only demoralizing... too often, it’s defeating. (p. 4)

How to best serve students who fall into the category of needing remedial education is one of the important issues that CUNY is currently grappling with as the university introduces its plans for a new community college.

CUNY’s New Community College

Its Beginnings

“In the spring of 2008, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein initiated a process for developing a model for a new CUNY community college” (A New Community College

Concept Paper, Foreword, 2008). This model is partly inspired on CUNY's recent Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, or ASAP program which has had some success. This program allows students to attend all of their classes at the same time of day or on weekends to accommodate their work schedules. They travel through the program in peer cohort groups and receive tutorial support and mentoring. In addition ASAP is totally free to those who qualify.

The "New York Times" article, *CUNY Plans New Approach to Community College* (January 26, 2009) reports on some of these innovations. The new community college plans to keep enrollment under 5,000 and will, unlike ASAP, admit students who need remedial work. In addition students will be required to attend a summer orientation session which will include remediation for those students who need it. Another innovation is that students will be interviewed before being accepted into the college. "The mandatory interviews for admission – unheard of at community colleges – are not so much to weed out unqualified applicants as to let prospective students know what will be expected of them" (Santora, p. 4).

CUNY's new community college project is in part guided by the answers to the following questions which were posed during the project's brainstorming stage:

1. Describe the ways in which the proposed program of study is consistent with the mission of the college to prepare its students to be active participants in developing and sustaining the future of New York City.
2. Describe why prospective college students will be interested in pursuing the program of study and/or describe the ways that significant numbers of students without clearly defined interests might become interested.

3. Describe how the program of study will be both aligned with employment in fields with substantial openings in the future and provide individuals entering the fields with salaries and benefits that make the acquisition of the credential worthwhile.
4. Describe how the program of study will equip graduates to qualify for a position in a variety of different employment opportunities related to the field of study and/or qualify them for admission as a transfer student to one or more baccalaureate degree programs.
5. Explain why a program of study in this major could be designed to ensure that students taking required and elective courses will acquire skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
6. Describe how the program of study will be complementary to the other proposed programs of study and will contribute to the strengthening of inter-disciplinary connections.
7. Describe how the new college will be able to recruit and select faculty and staff needed to develop and implement the program of study.
8. Describe the extent of overlap or duplication of the program of study with existing programs of study at CUNY community colleges and, as necessary, explain why the new program is needed.
9. Describe the external partnerships that will be developed to support field-based learning for the program of study and provide employment opportunities to graduates.

10. Describe the special resources, if any, that will be needed to support the program of study.
11. Indicate whether this program of study is a match with one or more of the CTE schools intended to be a partner school with the college. (Summary of Research on Selection of Majors for the New Community College Planning Team, 2008, August 14)

The Current Problematic Situation

CUNY's new community college is an attempt to deal with a series of challenges that community colleges in New York City are facing. The concept paper begins with the observation,

Graduation rates in New York City's public high schools, although improving, remain distressingly low, hovering around fifty-five percent. Equally troubling, only eleven percent of full-time first time freshmen enrolled in CUNY associate degree programs graduate within three years, with about a quarter of the entering cohort still enrolled. (p. 6)

The report continues with information and statistics which have already been widely written about. It mentions that college graduation rates are especially low for minority and low-income students, that many students lack the academic background or experience with higher education since they may be the first generation in college, and that many high schools graduate students who are not ready for college.

The Pathway

CUNY's answer has been to come up with a new experimental highly structured pathway to move students through college and into a career with maximum ease and efficiency. This new pathway will require full-time study in order to help traditionally unprepared students to catch up with their peers. There will no longer be remedial courses, or the broad introductory courses in the liberal arts and sciences that college freshmen typically take. Instead, in an attempt to be interdisciplinary, "every course of study will incorporate the theme of creating and sustaining a thriving New York City" (p. 8). Further, the college will endeavor to connect with the city's public institutions, private businesses, and cultural organizations in order to open up possibilities for internships and future employment opportunities.

Programs of Study

The programs of study that have been approved are Nursing (RN), Surgical Technologist, Environmental Technology, Energy Services Management, Earth and Environmental Science, Information Studies/Information Management/Informatics, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Supply Chain Management, Community Health Worker (CHW), Disability Studies, Urban Education, and Urban Studies.

For the most part the programs above are pre-career studies. It seems that only Urban Education and Urban Studies are to contain any humanistic study whatsoever, and art is not even mentioned. For Urban Education we learn that "the core topics to be studied will come from the following disciplines: history, economics, philosophy,

literature, the social sciences (psychology, sociology and anthropology) mathematics and education. (Summary of Research on Selection of Majors, p. 35)

Alternatives to Remedial Courses

Regarding remedial education, the first step the new community college is taking is to dispense with the CUNY compass placement tests. Instead, the school assumes that most if not all students admitted to the school will have some need for remediation, so the school will run a mandatory summer program – about three weeks long, to bring students up to par.

The new community college summer program will be a full-time, three week program. The goals of the program will be four-fold: to begin to develop the reading, writing and research skills necessary for success in the first-year City Seminar course; to familiarize students with the college's math program and begin its intensive work; and to acquaint students with the resources available at the college through a student success course. Finally, all students will complete diagnostic assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and quantitative problem-solving. (A New Community College Concept Paper, p. 15)

During the summer program students will be asked to complete reading and writing assignments that closely resemble the kinds of assignments they will encounter in college courses. Faculty who are in charge of teaching the first year program will assess students' ability to read and interpret textbooks and general texts, organize and present ideas, evaluate materials in charts and graphs, etc. A reading and writing seminar will

focus on strengthening literacy with different kinds of non-fiction texts around the topic of New York City. There is even a research component. “In the final week of the seminar, students will identify an issue facing New York City, research the issue, and make brief group presentations” (p. 15).

For math CUNY recommends the use of the Maplesoft Placement Test Suite – an online version of a comprehensive placement instrument developed by the Mathematical Association of America. Subjects tested include arithmetic, basic algebra, algebra, advanced algebra, trigonometry/elementary functions and calculus. The purpose is for math faculty “to identify those topics which students appear to have mastered, those that they have uneven control over, those that they appear to be confused by and those that they apparently have never really learned” (p. 14).

Educational Model

CUNY is concerned that its community colleges are currently failing many students academically:

The separation of student services from classroom learning, the stratified approach to remediation outside the interesting work of disciplines, and the introductory course requirements across multiple departments create an environment of disconnect that works against student success. In these institutions, students often experience college, especially a commuter college, as a jigsaw puzzle of discrete courses, services, and administrative obligations. (p. 17)

To deal with these shortcomings the new community college proposes to:

Meet students where they are and move them along a path that strategically builds their academic confidence and independence, as well as the social and emotional maturity essential to graduate and pursue more advanced studies and/or enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills required to succeed. (p. 17)

To this effect CUNY has decided to bridge the traditional divide between remedial and credit coursework, denying that “rethinking established curriculum and course sequences automatically leads to weaker, watered-down coursework” (p. 18). It is possible, CUNY stresses, to have a more imaginative and challenging curriculum which will provide a good education for all students.

The new educational model will include a required first-year curriculum, shorter modules instead of the fifteen week semester; student development and work-place education in the first-year program; and the implementation of learning communities.

The First-Year Core Curriculum

The first-year core curriculum will be an integrated liberal arts and occupational curriculum. Students will be required to attend school for 22 hours a week. In the first semester, the core will consist of three blocks of three courses each. Each block will last for five weeks and will include: 1) a City Seminar, 2) a Professional Studies course and 3) a Mathematics course. The City Seminars will be organized around the theme of *Problem-solving for the Future of New York City*, and introduce students to the “complex physical, social, environmental, and political realities of urban life” (p. 20). The seminars will consist of four components: a case study that focuses on interdisciplinary learning;

an integrated reading and writing workshop; a quantitative reasoning workshop, and “Group Workspace.” Students will study different problem cases and meet with practitioners and decision-makers in the field. Seminars will be created by both reading and writing faculty, quantitative reasoning faculty, and disciplinary experts so that students are able to develop both their content knowledge and skills as they advance in their college careers. During the “Group Workspace” component of the program students will have the opportunity to work together or individually on assignments, and begin to build their e-portfolio – a developing document that will trace their progress throughout the program. Group Workspace will be a structured session led by a faculty member.

The Professional Studies course will help students understand the employment prospects for different majors, and where associates’, baccalaureate, and master’s degrees will place them respectively on the career ladder. Students will research and present on the qualifications necessary to obtain positions they may be interested in. They will also make visits to work sites in order to gain a better understanding of what these jobs are really like. Course curricula will be developed to teach soft workplace skills such as communication skills and teamwork. CUNY makes the highly dubious claim that this program includes a “performing arts element” since students will engage in role-plays based on workplace scenarios. That art seems to have no place in the new curriculum is unfortunate; that the school would dub such activities art education insults our intelligence.

All students will take a Math Topics Course which will also meet in a three-module structure for the first semester. The first module will provide an opportunity for students’ strengths and weaknesses to be better assessed. By the second module students

will move into an appropriate math-intensive or non math-intensive sequence depending on their majors. Math teaching in the new community college would:

emphasize not only students' facility with procedures and skills, but also the development of students' conceptual understanding and ability to problem-solve in non-routine instances, make connections between math content areas, work in context as well as with abstraction, and meaningfully link mathematics to other academic disciplines. (p. 23)

During the first year students would take a total of 135 hours of math instruction, double what they currently do.

First-Year Program Credit Model

The plan is for students to earn credit for their courses on a sliding scale – depending on the quantity and quality of work they do. To this effect, students' e-portfolios will be reviewed by faculty, using a standardized rubric. These e-portfolios will include a wide variety of work products, including examinations as well as an overall assessment of the student's progress.

Second and Third Year Program

During the second year students will concentrate solely on their majors. Courses will be eight weeks long. Students will take two linked courses in each module and either a program-specific internship or a course that fulfills a liberal arts requirement. The point is to provide “prescribed pathways for each major that limit choice and

exploration but nevertheless fulfill degree requirements in a clear and timely way” (p. 26).

Collaboration

Throughout the program there will be constant collaboration between disciplinary faculty as well as reading and writing and quantitative specialists in order to provide students with a good educational experience. Even when courses are taught by one faculty member, the instructor will bring the proposed curriculum to a curriculum team that includes faculty from other disciplines, reading, writing and quantitative specialists, as well as student development specialists teaching the Professional Studies courses. The team will evaluate the curriculum and provide feedback on the ways in which the proposed curriculum can best achieve the teaching and learning principles outlined in the educational model. Though the college insists that its purpose is not to control faculty, the insistence on standardization is highly disturbing and seems an affront to professors’ academic freedom.

Professional Development

In order to provide professional development for faculty, the college will implement an annual Summer Institute during which faculty from different departments can share materials, curricular innovations, and feedback from students. This will be a space to review the college’s progress in achieving its educational goals.

Student Advisement

Student advisement will be key in the new community college. Student cohorts in the first year program will each be assigned an advisor, who will be also be one of their first-year core seminar faculty. During Group Workspace, these faculty will hold individual and small group advisement sessions to follow-up on attendance, academic performance, or any student concerns. The purpose of these sessions is for students to “begin to develop educational, personal, and career goals that reflect an evaluation of personal and academic skills, abilities, and interests” (p. 31).

Office of Partnerships

One of the main purposes of the new community college is to produce “middle-skilled workers,” those who require training past high school, but not a four year degree. To this effect, “community colleges must persuade employers that the college not only teaches technical skills but also provides a rigorous academic program that will enable graduates to understand the industry, adapt to new circumstances and keep on learning” (p. 49). It certainly seems that the emphasis is on employers’ interests. Under this model the employer works with faculty to develop curriculum, and also provides hands-on training for students. The idea is to integrate work-based and classroom learning, making the student a potentially more attractive candidate for future job opportunities. The Partnerships Office will have specialists in different sectors of employment, whose job it will be to network with employers in that industry.

The Partnership Office staff will work closely with faculty and other college staff, keeping them informed of industry certifications, and internship and employment

opportunities. This office will bridge the gap between the world of school and that of work.

Employers do not have the time to develop the activities that produce meaningful results from internships and work-based learning, and schools may not have the knowledge to define which activities must be developed. The job of the Office of Partnerships is to help close that gap. (p. 52)

Accountability

There will be a Center for College Effectiveness that will oversee accountability and institutional research. This office will collect and disseminate information from data analyses to the whole school: faculty, students, administrators and staff. The new accountability system will include:

- 1) well-defined goals; 2) a transparent, collaborative process by faculty and staff to develop and present clear performance measures and to communicate the goals, measures and results effectively and honestly; 3) continual feedback by faculty, staff and students on the means of assessment and the achievement of goals; and 4) a flexibility that promotes timely, rapid decision-making. (p. 53)

Teaching & Learning

The new community college will include a teaching and learning commons where students can study, or meet with faculty and staff during office hours. Faculty and staff will also utilize it for their own professional development. The commons is to be a centerpiece in the school.

It will be centrally located and highly visible. We envision it as a transparent element that will be experienced immediately upon entering the building – a space humming with activity, drawing students, faculty and staff to participate in the collaborative learning endeavors taking place at the college. All other areas of the college will “spoke” off this hub with clear signage and other architectural elements to direct students, faculty, staff and visitors through the building. (p. 61)

A Few Concerns Regarding the New Community College

Shaking up the Community College Concept (February 6, 2009), an article published by “Inside Higher Ed” addresses some problematic issues regarding the new school. Though it seems that the new community college may succeed in getting its students to complete their programs more speedily, there are some concerns about the strict requirements and narrow curriculum. One criticism is that “the proposed majors are mostly in pre-career fields of study such as nursing, surgical technology and energy services management” (p. 1). The move away from a liberal education is worrying in that we seem to be progressively distancing ourselves from the democratic ideal of providing equal education for all, instead contributing to the creation of ever more tiers of education. Another issue is that most community college students across the country can only manage to attend school part –time and thus the new community college could become a new elitist institution, adding more hierarchy to the system.

George Boggs, president of the American Association of Community Colleges, notes that “special subdivisions within institutions, such as honors programs and learning communities, tend to succeed because they target students who are mostly not at risk” (p.

2). His main argument is that the only way for the new community college model to really be considered successful is if it “attracts students who would not have otherwise attended full time” (p. 2). Otherwise the school will just be handpicking those students who would have succeeded independently of where they went to school, and this is not the population that we need to be most concerned with.

PSC's Concerns

The Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union that represents more than 20,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York (CUNY), has also voiced some concerns about the model for this new, “vocationally-oriented” community college in a letter sent to faculty union members in October 2009. The union’s initial concerns are as follows: 1. There is no mention of tenure or academic departments in the new college. The PSC asks, “Is CUNY contemplating a whole college with no full-time, tenured faculty and no academic departments?” (p. 2). 2. The college focuses on vocational education and has a very narrow curriculum, with required courses taking up the whole first year, and only twelve majors to choose from. The PSC would prefer “an education that situates job preparation within a liberal arts curriculum” (p. 2). 3. The project is driven by graduation rates, which the PSC consider a flawed way to measure student success. 4. The community college is in violation of several faculty contractual protections. The academic semester calls for the imposition of a 16-week semester on faculty whose contract does not stipulate this workload. 5. Funding for the new community college could “obscure the need” for funding for CUNY’s six community colleges. As a result the PSC goes on record as not supporting CUNY’s proposals.

Analysis of CUNY Questions

I would like to return to CUNY's guiding questions in order to take issue with some of the school's proposals.

The first question deals with the college's mission "to prepare students to be active participants in developing and sustaining the future of New York City." This is a laudable goal, reminiscent of Greene's (1995) call for concern and engagement with the community, her call to "see the world big." Yet I would also like to see some attention paid to the world outside New York. Global studies are crucial to a broad curriculum. It is not enough to argue that because New York City is a microcosm of the world, a sole concentration on this locality will provide students with all the exposure to diversity they require.

Questions two, three and four focus on why prospective students would be interested in pursuing each particular program of study, what employment opportunities will be open to the graduates from different majors, and specifically on how each program will "provide individuals with salaries and benefits that make the acquisition of the credential worthwhile." I find the use of the word "credential," reflecting the emphasis on training rather than education, to be highly disturbing. It almost seems that, with a little more "research" an equation might be derived measuring input and output for each field, and a definite price tag might be attached to each type of worker. One can recall Dewey's (1916) antipathy for this undemocratic reduction of educational experience. On the other hand, I agree that the school does have the responsibility to help students sort out and explore different possible career paths; it is another lesson in

learning to navigate the world. But then I would insist that students also be informed about how their courses will help them grow and develop *as human beings*.

Question five is concerned with whether the different programs of study will ensure that students are equipped with adequate skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. While no one would argue against the importance of reading, writing, and mathematics today, my concern is with the move to once again reduce education to the three r's, - NCLB for college students destined to be "middle-skilled workers." And apparently middle-skilled workers have little use for the arts or humanities, or any enriching experience which does not directly lead to the cultivation of a narrow, clearly defined skill. With this kind of focus why not simply run specific training programs and then require everyone enrolled in the programs to take a national test of reading, writing, and mathematics which they would need to pass before they were given their credential? This would be the complete antithesis of a liberal education, but at least it would have the benefit of not parading as one.

Question six concerns how the different programs of study will complement one another in order to strengthen interdisciplinary connections. Though I find the emphasis on interdisciplinary study to be well placed, I do not altogether agree with the abolition of 101 type courses, provided that changes are made to pedagogical practices in order to enable students to be active participants in their education – producers of knowledge. Eisner (1983) would say creative pedagogy is part and parcel of the art of teaching. And, in fact, students can benefit from a strong grounding in different areas; content is still important.

Question seven deals with CUNY's ability to recruit and retain the faculty and staff appropriate to implement the new programs. For the most part this is achieved by paying employees well and providing them with the opportunity for professional development and for having real input into how the programs are run. The proliferation of adjunct faculty with few or no job benefits or stability does not bode well for the future of higher education. I am also worried by the move to make business and industry leaders too powerful in determining curriculum – that might very well alienate professors who will feel that their professional capacity is being called into question.

Question eight is included merely to ensure that the different programs of study do not overlap with other CUNY programs, so as not to waste funds on replication.

Question nine deals with the creation of external partnerships which can be developed to support field-based learning and provide jobs for graduates. Partnerships are a good, practical idea, as long as students don't get the message that classroom learning is subordinate to any field experience they may be involved with. I am also concerned that this move can degenerate into the practice some institutions currently have to award credit for "life experience." This devalues the learning that goes on in the classroom. It inverts the old hierarchy of the theoretical over the practical. Now the theoretical becomes subordinate to the practical in the name of "democracy." In fact, both elements need to be given equal weight.

Question ten asks about special resources needed for the new programs. I find the inclusion of counseling, tutoring, and other types of support to be beneficial, but I am concerned that the program may actually harm students by curtailing their freedom to fail. A constant following up on attendance and punctuality, as well as frequently asking

students about their feelings and motivation does not allow them to be adults. It sets up a controlled artificial environment and robs students of the opportunity for a healthy amount of struggle necessary to achieve independence and maturity. Moreover, this climate of micromanagement tends to easily spill over into the administration's dealings with faculty, and facilitates management's intrusion into both the content of courses and pedagogical practices – all in the name of standards and quality control.

Question eleven focuses on whether each program is a match with any of the CTE (career and technical education) schools which will be partnering with the college. It seems the new community college will be primarily a vocational school. My main concerns are that first, programs which are too geared towards one kind of occupation or trade run the danger of becoming obsolete after a few years. And there is, of course, the recurring concern that the new community college is just providing common workers to serve corporate interests, a claim which would be echoed by Dewey, Eisner, and Greene.

It is, indeed, important to pay special attention to community colleges today. They can provide wonderful educational opportunities for a great part of the population as long as their course of study does not become a watered down version of the first two years at a four-year school. I am advocating a liberal education for all, not just those who can afford to pay for it – in time and money.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to argue for a new, transformative vision of college education for the 21st century based on a comprehensive view of the human being. To this end it is proposed that rational and aesthetic thinking be merged into a new type of critical-creative thinking which should be cultivated in college and university students, and that general education should be accessed through a dynamic, renewable, evolving core curriculum containing a heavy dose of arts and humanities courses, since these will particularly serve to open up students' minds and sensibilities in matters pertaining both to the intellect and to the moral life. This education will lead to the enrichment of young people's lives as they become enabled to develop not only their intellect, but their sensibilities. This endeavor will also serve in the pursuit of democracy and social justice.

Chapter One points out a serious problem facing colleges and universities today: that of a reductive model of education which leads to an impoverished learning experience for students. It is argued that the solution consists of two parts: developing critical-creative thinking in students and strengthening the arts and humanities component of the general education curriculum.

Chapter Two gives an overview of different philosophies on the general education curriculum after WWII, starting with the Harvard Report, "General Education in a Free Society" and going up to Greene's and Eisner's preoccupation with aesthetic education.

Chapter Three focuses on Dewey as a significant figure in the history of education for the importance he gave to thinking outside the constraints of technical-

rational reason. His awareness of different symbol systems and his valuing of engagement with the aesthetic as hard, worthwhile, intellectual work are underlined. Also emphasized are his respect for the autonomy of the individual student within the learning environment, and his commitment to democracy.

Chapter Four takes a look at the work of Greene and unpacks her existentialist leanings and her preoccupation with the moral dimension of education. Important points dealt with are her preoccupation with the multiple crises our world is experiencing today, and her proposal to “release the imagination” through engagement with the aesthetic, as a tool to counter the current climate of crisis, and to strive for freedom and democracy.

Chapter Five examines Eisner’s work which focuses on the cognitive possibilities of the aesthetic, especially through engagement with the visual arts. The chapter points out Eisner’s preoccupation with developing multiple literacies in young people, making them aware of the great richness and diversity of symbol systems that exist so that they might better navigate the world, and the ideal of equity might become more than just an empty term.

Chapter Six examines the implications of the work of Greene and Eisner for education today: how they might contribute to a new transformative model of education for the 21st century, how their visions serve as a base and springboard for the implementing of a new type of thinking, critical-creative thinking, which is a merging of rational and aesthetic thought. The chapter also examines how their insistence on the arts and humanities as a central part of the curriculum, both as a matter of intellectual development and as social justice are key in the achievement of a comprehensive education. It is argued that a dynamic, renewable core curriculum can serve these goals

by exposing all students in the college or university, regardless of class or social status, to a broad, inclusive education so that they may more successfully navigate the world they live in and enrich their lives. The chapter then continues with a depiction of two interesting programs, *Project Zero*, and *Lincoln Center Institute*, and describes how the aesthetic permeates the work being done in these programs. After this comes an illustration of the “liberal education” offered at four institutions: Brooklyn College, Columbia University, Brown, and Harvard, together with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these different models from the perspectives of Dewey, Greene, and Eisner, and an analysis of the schools’ proximity to a critical-creative philosophy in the arrangement of their curriculum and their pedagogy. Finally there is the illustration of CUNY’s project of self-reflection, with its recommendations for a clear, transparent re-imagining of liberal education, an education which is meaningful and compelling to students today.

Chapter Seven discusses the importance of developing a renewable core centered on the social, political, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of our experience. It is an attempt to deal with the problem of a “university in ruins” by providing a viable alternative to the present technocratic climate we find ourselves in. It is argued that humanism needs to be brought back to the center of education through a focus on an evolving, multidimensional cultural literacy made available to all students regardless of wealth or social class. There follows a discussion of adult education, and an analysis of the curricular and pedagogical principals necessary to make adult learning liberal, transformative and meaningful. An important question is then brought up: “What if play and imagination were given a real presence in the university? The chapter then moves on

to examine critical-creative thinking: its nature, imaginative models for this thinking, the challenges connected with its implementation, and its practical applications within the general education curriculum. There is then a shift to faculty: the role of the imagination in staff development and a recommendation for a possible model for faculty governance based upon Rawl's famous thought experiment. Finally there is an exposition and critique of Britain's Open University as a study in "democratic" adult education.

Chapter Eight takes a look at the community college, which is rapidly gaining importance in the higher education arena, and examines the opportunities and challenges presented by this relatively new phenomenon. There's an overview and critique of portions of Obama's community college initiative, particularly his plan to invest \$500 million on online courses. This is followed by an exposition of other recent community college initiatives: *Achieving the Dream* and *Bridges to Opportunity*. Next comes a look at recent international reform efforts as community colleges attempt to prepare their students to compete in the global marketplace; one example given is the changes taking place at Kapi'olani Community College in Hawaii. There is then a brief shift to examine a controversial proposal in higher education – the move to offer three-year Bachelor's degrees in an attempt to save students time and money. After this the chapter returns to its focus on community colleges with a look at some proposals to overhaul education for community college students at CUNY as well as the plans for CUNY's new community college. It is argued that CUNY is planning to embrace a reductive model of education for this new school.

Limits of the Project:

It is the intention of this dissertation to advocate for a new merging of rational and aesthetic forms of thinking into a new critical-creative mode of thinking, and explore what each of the two types of thinking have traditionally been taken to mean, as well as what the new merged thinking might entail, and how it might be implemented. It is also argued that it is necessary to cultivate this type of thinking at the college and university level, and that the best way to do so is by strengthening the humanities and arts component in the curriculum in order to truly offer students a liberal arts education.

In the analysis of the rational and aesthetic types of thinking it is not the purpose of this dissertation to do any of the following: analyze the unconscious, create a “taxonomy of artistry” (Gardner, 1994), or break down, analyze, and enumerate every symbol within every symbol system of aesthetic understanding, as well as all the possible relations among them.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to single out the arts and humanities as the most appropriate vehicle for the development of critical-creative thinking because of the nature of the subject matter which is rich in imagery, laden with emotion, and open to multiple perspectives and interpretation. But it’s important to emphasize that critical-creative thinking needs to be developed in all courses, independent of whether we are talking about arts and humanities, or math, science, and technology.

Finally, it is imperative to say that the best thought out curriculum cannot accomplish by itself what a good teacher might accomplish. To that end it is absolutely essential that the teacher be both a connoisseur and critic of the subject matter, in order to guide students well, since for students to successfully engage in critical-creative thinking,

teachers must do so first. A good curriculum may open possibilities for good learning, but it is the wise arrangement of content, the sparking of students' interest, and creative methods of pedagogy which, together, may properly be called art.

Some Final Thoughts

Our Ideal

In the end we can look back to Rousseau – the philosopher whose “Social Contract” advanced democracy through his forward-looking, idealistic, egalitarian ideals.

Let us recall his words:

Adapt the education of man to man and not to his accidents. Do you not see that, by bringing him up to fill only one's station, you unfit him for all others, and that through the caprices of fortune your pains may serve only to make him unhappy?
(Emile)

The proposal advanced in this dissertation is for the education of human beings in their entirety, not the narrow, single-minded pursuit for a credential. Unfortunately, though, the latter is the direction current policies seem to be headed towards with their constant focus on measurements and standards, and their clear preference for science, math, and technology at the expense of the arts and humanities. Note the proliferation of grants and other monies available for the implementation and development of STEM projects. In the current climate it is unlikely that a liberal arts education will receive the

support it deserves, unless engaged humanists and artists step in to make their voices heard. It is imperative that a true liberal arts education take center stage. No longer can we accept the ever encroaching factory model of education – a return to feudalism masquerading as progress under the tyranny of a rationality solely expressed through number and the bottom line. A renewable humanistic core curriculum, developed through critical-creative thinking, is a good place to position our resistance.

Education must be education for both the private and the public man, and it must be an education that recognizes and develops the different dimensions of the human being. The professional man, the “credentialed” man, is but one dimension of the public man – a dimension which does not even begin to extend into his private sphere. Thus in our commitment to educating the whole person we cannot, in all conscience, gloss over the ethical and the political, the aesthetic and the spiritual - as if foreign to higher education. We must, instead, engage with the whole person, *mind, body, and soul* if we are to act justly in our roles as pedagogues.

Bringing About the Ideal

This dissertation has argued for a renewable liberal arts and sciences core curriculum, rich in the arts and humanities, as well as for pedagogical methods which engage and develop critical-creative thinking in students and professors alike. As has been shown throughout, in the pursuit of these two goals we uncover a series of challenges by no means easy to overcome: misconceptions about mind and learning, unreflective and entrenched educational practices, political motivations and machinations, economic appropriation and manipulation, social control and neglect, and

an overall unhappiness and dissatisfaction with an educational system that is broken – dissent and dissonance all around us.

As is natural, different groups advance different solutions to our problems. So let us then use our tendency to differ and disagree for a positive end. We can look to the model of Hegel's dialectic materialism: the movement from thesis, to anti-thesis, to synthesis – divergent views, coming together in new and interesting ways, bringing us to a new thesis, hence the emphasis on renewal. In the university this process of change is to be at the center of the community of dissensus, stimulating a culture of debate through which fruitful change is produced as there is always a forum for faculty, researchers, and students to set forth their views and argue for their vision of a good education – in both content and methods.

The Place of the Aesthetic within the Political and Administrative

Because we are dealing with real world problems and, accordingly, wish to provide real world solutions, our treatment of the aesthetic cannot ignore its relationship to the political and administrative. One might venture that a crucial step in reconstructing the university is to have administrators who *philosophize*, who understand that man is not an object, subordinate to disembodied reason. We need administrators who can understand and appreciate qualitative arguments, and who can and will act upon these *because it is the right thing to do* when one is dealing with human beings as opposed to widgets.

But this, of course, entails having educators who possess the courage to make qualitative arguments, instead of hiding behind quantitative ones. As Eisner warns us,

when arts educators, for instance, justify their courses as a means to improve math or reading scores they are inadvertently trivializing their own subject by making it instrumental, worthwhile only in as far as it supports another *more important* one. This is one way in which arts and humanities educators sabotage their own efforts. But there are others. For example, when looking upon an increasingly barren educational landscape, some educators shake their heads in dismay, but then shrug their shoulders and quickly add some variation upon the theme that “progress is inevitable” or that the only thing to do is to find “creative solutions” that allow them to work within the boundaries imposed by non – educators whose pedagogical concerns may very well pale before their economic and political interests. In effect such professors disengage from their pedagogical responsibility, becoming complicit in their own exploitation and that of their students, renaming acts of injustice to make them more palatable, lying to themselves and to others.

It is evident, then, that a great part of the solution to our “university in ruins” is to have educators who can speak up and advocate for students and the education they deserve, who can explain how professors’ and students’ rights are being trampled upon. It is imperative that these men and women express their resistance through the written and spoken word, that they become actively involved in bringing about the university they want to work in. They must not, under any circumstances, give up the reins to an “inevitable” bottom line. Faculty must not support policies that put power over the curriculum and pedagogy in the hands of administrators and business leaders.

In the end there are still some questions we need to ask ourselves and be prepared to answer honestly if we are ever to make the progress we hope for: How can key

concerns be accommodated within current policies? They can't. We must first move away from the post-Cartesian rationality which is currently part of students' educational experience in form as well as content. A counterrevolution must begin. Will the liberal arts return to college? Only if we advocate for their importance. Are we fighting a losing battle with politicians who want to replace teachers with electronic tutoring? That's up to us. Once again, we need to endeavor to block "reforms" which are anathema to education. Can there be humanistic study without human teachers? Only if the student is already an accomplished humanist himself, a thorough connoisseur and critic. So, no, that would be rather unlikely. And it's hypocritical to play a name game, to speak of "world class" online courses "rich and rigorous" in content as a solution to our educational problems. Pedagogy is essential to the development of critical-creative thinking, and the complete growth of the human being; and there is no pedagogy without pedagogues.

Through the tireless and careful cultivation of his craft: the expert selection and arrangement of content and methods, the stance of engagement with and responsibility for the world, the critical observation of and understanding of his charges' hearts and minds, a good teacher assists in releasing his students' potential to become complete human beings. And becoming truly human is perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn today.

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