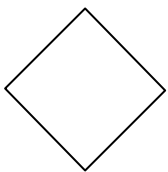


Essential tenets for the new orientation of aesthetic education



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"Aesthetic education is indispensable," wrote Wolfgang Klafki.

Aesthetic education is not the means to an end, nor is it a vehicle for non-aesthetic purposes. It makes us capable of perceiving and experiencing things in a manner which is independent and has its own intrinsic value. It also gives us the aptitude for the creative shaping of reality or other imaginable possibilities. To make aesthetic perception and aesthetic practice of such independence and intrinsic value available to every child, youth and young adult is one of the tasks of correctly understood general education today. In this respect a school which treats aesthetic education as a "subsidiary subject" is, or would be... an inhuman school.

What does it mean, to value aesthetic content in society differently?

It means, first and foremost, that we must fundamentally devote more attention to perception. Detailed looking, listening, feeling and sensing – as well as imaginative evaluation – are not only useful abilities in mastering everyday problems, but also extend far into political, cultural, social and economic activity.

A new orientation in aesthetic education is necessary because the traditional forms are no longer tailored to the realities of society. The situation today is such that a rearrangement process is necessary from the foundations up. In short form, the following conditions can be formulated:

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1. Our perceptible world is characterized by inundation and splintering. Because we perceive selectively we are running more and more into the difficult situation of having to choose from an oversupply – an oversupply which has a chiefly medial character, i.e. is not authentic.
2. The perceptive intake of information (unconscious perception) is to a great extent impaired in that the excess of temptations that we are daily subjected to, a cascade of data, finds its way into the subconscious where it cannot be adequately classified. The "free radicals" of the mind organize themselves in an uncontrolled manner and can lead to changes in behaviour which are undesired but which we still have to deal with.
3. The aperceptive intake of information (conscious perception) is hampered in the environment described in that there is continually less reflex-time available to be able to achieve an organization and more importantly interpretation and evaluation. The natural cycle of "perceiving-thinking-acting" can thus only be performed fragmentally.
4. Since our brain is naturally lazy – or put otherwise, works very economically – it is difficult to escape a perceptual oversupply and to occasion our consciousness to undertake more highbrow mental activity. We can only receive the necessary consciousness-energy for this through exertion. It is therefore also very tempting to watch television and simply consume.
5. The greater the inundation with temptations around us is, the greater is the probability that we will succumb to them. There are also forms of structural force which must be altered when an unfolding of the senses (Kükelhaus) and the resulting active debate with reality are to result.
6. The threat basic principles of nature: leisureliness, differentiation and self-organization (Peter Kafka) must also be prominent for our contact with the world. Since the constituents of the media world are diametrically opposed to this, we distance ourselves more and more from the natural basis. (v. Hentig)
7. In order to understand perception and perception processing in the media world we have to pay particular attention to the processes of inner perception. Only thus can we learn to deal with the fact that our sensorium cannot manage to differentiate selectively between authentic and non-authentic perception.
8. Rudolf Amhelm writes: „We think too much and see too little.“ With this he means that we no longer trust our senses and prefer to rely on abstract concepts. This retreat into the world of words has also contributed to a great extent to the fact that people have increasingly greater problems in getting to the essentials

and to be able to differentiate between the important and the unimportant. **Delayed** and **complete** perception (perception with all the senses) are necessary to counteract the loss of differentiation and the resulting reduction of perception capacity.

9. The interhemispherical communication (the regular, balanced use of both brain hemispheres) is strongly limited by a media-determined environment. Sitting in front of the television and computer monitor only allows strongly reduced forms of perception which impede a comprehensive and intuitive registration of phenomena.

The intensive and constant exchange between both completely differently working hemispheres of the brain is of extraordinary importance for the development of the personality. This can only be achieved when a high proportion of authentic experience exists.

10. We need comprehensive behavior (perceiving with all senses, thinking with both cerebral hemispheres) in order to be able to exist in the world. Since, due to the make-up of our educational system, we have up to now strongly emphasized lineal-rational thought and behavior, it is important that we follow new, compensatory paths with more resolution. Another appearance of the aesthetic can only be defined through this. The result will be serious consequences for the traditional subjects art and music.

Deductions for the management of aesthetic processes

In general, management is immediately connected with "organization". The fact that other essentials are important in the management process is often overseen or not considered significant enough. No reliable stock-taking can be made without detailed observation. This observation requires a great deal of time and it is important that the original is observed and not the medial copy in the form of text, pictures or films. The observation must be structured, and this requires a form of organization in order to make a creative idea realizable. During the creative process there is further observation and new organization processes are necessary. Thus the correspondence of the three "+greats" is constantly repeated.

Our particular attention is directed at the process of creating. It can be represented in the form of three overlapping circles. Experimentality, materiality and structurality are interdependent and simultaneously overlapping.

Materiality is necessary so that we can sensorially analyze an object. Only thus can we obtain reliable data for further decisions. It is important that we comprehend the original, that we find the authentic level. Then it is time to devise paths to achieve form and to try them out extensively.

The experimentation is characterized by comprehensive grasp and learning by trial and error. Creativity also exists on a purely thought level but it is generally the consequence of solid experimental creativity which then attempts to proceed from the basis of a particular subject to knowledge.

Preconscious, comprehensive perception is often underestimated. Advertising managers know this only too well and consequently conceive their spots so that they are time wise on the perception borderline. We therefore tend to perceive them rather unconsciously and yet their effect is felt in everyday life.

When we observe, we pay attention to particular things, situations and processes. We arrange things microstructurally, recognize the finer points and the inner relationships which went unnoticed during identification. By observing one can always discover more, but at the same time it is also easy to lose sight of the whole. We usually observe superficially because there is no time for detailed analysis. A leisurely way of going about things and a form of observation training are called for.

In the end we interpret that which we have perceived, classify it in terms of a larger picture and formulate our own thoughts about it. Ideas for creative work with pictures, sounds, movements and words are the result of many perceptions. With these we explain and elucidate our thoughts. We create something new which in turn becomes an object of perception.

The difference between the creativity resulting from the left and right hemispheres is well known. Both halves of our brain work differently and accentuate other aspects of the world. A creative process will only then run satisfactorily when there is a transfer of types of thought between one another.

The left hemisphere carries out logically arranged processes which can be represented in the form of a triangle. Superiority and subordination are important steps of differentiation for logical processes. A clear top and bottom can however lead to externally determined figures. The left half of the brain relates to abstraction, reduction and standardization. Thus it also causes the elimination of halftones. High mobility and temporal reduction are also characteristic. It often only accepts incidents that occur in real time. Because of this, the view for temporal runs of events is often distorted. The right half of the brain, on the other hand is predominantly responsible for comprehensive

processes and for worlds of pictures and sounds. It organizes processes more in circles and prefers self-determined action, loves delayed perception, tends however also to linger about. The leisureliness with which it approaches problems sometimes goes too far. It controls differentiation excellently but can also carry this on to extremes and thereby contributes to the situation that one lapses, loses orientation and can no longer realize the planned work.

We see that both halves of the brain must enhance and control each other as far as their aims and ways of doing things are concerned.

The dominance of one hemisphere over the other is always disadvantageous. The aim is to achieve a balanced rhythm of interhemispherical communication. Self-determination has priority, is however supplemented by structurization when necessary. It also contributes to the situation that as many other people as possible can duplicate a thought construction. Leisureliness must and may be, but a shortening of the time available is necessary, particularly where the achieving of important (of vitally important?) aims is concerned. Differentiation takes place during observation whereas reduction takes place during the interpretation.

During the 4 "ELEMENTS" workshops, INSEA International Summer Academy, it was possible to formulate the characteristics of the Workshop Principle in greater detail and to try out new methods. We want to continue this work in the next workshop which have "Open the WINDOW of the HISTORY" as its theme.