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ART, THE EXPRESSION OF THE INEXPRESSIBLE WITHIN ETHICS

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Creating a Mind-set

An artist is an intellectual who not only thinks but also creates. However that does not mean he can stop thinking.

A believer who is an intellectual or an artist not only believes but also thinks and creates. However that does not mean that he should stop believing.

In the context of educating young people through the study of art, it seems valid to establish the function aesthetics has in the learning process. The relevancy of art will depend on the extent to which we rely on aesthetics to shape our worldview, to cultivate our mind and to nurture our beliefs. Often when taking a stand on human endeavors, Christians resort to a prescribed set of permitted reactions. Similarly, when acknowledging artistic expressions, a list of guidelines is advised for evaluating works of art in relation to Biblical principles. To make a point of applying Biblically plausible principles of aesthetic judgment and art criticism means relying on an addition to our thinking, a detached, rather than incorporated, awareness of our ethical and moral dimension in our Christian identity. The aim of the 'integration of faith and learning' is to consolidate this awareness into our lives as an inherent quality, so that we won't need to ask ourselves how to bridge the gulf between abstract principles and spontaneous reactions.

This essay is an attempt at creating a basic mind-set that could be helpful in the study of the arts and literature by removing the need for a collection of 'commandments' for understanding and being sensitive to art, along with the need to determine art in terms of morality or ethics. We ask ourselves: What does our thinking really contain if instructions on what to do and not to do have to be added to it? Does our faith demand from us that we compartmentalize our thinking in this way?

Integration of faith and learning propagates a philosophical outlook, a foundation for our focusing, that reconciles not only the notion of learning, but also the human creative dimension with the concept of faith. Learning might present a challenge to religious faith and moral practice through human reasoning, human fantasy and human inquisitive nature. Yet these challenges cannot be met by rigid adherence to a fixed ethical model. To reorganize our mind-set means to create a new condition that promotes moving away from the familiar. Such a reorganization of one's ideological convictions does not imply a loss of moral direction or even a loss of faith. It is partly the joy of discovery and partly implementing the mandate of our Christian identity and life education: a change of human ways of living, through individual and collective efforts. In our practical lives, the human creative dimension, including both aesthetic enjoyment and artistic expression, and the intricate net of ethical moral implications are interchangeably deriving from each other.

The argument in this essay will mainly be based on personal reflections. It does not aim at taking a stand on the current line of thought in aesthetics or ethics. The observations in this paper intend to lead to consciousness of human existence, through reflecting about human life both as a human being and as a believer. The essay will conclude with an example of how such an awareness is formed by suggesting different ways to approach the study of a literary text. A similar approach can also be applied the study of visual art and music. Learning does not undermine faith neither does it necessarily support it. Learning is desired in the pursuit of a tentative solution for meaning, a query for a final placement of human thoughts and actions in the created universe.

Reality: Human Actions In Relation To the Transcendental

All that is practical, so far as it contains motives, relates to feelings, and belongs to the empirical sources of knowledge.
Kant, Critique of Pure Reason

We find concern with ethics among academics and scientists, at institutions and at conferences for political and industrial guidelines. The ground for such considerations is that human behavior is inevitably submitted to ethical criteria and therefore necessitates different rules of conduct in professional and social life. The ethical dimension of human life is seen in terms of carrying responsibility for the consequences of voluntary human acts. Ethics then is relevant to the study of human behavior and consciousness, and relies very much on practical reason and the application of principles. The study of human existence, the nature of God, freewill, and the 'true essence of things' implies, as Kant suggests, a study of the issues regulative for human life, since 'morality ... requires anthropology in order to be applied to humans'.

The study of human actions extends over a whole range of different disciplines including philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, religion, history, literature and aesthetics. The prevailing motive for all intellectual efforts is to gain an understanding of human nature and to explore human rationality or mystic experiences. In the light of the recognition that there is no neutral starting point and that facts are theory conditioned we arrive at the conclusion that sciences are making reality just as the humanities are; they are no more, or less, objective than the humanities or theology. The world viewed through the eyes of a poet, or a believer, are no less real than the world viewed through a microscope. Religion and philosophy traditionally aim to state the relation between the human and the supernatural. According to postmodern thought, disciplines in the natural science or arts equally struggle with establishing a relation between objectivity and the supernatural, the human and the transcendental. Through an understanding of this relationship we attempt to grasp the course of the universe or the truth of life. This compels us to strive for insights into human actions as much as to seek to comprehend the otherworldly and acquire divine knowledge. A deeply human, and at the same time deeply religious, experience consists then of the individual's affinity to the human element to the same

extent as it includes affinity to the transcendental.

The concept of integration of faith and learning represents the concern with obtaining a balance between an affinity to the human and an affinity to the divine. Affinity with the human is accomplished through the study of disciplines such as philosophy, natural and social sciences, art, literature, psychology and anthropology as well as simply through experiences in human relations. Affinity with the divine is achieved through worship and meditation. How can the two be integrated? Human beings clearly do not spend their days only meditating, they interrelate with one another, studying, working, eating, listening to the radio, making decisions in a professional or personal context, relieving suffering, dealing with tensions, doing actions that will affect their own as well as other people's lives. They not only take pleasure in worship, but they enjoy entertainment, as well as exchanging ideas and constructing theories. They engage in sports, take vacations, attend art exhibitions. They like hiking, reading, building, gossiping, making fun of things, making sense of things, making music. All of these actions are done within an ideological or ethical frame, and they reveal as much of people's affinity to the human element as of their affinity to mysticism.

As a premise for human conduct, religious faith is based on God's revealed truth. The moral practices we chose as the ground for conduct reflect either our faith in divine revelation or in an ethical frame which in turn derives upon generally accepted philosophical or ideological considerations. Both result from a personal experience. The question could be asked then: When one accepts a mystical experience and its authority imposes itself on the individual, why accept the resulting perspective as morally normative? Does our ethics allow tolerance towards other claims of conduct based on rational or mystical experiences? We may not be able, in a sense, to justify our practice even to ourselves except by faith based on a personal, emotional and mystic experience.

Nevertheless, dealing with ethical terms and equally dealing with art and aesthetics requires an adequate definition of the terminology. 'In the practical employment of understanding, our sole concern is with the carrying out of rules...We must be able in every possible case, in accordance with a rule, know what is right and what is wrong...we have no obligation to that which we don't know" (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason). In trying to establish the apparatus I found myself unsuccessfully trying to clarify terms like morality (moral code, moral norms, moral standard) systems of values and beliefs or worldviews and value judgments. Other terms such as truth, justice, virtue, merit, principle, good and evil also relate to the notion of ethics as we construct it relying on our personal experience. At first these words might seem to have an inherent clarity, yet they connect to things we are linguistically or philosophically still exploring and don't seem yet able to completely grasp. We can, however, observe that in life these terms refer to very distinct paradigms, they are interconnected and superposed in different ways to reflect various understandings of the theories of logic, theological or philosophical structures, as well as various degrees of trust in an authoritative, normative being, or in an identity within the socio-cultural aspect.

Reality Through Aesthetic Dynamics

Through the work of art, the artist finds a possibility of exchanging his/her subjectivity into an objectively existing work. The work of art constitutes the expression of the artist's personal existence, the condensation of the subjective point of view into an objective reality.

The recipient of the work of art also finds a possibility for an active experience of shaping reality. The aesthetic message, in the work of art, activates the audience, so that the perception of it becomes a voluntary creation. Together with the artist, the audience creates a new objective dimension. The audience and the artist are, therefore, equal partners in the aesthetic experience, in the act of creating a new understanding that infiltrates the subconscious. A new consciousness is activated and the receiver realizes the possibilities in reality that can be expressed through artistic sensual activation.

An aesthetic encounter may be subjective, yet a new intellectual experience takes shape, a rearranging of the idea of truth about reality, a moving and awakening of a lumbering knowledge within, a calling forth of a certain energy and enthusiasm, a so called "Lebenslust" joy of life, a joy of being alive and possessing the power of understanding is experienced.

Art, therefore, makes possible the expression of a hidden reality within the wide range of unused possibilities; it generates one crystallization out of all possibilities of reality, and the artist as well as the recipient, have both been a part of this creation. It is an experience similar to crossing a frontier. There may be infinity still to conquer, but through each aesthetic encounter, the frontier advances, a certain territory of life is embraced: new encounters lead to new questions, new questions open new windows. This process is necessary to establish our existence and to reaffirm life power.

Reality Framed By Art

Since a work of art carries a semantic information as well as an aesthetic information this implies that it is constituted of content and form. Form canalizes, focuses and frames reality identifying a spot where we can dive into and where we encounter a new objective reality. This act is done spontaneously but has to be seen in the context of our want to experience and understand. The question of form is connected to the question of beauty as well as with dimensions such as expression, imagination and communication. The classical Greek criteria for beauty were assigned an aesthetic meaning by establishing a balance of proportions in order to create symmetry, regularity, measure, and correspondence between the detail and the whole. This would be a means of making possible the expression of a hidden reality within the wide range of unused possibilities.

Art is like a lens directing the perception of reality by 'framing' reality. 'Framing', the aesthetic statement given through the form constitutes the genre, the composition of a picture, the usage of brush strokes, the metre of a poem, the structure of drama, the phrasing in a work

of music.

Form is not neutral, it implies a worldview, a specific outlook on life. Since the content cannot include everything, what is left out, is as important as that where the focus lies, the selection is, so to say, a 'frame' with an aesthetic message. What is framed - the content - is not simply an idealization of reality, nor is it simply a symbolic miniature reality, a microcosm; but its structure and organization or elements have a meaning. Frame and content are both there to lead the recipient into focusing on yet another choice of reality and ultimately indulging into creating his/her own enlarged existence as a response to the human quest for meaning.

In short, an encounter with art means that the audience engages in the creation of a new understanding of reality. This invitation cannot be bypassed; even a rejection will be a conscious act that constitutes a true, objective creation of reality. A recipient is constantly active in creating his/her existence even if it means consistently stepping aside and undoing the framework of his/her understanding. Such a reshuffling may be devastating, yet it is the only proof of life. Life can only be perceived through the act of creating it.

The artist is like a sensor of the interrelating structures of reality, unveiling some of the possibilities of life. Every aesthetic access into new realms of existence is as real as life; it is in fact life. Sounds, colors, textures, boundaries are all examples of the elements 'framed' into art, a piece of music, a covered statue, a trail of words, a life story, a symphony, a building. Each element is interrelated with another, each structure has meaning. Art is life framed: composed, yet real and not fictitious. Furthermore, the aesthetic experience includes the communicative structure between artist, audience and the created reality, a net of interactions, as complex as life not just lofty theorizing on art, sophisticated and self-conscious. At various levels and degrees, it is relevant to establishing one's consciousness in relation to space and time. This basic premise or aesthetic dynamism I find to be at work whether the addressed is spiritual or secular, Christian or humanist, rich or poor, man or woman.

Ethics: Delineated Reality

So far it has been argued that existence can be marked as a dynamic process. Consequently, a stable, 'static' quality would not mean life. In contrast to the life-as-frontier-model we are presented with the 'static-juggle' quality of existence. Human endeavors are seen as perpetually juggling within an ethical, dualistic system of values. 'Static' here is used in the sense of deterministic. Juggling then reflects finding a place and a meaning within a set pattern of values, and would result in positivistic adherence to a defined ethics. This would mean rejecting to extend one's awareness in the search of ultimate origins, it would mean that reality is pre-created, since it is 'delineated' by certain limits, a code of morality, an ordinance in adherence with an authoritative value system.

This is not a claim against limits or value systems, we can in fact to a certain extent through a directed decision-making create our own reality, shape our worldview with its set of

values. Decision-making should be exercised with an alertness towards the unused possibilities of life, rather than to affirm a closed ethical frame.

Worldviews, value systems cannot be avoided, even though the authority on which they are based may be questioned. I am suggesting that since our decisions reflect adherence to a normative system, be it Scripture, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, positivism, fashion or rock culture, we are creating a delineated reality. This delineation not only creates a fence that leaves out the unused possibilities within the human world, a world of ideas and people, but creates a morally normative fear of infringement against the delineated system as the only possible order of things.

In consistence with the juggling pattern, the access to the meaning of one's existence is pre-directed, delineated: all the energy, all the intellectual, social, spiritual efforts are engaged to come to terms with that externally predicated paradigm. Therefore, any shift towards the inexpressible - initiated for example by art or reflection - means stealing away one's concentration from our set direction. Within the analogy of juggling, the encounter with an unused possibility can be compared to a higher and more daring throw, followed by the preoccupation of being able to catch the ball back, as well as fitting it back into the rolling system. In other words it is like floundering in a swamp, like an excursion into space not knowing if you can return into the orbit, and is, therefore, condemned.

Even by doing away with all moral implications of arts and aesthetics on human conduct artistic judgment still is bound to a value system of opposing attributes, creating a dualistic model of contesting notions. In the framework of aesthetics the ethical polarity of good and evil is expressed by appositions judging not the morality but the relevancy of a creative work. An artistic evaluation is, therefore, expressed in terms of antonyms like serious/frolic, deep/superficial, sincere/insincere, genuine/artificial, original/conventional, inventive/phony, trustworthy/suspicious. Even without ever mentioning good and bad, the reality brought forth by the encounter with the work of art will inevitably include an evaluation in terms of such qualities. It will produce a set of values, a morality as it were. It will not be a judgment that can necessarily be defined as a Christian, Biblical or moral evaluation, distinguishing between good and evil, but it will acquire moral implications in the process of testing the personal significance and the relevancy of the work of art in the socio-cultural context.

The relevancy of the work of art will be evaluated positively if it has initiated a diversion out of the orbit in the search of truth. When the receiver who is contemplating a work of art concludes: '*yes - why not before?*' the interaction between reality, artist and audience is clearly a successful one. 'Yes' stands for the voluntary access into a dialogue with the artist or with the aesthetic message of the work of art, 'why not before' shows that the work of art represents an island within the sea of possibilities for reality and that the receiver therefore has arrived at a new understanding.

A new understanding can lead to a change of trajectory. This is not meant to be an excursion with a preprogrammed return to the predetermined ethical orbit, but rather the ethical setting, the moral laws and the set of values that construct the orbit are taken along. The diversion into a newly created reality can be described as a complete change of itinerary, in

practice, a change of conduct, after having adopted a new set of rules.

Translated into Christian language, even though a new trajectory is based on the rejection of Biblical values, these values still are part of one's enlarged reality and only their relevancy to the new existence would enforce their validity, reaffirming one's faith.

The Faith Issue

Our ideas about reality and our beliefs in things we do not see are contained in a well rounded picture. Faith is the process of including new images to one's clearly visualized identity. In adding new images, however, we create an unbalance. To regain balance we either change the distribution of our weight, reorganizing our convictions, or we take off some weight. By ascribing less significance to the elements that have lost their truth value we counterbalance the new addition. Therefore to round up the enlarged picture we need a gradual integration of faith with faith in order to experience oneness again, oneness with one's self and with the nature of things.

For some it is art that provides the mental images that enlarge one's picture of reality, for some it can be ethics or even suffering. Such 'specifics', as the acts recognized through ethics or suffering, may open our eyes to more pictures which illustrate truth and meaning. However, the meaning of these picture does not strike us as immanent, but rather as attributed sense, affirmed through exterior consequences. The evoked reality is identified as known and predictable, but it is not 'an unused possibility of reality' that we have helped into existence. We might be able to apply ethical evaluation to justify its truth value and by assigning it a function within our working ethical system, we might also gain balance - it would be unbearable to be in an off-balance spin for long. It will, however, remain a balance based on justification, rather than an innate truth. In order to justify our belief we might find ourselves using a train of thought only realizing that it leads us back to where we started. Wittgenstein calls this process touching the bedrock: one can find a reason for justifying a morally normative evaluation and a reason for that being a reason, but eventually one is forced to give up offering reasons.

Art or aesthetics, paintings, poems, music, narratives may stand for life as a 'less serious business' compared to suffering, yet artistic expressions are 'calligraphic moments of ontological recognition', not just a way of doing, but of knowing. Their simplicity activates an intuitive sense of concrete abstraction, ideas are felt not examined, they have a direct connection to the eye/mind. In this way the aesthetic message has some similarity with faith: it is life transforming by enlarging our pictures of the truth of things. The process is ongoing, through each new encounter a new picture is added and a reorganization is required.

Ethics and morality delineate reality according to the premise that there is only one truth to separate right and wrong. They use a language that is directed to an external function, rather than internal meaning. An internal meaning cannot be found, however clear the directions. It

is a creation of every individual during the process of enlarging his/her picture, integrating faith with faith. Though there is unity of truth there is nevertheless a diversity in our ways of knowing, in the ways of speaking, of asking, of believing.

The Moral Issue

Art is understood to be a fundamental intellectual activity which is relevant in forming human existence and objectivity. The classical Greek criteria for beauty were assigned an aesthetic meaning by establishing a balance of proportions in order to create symmetry, regularity, measure, and correspondence between the detail and the whole. Such an aesthetic message makes possible the expression of a hidden reality within the wide range of unused possibilities. The aesthetic message is constituted by the content, the semantic information, and the form, the aesthetic information. The form canalizes, focuses and frames the content identifying a spot where we can dive into and encounter a new objective reality. This act is done spontaneously but has to be seen in the context of our want to experience and understand.

Morality deals with an already given reality and is concerned with the constant repeating of what can be proved to be good. Morality is therefore placed above art since it is believed to contain all reality within its dualistic pattern. The procedure that places ethics above art is therefore a definition by contrast. Within the frame of morality in order to evaluate something as good, it has to be contrasted with bad or evil.

Art as described above can not be contrasted to bad art. It is either art, or it not art; it is, either reality, and therefore it evokes a specific truth, or it does not exist. Art, if it is true art, represents a quest for understanding, for consciously uncovering reality and collecting parts of the whole truth.

The search for understanding and knowledge as the primary goal for human existence may appear egoistic and self-centered in comparison to the pleads for self-effacement, altruism and solidarity prompted by ethics. Yet the codes of morality, unless they spring from understanding that has been gained through an intentionally acknowledged experience of truth, have to be taught and applied from the external. An attempt at externally penetrating human understanding, simply would mean moralizing or enforcing a personal and subjective notion. Moralizing also implies an unequal position of the parties involved in communication, which results in division. The two parties are separated in a double way: the moralizing party versus the party suffering moralizing, and furthermore the virtuous group versus the group failing to uphold morals. The result is not a humanity united in spirit.

In fact while adherence to moral principles is mostly a result of a theistic belief when we look at the foremost example of Christian morality put into practice in the life of Jesus, it is interesting to notice that for God moralizing was not an element of passing down principles. Jesus is portrayed as speaking in parables (stories). He avoided moralizing or enforcing His truth. Often he threw people's well founded beliefs off balance. For example, the Samaritan in

His story is the good character, the pious ones are the villains. Jesus extends the picture of reality in his listeners by a picture containing an unused possibility: the Samaritans as God's children. His listeners have to rearrange their understanding of the nature of things to create a new enlarged and balanced picture. He is not going to do it for them, they have to create a reality where the picture of loving one's neighbour is enlarged, containing the Samaritan. "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." The Beatitudes are another example of how Jesus recurred to language containing both a semantic and aesthetic message. This leads to the assumption that art is relevant in creating a morality that is not a separate entity, a checklist of rules, but morality as an immanent feature.

Art is then a unifying factor between human beings. On the one hand they can share the pleasure of adventure, the satisfaction of having gained knowledge, the power of being responsible for knowledge, on the other hand they gain understanding for each other, sensitivity to the situation of others, tolerance towards the existence of others.

The social dimension of art compelled artists like Brecht to build on the potentiality of art to change attitudes. Brecht took the principle that it is "not a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it". By transforming the form and techniques he aimed to 'alienate' and so form the conception of art: the receiver is to become aware of the social possibilities reality can be attributed. This results in active social, political and moral behaviour rather than dealing with a compelling myth of reality.

Implications For the Evaluation Of Art

*Rest not on the wave which breaks against your foot,
So long as it stands in the water, new waves will break
against it.* Bertolt Brecht

The following premises have served as the basis for my reflections: human life exists in an ethical frame and aesthetic experience as the active creation of new realities. Both ethics and aesthetics are in fact due to a concern with the quality of life. Both feature a search for meaning, for the real essence of humanity and the transcendental. There is, however, a difference: on the one hand we have a concern with responding to a set of values, a delineated ideal; on the other hand a quest for the truth of life within the unexpressed reality.

In respect to art, the ethical frame of life implies a table of 'ten commandments', guidelines for the selection of good or bad art, like the ten commandments (or any value system), are a guideline for selecting actions. Within this frame the answers are as definite as are the questions. This might render personal decision easier and personal choice more intelligent, but a concern with answers is static and accommodating and does not, therefore, mean life.

Within a given moral practice the answers are ready, waiting to be taken up. Yet, are those

basic principles reflected in other practices, as for example when doing aesthetic judgments, in a way that makes social, psychological or spiritual sense or just in a way that makes sense within the affirmed moral choice? Brecht's view was that traditions leave people content with social injustice. A practice or moral choice may be so directly related to our experience that for us the reason it provides will simply count more than any other reason that might be advanced for it. As S. Kierkegaard observes, however great our knowledge (our answers), we are not able to help anyone unless we understand at least what he/she feels. Aesthetic encounters open our consciousness to new questions inexpressible within the frame of our moral choice. Our practices and the underlying ethical theory are constantly critically evaluated.

A Christian creative, aesthetic experience is a reality within a God-given ordinance. Our practices are human actions resulting from human understanding of the divine norms that rule the world. We apply a moral meaning (good or evil) to reality on the basis that the world functions within a God-given ordinance. We forget that we are applying a God-given ordinance to the nature of this world as it is humanly discerned: through contrasting features (good and evil). Is this dualism the absolute order of things? Nothing that we participate in creating, should lead us to think that established distinctions of race, social structure, knowledge, even artistic understanding are beyond criticism; practices that make distinctions between different groups of people may certainly be questioned and reexamined. To be content with unreflective traditions, even if they claim a direct descent from out of the original God-given ordinance, can provide a reality of prejudice. Bias comes from the human need of justification of a familiar tradition. And if such a tradition nurtures a rule of conduct that is contradictory and makes no social, psychological or spiritual sense, then it cannot claim authority to apply its morally discriminating values. Art is a means of taking the focus away from the task of guarding the boundaries. Art rather engages our minds within a dimension where all humans are equal in their searching process.

Implications For the Personal Christian Experience

Our aesthetic encounter and the process of studying art, as seen in the pattern of creating new realities, are identifiable with our personal experience at the same time as our experience will have been the starting point for the aesthetic venture towards more understanding.

I would like to contrast the reality of one's own experience to the allegiance to authority. Being true to ourselves means being true to our experience and being sure that in a meaningful way it will fit in a bigger context of theoretical and/or spiritual truth. George P. Schner analyzes the appeal of one's 'own experience' and how it can become theological common sense. His observations can be brought to relation to the evaluation of the aesthetic encounter.

Appealing to one's own experience in taking a stand can be understood on one side as a self-manifestation or as an assurance of the authenticity of something that is uniquely my own

in opposition to another group's. And, of course, where else would an opinion come from except from one's 'own experience', whether it is a result of direct learning or appropriation on the word of another? Likewise one might ask about the phrase 'personal experience': what other kind is there? Have you ever expressed your 'impersonal experience' when giving an opinion?

In the context of art and ethics one could argue that the appeal to experience in general or the experience of faith in particular, is a variation to the appeal to authority (moral code, Scripture, worldview). Students and teachers could debate whether the right of one's opinion to be heard in evaluating arts is actually a demand for 'my experience' to be dominant, to overcome and displace the other opinions and degenerate to an appeal to authority. One would have to take into consideration that an opinion could be seen as the 'articulation' of the actual form of life of an individual or a group. It would represent the actual operative principles or convictions of the individual or group and if analyzed psychologically, socially, philosophically and spiritually it would be an articulation in terms of identity formation.

Therefore, personal experience leading to faith or belief in the evidence, is in one sense a displacement of authority, on one hand a matter of exercising either reason in full freedom of inquiry, and on the other hand fully trusting the sensibilia at work. Either way it will not be a disinterested appeal: it will be dependent upon a net of theories of rationality or belief, of human nature, of the relation to society, history, the transcendental, of language and all other forms of mediation. Appealing to 'personal opinion' as a synthesis of all these elements, a nest of existential and mystical (spiritual) concerns does call to the attention that one is appealing to tradition and its multiple origins and connections. This will indeed raise issues rather than settle them. A flat contrasting evaluation of the secular and spiritual attributes will, in contrast, aim at pronouncing value judgement which reflects an attempt at settling the matter.

These questions might be dealt either through expressing one's experience, feeling, intuition or through a systematic analysis in a professional and technical manner of approaching a work of art. Yet in both cases they will bring forth the linguistic, theoretical, social, political, and ethical consciousness of the artist and the recipient (both student and teacher). There is no better integration of faith and learning than in acquiring the skill of an alerted mind, a mind that will detect the intricacy of reality, that is able to juggle a fair amount of its interrelated elements, and that has the ability of logically establishing relations and priorities and applying them in a real life situation.

Integration means to supply one's self with a self-regulating spirituality that will enable one to confront reality with its unpredictable combinations and antagonism of any given entity, meaning, relationship, appearance, belief, or practice. At the same time it means being able to create an own identity and place, one's self within space and time with a meaning and purpose. This awareness of the self and the transcendental enables us to recognize the human senses, common to us all, as an interior mandate for actions in the human community rather than an exterior order. Such an exterior order is expressed through ethics and morality becoming

autocratic and resulting in disproportionate preoccupation with the exposition of principles. Our learning is directed towards an external function rather than to an internal meaning.

Rationale For a Christian Education

The quest for beauty is one definition of art. In pursuing such an abstraction, artists attempt to explain our deepest emotions in a way that clarifies the human experience and unites us as a culture. This is a decidedly inner experience, reminiscent of religion. One can ponder a series of intriguing questions - Who made you? Why were you made? - or memorize the pet answers: "God made me. Because He loved me." The questions will lead one to paradise, the answers to church. If forced to memorize meaning we naturally recoil, because meaning is external unless it springs from the well of self. Given the choice we should opt for an educational system that fails in the training of answer-seeking critics but succeeds in the schooling of question-raising readers.

In view of the above considerations, the scope of education in aesthetics and art can be seen in terms of the ability to capture the inexpressible, the transcendental, through question raising. For a teacher the crucial point is the emphasis on certain qualities, a mind-set, that makes this possible. An educator should not ask: 'How can this discipline be *changed* so as to correct what I as a Christian find to be its errors, and to supplement what I find to be lacking in its vision of truth?' Faith-learning integration does not mean using academic disciplines as a source of illustrations for spiritual truths. Such an illustration is given for example through comments like 'Two and two is always four...and God is always the same, you can depend on Him.' Though we would not disagree we might wonder whether saying it in this way is an effective teaching strategy. In the same way we cannot teach arts and literature by using the disciplines to illustrate assumptions on moral conduct that are not there. This might cause secular scholars to suspect that a Christian practicing their discipline will twist and distort it into something it is not. Such an accommodation of the subject matter would not even serve the educator as a trainer in applied ethics and values in terms of equipping the students with the tools for a meaningful religious experience and human existence.

A mind-set that will promote a commitment based on clear and independent thinking includes: an alertness for the asserted reality, a discriminating ability towards allegiance to authority, an independence in recognizing attitudes, an awareness of the intrinsic meaning of form, an insight in the historical context, the acumen to grasp the psychological frame, and the capability of interrelating all of these elements into structures. All given entities should be questioned, their relationships should be examined, the role of their presence in the structure should be analyzed, a presupposed ethical, social and political theory should be identified, inconsistencies should be recognized, the professed idea and its impact should be articulated, and the underlying beliefs and attitudes and the time and space elements should be reflected upon.

Objective For the Study Of Aesthetics and Arts

To create a disposition to value the qualities of life itself. To venture into the unknown and provide an atmosphere of mystery, a sense that many highly different shapes and voices combine with an unfailing vitality to create a complex overall unity.

To get the students involved in discovering the personal and the overall (socio-cultural, spiritual, mystical) values of art, other than the appeal to the sense of beauty. To train in detecting and naming the highly different expressive elements as numerous and distinct as they can exist in the inner and outer world, and to reproduce them with the same simplicity and precision as is reflected in their intricate function in the overall unity.

Applications To the Study of Literary Works of Art

The encounter with a work of art should not merely bring forth a statement about one's liking, a description of a reaction, an aesthetic evaluation, it should also establish a certain standpoint, be it adherence to, or diversion from, a set of moral standards or worldview.

The objective of the study of art is, therefore, to provide the student with helping tools for the study of literature from the following disciplines:

linguistics

- to get access to the smallest units in language that carry a meaning and view them in their context and in the context of the literary form; to recognize the poetic function of language

textlinguistics

- to recognize structures; to get access to the variety of devices in a text that carry a meaning and view them in their communicative contexts and in the context of the literary form and poetics

discourse analysis

- to get an insight into the communicative function of language and literary structures

literary history

- to recognize the historical development and cultural and social settings of literary writing

literary theory

- to create awareness of the elements of literature as they are organized within a variety of theoretical approaches; to create an analytical base for interpretation

language philosophy

- to be familiar with the function of language in shaping human thought; to establish the truth, validity and relevancy of texts

- and still **philosophy, history, theology, psychology.**

Implications For Teaching

Most important is to avoid the 'leading' question: questions should aim at objectively analyzing the text. Open-mindedness and honesty are vital, because they prepare for exploration, and not for (right) answers, and allow the student to present interpretations outside a traditional school of criticism. A lot of attention should be given to making use of the interpretative tools that derive from different disciplines. The following questions are regarded as 'leading' questions, questions that expect a definite answer within an externally imposed value system. The result is that the discussion is brought away from the literary work, serving as a springboard to refer to an external normative system, outside the world of the text itself. The expected answers aim at affirming rather than testing that system.

*** What is the message and value expressed in this scenario?**

ask RATHER

- What are the components of the scenario and how do they achieve certain effects? How do they convey meaning?
- How does the scenario relate to the work as a whole?

*** What feelings are evoked?**

ask RATHER

- How are feelings evoked? (elements of syntax, structural pattern, mode, color, contrast, surprise element, phonological elements, semantic relations, grammatical pattern, character features, relations, style, behavior)
- Do any of these cluster into a motive, a rationale, a worldview, a morality?
- Are the characters able to handle their feelings?
- How does the given ideology help the characters to master their inner and outer world?
- How is the plot, theme, carried forward? Do the characters undergo a change, a development?
- Is there a speaker, who holds the threads in the hands and gives a point of view on the doings of the characters? Is the character presentation distant or near to us, can we identify with his actions as they are taken in the given situation?

*** What values are neglected by the choice of feelings?**

ask RATHER

- Does the choice of feelings tell us something about the theme, about possible attitudes?
- Can a conflict be recognized in the mind of the characters or in their behavior? How is the conflict detected, through linguistic constructions, through the structure of the text, and through the choice of words? What action could have changed the situation?

*** Is the author's or his character's method of solving problems compatible with Christian values?**

This question is relevant if the author/characters declare themselves as Christian.

ask RATHER

- Does the way of solving problems derive from the author or the character's worldview? Are there any paradoxes? Is s/he successful in solving the conflict? What problems can be recognized with his/her solutions? What are the consequences? What pushed the character to act as s/he did? Why was s/he in such a situation in the first place? What are his/her ideals?
- How would you have handled the situation? How would your choice have affected the outcome?
- Does the character evoke sympathy? Does the author take sides? Does the author treat a relevant problem of human nature? How have new perspectives been opened?
- Does the author/character show a critical mind? Has his experience helped to get new insights about reality?
- How does the work of art convey meaning through poetic devices, the choice of form? Did the form contradict the content?
- In what way is the author a product of his/her time? Is the book trend setting? In what direction.

The following questions are often considered in arts class with the well-meaning belief that they will clarify our stand as Christians.

*** Does art contribute to SDA culture?**

The educator's task is to guide the study of the artistic means and tools artists use to perceive reality, and then create reality. Personal struggle, human relationships within our community and social questions are some of the themes artists treat. Every individual's observations about life through the study of art, through personal reasoning, through mystic experience will be the basis for his/her choices. None of us can do more. God created life for the purpose of life. What He revealed has been passed down and interpreted by people limited to their human understanding. The best we can do is to try to understand life and contribute to life. SDA culture will then be the sum of the characteristics of the life of SDA individuals as they grow in their understanding in their convictions, in their hope, in their respect for others, Nature and God. But SDA culture is not something that is fixed before our actions and that we have to fulfil in order for our efforts to become worthwhile.

*** In what way can we transmit Christian values in Fine Arts Class?**

We transmit Christian values in arts class in the same way as we transmit them every other moment of our lives, by being interested in human nature, the human mind, human understanding, human history, human relationships, human weaknesses. God is perfectly able to get through to our minds, but our minds are usually obstructed with the preoccupation of proving that our value system is right. Being right is important to us, as if perfect adherence to an ethical norm could produce more complete human beings. In our life we strive for one right solution, like in the Western puzzle with 1,000 pieces and one solution, instead of remaining open for

alternatives, like in the Chinese puzzle, with 7 pieces and 1,000 solutions. All our human efforts, however, will not bring us close to the ideal, the transcendental. If our goal is to get closer to God, we should concentrate on affirming our place as humans in the Universe. How otherwise can we understand a God whose main interest is people?

*** Is art for art's sake, and art that does not transmit Christian values a waste of time?**

Christian (human) values can be transmitted through art by creating the condition for

- a happy mind
- an alert, exploring mind
- a mind daring to break from the familiar if it means an improvement in the quality of life, in the understanding among people
- a mind that recognizes the paradoxes of life and is not discouraged by them.

If these features are the prerequisites for a worldview based on the Christian principles of compassion, respect and humility, then the art is the expression of them.

*** Can art counteract Christian values?**

Educators should concentrate on pointing out the strengths in our actions and thoughts as Christians (humans), on building respect and compassion towards all members of human community, on creating a consciousness of human rights and an awareness of the human psyche, of the usage of language as a vehicle for human thoughts, symbols and different means of communication, all in the attempt of establishing our place within space and within power structures.

Educators should also point out the paradoxes in life, for example: my right can be my neighbour's limitation, to gain life one has to lose life, to chose and get involved restricts my freedom to chose another alternative (a pure mind is always free to contaminate itself, a contaminated mind can never chose to be pure again).

Educators should make sure, during the limited time they have, that the student is given the tools that will enable him/her to chose in a compassionate way. We will never be able to include in our list of preventive measures all the damaging things that human phantasy will come up with. We will also have difficulty in trying to present good reasons to motivate young enquiring minds to avoid what is damaging for human well-being and chose 'right', if the consequences don't seem real. We will spend a lot of time trying to paint the bleakness that follows out of wrong choices, only to be contradicted by life all too many times.

It seems more relevant and to the point to teach students the tools to analyze actions, situations, mind-settings, to take the risk in teaching them to approach things critically, both on the good and the wrong side, in order to provide them with the ability of affirming what is worthwhile.

Application To the Literary Text

MENDING WALL

Something there is that does not love a wall,
 That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it
 And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
 And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
 The work of hunters in another thing:
 I have come after them and made repair
 Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
 But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
 To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
 No one has seen them made or heard them made,
 But at spring mending-time we find them there.
 I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
 And on a day we meet to walk the line
 And set the wall between us once again.
 We keep the wall between us as we go.
 To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
 And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
 We have to use a spell to make them balance:
 "Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them
 Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
 One on a side. It comes to little more:
 There were it is we do not need a wall:
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
 My apple trees will never get across

And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
 He only says, "Good fences make good
 neighbours."
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
 If I could put a notion in his head:
 "Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
 Where there are cows? But here there are no
 cows.
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offence.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
 But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
 He said it for himself. I see him there
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed,
 He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He will not go behind his father's saying,
 He says again, "Good fences make good
 neighbours"
 Robert Frost

The following comments on how Frost's poem conveys Christian values are not an attempt at presenting a complete literary analysis, but a suggestion on how to enter a text and the reality it evokes.

If we are looking for question-raising, the first line of the poem is a good example of how, in contrast to ordinary language, poetic language is able to unfold what we can't see at first and make the common incidents seem intriguing and worth investigating.

While an ordinary word order would have resulted in a flat statement (there is something that ...) the unusual, the break with the familiar "Something there is..." leaves a lot of room for questioning. What is that something? We can see the results of its doing - "gaps" - , we can see the tools it is using - "frozen spells"... "hunters" - but we are left with doubt about what is actually behind it all. The speaker also knows that it is hard to work against it - he has to tell the stones: Stay where you are until our backs are turned - and that makes him wonder whether the effort of mending the wall is worth while. Yet the wall is not the only thing to wonder

about: the poet is also wondering about wondering. His neighbour in turn is content with what his father has once told.

Clearly the whole thing has to do with order; yet does it make sense? The writer knows it is mischievous of him to ask, but he appeals to Spring, the season that gives new birth to life and that might bring new understanding. The metaphor of Spring is often used in literary tradition to indicate the affirmation of life (literally mending the wall affirms that the inhabitants are alive and well after winter). Yet, the metaphor can be taken further to detect the birth of revolutionary ideas ("Ode to the West Wing" by Shelley). The doubting poet knows: Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder...". This describes human condition, it reflect the tendency to stir up things, to start questioning when everything seems to go move according to a plan. "Why?" Constantly unhappy about the limits of our knowledge, the limits in space, and the limits to our actions, we humans search after rational explanations - "what I was walling in or walling out" - or even a supernatural one - "I could say Elves."

The attitude of the neighbour, refusing to know more, or get to the bottom of things, his unwillingness to take part in the controversy, is something that is connected to primitive life, - "old stone-savage ... that moves in darkness" - in contrast to the urge to know all. And yet in his primitive thinking he "likes to having thought of it so well." His opponent, however, does not force him to change, he concludes: "I'd rather he said it by himself."

The poem presents two types of people. They live in the same world, they are neighbours, but they represent different ideologies. They are occupied with similar activities (mending walls, minding an orchard and the cows, getting through winter). One is not more worth than the other: they are separated from each other, but are tolerant of each other. They "keep the wall between (them) as (they) walk"; yet they are walking side by side, working together. The attempt at "putting a notion in his head: Why do they make good neighbours?" does not change his neighbour's conviction that the order of things is good and unchangeable. The question "why" will remain unanswered, and that "something that doesn't love a wall" will remain a reality that contradicts and probes the order, always making one of them think there must be an alternative, another way for nature to run things, another perspective. That "something" is not dependent on human action, the neighbours can not influence the duration of the wall by moral conduct, by extreme care or an in-depth scientific study of all the effects of erosion. The reason why there is "something that does not love a wall" will not be understood, "something" will always be a reminder that certain things are simply unknown.

Never mentioning Christ or alluding to Biblical teaching the poem presents the human situation, the relationship of human beings towards their neighbours, and how they relate to the unknown. The feeling we have as humans towards things natural yet unknown and things we cannot change is a reality we ponder about. The poem is an attempt to come to terms with it, leading us to think, to wonder, to come closer to a satisfying explanation or may-be just to remind us of the facts of human life. The poem ventures into the unknown and provides an atmosphere of mystery similar to a religious experience.

Though we might be reminded of Job and his realization that, as much as we would desire

it, we cannot find purpose in all that life brings. We have to organize our life in the best way possible accepting that the unknown might stay a mystery. It is possible to show how Christian (human) values are implemented through the poem without pointing at concrete analogies to the Bible. Looking for ideas of the devil as the cause of decay and destruction, (the devil hindering our understanding of God's ways, pulling down our human relationships, giving us rebellious thoughts, separating us from God) would bring us far from the poem, attributing an exterior meaning to it, that is not there, in the attempt of justifying the familiar. We would miss a valuable opportunity to spend a creative moment pondering about what might be true in our lives. The relevancy - beauty - of the poem lies in its distinct picture of the human condition, and in its potentiality to make us feel more at ease - yet not appeased - with the realities of our existence, at the same time as we never give up our search.

Conclusion

For you see, don't you, that our discussion is about this - and what would anyone with the slightest intelligence be more seriously concerned about than this? I mean - the way we ought to live.
Plato, Georgias

The virtues of art like the virtues of faith reach beyond the limitations of the intellect, beyond any theory that a human mind may entertain. They lead to an experience of oneness in the middle of fragmentation, oneness that does not result in seclusion, but in openness and willingness to contain unpredictability, antagonism, perplexity.

This then is the challenge and task of faith-learning integration. It is an area in which we do not have pre-packaged answers waiting to be taken up and proclaimed, rather we must find our own answers in collaboration with dedicated Christian scholars everywhere.

The primary purpose of education should be to encourage and develop respect, compassion, and understanding of all members of the human community. Intellectual development and academic achievement are worthless if they are not rooted in these principles.

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