

Aesthetics and the Curriculum: Persistency,
Traditional Modes and a Different Perspective

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The children of the present day receive a matter-of-fact education; their heads are cramed with facts-facts,-facts! The intellect alone is cultivated; the affections and the imagination are neglected... Thus the germs of imagination are nipped in the bud; the affections are checked in their growth, and we become cold, calculating, selfish beings, qualified, perhaps, for the drudgery of mere mechanical operations, but totally unfitted for the higher and nobler employments of life. And this is what we call 'practical education'!!!

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The search for persistent issues in the curriculum field has led so far to the identification of at least two. The first relates to questions regarding curricular objectives and the second to questions regarding curriculum differentiation.¹ In this paper, I focus on a third: questions dealing with the relation of aesthetics to the curriculum. Specifically, my discussion contains three parts. First, I want to consider these questions from a historical perspective, trace them to a point in time, if you will, and describe their initial framings. Second, I plan to talk about how these questions are being addressed currently.

Finally, I will suggest a mode of questioning that seems promising from the point of view of research. What I will argue essentially is that the persistent questions in the curriculum field dealing with the relation of aesthetics to the curriculum require reformulation and empirical treatment.

Intial Framing of a Problem: How Can Schooling Contribute to the Acquisition of Aesthetic Meaning? Or Can It?

As a starting point, I would like to take for analysis the meeting of the National Council of the National Educational Association held in July, 1897.² This was essentially a conference entitled "The Aesthetic Element

in Education" consisting of papers and discussions. Three major papers were presented: one by John Dewey of the University of Chicago; another by William Torrey Harris, then United States Commissioner of Education; and a third by Miss Mary E. Nicholson, principal of Normal School, Indianapolis, Indiana. Discussions followed the papers.

From the perspective of curriculum, this conference is important for two reasons. To my knowledge, it is the first major conference organized specifically to address questions regarding the relation of aesthetics to education generally. It was not a conference dealing with art education *per se*. Even the paper by Mary Nicholson was concerned not so much with problems in art instruction but with the relation of art activity to the general curriculum. Also, for the first time, we find two well-known curriculum theorists coming together to grapple with a common problem. The conference provided Harris and Dewey with an opportunity to meet and share perspectives on the question of aesthetic knowledge distribution and acquisition. Thus, a reading of the proceedings of that meeting offers at least a starting point for identifying and isolating the order of curriculum-aesthetic related questions receiving attention during the formative years of the curriculum field.

Consider Dewey's paper. His presentation was rather brief in comparison to Harris's. He opened with a one sentence statement and followed with six related points. He began by interpreting the title of the conference "to mean a certain phase of all education, rather than a particular group of studies."³ As we shall see, this position took issue with Harris's interpretation of the same title. A pragmatist, he had construed education as *an* experience with a built-in aesthetic side to it, what he preferred to call a phase. This line of reasoning developed into the thesis on art that he later worked out systematically in the now classic *ART AS EXPERIENCE*.⁴ The model of art as experience seems to have been already shaping in Dewey's mind at this time, although his earliest published statement on art did not appear until 1902.⁵

The six points which followed his opening statement were like a summary of the key elements in his view. He justified the aesthetic element in education on the grounds that it afforded refinement of qualities characteristic of sound intellectual and moral character. Dewey referred to these qualities as an "emotional responsiveness" and a "delicacy and quickness of recognition in the face of practical suggestions."⁶

In order to get individuals to acquire these refined qualities, he suggested an emphasis on two constitutive properties of aesthetic experience: balance and rhythm, balance because it implied control without the sacrifice of personal freedom and rhythm because it called for a sense of regularity and economy in sequential action. In art activity, Dewey saw a model of productive experience, a kind of controlled and guided expression applicable to all work. Art was to become *the* measure of genuine experience, which comprised more than simple activation of intellect and will. Genuine experience also required something in the order of an aesthetic responsiveness.

His final point was a critique of modern educational theory and practice for over stressing mere acquisition of knowledge. He saw an alternative to that state of affairs in a return to the Greek conception of educational practice, recognizing of course in that view the other extreme of over stressing emotional responsiveness. His interest was in striking a balance between intellect and emotion.

In his address to the Council, Harris voiced a different view. If Dewey interpreted aesthetic element in education to mean a phase in educational experience, Harris interpreted the same terms to mean a course of study. As a Hegelian, he was approaching the matter differently. Harris was committed to the scheme of the course of study or curriculum as symbolizing what he liked to call "*distinct lines of intellectual development.*" In the paper, he also referred to these as intellectual disciplines, of which there were five in the school curriculum: mathematics, philology or grammar, biology, history and art and literature. The last two disciplines were in turn subdivided into art--sculpture, painting, architecture, and music--and poetry--epic, dramatic and lyric. Symbolizing the dialectical relations between nature and mind, these disciplines were central to Harris' view of how to structure the socialization of individuals into intellectual and institutional life. In fact, he was now sharing a curriculum principle worked out long before this conference.

In a much earlier paper, he had argued that for curriculum to be effective and comprehensive in structuring socialization, at whatever level of schooling, such a curriculum needed to include both realms of knowledge and their respective subdivisions: the theoretical, practical and aesthetic sides to the world of man; and, the inorganic and organic sides to the realm of nature. "*Looked at as an object of knowledge,*" he wrote,

*"the world is twofold: (a) the world of man--including his realizations in art and literature, in his political and social institutions, in his science and history; (b) the world of nature including the inorganic aspect, and the organic one of plant and animal."*⁷ Thus, the basic features of a curriculum for, say, a common school would look like this:

TOPICS RELATING TO NATURE

INORGANIC--Arithmetic, Oral lessons in Natural Philosophy
 ORGANIC OR CYCLIC--Geography, Oral lessons in Natural
 History.

TOPICS RELATING TO MAN; OR THE HUMANITIES

THEORETICAL (Intellect)--Grammar (Reading, Writing,
 Parsing and Analyzing).
 PRACTICAL (Will)--History (of the United States).
 AESTHETICAL (Feeling and Phantasy)--Reading selections from
 English and American
 Literature, Drawing.⁸

While seeking implementation of this scheme, he had been defending forcibly throughout the years the place of aesthetics in the course of study. So at the conference, he wasn't expressing anything new. Only three months earlier, for example, he had delivered the same message at the Superintendents Conference in Indianapolis.⁹

The aesthetics of Harris were cast in Hegelian idealism. Art and literature, like all other studies, symbolized energy or self-activity. Essentially, both implied processes involving objectification of personal meaning through the manipulation and structuring of media: bronze, wood, light, shade, color, sounds and language. These views are reminiscent of Dewey's later formulation of art as the organization of energies. The critical difference, of course, is that for Dewey energies in art came to imply experiential forces rather than the manifestation of working out of spirit.

Unlike Dewey, Harris took aesthetic forms as indices of varying degrees of spirituality rather than experience. His ascending scale of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry supposedly described such a variation. The principle underlying the scale was the degree to which an art form revealed the human spirit as subduing nature. Thus, the higher the place of an art form on the scale, the greater the degrees of spirituality revealed through it. For being highest on the scale, poetry deserved to be called queen of all the arts.¹⁰

In what he referred to as the practical part of the paper, Harris was concerned with showing why architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry belonged in the school curriculum. His reasoning was as follows:

*Art appeals to the feelings. It arouses emotions and aspirations, but not appetites. Its effects are, therefore, to purify the feelings. It directs them toward ideals. It is not so much an education of conscious thought as of instinctive judgments in matters of taste. But, as it has to do with ideals, it inspires religious and ethical emotions, and through these indirectly develops thought.*¹¹

The notion of "instinctive judgments in matters of taste" was similar to Dewey's "delicacy and quickness of recognition." The only difference seems to lie in the object stressed. Whereas Dewey placed the stress on emotion, Harris placed it on intellect. Both, however, were seeking a balance between pure thought and raw emotion, a concern that appears persistently in the context of similar discussions. Years later, Dewey himself was to use the construct of qualitative thought to convey that balance. Harold Rugg, on the other hand, used meditative or transliminal thought to describe the same concerns.¹² Charles DeGarmo modeled Harris. He borrowed the notion of instinctual judgments in matters of taste and built it into his program of aesthetic education.¹³

On close examination, the views advanced by Dewey and Harris at the 1897 conference did not differ significantly. They expressed very similar views of art, for example. Both construed aesthetic objects as charged with symbolic meaning. They may have differed as to what that meant, but the important point to stress is their closeness with regard to the view of art as symbol. In art, moreover, they both found integrative potential. Each felt that through art individuals could be socialized into acquiring highly refined qualities in thought and action, great values to a social order. Finally, both were addressing a common problem; namely, what contribution can schooling

make to an individual's acquisition of aesthetic meaning. Both seem to have defined aesthetic meaning as a kind of personal sensitivity to aesthetic objects and experience.

True, each man brought a different perspective to bear on the problem. Harris brought what we have come to know as a discipline-centered approach. Dewey, on the other hand, relied on what we may loosely refer to as an experience-centered approach. But the fact remains that implicit in their debate was a curriculum question which seems to cut across curriculum movements and generations: how can schooling get individuals to acquire an aesthetic perspective on the world. I wouldn't want to suggest that this question was newly discovered by either Harris, Dewey, or both. It can be traced as far back as Plato's *Laws*.¹⁴ Neither am I prepared to argue that the question was as explicit to Dewey and Harris, at least during the 1897 conference. It is certainly more reasonable to claim that the question remains implicit in each of their papers, as if taken for granted.

What is of key interest here, and certainly much more important from the perspective of curriculum, is how curriculum theorists have come to deal with this old question. Both Harris and Dewey seem to have supplied initial models of approach. We might say that Dewey, for example, approached the question *valuatively*. For Harris, on the other hand, the question became a content question primarily. In other words, for Dewey, the answer to the question implied more than mere organization and distribution of knowledge. It called, first, for a *valuing* of the primacy of the aesthetic experience and, second, the employment of such experience as a measure of all experience, including education. This meant that one way of getting individuals to acquire aesthetic sensitivity was to transform educational practice itself into an aesthetic enterprise, thereby making it possible for individuals to acquire aesthetic values (implicitly) across experiences.

In the case of Harris, the question necessarily led to knowledge selection, classification and distribution. Getting individuals to acquire perspectives that would allow the making of aesthetic judgments depended directly on the transmission and acquisition of aesthetic knowledge, the disciplines of art and literature. Thus, the content and value positions found in Harris and Dewey, at least as far back as 1897, stand as early proposals on how to socialize others into acquiring aesthetic views through schooling.

Other curriculum specialists who were then raising or were to raise later a similar question leaned toward either one of these two basic positions.

For the well-known Herbartian, Charles DeGarmo, for example, popularization or massive distribution of aesthetic knowledge was the key to (a) restoring the apparent social loss in aesthetic taste and (b) guaranteeing to every child the acquisition of an aesthetic view of the world. Accordingly, he devised a program in aesthetic education for massive public consumption.¹⁵ On the other hand, Harold Rugg's program of social reconstruction contained an aesthetic component calling for a valuing of the role of imaginative creation in all knowledge acquisition. The reformation of personal perspectives, Rugg believed, depended upon a radical shift in educational thought and practice. Aesthetic values, therefore, needed to be built into educational forms. The distribution of aesthetic content was of secondary importance to Rugg.¹⁶

I choose DeGarmo and Rugg as examples because in my view they are two of perhaps a handful of curriculum theorists who in the past, like Harris and Dewey, have given considerable and very systematic attention to the question I have identified here. But there are others who, although may have written less on the question, have debated whether the distribution of art knowledge is in fact important or even effective in getting individuals to acquire aesthetic sensitivity. I am thinking of the exchange between Ross L. Finney and David Snedden, two exponents of the social efficiency movement in curriculum who stood at opposite poles of the issue.

Snedden initiated the debate by arguing that art in the modern period had lost its integrative, social powers and, as a consequence, had no further use of value and place in pedagogical practice.¹⁷ Snedden was particularly interested in answering the question why schooling in the industrially emerging nations was not contributing significantly to the public's acquisition of aesthetic standards. Snedden's question brought the assumptions of his colleagues into questionable standing. The faults may not be with schooling, Snedden argued. Rather, they rested with the set of assumptions on which educators and others had come to rely. His words are worth noting here.

To educators, publicists, and statesmen, as well as to all persons gifted with sensitiveness toward things artistic, it is a serious and disturbing matter that art as regards its evolution and social vitality seems to be so much in the doldrums. What are the causes of this condition, and what does it portend? In our public schools alone we now expend millions of dollars annually in trying to teach our children to appreciate and desire the better things in literary, musical, graphic, plastic, and terpsichorean art...May it not be possible that occidental civilization

has reached a stage in its development when the general social need of art of good quality, at least in some of the forms which have counted most in humanizing man and upbuilding societies, is less vital and compelling than was formerly the case? Perhaps the functions of art in ministering to the primal needs of society are not what they once were, and so, as a consequence, while society may still be willing to spend its energies and resources freely on art, it now refuses to take art seriously because it cannot make of it a means toward realizing the more serious and worthy things of life.¹⁸

Men like Harris, Dewey, DeGarmo and Rugg thought differently. They all took for granted the integrative powers of art. For them, the problem was one of schooling or socializing others into acquiring a certain view of art, although they may have differed as to what view exactly and how to do it. For Snedden, however, it was no longer art but science which now held the key to social integration.

In a rejoinder to Snedden, Ross L. Finney entered to defend the realm of art. Finney built his case around the survival value of ideals. "*The great ideals which are of the most vital survival value to a people,*" he wrote, "*science alone can never adequately inculcate and vitalize.*" For Finney, ideals were beyond scientific description. Ideals could only be "emotiona- lized," and only through art was that possible. Snedden had erred, Finney argued, in that he had failed to recognize the highest function of art: to symbolize and preserve the ideals of a people, a vital link to group main- tenance and survival. Finney could find nothing more important to group survival than the aesthetic symbolization and preservation of ideals through art. He too now came to defend the symbolic functions of art, as Harris, Dewey, and DeGarmo had done before him and Rugg was to do later.

Thus, in opposition to Snedden, he felt there were indeed sound social reasons justifying massive distribution of art forms. He noted three: "(1) *the arts inculcate and enforce the traditional virtues; (2) the wholesome pleasure which they furnish is an effective protection against vice; and (3) they contribute to the social efficiency of the family and other fundamen- tal social institutions.*"¹⁹ He then proceeded to cast his thesis in a man- ner not unlike DeGarmo's: that the popularization of art was indeed cen- tral to the aesthetic rejuvenation and preservation of mass culture.

Let me summarize. I have identified two curriculum questions here: (a) how can schooling contribute to an individual's acquisition of aesthetic meaning, and (b) why is schooling ineffective in the massive distribution and public acquisition of aesthetic meaning. When pursuing the first, men like Harris, Dewey and DeGarmo, for example, defended the value and integrative powers of art and sought to secure and define its place in educational practice. When pursuing the second, a man such as Snedden advanced the highly controversial position that schooling was essentially ineffective for the distribution of aesthetic knowledge because art had reached the evolutionary period in which its powers had waned. For Snedden, the failure was not with schooling but with art itself. As matters stand now, neither question has been really settled; the debate continues.

Current Perspectives on a Recurring Problem

The question whether schooling can contribute to the aesthetic socialization of individuals remains very much alive. The general consensus seems to be that it can. Contrary to Snedden's view, a faith in and a commitment to the values embedded in art still prevail. Existing differences in this dominant view relate more to proposals submitted than to assumptions held. There are still those, for example, who, following closely the intentions of Harris, Dewey and Rugg, argue that the acquisition of aesthetic knowledge remains the path to individual freedom. Maxine Greene frames the position in terms of getting "*those we teach to rebel.*"²⁰ She does see schooling and other related institutions as forces to contend with, for they stand in opposition to what the "aesthetic-artistic" represents: self-reflection, new disclosures of meaning, a mode of futuring, and "*a challenge to many kinds of linear, positive thinking, as well as to the taken-for-grantedness of much of what is taught.*"²¹ Cast in existential-phenomenological language, Greene's position answers the question of schooling's ineffectiveness in transmitting aesthetic perspectives to others by stressing the negativity (not in a Marxian sense) of schooling not the waning powers of art. On the contrary, Greene seems to suggest that the aesthetic-artistic is the last stronghold for battling social oppression and technological closure of meaningful and genuine discourse. In her view, we need only find an adequate language and resocialize teachers to perceive differently. In this, she shares the view of DeGarmo and Rugg. The latter two would agree that the problem is in finding the right language for getting others to acquire aesthetic meaning. DeGarmo devised an elaborate

methodology for teaching art appreciation and Rugg prescribed movement and dance as ways of freeing perception, if you will. Now we are beginning to see evidence supporting their view. The work of Kenneth Koch, for example, clearly suggests that finding the right language in getting others to acquire aesthetic perspectives on the world may make the difference between failure and success.²²

Of course, there are others who disagree. True, even those who disagree share the view that schooling can contribute to the acquisition of aesthetic meaning. They also share the view that schooling's ineffectiveness to do so lies with schooling itself and not with art. However, they do maintain that a lasting solution cannot depend on teacher reform or right languages or systems of transmission. For them, a systemic restructuring of schooling is essential, although some short-term good may result from the strategies mentioned. Dwayne Huebner expresses the latter sentiment this way:

*I have no hesitations about supporting...concern for teachers and helping them deal with the aesthetic experience. I think that we should also help them attend more carefully to the language of students. However, I'm not sure that the structures of schools permit meaningful communication between teachers and children to take place. That's a structural problem that I don't believe can be resolved by just educating teachers.*²³

In addition, Huebner raises a question very similar to Snedden's. Drawing on a neo-Marxist perspective, he suggests that we begin to inquire into the functions of art in contemporary society as we explore the relations between schooling and the distribution of aesthetic knowledge. The conversion of aesthetic knowledge and skills into commodities, Huebner argues, may be at the root of the problem. With Huebner, it isn't so much that art has lost its integrative powers, as Snedden maintained. Rather, it is that art, as cultural capital, commodity, if you will, is bound to "a culture-making industry today in which literature and works of arts are commodities serving educated classes or educated people reasonably well. These same 'commodities,'" he continues, "are probably not being used to clarify, form, or develop the experience of every person unless they themselves wish to buy into the social relationships of the so-called educated."²⁴ His solution echoes that of DeGarmo, Finney and others: "a democratization of the culture industry so that more of us may have a chance to express and interpret personal meaning."

Undoubtedly, Maxine Greene would agree as she searches for a workable methodology for realizing the same goal. But unlike Greene and others before her, Huebner prefers to move away from inquiry into the value of aesthetics and toward a politicization of the debate. He rather "*deal with the question of the right of people to express meanings, to express the significance of their lives, and to communicate those meanings to other people.*" Thus, he suggests that we begin to explore the limits of schooling when it comes to the distribution of cultural capital, although not for the same reasons as Snedden. As to how that is to be done exactly remains highly ambiguous. What is somewhat clearer is the highly political stance he prefers to take. That is not to suggest that others before him failed to recognize the political side to the problem of aesthetic knowledge distribution. Dewey for one expressed a similar concern in *ART AS EXPERIENCE*.²⁵ He and others, however, were much more optimistic about the potential of schooling. For a person like DeGarmo, a mixture of optimism and a commitment to the so-called new aesthetics, that of technology, sufficed. But these are past ingredients not found in the kind of sentiment Huebner has come to express. If there is any optimism in that kind of sentiment, it has come from a following of his early work. This group has come to add its own view to this old debate, although I'm not certain they recognize the historical links.

I am referring to a group perspective that seeks to talk about curriculum as if it were a literary object. It is an orientation first expressed by John S. Mann and later adopted by George Willis and others.²⁶ It is a view not concerned with the question of acquisition at all. Rather, the proponents of "curriculum criticism" seem more concerned with using aesthetic models as evaluative instruments. In this regard, their perspective stems from Dewey's approach to the initial question regarding the relation of schooling to aesthetic knowledge acquisition. Their approach differs from Dewey's in that it lacks Dewey's sense of purpose. Dewey's perspective on the relation between aesthetics and education was linked to and inseparable from his interest in the refinement of experience and how to get others to acquire it. But curriculum criticism reduces Dewey's position to a mere evaluative concern. It represents yet another search for techniques, technical mastery, although supposedly qualitative in nature. One writer talks of developing a "rhetoric for the curriculum."²⁷

Others write of *currere*.²⁸ In this context, aesthetics is reducible to modes

of self-revelation. Lest I be misunderstood, the suggestion is not that *currere* is identical or equivalent to curriculum criticism. It is, however, related and seems to stem directly from it. Moreover, it shares with curriculum criticism a view of what is to be the role of aesthetics in the curriculum field: that is, a tool, a technique. The difference is one of focus. *Currere's* focus is not curriculum as such but the person engaged with curriculum. In *currere*, autobiography and theatre, for example, become devices, techniques or methods for acquiring an intense awareness of, say, self-in-time-and-place. As a method, *currere* is intended for both theoretician and practitioner, as well as students. It is a method, moreover, reminiscent of much of Rugg's writings on a similar subject.

Rugg was quite interested in modes of disengaging conscious mind and releasing what he called transliminal mind, a psychic level lying between conscious and unconscious mind. He therefore paid considerable attention to Zen, Yoga, hypnosis and drug induced states in search of analysis and understanding. So in a sense, *currere* may be seen as a possible extension of Rugg's later work, without losing sight, of course, of his broader scheme and purpose. That is, Rugg's interest in techniques of self-analysis and transcendence must be seen in relation to his main interest in acquiring understanding of imaginative creation, knowledge acquisition in its deepest sense. His discussions of them are inseparable from this general concern. He studied these techniques because he wanted to establish a connection between them and the process of creation. It is interesting that he never in fact suggested their use in the context of schooling as a way of realizing his school of the second freedom, as he called it. In the final analysis, he turned to the arts themselves, to be experienced in their own terms, not as means to ends, however noble. Although *currere* may be viewed as a methodological extension of Rugg's work, it may at the same time be a distortion of Rugg's primary interests.

As I see it, neither *currere* nor curriculum criticism has bothered to address the questions that were of concern to Harris, Dewey and DeGarmo and are still of concern to Maxine Greene and others. The approaches are to be recognized and taken seriously. But I doubt whether they are indeed useful for dealing with questions of aesthetic knowledge distribution and acquisition. Admittedly, I see a place for autobiography in curriculum inquiry--but not as *currere* or even curriculum criticism would propose. The research direction I see as possibly more fruitful would define

its place differently. But before delving into that, I prefer to talk about what that research direction is exactly.

Toward a Different Perspective

When dealing with aesthetic issues in curriculum inquiry, I choose to move away from *prescriptive* formulations and toward *descriptive* approaches. That is, I don't want to ask how *can* the school contribute to the general acquisition of aesthetic meaning. Further, I don't find useful asking how aesthetic forms may be employed to attain certain ends, whatever those may be. As research questions, they don't appear sufficiently promising to warrant long-term pursuits. In a sense, I'm like Snedden in that I want to make problematic our faith in the use of schooling to achieve what I prefer to call aesthetic socialization. However, I differ in terms of initial assertions. I assert neither the innocence of schooling nor the modern weaknesses of art. I prefer to acknowledge that schools explicitly regulate the structuring of a child's aesthetic experiences through modes of knowledge distribution, namely, art programs. We know that aesthetic knowledge is de-contextualized, selected and organized, and then made part of the school curriculum for subsequent transmission. But how is it actually transmitted? What are the notions that children do come to acquire about art? Is the aesthetic meaning embedded in the curriculum transformed as it is filtered through pedagogical practices and then transmitted to children? How *are* children placed in art programs? What are the aesthetic codes being transmitted to children? These are the kinds of questions I prefer to raise. They aim at an understanding of how schooling actually functions in the socialization of children into orders of aesthetic meaning. Without this kind of understanding, I find it fruitless to prescribe what other people, or we for that matter, ought to be doing in the interest of aesthetic knowledge distribution and general acquisition. There is a prior interest of trying to understand the nature of the contextual structuring of art and aesthetic experiences.

This is where I see autobiography really fitting in. It is the kind of theoretical fit Rugg found for it in his own search of how it is that we come to create new meaning structures in the world. Rugg, for example, accepted autobiographical statements of scientists and artists as reliable data bearing on the problem of creation. What can real scientists and artists have to tell us about the logic-in-use in struggles with creation?

This was an important question to Rugg. To answer it, he turned to autobiographical statements of renown scientists and artists. Personal knowledge or accounts of creative struggles were data to be taken seriously and investigated. Conclusions drawn from them were then to be incorporated into any subsequent theoretical formulations. Similarly, one can turn to autobiographies as reliable data bearing on questions of aesthetic socialization. The "findings" can then be incorporated, in the manner of Rugg, into theoretical claims about possible relations between, say, schooling and the acquisition of aesthetic knowledge.

Other approaches have been fruitful, and I would like to conclude this paper by noting a number of studies that provide direction.

The work at Columbia University's Office of Radio Research in the 1940's is a case in point. Much of that survey research work aimed at showing how radio, as an educational tool, contributed to the distribution of cultural capital and the formation of taste. Duncan MacDouglad, Jr.'s study of the popular music industry, for example, demonstrated how taste, as reflected in the popularity of hit songs, was a direct function of market conditions. A song's popularity had less to do with a song's aesthetic merits and spontaneous public acceptance. It had more to do with a "plugging mechanism:" a song writer's "prestige-reputation" and how well a particular song was "plugged and exploited" by music publishers. MacDouglad put it this way:

The result of the whole plugging mechanism in all its different aspects may be summed up as follows: The public at large--more specifically the radio audience--has been led more and more to the point of merely accepting these songs as standardized (musical) products, with less and less active resentment and critical interest. While the accepted songs are being incessantly hammered into the listener's heads, the prestige build-up strives to make the audience believe that this constant repetition is due to the inherent qualities of the song, rather than to the will to sell it--either for prestige or for profits. Thus it may be assumed that this controlled repetition and manipulated recommendation seem to tend to the standardization of the tastes of the listener and the subsequent gradual eradication of these tastes.²⁹

MacDouglad's study of the music industry is significant in that it sheds

lights on contributing factors to musical taste distribution and production. Theodor W. Adorno's studies of radio symphony and Edward A. Suchman's study of new music listeners are important for a similar reason. Both were able to show that radio contributed little to sophistication in music taste. Whereas Adorno concluded that radio conveyed false musical knowledge, Suchman found that *"evidence points toward the building up of a pseudo-interest in music by the radio. Signs of real understanding are lacking. Familiarity, without understanding, seems to be the result. Music is listened to for romantic relaxation or excitement, without any concern for the development or the relations of the music."*³⁰ Adorno found a problem in radio's inability to capture the immediacy and glow of a performance. Through expropriation, radio could only trivialize, romanticize and reduce to "quotation listening" serious musical creations. *"What is heard,"* he wrote, *"is not Beethoven's Fifth but merely musical information from and about Beethoven's Fifth."*³¹

The problem for Suchman, on the other hand, was two-fold: (a) the tendency of radio to create dependents, listeners relying only on radio for musical information; and, (b) radio's inability to educate, to move the listener beyond mere consumption of musical information and toward genuine understanding. *"Although we have shown the radio-initiated listener to be less sophisticated in his musical listening,"* Suchman commented, *"it is important to understand that this is no reflection upon the intensity or fervor of his interest. While his actual listening may be misdirected, we do find that in most cases his efforts at listening are quite sincere. The failure is not so much his own as that of the broadcaster and the educator."*³²

As to how schooling itself may come to contribute to the distribution and acquisition of aesthetic meaning, one can cite a number of cases that can easily serve as model demonstrations of work still in progress. Jules Henry's investigations of classroom culture, for example, contain indices of what *ethnographic accounts* of aesthetic socialization may look like. Among his findings, there are descriptions of how aesthetic contexts can be manipulated to serve ends unrelated to art.³³ While focusing on communication and interaction patterns, he found greater preoccupation with the elicitation of conformity and consensus than with getting individuals to acquire aesthetic sensibilities. Edith Collazo's continuing study into the functioning of art in three preschool classrooms follows closely Henry's

approach in an attempt to show schooling's initial contributions to a child's socialization into art.

Ruth Miller Elson's work suggests a different approach. Her *content analysis* of nineteenth-century American schoolbooks offers a clear view of how texts function in the distribution of aesthetic perspectives.³⁴ In her assessment of these texts, Elson found an ideology favoring utility and nationalism in matters of cultural creation and appreciation. The aesthetic views transmitted through the texts she analyzed rested on claims that "*only when art becomes propaganda for good morals, or nationalism, or when it is in the service of the useful arts is it worthy of serious attentions. According to the schoolbooks, it is this kind of art that Americans have produced and will continue to produce.*"³⁵

More recently, Fred Inglis has added to Elson's contributions through his own critical analyses of English literary studies.³⁶ Partly through content and partly through textual analyses, he too has shown how certain aesthetic ideologies come to be distributed to children through literary curricula. What he points to specifically is how these ideologies function in what he prefers to call "the formation of consciousness." In children's novels, for example, the principles of liberalism, sincerity and self-knowledge are generously distributed. These principles then become organizers which children subsequently use to order lived relations, their "syntax of experience." Inglis' negative response to his findings relate more to qualities of the ideological forms children's novelists transmit than to the fact that they are indeed distributing ideological forms. In essence, children's novels are not what he would prefer to see: metaphors for goodness. For him, the Kantian equation of beauty and goodness seems lacking. But the value of Inglis' work here is not so much in what he prefers to find than in the embedded meaning he does find in literary works intended for children. It is that kind of embedded meaning that we too need to find, whether our mode of inquiry is survey research, content analysis, or ethnography.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have done three things basically. First, I drew attention to two persistent questions in the curriculum field: (a) how can schooling contribute to an individual's acquisition of aesthetic meaning, and (b) why is schooling ineffective in the massive distribution and public acquisition

of aesthetic meaning. Second, I described what I find to be the current status of these questions. Third, I proposed that we reformulate these questions and proceed to research them differently. Implicit in all of this was a call for at least a softening of the rhetoric, if not its elimination, and a commitment to researchable questions

FOOTNOTES

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4. John Dewey, ART AS EXPERIENCE (New York: Minton, Bolch, and Co., 1934).
5. John Dewey, "Naturalism in Art," in DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY, Volume II (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), p. 138.
6. "The Aesthetic Element in Education," OP. CIT., p. 329.
7. William Torrey Harris, "A Course of Study from Primary School to University," National Educational Association, JOURNAL OF ADDRESSES AND PROCEEDINGS (July 12, 1876), p. 64.
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9. William Torrey Harris, "Why Art and Literature Ought to be Studied in Our Schools," EDUCATIONAL REVIEW, 13 (April 1897): pp. 324-333.
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12. Harold Rugg, IMAGINATION (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
13. Jose Rosario, "Charles DeGarmo on Aesthetic Education," JOURNAL OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION, Vol. II, No. 3 (July 1977): pp. 87-100.
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15. See Rosario, OP. CIT.
16. See chapter 15 of IMAGINATION, OP. CIT.
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22. Kenneth Koch, I NEVER TOLD ANYBODY: TEACHING POETRY WRITING IN A NURSING HOME (New York: Random House, 1977).
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24. Ibid., p. 299.
25. OP. CIT.
26. See, for example: John Steven Mann, "Curriculum Criticism," in CURRICULUM THEORIZING, OP. CIT.: George Willis, "Curriculum Criticism and Literary Criticism," JOURNAL OF CURRICULUM STUDIES, Vol. 7, No. 1 (May 1975): p. 3-17; Edward Kelley, "Curriculum Evaluation and Literary Criticism," CURRICULUM THEORY NETWORK, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1975): pp. 87-106.
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28. William F. Pinar and Madeleine R. Grumet, TOWARD A POOR CURRICULUM (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1976).
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30. Edward A. Suchman, "Invitation to Music," in *ibid.*, p. 179.
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